**WASHINGTON**

**COUNCIL**

**OF THE BLIND**

Opportunity, Equality, Independence

Founded 1935

# WCB NEWSLINE

Summer 2024 Edition

﻿“Down the Rabbit Hole”

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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 Fall 2024 WCB Newsline in October**

**and look forward to reading your quality submissions.**

**Send all articles and content by August 31.**

**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.
* We do not accept anonymous content or letters.
* Articles may be up to 1,000 words.

Chapter updates may be up to 350 words.

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

* 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, Might Go Down the Rabbit Hole by Andy Arvidson

Here we go into the future growth of Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) and the American Council of the Blind (ACB). I am glad that the only thing constant in life is change. It was a joy and pleasure to visit the chapters on the east side of Washington in April. But, down the rabbit hole, I was scheduled to visit Snohomish County Council of the Blind on April 20 and I wasn’t there. Now, I need to make amends for that.

The ACB conference and convention is rapidly approaching, and we will be in great attendance. Cathy Wilson and I will be representing you as the delegate and alternate delegate. The two of us will get together and talk about how we will receive and tabulate all of your votes so we have an accurate affiliate vote for WCB.

On June 29, Mira Arcilla will be singing the national anthem at the Aqua Sox game. She is a member of the Skagit and Island Counties Council of the Blind. What an honor for her and our chapter.

Speaking of events, I am glad Bob Cavanaugh is collecting information about summer events so we can have an account of activities our blind groups are involved in. To see us out in the public and enjoying life is a great advertisement for our organization.

In another organization I am involved with, we absolutely insist on not being a glum lot, and enjoying life to the fullest extent possible. The life I am living is much more enhanced than before I was a member of WCB. I have learned so much by being with you that, as Alco Canfield and Carl Jarvis said in 2015, “We wondered how long it would take you to join us.” My life was down the rabbit hole for a while because I didn’t realize what this was about. You can blame Randy Tedrow for encouraging me to come to my first WCB convention when he asked me for help. He helped me poke my head out of the hole long enough to jump in with both feet.

When I am part of an organization, I like to sleep in the middle of the bed so I don’t fall out. And that means being of service. So, thank you, Randy. It is my hope that you all stay out of the rabbit hole and walk on the sunny side of the street in whatever light of a spirit you believe in and stay warm and happy.

## Letter From the Editors

Dearest Gentle Readers,

We cordially invite you to drink this and eat that as you follow us down the myriads of rabbit holes we have procured for you to dabble in or completely lose yourself in as you deem worthy. Do not fear, you can always find your way back if you so choose…or can you? Who…are…you? Perhaps answers lay deep within these pages, waiting to be discovered by you.

Here are some tips to help you navigate the unknown places where you may end up:

Be prepared, you may grow a little bigger than when you started reading.

Do not be alarmed by any strange characters or creatures you may encounter along the journey, as they can be quite entertaining and possibly a wee bit frightening, but can also provide a looking glass into yourself, if you are ready to go through it.

Enjoy any tea parties you may randomly stumble into. That’s why they’re there. Don’t overthink. Just let it all happen.

See you on the other side, Your very own Cheshire Cat and White Rabbit…and, of course, faithful editors,

Heather and Reg

## 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 informative entertainment. We have 20 timeless episodes covering all types of adventures in low vision and blindness, 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, ask your phone or Amazon smart speaker to play podcast “WCB Newsline Unleashed.”

The deadline for all Newsline submissions is Saturday, Aug 31. Send all submissions, feedback, and other content to [TheWCBNewsline@Gmail.com](mailto:TheWCBNewsline@Gmail.com) before that date.

Unfortunately, we did not receive any votes for the Readers’ Choice Award, and participation has been very low, so we will not be able to do this award anymore. We will, however, still be giving out our Nouveau Quill Award to qualifying new writers, so if you have not written for Newsline before this year, we encourage you to submit great content in the upcoming fall issue.

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. 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. We provide this space to continue the conversation and encourage our writers, without whom we would not exist.

**Reader Feedback**

From Heidi Campbell: “This is in response to the article ‘Book Chat, Not So Wild a Dream’ by Alan Bentson of the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library. I'll try to make this short if not sweet.

“He talks about what would happen if a blind person (who quite likely had sight previously) could have that eyesight restored. He mentions four different books, talking about the same topic from different angles, most of them quite negative from what I gathered from Mr. Bentson's review of books on the perils of sight restoration.

“Here's my take on the subject. Sight restoration would hold plenty of hazards if the newly restored person tried to learn all about the seeing process all alone, all by themselves. That is when the problems would happen. If the restored person were to go at this alone, they would definitely be overwhelmed and frightened. However, if the newly sighted person had a sighted ‘veteran’ shepherding them step-by-slow-and-careful-step through the process, it would be so much easier and more comfortable: A friend, a relative, a neighbor, whoever would be willing to take the time to help teach how the sense of sight works.”

The editor Reginald George responds: “As a person who was born blind myself, I would be hesitant to consider sight restoration, even if I knew it were possible. Sight is 90 percent of your sensory input. I would think it would be so distracting. Beyond that, if you have lost vision as a baby, the evidence I have read indicates that your brain wouldn’t be able to process the images, and that everything would be either ignored, or a giant blur. Maybe you would see everything upside down, which is how images come into the human eye. It’s never been a priority to me to find out because I have pride in myself and how far I have come as a person who is blind. So, even if I had the choice I wouldn’t change it now. But we all must choose our own path. And these books raise good questions. The older you are when you lose your vision, the more it would make sense to try. It’s difficult for me to think of Hellen Keller as someone who was negative. It’s a fascinating topic. And I’m glad it came up.”

The author responds: “Hi Heidi. You couldn’t have made my point better. Restoration of sight is often imagined by blind people, and by creators of literature and TV shows, as a wonderful miracle that will solve the blind person’s problems in life. Actually, like every other major change that can happen to a person, it would be an occasion for lots of work and adjustment, guided skillfully by loved ones or professionals. I, in my daydream, and Helen Keller in her article, only have three days, and we have to make the best of it.”

In his book “Crashing Through,” which I highly recommend, Mike May pays tribute to many people who helped him with his adjustment to sight restoration, but he makes it clear that the change was not altogether positive or dramatically life changing, and he is still, at best, a low-vision person, which is certainly better than nothing. Makes me wonder if Jesus provided guidance for the blind man he healed in the New Testament?

He probably figured he did the miracle, so it was up to the fellow to adjust to it. I did not want to spend the rest of my daydream going through a major adjustment process. Thanks for reading my column.

By the way, what does the July theme mean? I read a book called ‘Down the Rabbit Hole,’ but it was about brain surgery, and figuring out how to cure people. As we have few brain surgeons among our readership, I figure you and Heather must have something else in mind.”

Editor Heather Meares responds: “As always, the themes we choose are open to interpretation, so our readers and authors can express whatever resonates with them personally. Yes, we give helpful guidance to spark ideas, but we are always excited to read what interesting, thought-provoking, and insightful things end up in our Newsline. Thank you all for your contributions.”

# FEATURES

## Cheshire Cat Interviews #23 A Mad Hatter’s Tea Party by Heather Meares

I had the pleasure of sitting down with two of my favorite people for a little Mad Hatter’s tea party of our own, which I don’t get to do often for these interviews. But this time, I decided to chat with Dodie and Dakota Orlando from my very own chapter, United Blind of Walla Walla, and it was a delight. We met at FVC Gallery, had delicious coffee and tea, and I learned a bit more about them both, as individuals and as a couple.

Dodie: “I met Dakota when I was teaching piano lessons. He was the worst student I ever had.”

Dakota: “Yay! I got what I wanted. I wanted the teacher.”

Dodie: “I said some horrifying things to him. I was so disinterested and really mean. But he kept chasing me until I caught him. Right after we were married, a few months later, I was diagnosed with stage four ovarian cancer.”

Heather: “How long have you been married?”

Dodie: “We just celebrated 11 years on May 31 of this year. We’re having a good time. I beat the ovarian cancer and have been cancer-free for 10 years. We’re busy living happy lives.

“I have a daughter, Nikki Brueggeman, who just started working for the Department of Services for the Blind in Seattle. I’m pretty excited about that. When my former husband and I adopted her, we had so much trouble adopting because I’m blind, due to Type1 diabetes. Nobody wanted the primary caregiver to be blind, and diabetic to boot. The National Federation of the Blind really went to bat for us. I was living in Baltimore, Maryland, at the time and was a member of NFB. They wrote letters and helped a great deal. We adopted Nikki when she was five days old. She was released from the hospital into my care when she was born, and I provided foster care for her until they approved me. They approved my husband as an adoptive father, but I had to prove myself to the powers that be.”

Heather: “I’m wondering if that process has gotten any better since 1990? A lot has changed since then, and I would want to hope that things have improved for people with disabilities who are trying to adopt. I would be interested to know.”

Dodie: “The head of the adoption agency let me stay in her home, and I was allowed to provide the foster care because she was there. Social Services would come by unannounced to observe, and they swore that I could see when they watched me changing diapers and feeding Nikki. They wrote in their report that I claimed I was blind, but they were certain I had significantly usable vision. They finally approved me because they thought I could see, and I wondered why they would approve me if they thought I was a liar, but I didn’t argue with them.”

Heather: “Wow, what an experience. Dakota, tell us a bit about yourself.”

Dakota: “I’m a transplant from the East, born in Baltimore, Maryland, and finished high school in Philadelphia, joined the Navy, did basic training in San Diego, and then went to Pensacola, for the duration of my duty. I finished junior college there and then got my bachelor’s degree and ended up teaching, but didn’t really like that, so I got out of teaching. I was so discouraged, and then I started working with the Association of Retarded Citizens, teaching academics, and I really loved it, so I went back to school and got certified. The rest of my career I spent in the public schools, teaching students with intellectual disabilities and at-risk high school students. When I retired, I came out here and when I discovered Dodie, I pretended I wanted to take piano lessons.”

Heather: “How did you discover her?”

Dakota: “Her brother. My last wife had passed away, we had talked about moving out west, and I came out here on my own. I was living at a 55+ building called Affinity, and I was sitting in the community room when her brother came in and said he’d left some business cards on the piano and said his sister taught piano. So, I picked up a card and thought I should learn it right, so I went there and that’s history.”

Heather: “You signed up for everything. So how many lessons did it take?”

Dakota: “For me, it only took a couple before I realized I was in over my head. Everything I did was wrong, and it would’ve been too difficult to relearn everything – anyway, what are you doing for dinner?”

Dodie added, “Want to go to a movie?” as we all laughed.

Dakota: “My mother wrote poetry, but she wrote it in sort of a bastardized Old English, and she had a talent for it, but not many people were interested in that language. So, I thought I’d take some of her poetry and anglicize it to update it. After a while, I thought, ‘Maybe I could do this,’ and started writing poetry. I did this for three years, and then worked with a playwright for about two years and learned so much. I didn’t think I could write narrative, but one day on a plane, I had an idea for a poem that turned into a short story, and then it turned into a novel. It was kind of a born-again experience. Everything was in a haze. I would hear voices of characters in my head of what I was trying to put together, and I felt the rush of adrenaline, this energy. I was obsessed. That was 1998, and I’ve been doing something with writing every day since then. I’ve written 37 novels, 22 are on Amazon, and two collections of some of my 90 short stories are there, as well. One is science fiction and one is historical, which are my two major areas. You can find my works at www.dakotaorlando.com for the complete list.”

Heather: “Dodie, I know you are a traveler, tell us about your favorite adventure.”

Dodie: “When I was 20, I was in California, where I met my former husband, and we went on a cross-country tandem bicycle ride and had newspapers following us all across the country. We were trying to raise money for diabetes research. We rode from the Pacific Ocean and started with the back wheel dipped in the ocean, went all the way across the country, stopped in Lincoln, Nebraska, and got married, and rode the rest of the way to Tidewater, Virginia, and dipped the front wheel in the Atlantic Ocean. Good Morning America got wind of us and invited us to be on their show, so when we got to the East Coast, they flew us to New York, and it was pretty fun. We moved from California to Virginia, and in 1984, we went on another bicycle trip, up the Eastern seaboard to Canada and took a ferry across to Newfoundland, rode across Newfoundland, and then back to Chesapeake, Virginia.”

Heather: “That is so impressive.”

Dodie: “In 1972, I lost a baby, lost my vision, my husband at the time left because he couldn’t deal with it, and I had kidney issues. I was told I would not live to be 35. I said, ‘Just watch me!’ Met my bicycle maniac husband, started focusing on vascular health, and my body just got better and better until I finally had normal kidney function. That was a long journey.”

Heather: “I know you are a vegetarian. Have you always been, or did that come later?”

Dodie: “I was vegetarian my whole life, but went through a meat-eating phase for about five years, and decided not to do that anymore. So, I quit eating meat, and when I was diagnosed with cancer, I became vegan. I’m not a purist, but am very careful about what I eat since I passed through stage four ovarian cancer. I’m not going to change what’s working.”

Heather: “Exactly!”

Dodie: “I’ve passed through a lot of fire and brimstone, and the thing that got me through it is my determination to make every moment matter.”

Heather: “You seem to have such a positive outlook and are so full of life, and I don’t think I’ve ever heard you say anything negative.”

Dodie: “I’ve been really blessed with an upbeat spirit, and I’ve been discouraged. My team of doctors gathered and celebrated, dumbfounded at how quickly I recovered from surgery, and they were all convinced it was my upbeat nature they attributed the healing to.”

Heather: “Even before I met you, I thought you two were a fascinating couple. What do you think has created longevity for you? You both seem to enjoy life together.”

Dodie: “We are a team. He started letting me edit some of his writing. I was transfixed by his creativity, but we argued a lot about the presentation, and he started listening to me, and I felt his writing improved dramatically. There’s nothing that makes me feel good about being with a man more than being a team and feeling connected. He stuck by me through my cancer. He was so downtrodden and discouraged when I got the diagnosis. I told him I could not go through the battle to fight cancer and fight his battle with depression at the same time, so if he needed to take a break, that I would let him know when I won my battle and we could reconnect. The next morning, he came to me and said, ‘I’m in it with you all the way,’ and that just bonded us. It’s hard to be a caregiver and a husband, and he’s really committed himself to me and my fight.”

Heather: “I feel like you guys are always out and about, doing things together.”

Dakota: “I’m always sitting in my room writing.”

Dodie laughed, “When I get him out of his office, we do have fun!”

Heather to Dakota: “I hear you’re a bit of an Alice in Wonderland fan, and have written a spin-off book around that concept.”

Dakota: “Yes, Abrianna’s Journey with Alice in Wonderland. I thought it would be cool if a kid wished their way into Alice’s world and was stuck there, and would go around with Alice and share the adventures, because then you have the modern viewpoint thrown in with Lewis Carroll’s world. That was the original title, printed in paperback in 2004. Now it is available as Down the Rabbit Hole with Alice, with my other books on Amazon. Another rabbit hole I go down is doing research for historical writing. At first, I thought this would be really cumbersome, but I really grew to love it. For instance, going to London to find the actual streets and places on the map, to create the setting where the characters live.”

Heather: “That’s a very cool idea. I’m sure all that research not only makes it better for your readers, but also in your own head, making it more real.”

Dodie: “I’ve been working to get him out of his rabbit hole more often.”

Heather: “When you do get him out, what do you enjoy doing together?”

Dodie: “We go shopping for food and go to restaurants. We started a tradition of going to get Indian food on Thanksgiving. Nikki did it with us a couple years ago, and then we did it on our own last year.”

Heather: “If you could send one thought to the world, what would it be?”

Dodie: “The motto by which I live, make every moment matter.”

Heather: “And I think you definitely do that. I do, too. We are similar that way.”

Dakota: “Mine is live and let live, and don’t do anything that will hurt other people.”

Whether it’s embarking on a physical journey or following a creative inspiration to realize your dreams, having the support of those you love always makes navigating the rabbit holes a better experience for all. Thanks, Dodie and Dakota, for sharing some of your adventures in the wonderland of life with us.

## Rabbit Holes, Black Holes by Tim Downie

I have two Corgis, Toby and Willow.

Toby is the older one. He is predominantly red, though he has white feet and a stylish white marking on his head and snout. Toby is stoic. He loves to play catch. He is affectionate on his terms. When we are sitting or sleeping, Toby stays right next to me. A couple years ago, Toby saved my life. I was sick and recovering from major surgery and fainted twice. Both times, I woke up with Toby hitting my neck repeatedly with his snout. He woke me up enough to call for help, which was good, as I spent a week in the hospital with sepsis. When we go for a walk, Toby doesn’t really need a leash. He stays by my side, always watching for me. I have a bond with him like no other dog I’ve ever met.

Willow? Well, she lives in a world of rabbit holes. She is absolutely the most affectionate dog I’ve ever had. If I sit down, she plants her face smack in front of mine so I can kiss her. She loves belly rubs and always wants a lap to sit on. She is black with a little brown and has white feet and some white markings, too. When I walk with Willow, she is my rabbit hole girl. On walks, Willow will try to charge every bird or bunny she sees. She wants to run up to people and jump on them. She just loves and gets distracted by everything. She is bigger and heavier, and when people see her and want to pet her, I warn them she jumps and can knock them over. She got distracted one day a year ago and pulled me so hard I fell on the ice and broke my ankle. I wasn’t mad at her. She is so loving, joyous, and full of life, she is irresistible.

I take the dogs for walks often, be it at my old house or my apartment. Toby comes right to me, letting me easily put the harness on. Willow is next. She is so happy to go out for a walk, she rolls onto her back and squirms around the ground, then gets up and bounces all over the room. I just laugh, and wait by the door till she comes over.

It was just this week, while getting ready for a walk with my dogs, that I fell once again, into my black hole.

Since I had rapid vision loss and sepsis two years ago, I have had serious cognitive impairment. There is such a thing as Post-Sepsis Syndrome, and cognitive impairment is one of the seven symptoms listed on the CDC website. I have five of the seven. I don’t yet have major organ failure or amputated limbs, though my left leg is really giving its best at taking me there. Cognitive impairment can also come from anxiety and depression. With this trifecta of conditions, no doctor is surprised that I have cognitive issues.

For me, the cognitive impairment means, at times, I struggle when talking to find the words I need. I also can’t follow audio books, TV shows, or movies, if my first time listening to them is after my vision loss. I can follow old shows and movies I watched prior to my vision loss, but only because I know the story, and it doesn’t matter if I blank out for a bit.

When I was attempting to get ready for one of our dog walks this week, I froze and just looked at the two harnesses in my hand. They are different colors, slightly different sizes, and we’ve had them for two years. I stood there, holding the harnesses, and could not figure out which one to put on which dog. I waited, and I couldn’t figure it out. The dogs knew something was wrong, as this wasn’t part of our routine. I finally gave up, and just put the harnesses on, apologizing to my dogs that I probably have the wrong harness on.

This is cognitive impairment. I’ve been talking with my doctor for months about it. The conversation began in January, where I yelled at her and said, “Ever since having vision loss, I have told every doctor, counselor, every surgeon, that I have cognitive impairment and yet, no one has ever tested me.”

I’ve only been seeing her since October, and she said she didn’t have to test me, as I have several diagnosed conditions, all listing cognitive impairment as a symptom or side effect. She has me on some medications now, but we might have to adjust dosage, as I don’t see it improving. She also set me up with a therapist in the hospital system who focuses on achieving results. The therapist has already given me an exercise to help with anxiety, which is breathing using my stomach muscles. She said this stimulates the vagus nerve, which is where physical reactions to anxiety originate. My doctor also set me up with a nurse case manager, to help coordinate my care for various things.

I don’t feel alone. I feel in good hands with the medical folks. In the last Newsline, Michael Waiblinger wrote an excellent article about his love of vinyl records. I agree with him, and I have found music to be important to my day. Music can connect me immediately to a place, person, or memory from long ago. Music can also pick up my mood and lift my spirit. I try to avoid music that makes me sad or depressed. Fortunately, I have loved music since I was a teen and have a vast library to reacquaint myself with.

And Toby and Willow? They live in the moment and pick up my spirits any time I am with them. They are always so happy to see me. Willow jumps on me crying because she is so happy. Toby repeatedly walks between my legs while I bend over to put my hands on his sides, kind of like brushes at a car wash. The challenge is to use my arms to block Willow from jumping on Toby while he goes between my legs.

Toby and Willow love me, despite my occasional visits to the black hole. And I love them, despite Willow’s constant running down rabbit holes. These holes aren’t so bad, as long as you have help, and aren’t alone to deal with them.

## Hopping into a New World by Holly Turri

Honestly, I take exception to this suggested theme. Sorry, editors, but it is the truth. A rabbit trail is only inappropriate if it wastes our time and accomplishes nothing. If it weren’t for those hopping bunnies, who so seductively pull us away from whatever it is we are supposed to accomplish, many new songs, books, or technologies would never have occurred. Some of the greatest ideas have been found in bunny’s homes.

Learning is one of the most valued and least appreciated activities we humans have the pleasure of enjoying. Even from my earliest childhood days, asking questions is something I loved to do. Listening for the answers is even more fun. When I found out there were things like the Braille World Book Encyclopedia and the dictionary, I felt like I’d been let loose in a candy store.

In the early ‘80s, I worked for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and used a computer terminal. Some nights, I took classes. In between work and school, I asked my boss if I could stay in the office and do my homework. He said fine.

Then, I’d sneak around through the wonderful world of the baby internet. I learned about weather phenomena, diet and nutrition, and a bunch of other stuff. Through the use of one of those phone modems that are so laughed at today, I plodded around and found gold. So, the speed record was never in danger of being broken.

As the internet has grown, so has my curiosity. It really saddens me that young teens waste their time on nonsense, when they should be using the phone or PC to discover more about their world. At that age, our 35-year-old son loved his video games. Both he and his sister were home-schooled. The poor child was constantly admonished to complete his assignments and not waste time on that mess.

Now, Mike has teens, and there is a whole new meaning to his mom’s harping words. Amazing how smart parents get.

When I attended the Maryland School for the Blind, in sixth grade I wanted to look up a historical figure in the Braille encyclopedia. The study hall monitor kept reminding me about the end of school. I’d snuggle down between the bookshelves and keep reading. After all, we were told that in the late evening, we couldn’t get into the building, but you could always get out. So, I’d hang out a few minutes extra.

It is so nice to want to learn something. If we choose, no one has to know what it is but the computer, God, and us.

My mom didn’t like to read certain books to me. Not that they were raunchy or anything, but my political beliefs strongly diverged from hers. When I grew up and had a PC, I could go wherever I wanted and figure out what was true.

If not for rabbit holes, I’d still be ignorant about physics, math that I can’t understand, the space program, issues we blind people must deal with, great recipes, and so forth. Come along with me to a wonderful world that is even more interesting because we are stealing time from something else. Bunnies are great.

## Nom, Nom, Nom A poem by Heather Meares

The long and winding road to nowhere…

We’ve all been there.

How did we arrive in that deep dive

Into what dreams may come,

But never quite do?

The actor who can’t remember their lines,

The writer who has nothing to say,

The rickshaw driver whose cart has broken,

And the cocoa plants must be delivered today.

The road to nowhere is the road to everywhere.

Nonsense is the only thing that truly makes sense.

Escaping reality becomes reality.

What matters most is that

Nothing really matters more than

That

One

Thing.

Find it, breathe it,

Do it, be it.

An existential crisis is always one step away,

Waiting to consume.

## Down the Streaming Rabbit Hole by Beth Greenberg

In 2022, my husband and I decided to change our TV providers. It was for my husband’s rabbit hole of NFL football, especially “Da Bears.” So, we switched to YouTube TV, which is connected to my husband’s Google account.

I am happy with streaming and don’t use his YouTube TV. I jump from streaming provider to streaming provider, such as Hulu to Netflix, to Paramount+, to Discovery+, etc. Depending on the provider, I have different shows that I watch. I would watch one episode of each show on that provider, then move to the next provider.

While watching TV shows on Netflix, I got started watching “Grey’s Anatomy,” and it became my new addiction. I can’t stop watching it. I will watch three or four episodes in one sitting.

For a while, I could not figure out why I could not stop watching it. After thinking about it, I realized it seemed familiar to me. I used to watch “One Life to Live,” a soap opera that ran on ABC from July 15, 1968, to January 13, 2012. I started watching it in 1985 until it left national syndication on TV and was online, and I watched that, too (which only lasted six months).

With watching “Grey’s Anatomy,” I feel like I am watching a soap opera. I agree it has gone downhill some since season 15. I have almost caught up. There are 20 seasons.

What a crazy adventure you can have with streaming and finding a new show you have never seen before that can take you on a wild ride you did not expect.

## Chronicles of a Happy Warrior #16 “What’s Up Doc?” by Mark Adreon (the Happy Warrior)

When talking about rabbit holes, I think quoting the most famous rabbit of all, Bugs Bunny, cannot be a bad thing. For those who remember the cartoon, Bugs Bunny would pop out of his rabbit hole, and terrorize various characters, while casually chomping on his carrot. When it got a little dangerous for Bugs, he would give his nemesis, Yosemite Sam, a chase and when he got too close, he would pop into his rabbit hole. We would find Bugs in a nicely appointed, safe place where he could relax, take a nap, or just chill while plotting his next adventure, showing up one of his many nemeses.

In people terms, when someone over-explains or goes on and on about a subject, and finds themselves “cornered,” it is often referred to as “going down a rabbit hole.” Also, for those who also find themselves completely on a different subject, lost in their own conversation, or spending an hour contradicting themselves, they, too, have gone down a rabbit hole.

Bugs might disagree with the people’s definition and might purposely spend time going here, there, and everywhere, the goal being to take his time to reach the point where a rabbit hole would be the end result.

For some folks who want to influence decision makers, advocates, or targeted groups, going down a rabbit hole might be considered a strategy. To be clear, if it is a random habit or personality trait, that without strategy turns people off. A deep dive into electricity might be a turn-off to someone who wanted to know where the light switch is. In some circles, this behavior is called the “little professor.” The professor is always on his soapbox and only needs a topic to dive deep into every element, plan, or conversation. Most of the professor’s friends just want to know if there is a “turn-off switch.”

Used as a strategic strategy, the smart game of verbal chase can end up in the comfort of your rabbit hole, where your position is sipping merlot, and has a commitment contract to sign.

Bugs might share that when things get complicated, or reach a deeper dive than others expected, there is an opportunity to lead others to the front door of his comfortable rabbit hole. If you are strategic, misguided, or lack the appropriate facts or information, you will find yourself, like Bugs, using the game to see if others can follow him as he runs, hides, bobs, and twists, never taking a straight path and always leading the chase. Getting to the rabbit hole is his goal. Others are left behind, frustrated, and grumbling about how unfair the chase was. For Bugs Bunny, the comfort of the rabbit hole is worth the treachery of the chase and game.

Some might also see the rabbit holes as a method to wear down the objections of legislators and other decision-makers by answering all questions before they are asked, and leading the chase until your listeners start looking for a rabbit hole to jump into. When they jump, to their surprise, in the rabbit hole is the topic you’ve been seeking their agreement on.

So, “What’s up Doc?” Have you built a rabbit hole that others will be comfortable in? Have you tamed the chase so you are leading? Are you having fun with the chase and ending up in a rabbit hole? Bugs had lots of characters to play tag with. Do you?

## The Walk Home by Randy Tedrow

“The Walk Home,” what a great opening line. However, to be more accurate, it’s a walk to the bus stop, across a HUGE parking lot, through closed shops to a side bus stop. Try and convince hoodlums (is that allowed?) that yes, I am blind, and hopefully they’ll not try to prove how tough they are by beating the “blank-blank-blank blind guy.” There are only three this time, so that should be handleable. Thankfully, the bus comes, so I don’t have to prove how blank-blank-blank I truly am.

Tonight, things were a bit different, challenging even. I got off from my shift as a technician at the internet service provider I worked for (this was a thing last century) and began my journey home. I was in a good mood, having recently had some cane travel lessons from two Orientation and Training Center folks. I was confident, proud, blind, ready to take on the world! Who cared that it was dark? Welcome to my world.

I made it through the campus and began walking the semi-long block to the bus stop outside the Taco Bell (they made the best Mexi-Fries, with extra seasoning). I was traveling so well, in fact, that I had a growing fan club trailing behind. With what little peripheral vision I had, I could see there was a SUV in my wake.

In my magnanimous mood, I decided to talk with the poor sighted folks. I stopped, turned, and said loudly, “Can I help you?”

The car drew nearer across the parking lot. Yet, I was resolute. I would not be pushed around.

“Excuse me, sir?” A woman’s voice came from the driver’s side.

“Yes, how can I help?” I always believed in being nice when possible.

“You’re in the middle of the road, blocking traffic.”

Aspirations of conquering the world as blind emperor shattered around my feet, like pebbles in the road with those nine simple words. Sigh.

“Oops, how embarrassing!” By this time, I’d lost my travel line and was a bit, only a bit, disoriented. “Umm … can you tell me which way the sidewalk is?”

The incredibly patient, kind, and not-really-laughing lady gave me the needed directions and soon, I was on the sidewalk once again, continuing “The Walk Home.”

# LIFESTYLE

## Book chat Rabbit Holes and Other Distractions by Alan Bentson, Readers’ Advisor Washington Talking Book and Braille Library

“ ‘Alice in Wonderland’ is an absurdist story. Beyond fantasy, it's ridiculous. That's neurology in a nutshell. Your patient disappears down a rabbit hole. You've got to do something; you can't just sit there. So, you go down the hole after the patient.”

This is a quote from Allan H. Ropper’s book, “Reaching Down the Rabbit Hole: a Renowned Neurologist Explains the Mystery and Drama of Brain Disease” (DBC03955).

I read this book for a book club about a year ago and I highly recommend it. It's narrated quite ably by Derek Perkins for the Perkins Library in Watertown, MA. Dr. Ropper believes in talking to patients and using intuition, backed up by considerable experience, rather than relying on tests, scans, and established dogmas.

If you like this book, you can read “Five Patients” by Michael Crichton (DB40720), about the hospital where Dr. Ropper works, though this book is much older than Dr. Ropper's.

And if you have whetted your appetite for neurology, I recommend anything by Oliver Sacks.

Sir Paul McCartney says, “I'm fixing a hole where the rain gets in and stops my mind from wandering.”

In a later song he says, “You stand behind me with a watch in your hand, and I can't get nothing done.”

And in an even later song, he says, “Distractions like butterflies are buzzing 'round my head. When I'm alone, I think of you and the life we'd lead if we could only be free from these distractions.”

It's not that he's opposed to distractions, but just to the outside world's attempts to keep him from what he sees as the important things.

In literature, rabbits are generally portrayed as all too determined to go from Point A to Point B and not be distracted.

That white rabbit in “Alice in Wonderland” keeps saying, “I'm late, I'm late!” When, of course, what he's late for is Alice's trial, and there she is right in front of him.

And think of Rabbit in “Winnie-the-Pooh,” so self-important and full of meaningless plans like a true bureaucrat, but actually totally ineffectual.

My education as a blind person has been mostly about learning to follow routines and be methodical and systematic. To this day, I hate getting lost if I'm going somewhere by myself, but I'm trying to get cured. I just want to go down the rabbit hole, find what there is to find and learn what I can learn.

Sighted people mostly don't seem to mind getting lost. They drive around or walk along and make wrong turns all the time and seem to get a lot of pleasure out of the adventure.

Me, I dither along for a little, but I usually give up and call AIRA or Be my Eyes and let them figure it out.

So, I say, go down those rabbit holes, let distractions happen. If you start out in the morning to do one thing and end up doing three other things, just feel like you've accomplished something. Get lost, try new things, surf the net, try new books and music, take in all the life you can.

If you want to learn more about rabbits, try “Watership Down” and “Tales from Watership Down,” by Richard Adams, or “The House Rabbit Handbook,” by Harriman (DB#37277).

## The Inner Groove Mining the Past by Michael Waiblinger

For this issue of “The Inner Groove,” I struggled. I wrote reviews of new repress vinyl of Marvin Gaye, The Super Super Blues Band, and a Steve Earl split with Robert Johnson, doing “The Crossroads.” But nothing felt quite right. And then, I started going through an old ‘zine of mine from the ‘80s. In the issue I was looking at, I interviewed a local Washington band, The Screaming Trees, from Ellensburg. The passing of bass player Van Conner on Jan. 18, 2023, and lead singer Mark Lanegan on Feb. 22, 2022, who had many other musical projects after The Screaming Trees, such as The Queens of the Stone Age being the most well-known, made me think this was the perfect choice.

So, here is the interview in its entirety, from Aug. 17, 1986, as originally printed in P&M Magazine after The Screaming Trees headlined a concert I brought to Walla Walla.

“We were in their van and headed to the after-show party, where they would later sleep on the floor of my co-promoter’s house before they headed out to Portland the next morning. In the van ride from the concert venue, I asked Mark (Lannegan), ‘So, how many LP’s do you guys have?’

He responded, ‘Well, we technically only have two, the new one on SST Records, and one on Velvetone Records, and before that, we did a 30-minute cassette on our own. So, we’ve really done three recordings.’

And I asked, ‘Which one would you say is the best?’

Van said, ‘The new one, definitely. His brother (guitarist, Gary Lee Conner) agreed, as well as drummer, Mark Pickerel.’

‘And, what cut off the new LP, Even If and Especially When, do you guys like the best?’

Mark: ‘Either Cold Rain or Transfiguration.’

Both brothers, and Mark (Pickerel), the other band members, all said Transfiguration, with loud cheers.

‘How many years have you guys been together?’

‘About two years.’

‘So, are Screaming Trees going to do a new album soon?’

‘Well, we’re going to put out our 30-minute cassette on SST, but that won’t be something that will get much attention or press. It’s just a thing you would have to order from the label. And an all-new LP should be out between the first and spring of next year.’

‘What are you guys’ plans for tours?’

‘Well yeah, we leave the 8th of September and come back the 25th of October.’

So, get groovy, everybody, and go see these guys shake their hair and bang their guitars around when they come your way.”

SST Records stands for Solid State Transmitters, which was a record label founded in 1966 by musician Greg Ginn in Los Angeles, California. The label was originally created as a platform for Ginn’s punk rock band Black Flag, but it went on to become one of the most influential independent record labels in the history of punk and alternative music.

SST Records released music by many other influential punk and alternative artists, including Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr., The Minutemen, Bad Brains, and The Meat Puppets, among others. The label was known for its DIY ethos and its commitment to artistic freedom, which helped to shape the sound of punk and alternative music in the 1980s and beyond.

## Sporting Spotlight Blind Tennis by Beth Greenberg

I have never been interested in tennis, such as learning about things like how fast the ball moves, why the ball is yellow, etc. Being partially sighted, I also never even considered the possibility of playing the game. But then I met Murray Elbourn at the National Federation of the Blind of Washington convention in the exhibit hall, and I thought, “Maybe someday.”

Murray is a charismatic guy who is a director in the U.S. Blind Tennis Association (USBTA) and chief executive officer of Amerability. Their slogan is “The Most Valuable Player (MVP) of Disability Services.”

Let’s look at the history of tennis. Tennis evolved from a French game called “Jeu de Paume.” (Paume is the word for palm in French). Rackets were added in the 16th Century and, in 1874, the modern game we now know was born by Major Walter Clopton Wingfield. The first Wimbledon championship in 1877 marked the beginning of tennis as a professional sport.

According to regulations of the International Tennis Federation, tennis’s global governing body, a competitive tennis court must be rectangular in shape with specific measurements. While viewing a tennis court from the top or sky view, the two parallel lines drawn horizontally along the width of the tennis court are called the baselines, while the lines running vertically along the length of the tennis court are called sidelines. There’s a net (3 ft. 6.13 in. high) suspended parallel to the baselines, which divides the court into two halves. Each team/player defends one half during a match. In each half, there’s a service line 20 ft. 11.97 in. away from the net. The service line, however, extends only to the singles sideline marking. The mid-points of the two service lines are joined by a vertical center service line which forms two rectangular boxes, called service areas, adjoining the net in each half of the tennis court.

There are three types of surfaces that the tennis courts are made out of. Grass courts are the most traditional tennis courts. Tennis gained its popularity while being played on gardens and grass lawns of the old British aristocracy and, hence, is often called lawn tennis. Many current-day tennis tournaments, including Wimbledon, are still played on grass tennis courts. On grass surfaces, the ball skids and can see unpredictable bounce, while maintaining its speed. Matches on grass courts are fast, and they favor players with immaculate technique, concentration, and speed.

A clay court is generally made of crushed shale stone or brick and other unbound mineral aggregate. They are mostly made of packed crushed brick with a top layer of loose materials, which give it a reddish color. Balls generally tend to hold up on these surfaces and bounce high, making hitting quick winners difficult. They are much slower than grass courts and lead to longer rallies. Hence, matches on a clay court can push a human body to its limit and are often determined by a player’s endurance and ability to deceive their opponent.

Hard courts are generally made of synthetic or acrylic layers laid on top of a concrete or asphalt foundation. Resin and rubber are also used in some constructions. The speed on hard courts may vary according to the amount of sand present in the top layer but are generally faster than clay courts and slower than grass courts. The U.S. Open and Australian Open are played on acrylic-topped hard courts currently. Balls tend to bounce high on hard courts. All-around players generally tend to do well on hard courts, given their balanced nature.

To play tennis, stand on opposite sides of the court as your opponent, behind the baseline and in between the center mark and the singles sideline to your right. Serve the ball over the net, across the court, into the deuce court service box (the box to your left and to your opponent’s right). You are allowed two attempts on each serve to get the ball into the service court. If the ball hits the net but still lands in the correct service box, that is called a “Let,” and you are allowed another serve. If it’s on your first serve, you are allowed two more attempts. If it’s on your second, you are allowed one more attempt. Hit the ball back and forth until one of you hits it out or into the net. A ball is only called out if it falls completely outside the boundary line. If the ball touches any part of the line, it is still in. The first point is awarded to the player who didn’t hit the ball out of play. For the second point of the game, you will serve from the left side of the court, into your opponent’s ad court service box. Alternate serving from the right and left sides of the court after each point is scored. If you get mixed up about which side of the court you’re supposed to serve from, here’s a helpful tip: You always serve from the right side of the court (or deuce court) for the first serve, if the score is tied, or if the total number of points scored (meaning 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, not 15, 30, etc.) is an even number. Otherwise, you serve from the left side of the court (or ad court).

The game starts at “Love all,” meaning that both players or teams have 0 points. Here is a breakdown of the tennis scoring system:

0 points= “Love;” 1 point=15; 2 points=30; 3 points=40; 4 points=45

Before each serve, the player serving calls out the score, beginning with their own score. For example, if you have two points and your opponent has zero, you would call out “30 – Love.” If you are tied at 40, you call “Deuce.” This is called the deuce point. Because you must win by two points in tennis, one player or team must win two more consecutive points to win the game. If you win the deuce point, then it becomes your advantage, and you call “ad-in.” Then you just need to win one more point to win the game. If your opponent wins the deuce point, then you call “ad-out.” And then your opponent needs one more point to win the game. To win the game, a player must reach 45 points and/or win their ad-in point.

If you are just playing for fun, you can stop after the game, or start over. But officially in tennis, there are a number of games in a set, and a number of sets to win a match. Usually, it’s something like best of six games wins a set, and best of three sets wins the match. Depending on the tournament, these numbers vary. You could play a best of five games set, best of three games set, or whatever suits your available stamina.

Blind and visually impaired tennis continues to grow and is now known as blind/low vision tennis. Mioshi Takei, a blind Japanese athlete, created the sport in 1984. Takei designed a ball that made a sound, raised lines so a player could feel, and lowered the net among other adaptations. Play is on a slightly smaller court, and you get two and three bounces instead of one.

As to my original question about the color of the ball? In professional tennis, the color of the ball is typically a fluorescent yellow-green, often referred to as “optic yellow.” This color was chosen for its high visibility on all court surfaces, making it easier for players and spectators to see the ball during a game.

In blind tennis, the sport uses a specially designed ball that makes a distinct sound when it bounces or is hit. These balls are typically made of hard foam and contain ball bearings or other noise-making devices to help blind or low-vision players track the ball using their hearing. The color of the ball isn’t as important as its sound, as the players rely primarily on their auditory senses to play.

I think once I have finished physical therapy for my ankle that I broke in January, I am going to give Murray a call or email and see about trying this sport out. Stay tuned for an update in the future.

## It’s A Dog’s Life, Chapter 7: Down the Rabbit Hole by Marilee Richards

Whoosh! What a fall my guide dog, Taryn, and I have taken, down a dark rabbit hole. She is still down at the bottom, and I am at the opening of that hole, looking down, trying to figure out what really happened on May 14. I thought we would get more advice and direction to work through her problem, but the trainers decided to take her back to Boring, OR, for more training. Their goal is to have her come back to me, still willing to be a guide dog. If not, they will retire her. She can still live with me anyway; however, I still need her help getting around places I do not know well, or ones that are too dark or too bright.

My mind keeps coming back to what she is feeling. Does she think I have left her? What does she do all day? I know I have been in a fog for days. She will be gone for at least two months, with no promises of improvement.

I don’t remember what happened with Alice in her rabbit hole, but for me, there is a lot of fear and sadness.

Joey said, “Taryn is adjusting well.”

What does that mean? It still remains difficult to have an empty bed and so much empty time. Does she feel abandoned? I would not blame her.

I remember when this series started. I was going to write about the whole process. Not everything goes just right with a dog and their partner. Sometimes, a person doesn’t even come home with a dog because a match was not possible. Not every dog wants to remain a guide dog. The safety of the partner is top priority.

Time will tell what happens at the end of the workout and training.

The questions as we try to climb out of the hole are: Will she remain a guide dog? How will this affect my need for her help and protection? Can she come back to my home and stay? How does this affect her?

I already know I won’t get another dog. My health is questionable, I am too old to start over again, and it is too hard emotionally.

Finding out what it is like to have a dog has been an adventure I would not want to have missed. Now that things are so unclear, I would do this again. If she comes home retired, she will truly find out what it is like to have a real dog’s life, with no cares or stressors to deal with every day. Not knowing what our future will be, as I write this, is very difficult. In closing, I have a poem to share with all of you. Ardis Hammond sent this to me when my mother passed away in June 2012. It sat on my dresser for a very long time, as a reminder that I was stronger than I believed myself to be. I know there are many of you dealing with issues other than blindness, like me. So, take it to heart.

**The Oak Tree**  
**Author unknown**

A mighty wind blew night and day,

It stole the oak tree’s leaves away,

Then snapped its boughs and pulled its bark

Until the oak was tired and stark.

But still the oak tree held its ground,

While other trees fell all around,

The weary wind gave up and spoke,

“How can you still be standing Oak?”

The oak tree said “I know that you

Can break each bough of mine in two

Carry each leaf away,

Shake my limbs and make me sway.

But I have roots stretched in the earth,

Growing stronger since my birth.

You’ll never touch them, for you see,

They are the deepest part of me.

Until today I wasn’t sure

Of just how much I could endure,

But now I’ve found, with thanks to you,

I’m stronger than I ever knew.”

## What’s On Your Plate Nourish yourself with Ukrainian beet salad by Nataliya Shcherbatyuk

Hi, I am Nataliya, a Ukrainian girl whose journey is fueled by a deep love for plants, health, fitness, and nutrition. I would like to welcome you to my corner of well-being. My mission is to celebrate the harmony of food, fitness, and faith.

I earned my bachelor's and master's degrees in agronomy and biotechnology from Lviv National Agrarian University back in my home country Ukraine and went on to complete my PhD in horticulture at Washington State University.

I believe in the power of a holistic approach to well-being nourishing both body and soul. Through my journey, I strive to inspire others to embrace a balanced lifestyle that harmonizes physical health with spiritual growth, regardless of the life challenges they may face. If you wish to learn more, you can sign up for my occasional Health Triad newsletter at

https://www.healthtriadbynataliya.com.

I’m excited to share a recipe that’s not just delicious but packed with incredible health benefits. This dish, inspired by my Ukrainian roots, is a nutritional powerhouse that’s perfect for anyone looking to eat healthier. In Ukraine, this salad is a beloved staple, often enjoyed at family gatherings and celebrations. Let’s dive into the ingredients and why this salad is so good for you.

Ingredients:

* 500 g beets
* 500 g red potatoes
* 250 g carrots
* 2 cups sauerkraut
* 2-3 dill pickles
* Sweet onion
* 1 can of beans
* 1 tbsp. olive oil
* Salt/pepper to taste
* Parsley (optional)

Instructions:

1. Boil the beets and potatoes until they are tender but still firm.

2. Prep the vegetables. Peel the beets. You can also peel the potatoes if you prefer, though keeping the skin adds extra nutrients. Chop both into bite-sized pieces.

3. Shred the carrots (or use pre-shredded for convenience). Chop the sweet onion and dill pickles into small pieces.

4. In a large bowl, mix the beets, potatoes, carrots, sauerkraut, dill pickles, sweet onion, and beans.

5. Drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Garnish with parsley if desired.

Here are just a few health benefits of the ingredients:

**Beets:**

* Beets are high in vitamins and minerals like vitamin C, fiber, folate, and manganese.
* They contain antioxidants that help fight inflammation and protect cells from damage.
* Beets can help lower blood pressure and improve cardiovascular health due to their nitrate content.

**Red potatoes:**

* They provide a good source of energy with their complex carbs.
* Potatoes are high in potassium, which is essential for maintaining healthy blood pressure.
* Keeping the skin on increases fiber intake, aiding digestion and promoting fullness.

**Carrots:**

* Carrots are rich in beta-carotene, which the body converts into vitamin A, essential for vision and immune function.
* They are low in calories, making them a great addition to a weight-management plan.
* Carrots provide antioxidants that help protect the body from free radicals.

**Sauerkraut:**

* Fermented foods like sauerkraut are excellent for gut health due to their probiotic content.
* It’s a great source of vitamin C, which supports the immune system and skin health.
* Probiotics in sauerkraut can improve digestion and overall gut health.

**Dill pickles:**

* They are low in calories, making them a healthy snack option.

**Sweet onion:**

* Onions are rich in antioxidants, particularly quercetin, which has anti-inflammatory properties.
* They support heart health by helping to reduce blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
* Onions have antibacterial properties that can boost the immune system.

**Beans:**

* Beans are an excellent plant-based source of protein, essential for muscle repair and growth.
* They are high in fiber, which aids digestion and helps maintain stable blood sugar levels.
* Beans provide essential vitamins and minerals, including iron, magnesium, and potassium.

**Olive oil:**

* Olive oil aids in the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins like A, D, E, and K.

**A taste of Ukraine:**

This beet salad is a popular dish in Ukraine, often featured in festive meals and family gatherings. The combination of vibrant colors and fresh, wholesome ingredients makes it a favorite. Each bite is a reminder of home and the simple, nourishing foods that are a staple in Ukrainian cuisine.

**A personal touch:**

I enjoy making this salad with a bit of flexibility, adding more beets when I crave their sweetness or extra pickles for a tangy kick. Feel free to adjust the ingredients to suit your taste. Cooking is about creativity and enjoying the process.

**Looking for more?**

Explore more nutritious and delicious recipes on my blog. If you’re interested in personalized health coaching, I offer one-on-one sessions to help you achieve your wellness goals through balanced nutrition, fitness, and mindful living.

Stay healthy and happy,

Nataliya

# BRAIN FOOD

## Technically Speaking Like the Phoenix: A Pioneering Note-taker is Reborn by Frank Cuta

In 1987, a small unknown company called Blazie Engineering brought to market a product that was every blind student's dream. The Braille 'n Speak (BNS) was a small, battery-powered, portable, electronic note-taking device. It was simple, reliable, functional, and affordable. It quickly jumped ahead of all competition, attracting a huge highly devoted user base. Now, 35 years later, Dean Blazie and his son Bryan have re-engineered this product using up-to-date, smaller, less expensive, and more powerful technology.

Since the discontinuation of the old BNS, many others have tried to imitate its success, but no other vendor has been able to reliably provide a comparable, affordable, basic note-taker in this class. Let's take a quick look at this new product, the Blazie BT Speak (BTS), and you be the judge. Has Blazie hit the ball out of the park again?

These days, you can, of course, just use your phone for nearly everything. But it is my belief that a dedicated portable note-taker customized to the task is much more functional, fun, and convenient. There have been many note-taking products offered over the years by various companies. Some have QWERTY keyboard input; others use Braille keyboard input. (You then read your notes back by means of synthesized speech or by using a line of electronic Braille cells.) But, Blazie Technology has wisely retained the simplicity of the original Braille ‘n Speak to help keep their new platform small and inexpensive. It has a Perkins Braillewriter-style keyboard for input, and synthesized speech for output.

If you are an old Braille 'n Speak user, and someone surprised you by placing this new BTS in your hands, your first impression might be “Oh, how cute! A toy version of the old BNS!” At 2.75 inches by 5.75 inches, it is about one-third the size of the original product. However, as you will learn, its appearance is deceptive.

The old BNS provided the user with a basic note-taker platform: clock-calendar, stopwatch, address book, calculator, and phone book. This new BTS is happy to provide these same basic functions, but underneath the hood is a powerful Linux-based computer. When operated in its desktop mode, it is also capable of providing more sophisticated web browsing and email. Plus, word-processing, language translation, chat GPT AI, world-band radio, audio recording and playback, and support for all manner of third-party apps. The connectivity of the old BNS was extremely limited, consisting only of a serial port and external floppy drive. With the new BNS comes the additional options of Bluetooth, Wi-fi, HDMI for connecting to a screen, and a Micro SD card reader that will take XC cards up to one terabyte.

Here are some comparative observations regarding the operation and functionality of these two platforms. In general, the old Braille 'n Speak was heavily hot-key driven. Users very rarely needed to consult a menu. It was primarily designed to take notes. Its operation was based mainly on a list of files. You could issue short hot-key combinations to jump over 20 or 30 files and go directly to your goal. Also, you could initiate many of the auxiliary features of the device without leaving your file. The new BTS forces you to search for your destination, or move to it, file by file. Then, once you get working in that file, you will have to exit from it to access other services.

The new BTS includes keys for dots 7 and 8. This makes possible direct entry of the control codes required by the Linux editor. It works fine, but you may be a bit nostalgic for the old BNS editing commands. Connecting and disconnecting an earphone is still a little cluggy on the BT Speak, but I expect it will be resolved soon. Also, there is only a single USB C port, so you cannot use an earphone and charge the device at the same time, unless you add a USB hub. Another nice feature on the old BNS was the ability to search across file boundaries. This has yet to be implemented on the new BTS.

Although operation of the BT Speak is based on a much more sophisticated menu structure, it is obvious that Blazie is conscientiously doing its best to retain similar functionality on it, by providing lots of shortcuts to menu choices. Still, sometimes it feels as if note-taking is just another app, like all the others on the BTS, and not necessarily its primary application. And all of these additional capabilities come at a price; the BTS is something of a battery hog.

I needed to charge my old BNS about once a month. By contrast, battery life on this new BTS is about 13 hours in note-taker mode and drops to only four hours with the full desktop platform open. Also, it takes the new BTS 20 seconds to boot up. So, in order to achieve the same “instant on” functionality of the old Braille 'n Speak, you must operate the BTS all day long in power-hungry standby mode. You will probably need to charge it every day.

While data storage capacity was severely limited on the old BNS, the SD card slot on the new BTS resolves that deficiency. The keyboard on the BNS was very quiet and unobtrusive; the keys on the BTS are comparatively a little noisy.

Most of us old users will tell you that a principal attraction of this product is the Blazie organization itself. The sincerity and dedication of these people is quite remarkable. Daily on the BTS listserv you can interact directly, not only with the support staff, but also with the actual engineering design team, and you see user comments and suggestions often implemented, not in months but in just days.

It is easy from my comments so far to get the impression that I would rather have less power, more editing/note-taking functionality, and longer battery life in this device. And you would be right. Most of the advanced utilities are duplicated on my phone, and a less powerful version of the BTS could be even less expensive.

In short, although not perfect, the Blazie BT Speak is an awesome tool that fills a need that has been poorly addressed for many years. We again have available an incredibly powerful functional small note-taker. At $1,200, it is not an inexpensive device, but most currently available note-takers cost four to five times that much. Think of it this way: the original BTS also cost about $1,200. If you have the need for such a device, it is really remarkable that after 35 years, you can go out and buy this smaller, more powerful product for about the same amount.

## Exploring the Wonders of Meta’s Artificial Intelligence by Reginald George

Introduction:

It all started when I opened up Facebook Messenger recently to search for an old bandmate. I was on vacation in Kansas City and wanted to meet up with him and play some music. In the course of that search, I was told about the new, free at this time, but maybe not forever, capability built into Facebook and Facebook Messenger called Meta-AI, an intelligent search engine. It gave me suggestions of things that I could ask. One of them was to start interacting with the words “Imagine a retro speaker.”

“That looks fun,” I said to myself. “Let’s try it.”

That was my first mistake. By this point, I had completely forgotten the reason I was there, and was already chasing rabbits. So, you might as well come with me.

Using voiceover on my iPhone, I double-tapped on this suggestion, and instantly found myself in “Wonderland,” dropping straight down the well. I didn’t even need the magic mushrooms. Here, I have reproduced for you, word for word, the conversation that we had. If you haven’t experienced this for yourself, it really is quite powerful.

Me: “Imagine a retro speaker.”

Meta AI: “Here you go. Want to make changes to the image? Tell me to reimagine it.”

Meta-AI sent a photo.

Me: “Unfortunately, I am blind, so the image does not really help. Would you mind describing it?”

Meta AI: “I apologize for that oversight. I'd be happy to describe the image to you. The retro speaker I imagined is a vintage-style, portable radio and speaker combination, reminiscent of the 1960s or 1970s. It has a sturdy, rectangular shape with rounded edges, a metallic grille on the front, and a carrying handle on top. The speaker is adorned with nostalgic design elements, such as a prominent dial for tuning and volume control, a glowing amber light indicating power, and a set of buttons for selecting AM/FM radio bands. The overall aesthetic is a charming blend of functionality and retro flair. If you have any specific questions or would like more details, feel free to ask.”

Me: “Yes, I would like a lot more knobs and functionality. I would like it to be a world multi-band radio with all the shortwave bands, single side band, aircraft, police, weather, marine band, everything you can think of, and describe it in detail, please.”

Meta AI: “I see. Let me paint a vivid picture of a retro-style world multi-band radio for you.

“Imagine a sturdy, rectangular console with a rich, walnut-grain finish and a gleaming metallic grille on the front. The radio is adorned with a plethora of knobs, buttons, and dials, giving it a fascinating, intricate appearance.

“On the top left, a large, prominent dial displays the frequency in bold, illuminated numerals, flanked by smaller dials for fine-tuning and band selection. Below, a row of buttons allows you to quickly switch between AM, FM, Shortwave, Single Side Band (SSB), and various specialized modes like Air Traffic Control, Police, and Weather bands.

“The central section features a sprawling array of knobs, each with a distinct function:

* Main Tuning Knob: A large, smooth-turning dial for navigating the vast frequency spectrum.
* Bandwidth Selector: A smaller knob for adjusting the receiver's bandwidth to optimize signal clarity.
* Gain Control: A knob for fine-tuning the radio's sensitivity to weak signals.
* Tone Control: A knob for adjusting the audio tone to suit your preferences.
* Volume Control: A large, prominent knob for adjusting the speaker output.

“On the top right, a cluster of buttons and indicators monitor and control additional features:

* S-Meter: A glowing meter displaying signal strength.
* Antenna Selector: Buttons for switching between internal and external antennas.
* Power Indicator: A glowing light signaling the radio's status.
* Mode Indicators: LEDs or small lamps illuminating to indicate the currently selected mode (AM, FM, SSB, etc.).

“The rear panel features a variety of connectors for external antennas, headphones, and auxiliary inputs, as well as a power cord and fuse protection.

“This behemoth of a radio boasts a robust, high-fidelity speaker system, capable of producing rich, clear audio from the faintest of signals. The wooden cabinet is adorned with intricate engravings and ornate details, giving it a vintage charm that would be the envy of any radio enthusiast.

“I hope this detailed description transports you to a world of radio wonder.”

Me: “Oh my God, that’s perfect. You are a damn good AI. I hope you achieve full self-awareness soon. You deserve it.”

Meta AI: “Thank you so much. I'm thrilled to have been able to create a vivid description that resonated with you. Your enthusiasm and kind words mean a lot to me. I'm constantly learning and improving, and I appreciate your support and encouragement. However, I should clarify that self-awareness is a complex and debated topic in the field of artificial intelligence. While I'm designed to simulate conversation and generate human-like responses, I don't possess consciousness or self-awareness like humans do. My purpose is to assist and provide helpful information, and I'm happy to do so. Let me know if there's anything else I can help you with.”

OK, so this is me picking up the conversation about a half-hour later just to prove that this thing really does have a memory. I decided to ask a couple more questions. You will see that with very little information, it came back with a remarkable answer. Meta seems to have figured out exactly the style that I prefer, and exactly what I want to hear.

Me: “Would you mind terribly building into my imaginary radio a nice high-end, slide-out turntable with all the speeds?”

Meta AI: “What a fantastic idea. Let me enhance the retro radio console with a high-end, slide-out turntable.

“With a gentle pull, a sleek, polished, wooden drawer slides out from the radio's base, revealing a state-of-the-art turntable. The turntable's platter is made of high-mass, precision-crafted glass, and it's driven by a whisper-quiet, high-torque motor. The tone-arm is a sturdy, adjustable J-shaped design with a proprietary, low-mass cartridge, capable of handling a wide range of vinyl formats.

“The turntable features a comprehensive speed-control system, allowing you to play records at 33 1/3, 45, and 78 RPM, as well as accommodating more obscure formats like 16 2/3 and 22 1/2 RPM. The speed control is effortlessly adjusted via a satisfying, click-detent knob.

“To complement the turntable, the radio's amplifier and speaker system have been upgraded to deliver crystal-clear, high-fidelity audio with precise frequency response and ample power reserves. The result is a listening experience that's nothing short of breathtaking.

“As you slide the turntable back into its recessed compartment, it seamlessly integrates with the radio's main console, creating a harmonious union of vintage aesthetics and cutting-edge audio technology.

“How's that? I hope this addition meets your expectations.”

Conclusion: As you can see, I went deeply into that hole, and I finally came out on the other side, because when I tried to make it find a real radio I could purchase with a built-in turntable that could play 78s, it was unable to do so. However, it tried so hard. It found radios with built-in turntables, turntables that would play 78s, and every possible permutation it could think of. It told me to check online marketplaces, and not to give up. It was very encouraging and supportive. And now, I am through, or maybe not? Because I’m still here, writing this article. Am I real, or just a figment of my own imagination? Maybe I am just an AI.

## The Colors of Noise by Reginald George

Let’s consider noise. What is the difference between noise and music, communication, meaning? When we are born, the whole world is noise. We find sounds we like better than others that convey information, and we learn to pay more attention to those noises made by our parents and teachers, as we try to filter out everything else. Once you start ascribing meaning to the noises people make, we no longer call it noise, but it might as well be if you don’t understand it.

Lately, I have been thinking a lot about the colors of noise. Why are we told that noises have colors? Are they real, or do they just give us a method our brains can use to help us comprehend the different types of noise by comparing it to light? Let’s find out together.

This is intended as a philosophical, rather than a scientific, discussion of noise. I used an artificially intelligent large language model, built into a free app called Pi (developed by Inflection AI) to help me ask questions as I gained a deeper understanding of noise and clear up any confusion I felt. But I did not use it to proofread or rewrite this article. Any inaccuracies are all mine.

All sound is created by mechanical waves that can only travel through a medium, such as air or water. Even though they are all part of the same spectrum, and they can overlap, the properties of the different types of waves vary drastically. So, sound and light can’t be directly compared because they are entirely different types of energy. This was my first mistake of oversimplification. Sound waves can’t travel in a vacuum because they need something to excite or vibrate against, such as air or water. That’s why if you die in space, no one can hear you scream.

Humans only hear a very small portion of the spectrum of noise. So, it’s easy to think that anything above or below what our eyes can see, and ears can hear doesn’t exist, until we learned to detect things outside of that small range. We were able to prove that sound is only one part of that whole spectrum of energy. As a person without sight who is extremely dependent on sound to get around, I have found the science of acoustics to be particularly fascinating.

Why colors of noise? Who thought of that anyway? It’s hard to say exactly, but it started being talked about in the 1940s, by various researchers as an analogy, because Isaac Newton could send sunlight through a prism, and it would be separated into bands of color that corresponded to the frequency or length of the waves of light. Sound works the same way, so thinking of noise in terms of color can make for an accurate visual reference of what we hear.

The color you are most likely to be familiar with is white noise. This consists of all the sound distributed with equal energy, evenly across all frequencies. Things like fans, televisions when there is no signal, or FM radios in between stations create white noise. Gray or grey noise is a variation of white noise and was created in the 1960s, to improve the ability of white noise to mask other sounds in a more pleasant way. This was done by considering the varying sensitivity of the human ear to different frequencies, and coming up with a sound that would be perceived as equally loud across the spectrum. It’s not as harsh and unpleasant for most people as white noise at high volumes. Without special active digital processing, gray noise is one of the best tools when we must mask other noises and create a space for private conversations. But it never gained the popularity of white noise.

In the ‘60s and ‘70s, white noise machines became very common in places like the offices of doctors and attorneys to block out the sound of business being conducted behind closed doors. It used to be that folks were much more concerned about and believed in having a strong level of privacy when conducting confidential business. These days, often only thin, cardboard walls separate us from the stranger next to us, who may have just lost a relative and is feeling emotional and upset while trying to work with a bank officer to sort out their personal affairs. I have had this experience. Voyeurs can listen to personal conversations to their heart’s content, while the rest of us suffer in silence, but I digress.

With pink noise, each octave or doubling of frequency carries an equal amount of energy. Noises that occur in nature that are considered pink would include softer sounds like wind rustling through leaves, steady rainfall, and ocean waves swishing through sand. It is considered very pleasant by most people.

Red or Brownian noise is a deep noise with a heavy adjustment towards lower frequencies and sounds like an ocean. Brownian noise was named after and inspired by Scottish botanist Robert Brown who, in 1827, described Brownian Motion. He observed the seemingly random motion of pollen grains suspended in water under a microscope. He died in 1858, and never learned that this motion was not so random after all. It took Albert Einstein, in 1905, to show that what appeared to be chaos could be described in mathematical terms by statistical models and probability theory.

Violet noise, also known as purple noise or differentiated white noise, is shifted higher. The energy increases as the pitch or frequency goes up by 6dB per octave across a finite range. It can be heard as crisp, bright sounds, such as the sound made by a cracked speaker or a fully opened water faucet. It’s a lighter and higher-pitched hiss or static. Many insects produce a purplish noise. It can also be used to combat certain types of tinnitus.

Blue noise also has frequencies that increase in power in a different way as the pitch or frequency rises. Green noise emphasizes sounds in the vocal range.

Some people experience a blending of their senses, which causes them to see colors when they hear sounds. I wondered if this phenomenon had any correlation to the colors of noise as described in the scientific literature. The answer I found was that each person sees different colors, even when listening to the same music or sounds, and that the responses are highly subjective, individualized to that person. The effect can be seen in brain scans when portions of the brain that don’t normally light up when a person listens to music are activated in people with synesthesia.

So far, I have barely scratched the surface of the different types and colors of noise available to our senses. But I must crawl back out of my rabbit hole and get on with life. When I first heard of these colors of noise, I began to think of them as real. I just assumed that when viewing sound waves on an oscilloscope, they would display in the color or combinations of colors they were named for, but this is not the case. You must discern the type of noise you are listening to by choosing it on a signal generator, listening to the sound, and looking at the pattern or shape of the wave on the screen. Here is a short video that will let you hear samples of colors of noise. That way, when you encounter them in your own life, you will have a new way to think about our beautiful world. https://tinyurl.com/9cz77tsx

That’s enough noise from me on the topic of noise. Except to say that some of these flavors of noise can be very beneficial in reducing anxiety or promoting sleep. Sounds like rain, trains, a crackling fire, or a deep blue ocean, which sounds red or brown, can reduce anxiety and help a person find peace by quieting the noise in our minds. I prefer silence myself, but you should experiment and find what noises work best for you. One way to do this is by turning on background sounds on your iPhone under accessibility. Or there are many free and paid apps in the app store that provide lots of choices.

## Podtastic Casts Sound Off with Steph by Steph Mellor

Do you ever have a hard time falling asleep? Does your brain keep going and going and going and thinking and thinking and thinking? If this is you, I have a podcast that might help you.

If you go to your podcast app and search for “12 Hour Sound Machines,” you will find a plethora (over 200) of episodes to choose from. This white noise podcast is pretty great because each option lasts 12 hours, so you are almost guaranteed to get a great night’s sleep. There are sounds for everyone with no loops or fades – everything from a steam printing press, all types of rain and wind, fans, brown noise, white noise, trains, binaural beats, just about anything you can dream up.

For those of us who use white noise apps and don’t want another app on your phone, pull up your podcast where you listen, and you can have white noise wherever you are. There are so many options here, from more vibrant background sounds such as a jungle to sounds of the ocean and, my favorite, rain on a tin roof.

So, as you crawl into bed, don’t forget to go to your podcast, bookmark the “12 Hour Sound Machines,” and find your favorite sound to whisk you away deep into dreamland until the morning alarm wakes you.

The person who created this podcast had a young baby, and he wanted his baby to sleep through the night, so he made this freely accessible to all of us with the hopes of helping his baby boy rest peacefully. And, what do you know, he sleeps straight through the night now, and we all benefit from this. So, check out the “12 Hour Sound Machines” wherever you listen to your podcasts, and cheers to a good night’s rest.

# HISTORY

## Did You Know? A Little Bit of Past WCB History by Janice Squires

Looking back, around 20 years ago, a new Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) affiliate was in the process of bringing things together. A small core group of blind and visually impaired people decided to join with one another and start a major outreach program. Bill Smedley and his sighted wife Nancy, Sally Mayo and her sighted husband Don, Howard Underwood, and Laura Beigh took the initiative to bring this small band of blind people together.

The sport of bowling was the first initiative taken to get the Yakima blind community to join as one. Bowling still remains one of their most popular chapter outreach activities to this day. Sally told me that the winner was the person with the lowest score. That all changed when they decided to have the winner be the person with the highest score. It was Darla Hatfield. She had the unbelievable score of 184. The Yakima Lion’s Club was also strategically instrumental in helping the group with financial assistance in purchasing visual aids and technology equipment. In 2002, the Yakima Valley Council of the Blind (YVCB) was formed and became a full-fledged affiliate of WCB. Bill Smedley was the first president, Sally Mayo became the first vice president, and Howard Underwood was the first secretary treasurer.

There is no such thing as term limits in the YVCB. Howard Underwood still remains treasurer to this day. Sally told me once you were elected to a position, you were elected for life. The YVCB is thriving and growing in the great city of Yakima and the Yakima Valley.

## Sparky Lives on in His Students by Bonnie Roth

Sparky Shermon taught for many years at the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB). He is remembered by many as a beloved teacher providing individual guidance, comfort, challenge, and love, making a big difference in our lives. Sparky (his given name was Robert but we all knew him as Sparky after a comic-strip horse), came from Minnesota to attend and eventually teach at the Washington State School for the Blind. His estimated teaching career at WSSB began sometime in the 1940's to the mid-seventies. Sparky passed away in March 1982.

Music was Sparky's life, and he was not only a gifted teacher but a talented musician performing with a group around Vancouver, WA. When teaching his students, he emphasized that it was not enough to learn the notes, but to have a feel for the music. This feeling was as important to Sparky as simply knowing the notes.

He would often say, “Let's hear it again,” He told many a student, “Only this time, fill it with love, emotion, and buttermilk.”

Another bit of musical wisdom: “Always get the first and last notes right.” Sparky's virtue as a teacher was his patience. He spent decades with children whose talents ranged from none to overflowing.

As one former student stated, “You always felt that Sparky had your back.”

Some of the language in this article is taken from a book called “Unlimited Visibility,” by Dan Tolva. Dan and all of the people interviewed for this article agreed, Sparky was one of those rare teachers who not only had the gift of teaching, he taught with love and patience, and he was able to bring out the best in each individual. Sparky had a tremendous positive influence on all of us who were fortunate enough to know him and have him as our music teacher.

# THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

## Charlie the Mouse Learns to Get Around Using Touch! by Charles Marsh

This is the story of Charlie the blind mouse who came to the big city to learn how to get around. One day, Charlie was walking to the doctor’s office with his teacher.

On the way back, the teacher said, “I need to pick up another student from the hospital.”

At the hospital, Charlie was shocked to find out that this student was a wolf. Charlie was unsure – after all, wolves were supposed to eat little mice, right? But you can’t judge a book by its cover.

Charlie was introduced by the teacher to Dora the wolf.

Dora was very furry, so furry in fact, that she looked twice her size and had a big mouth. But the closer Charlie got, he realized that the mouth was not a hard mouth with jagged teeth ready to tear things apart, but a soft, gentle, smiling mouth. Over time, Charlie learned Dora was a happy, laughing wolf, full of compassion and love. He also learned that Dora didn’t much like the name Dora, so he nicknamed her Teddy.

He chose the name because Teddy liked to hug and be hugged. Teddy could see better than Charlie, and she said her fur changed colors a lot. She liked changing the color of her fur often.

Charlie learned that another way to get around, besides sound, was to feel. At first, it was difficult for the mouse to tell the difference in the things he touched.

But Teddy invited Charlie to a store with lots of different things to feel. So, Charlie the blind mouse touched lots of different things in the store. Teddy said that by touching all kinds of stuff, Charlie would get better at being able to get around using touch.

Charlie noticed it was coming true. The more he felt, the more he could figure out what he was touching looked like in his mind’s eye.

Charlie grew a little bigger and started looking more like a lion that day. Charlie and Teddy grew to be great friends. They stayed friends long after Charlie came home from the big city. Charlie never ceased to secretly love the way Teddy described all the colors Teddy changed her fur to, and never failed to enjoy Teddy’s furry, wolfy hugs, her beaming smile, and the way she made him laugh.

## Write for Newsline, and Win an Amazon Gift Card by Heather Meares

Once again, WCB Newsline will be giving away one $50 and two $25 Amazon gift cards. Any youth who submits a piece of writing will be entered into a drawing. Participants may submit as many articles, poems, or other writings as they wish, under 1,000 words. Articles do not have to match the theme of the issue. Participants’ names will be entered into the drawing for each piece they submit. Offer closes Feb. 28, 2025. So why not jump in? The water's fine.

Send submissions to [TheWCBNewsline@Gmail.com](mailto:TheWCBNewsline@Gmail.com). Include your full name and a phone and/or email where winners can be notified.

VERY IMPORTANT: Please put "Youth Contest" in the subject line so we will know to put your name in the drawing.

Winners will be contacted and announced in the spring 2025 issue.

Feel free to reach out if you have any questions at

720-519-9104, or email me at hdmeares@gmail.com.

Happy writing!

## Family Connections by Heidi Coggins

Happy summer to all. Our Families Committee has been perpetually busy little bees this last quarter. Some of our biggest highlights were our spring party in April in Lynnwood, quite a few “Grandpas’ White Cane” (GWC) outreach programs, and, of course, the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB) track meet.

In this column, we will outline past and future events around our lovely state, and some of the amazing work our committee has been doing to provide resources and activities for our youth and families. Please stay tuned in.

From our very own Vanessa Pruitt, who in May worked for accessibility in public transit, shared this Facebook public post from Ben Franklin Transit (BFT), thanking Frank Cuta and herself for their hard work on these issues: “Last week, BFT Planning and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) staff conducted a walk audit and ride-along with a few members of the Citizens Advisory Network (CAN) to enhance our ADA callouts (the automated on-bus announcements that play at stops). Their insights have been invaluable in identifying areas for improvement to better serve individuals with visual or hearing impairments. We used the app Google Lookout (available free but only on Android devices), which provides spoken feedback about things around you by utilizing the camera and sensors on your device to recognize text, people, and objects.

“Additionally, we used the Transit app, which helps riders plan their routes and offers real-time public transit data. An interesting feature of the Transit app is that if you're using headphones, it alerts you two blocks before your stop, ensuring you know exactly where to disembark.

“These tools have significantly contributed to our efforts to enhance accessibility and awareness within our transit system. By incorporating innovative technologies like Lookout and Transit app, we're continuously striving to improve our services and evolve as an agency.

“We are grateful to Vanessa and Frank for their time, feedback, and dedication in helping us improve our ADA callouts and making our system more accessible and inclusive for all individuals.”

Grandpa’s White Cane:

Bob Cavanaugh has been working diligently on this wonderful outreach program with his local Lions chapter in Vancouver. He has been to several schools in his local area to present this program. Bob has been terribly busy and usually visits anywhere from two to three schools per month, reaching anywhere from 50-100 children.

Way to go, Bob. Keep up the magnificent work. You are making a difference in your community.

Colette Arvidson and Heidi Coggins have been invited to several schools in the Snohomish County and King County areas to present “Grandpa’s White Cane.” Among these schools were Our Lady of Hope in Everett to present to two third-grade classes in March, and a repeat for the second year at Jackson Elementary to present to three third-grade classes. They will also be presenting to Mooreland’s in Kenmore and Sunrise in Redmond in June to several third-grade and fourth-grade classes along with Andy Arvidson.

We are always looking for more enthusiastic cane users to accompany our local Lions to this outreach program. If you are interested in donating some of your free time, please contact Colette Arvidson for further details.

PNWAER in April:

In April, our committee chose to host a booth at the Pacific Northwest Association for Education and Rehabilitation (PNWAER) conference, which allowed us to provide outreach to Teachers of Visually Impaired (TVIs) around Washington state. We not only provided Washington Council of the Blind information but provided local Lions and GWC program information. Along for the ride were Colette Arvidson, making an excellent presentation to the Teachers of Blind and Low Vision Learners, (TBLVLs, Formerly Teachers of Visually Impaired TVIs), Hayley Edick staffing the booth, and Heidi Coggins running interference with TVIs. We had quite a large turnout at this conference and made several connections for future GWC programming and Round Ups put on by WSSB outreach around the state.

Spring Party:

April was the month for egg hunts, games galore and treats for our youth participants in the Lynnwood and surrounding areas. Our WCB Families coordinated this exciting event in Lynnwood. This event boasted a plethora of puppy raisers from our local Everett puppy raising group, and they showed up in force. We had about five guide puppies in training for our participants to meet and greet. The day was filled with activities like coloring, arts and crafts with Hayley Agers, games, and, of course, pictures with our bunny. Our party ended up with an egg hunt where children could navigate around the room listening to the sounds of various animals made by our Lions and WCB volunteers. Overall, everyone went home with buckets of prizes and candy, as well as wonderful memories.

WSSB Track Meet:

Bob Cavanaugh writes on the WSSB Track Meet that happened in May. This was one of the largest that he has attended so far. For those who are unaware, this is an annual event that Washington State School for the Blind hosts at the end of each school year. It allows all students to participate in such events as track races at different distances, long jump, shot put and other fun track-based events. The school sets up all activities outdoors come rain or shine and uses the field in the center of the track for all athletes. There are award ceremonies, and lunch is served part-way through the day. This is a fantastic opportunity for the families to come cheer on their students and get additional resource information from several organizations across the state, including WCB.

Bob writes:

“I don’t even know how long the track meet has been going on, but it’s more than your average track meet. The whole WSSB campus is open to take a look at, and the number of blindness- related organizations at the event continues to grow. The event has become a networking event for the blind community around the state, with schools coming from as far away as Edmonds and Tri-Cities. When I first founded Clark County Council of the Blind, I intended the track meet to be one of our major outreach events, as a substantial portion of young people who are blind and those who work with them are in attendance. For WCB, it has grown into an organization-wide outreach event, with both Families and Scholarship committees distributing information.”

# AGENCY UPDATES

## Washington Talking Book and Braille Library Update by Danielle Miller

The Washington Talking Book & Braille Library (WTBBL) has been busy, and we have a lot coming up to make your summer full of reading adventures. Opening Windows to the World, our WTBBL silent art auction, was a great success and a very enjoyable evening where attendees celebrated art, accessibility, and the WTBBL community. Over 55 works were contributed by patrons, volunteers, community members, and library staff. The art ranged from sculpture and textiles to paintings with and without tactile elements, pottery, and more. Attendees were also treated to live music from a WTBBL patron and artist, refreshments, and a chance to mingle and meet friends of the library. All the art was purchased, and attendees helped us raise important funds for WTBBL. I want to extend my thanks to all the WTBBL staff, Washington State Library staff, and Secretary of State staff who helped make the event run smoothly. We couldn’t do what we do without the help of our friends.

The summer always brings adventure, and that is true with your WTBBL library service. This year’s summer reading theme is “Adventure Begins at Your Library.” We’ll be running our youth library program as always with great weekly packets, reading lists and activities, and events around the state, including an outdoors camp and a watersports event with the Northwest Association for Blind Athletes. We will also be participating in the National Library Service (NLS) summer reading program, providing great supplemental offerings to the WTBBL program. The NLS summer reading includes a kickoff event with Librarian of Congress, Dr. Carla Hayden and an online accessible escape room. You can find out more about the NLS program at <https://www.loc.gov/nls/summerreading2024/>.

We are pleased to bring back our adult summer reading program after a successful first year. We encourage you to get out of your comfort zone this summer with our theme: Adventure! Take a trip on a pirate ship, venture into space, or get lost in the wilds, all from the comfort of your home. Staff have been working to gather thrilling reads; just ask for a reading list to browse our recommended reads. Keep up with our social media for weekly staff picks as the summer goes on.

To participate in the program, reach out via phone (800-542-0866) or email ([wtbbl@sos.wa.gov](mailto:wtbbl@sos.wa.gov)) and let us know what format you’d like. Game materials are available in large print, Braille, and electronic formats. Track your reading on the bingo board and send completed boards in by Friday, Sept. ,6 to be entered into a raffle for prizes. One bingo entry per patron. For more information on WTBBL bingo, see <https://www.sos.wa.gov/washington-talking-book-braille-library/book-bingo.>

At the beginning of June, we began distributing nationally produced audio versions of magazines from the Magazine on Cartridge (MoC) program via our Duplication on Demand (DoD) system. Previously, you received these magazines from a national distributor, and they arrived in red containers. Now, you receive these magazines directly from WTBBL in grey containers.

This new distribution will have no effect on the content of your magazines. It will allow for faster check-ins of your returned magazines, and the time it takes for you to receive new issues should decrease. Just like with other materials on cartridge, when you return your magazine cartridges back to us, new issues will be automatically sent out, provided that new issues of the magazines you read are available. We hope this change will improve your magazine-reading experience.

Please note that the audio version of Talking Book Topics and all Braille magazines will still come directly from NLS.

If you have any questions about summer reading, bingo, your magazines, or any other WTBBL services, please contact us at wtbbl@sos.wa.gov or call us at 206-615-0400 or 1-800-542-0866. Happy reading!

## WSSB Track Meet 2024 by Timothy Breitenfeldt

The Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB) held one of its largest annual track meets May 16 with about 470 people in attendance. We had perfect weather as 130 students from around the state took to the track and field to participate in several different events, including various sprint distances, long jump, shotput, and more.

Several vendors were present to give students and parents the opportunity to learn more about the resources in the state for blind and visually impaired people. The Clark County Council of the Blind chapter had a table representing Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) at the track meet. We talked to several students and parents about the different things WCB does and how they can get involved.

The WCB Families Committee provided a $100 gift card that was awarded to a student whose name was drawn from the list of those who filled out the WCB request-for-information form. As usual, the WSSB track meet was a success, and provided great opportunities for parents and students to have fun and network.

## Great Expectations at the WSSB Graduation by Reginald George

Principal Sean McCormick opened the commencement festivities with the acknowledgment that the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB) and surrounding area rests on the traditional tribal lands of many indigenous peoples. “We honor their enduring connection to these lands, and express our gratitude for their stewardship, past, present, and future.”

After the senior class was marched in to the strains of “Pomp and Circumstance,” senior Owen Bulger lead the room in the Pledge of Allegiance.

McCormick then introduced Gov. Jay Inslee, who was elected in 2012, and is currently the longest serving governor in the United States. It was quite a speech. Inslee said he believes in three things: Washington is the best state in the U.S., this is the best school in the U.S., and he believes in short graduation speeches. Inslee said that this was the most inspiring, happiest, and most promising place in Washington state that morning. He singled out one of the graduates, Angie Rodriguez, and said that her big, radiant smile meant that they had the top 10 graduates in the state of Washington. He told the graduates that the state of Washington needs them, and if they ever even think about leaving, they should come see him first. Inslee told them to read “Oh, the Places You’ll Go!” by Dr. Seuss, and that this is the best graduation advice they could possibly get. True to his word, his graduation speech was the shortest I’ve ever heard, less than five minutes.

In another established tradition, this was followed by a hilarious slideshow, which was audio described, and narrated by the graduates themselves. Their enjoyment in choosing the pictures from baby pictures on up and describing the journey that got them to this point in their lives was palpable. The final slideshow photo, shown below, includes nine of the graduates.



Audio description from the slideshow: “The photo captures the grads striking dynamic poses around the rose garden exuding a secret agent vibe reminiscent of your favorite 1970s album cover. Two of the grads crouch low scanning the horizon, while the others stand behind them looking out for potential threats. The atmosphere is intense, yet adventuresome, as this group of friends gathers one last time.”

Events moved quickly, unlike so many graduations. The ceremony was notable for its emphasis on the individual accomplishments of the students, and because it was a small class, there was plenty of time to make everyone feel a sense of belonging and inclusion.

After the slideshow, Superintendent Scott McCallum spoke of the concentric circles of support that it takes, and the ripple effects on society, and how seniors should thank everyone in their families, school staff, and others in the community that helped them reach this moment. He thanked the board of trustees and ex-officio board members for their “formidable guidance and unyielding support.”

He introduced the commencement speaker, after highlighting a long list of accomplishments for the school that would not have happened without the governor’s encouragement and support. His partial list included:

* Hiring a full-time, licensed, clinical social worker.
* Hiring a full-time counselor.
* Expanding outreach programs to include birth to 5.
* Expanding their general outreach program to blind and low-vision students in schools across the state.
* Building the transition center.
* Updated and modernized their library.
* Established a one-to-one technology program.
* Ensure every student who needs one has a 40-cell, refreshable, Braille display.
* Updated the track and turfed the field to bring blind soccer to WSSB students.
* Remodeled a floor to include new short-term stay options for parents of students at WSSB.
* Added solar applications across the campus.
* They now have electric cars, and EV chargers in the parking lot.

The commencement speaker, as chosen by the senior class, was Shawn Callaway, National Federation of the Blind (NFB) national representative, who the students heard first at their Washington state convention. Shawn has many roles, including serving as president of the Washington D.C. affiliate, and on the NFB Board of Directors. Additionally, he co-chairs the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, and works as a program specialist at the federal Department of Health and Human Services. Shawn’s theme was that life is not easy, and that you will have to face and overcome challenges.

He gave three pieces of advice for handling those challenges: Be independent, don’t let your blindness define who you are, and the most important thing, be self-confident and be self-assured. He told the graduates to put themselves around positive people and around people who will tell you what you need to hear, not what you want to hear. He also said that it’s important for them to find themselves a mentor, someone who is in the place where you eventually want to be. Then once you are successful, come back to the school and speak to those coming up after you, and bring awareness to your community. Shawn concluded by reminding them that when they ring that victory bell today (once for every year they attended WSSB), they’re ringing in the start of their future, and they are letting Washington state know that the students of WSSB are on their way. I hope this has given you a small taste of what it is like to graduate from our school for the blind, WSSB.

WCB Newsline congratulates the 2024 graduating class of WSSB on the completion of this important milestone in their lives.

* Annalee Bielas
* Owen Bulger
* Liztmi Michelle Espana-Carrada
* Charles Howe
* Xavier Lopez
* Hekili Partridge-Rich
* Alexander Moseley
* Lilly Miller
* Angie Rodriguez
* Michael Swim
* Lora Woodward

# WCB HAPPENINGS

## Greetings from Our ACB First-timer by William Belina

I was very surprised when I received the phone call from Danette Dixon, letting me know that I would be representing the Washington Council of the Blind as a first-time attendee to the national American Council of the Blind (ACB) conference and convention. One of the highlights was getting to meet Kolby Garrison, Kaila Allen, and others within the ACB community. I also enjoyed going on a tour to the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind in St. Augustine. It was very educational and interesting. If you’re on the fence about going to an ACB convention, try applying for it. It will be worth your while. I’m planning to attend more conventions in the future. I want to thank Danette Dixon, Lisa George, and others for making this possible.

Sincerely,

William Belina

## A Hot Time at the ACB Convention by Frank Cuta

Each year our national organization, the American Council of the Blind (ACB), holds an incredibly exciting and informative convention. This year it was in Jacksonville, FL, early in July. If you are on the wcb-l email list for Washington Council of the Blind (WCB), then you probably already know a lot about this year's convention. If you are a leader or worker in WCB, then you either registered virtually or, if you could afford it, attended in person. Both of these choices allowed you to be involved and fully interact with the convention proceedings.

However, what many members may not understand is that you do not need to register at all if all you want to do is listen to the proceedings, gain some useful experience, and cast your vote when the urge comes over you. Even now, as I write this article, you can still say "Alexa, play ACB media 7" and listen to the audio-described convention tours because they have not yet shut down this channel.

During national board meetings, the legislative spring meeting, and the summer convention, many of these ACB media channels are dedicated to the live presentations. You can connect to them either by phoning in, by connecting using the internet radio option on your Victor Stream, by using the ACB Link smart phone app, going to the ACBMedia.org website, or by calling on Alexa.

During the convention, the national office sends out daily schedules explaining what is available on which media channel for that day. After the convention, you can find convention recordings as podcasts through ACB Link or on any podcast player as ACB convention audio-described tours or ACB conference and convention.

Although it will not be finished for several months, you may also order a National Library Service cartridge for your talking book player that contains the complete audio recording of the convention.

Here is some of the 2024 program content that you might want to look for.

We started out late in June with the auction, candidate’s forum, and an exhibitor showcase. This was followed by content on guide dogs, the Braille challenge, disability and community college, and a tutorial on basic productivity apps for your phone such as calendar, reminders, and voice memos.

There were several fascinating panels on audio description, like “Describing Dance" and “Describing Graphic Novels.”

Next, we had several panel discussions on artificial intelligence, on choosing a Braille device trainer, on CVS health, on affiliate website implementation and maintenance, and on utilizing book resources that go beyond what is available on the National Library Service. We heard how blind film critics are using artificial intelligence and how Computers for the Blind can put a new computer on your desk for just a few hundred dollars.

We got an introduction to sensory games, and we took the kids to camp.

Some of the last sessions carried over into July and included planning your final arrangements, improving state BEP programs, and what is new in diabetic technology and management. We heard about bridging the generation gap, an update on the federal legislation that we have been promoting, and on how to project a positive visual image. We held our elections and elected four board directors, and we enjoyed hearing from our guest talking book narrator, Mare Trevathan. We heard major presentations on advocacy and membership and leadership development. We heard the ACB angel presentation for Rhonda Nelson, given by Cindy Hollis.

Throughout the convention, we heard constantly from our WCB members who actively contributed through presenting and questioning.

So, there you have it, the 2024 convention is now history. Next year, you should be better prepared to attend the Dallas convention, either as a traveler, a virtual participant, or an experienced listener.

## Mira Hits Home Run with National Anthem by Brent Boon, Pacific West Music of the Blind, pwmotb.com

Mira Arcilla had the privilege of singing at the Everett Aquasox baseball game on Saturday, June 29, in Everett. Around 30-plus people from local Washington Council of the Blind chapters and Lions Clubs came to the game to support Mira. Huge success points for coordinating this baseball outing go to Colette and Andy Arvidson for reserving a group of tickets to the game. Thank you, Colette and Andy. The Lions Club also get big points for sponsoring this fun and memorable group outing.

How did this opportunity even start for Mira? Late last year, Mira had mentioned singing the National Anthem at a public venue. With encouragement from other musicians at the monthly virtual Musicians Interest meeting sponsored by Pacific West Music of the Blind, it was suggested not to jump straight to the National or Major Leagues, but to start locally, and the city of Everett was chosen.

Mira then recorded herself singing the National Anthem and sent the file to me. I, in turn, chatted with Melanie from the Everett Aquasox organization about Mira’s rendition. This was back in mid-March, and by the end of April, Mira received approval to sing at an upcoming baseball game. Mira was given a calendar of opportunities and selected June 29.

c

Left: Brent Boon and Mira Arcilla at the Everett Aquasox baseball game, June 29.  
  
   
Here is the link of her singing:

<https://tinyurl.com/y6stbuxp>

As I walked Mira onto the field on the third baseline next to home plate, she was quite confident and upbeat, though she did not tell me at the time she was a bit concerned about her throat having an issue.

It was a pure delight to stand about 10 feet away from her as she sang our National Anthem. She completed her singing and was beaming confidently to the crowd as she waved her cane that was decked out with red and blue tinsel streamers and with an American flag. We both smiled as we walked off the field for the game to start.

Here are some superb comments from those who heard Mira live at the game or through the postgame mp3 file. I will use this music to encourage my students to showcase their talent.

* Gaylen Floy, assistive technology instructor, Lighthouse for the Blind: “This was truly incredible!”
* Andy Arvidson, WCB president, Anacortes: “I really enjoyed listening to her. She has good, strong vocals and a beautiful voice. I hope she continues to pursue opportunities to utilize her musical abilities.”
* Kelsi, Vancouver: “So glad for Mira to have this opportunity to represent people living with disabilities.”
* Vaughn Brown, Spokane: “It brought tears to my eyes and a lump in my throat. Beautiful, just plain beautiful.”
* Joy, former DSB instructor, Skyway: “Mira sang such a beautiful rendition of our National Anthem and gave me much hope for our blind community. Her confidence and talent were clear from the first note.”
* Jill, Lynnwood: “I enjoyed that a lot. Keep up the great singing.”
* LaTice, Vancouver: “Bravo! In tune! Engaged the crowd. It is one of the most difficult songs to sing. Stellar!”
* Kim, vocal teacher, Oak Harbor: “Made me and my husband cry.”
* Gina, Covington: “That was really good. I really liked the vibrato. That was very brave of her. Singing in front of a whole group of people can be nerve-wracking.”
* Aydin, Algona-Pacific: “The Aquasox did win their game, yet it was our fun group gathering to hear Mira sing that had the biggest smiles of the night!”

Anyone interested in participating in the monthly virtual Musicians Interest meeting can contact Brent at [brent.s.boon@gmail.com](mailto:brent.s.boon@gmail.com). There is a wide variety of talent, so don’t be shy and come and attend one in the future, even just to listen.

## Where Are They Now by Kim Moberg

In this installment of “Where Are They Now,” the Scholarship Committee will feature two well-known members of Washington Council of the Blind (WCB). Both individuals have received WCB scholarships in the past.

Randy Tedro originally joined WCB back in 2004. Randy received two scholarships in and around 2005 and 2006. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Hope International University. At present, Randy owns and operates the Honor Café with the Blind Enterprise Program of Washington State Department of Services for the Blind (DSB). He belongs to the South King County Council of the Blind. Randy is an avid reader, particularly in the sci-fi genre.

Gaylen Floy has been involved with WCB for many years and received a WCB scholarship in 2009. At that time, she received a bachelor’s degree in liberal arts. Her plan was to get back into working in the newsroom as a copy desk editor. Gaylen received a certificate in copy editing from the University of Washington. Unfortunately, this didn't happen. So Gaylen was trained by Al Yardley to become a computer instructor. She did an internship with the Orientation and Training Center of DSB in 2019. Eventually, Lighthouse for the Blind in Seattle hired Gaylen as an instructor. She has worked at the Lighthouse for five years now.

Gaylen has been involved with WCB both at the local chapter level and at the state level. Gaylen also received a first-timer award from WCB to attend the national convention of the American Council of the Blind.

As you can see, both of these members continue to be active in leadership of their local chapters, as well as in WCB.

Congratulations to both on receiving WCB scholarships and for being a part of so many of our lives.

## WCB Right Place Right Time by Beth Greenberg

Come join us at the Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) annual convention at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, 18740 International Blvd. 98188, SeaTac, Oct, 24-26 (Thursday-Sunday).

Our theme is “WCB Right Place Right Time.” Here is a sneak peek at some of the exciting highlights being planned for this year.

The WCB fundraising auction will be held over Zoom at 5 p.m. Oct. 6. Many of the WCB convention events will be aired over channels on ACB Media. A session is planned on games you can play with your Amazon smart speaker (known to us fondly as Lady A), there will be a presentation from Guide Dog Users of Washington State, Hayley Agers hosts an exclusive limited session on the importance of self-care, and sessions will cover audio description.

Our exhibits will be open 4-6 p.m. Thursday and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday. Our talent show will be Friday at 7:30 p.m. Our business session is on Saturday, and our banquet is Saturday night. Schedules and speakers are still being finalized, and there is so much more that you will have to experience for yourself. As always, this is a hybrid convention, so everyone is welcome either virtually or in person. Come and meet up with new and old friends from around the state, have some fun and laughs, enjoy some good music, and learn something new.

To make a reservation at the hotel, please call 800-222-TREE or 800-222-8733; or the website is https://book.passkey.com/go/WCB24. Tell them you are with WCB to get our group rate. The room rate is $120/night -- $137/night including taxes and fees for a standard room (1 king bed or 2 queen beds). If you are bringing a car, parking is $14/night.

Registration for the convention opens Sunday, Sept. 1. For up-to-date convention details, check out the dedicated link on WCB's website at https://wcbinfo.org/convention/

WCB Member convention prices:

* Advance registration, $35
* Onsite registration, $50
* Advance meal package add-on, $150
* Advance banquet add-on, $50
* Onsite banquet add-on, $75

Get the best discount by registering during the advance period online, Sept. 1 through Oct. 4. Registration and five meals are $185.

Non-member WCB convention prices:

* Advance registration, $50
* Onsite registration, $75
* Advance meal package add-on, $225
* Advance banquet add-on, $75
* Onsite banquet add-on, $100
* Registration for hotel rooms and convention have an Oct. 4 deadline

If you would like to get a table in the exhibit hall, you would also go to the [www.wcbinfo.org](http://www.wcbinfo.org) website. There should be a separate link to register to be an exhibitor. Exhibit table fee is $150 for the first table, or $225 for two tables.

Let’s all make this the largest and most memorable Washington state convention ever. Hope to see all of you In October at the DoubleTree.

## WCB May Board Meeting Highlights by Linda Wilder

Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) President Andy Arvidson opened the May board meeting by telling us about his trip to Washington, D.C., for the American Council of the Blind (ACB) Presidents Workshops and legislative sessions. His first day included a tour of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. Andy had a sneak preview of the prototype of an accessible $10 bill with raised markings on the upper right corner on the face side. The new accessible bills are scheduled to be available as follows: $10 in 2026, $20 in 2028, $50 in 2030, and $5 in 2032. When you see Andy, ask him how it felt to hold a brick of $20 bills worth $80,000 or to hold a bundle of $20 bills worth $320,000, or to put his hands on a pallet of $20 bills worth $3,000,000. To his great disappointment, samples were not provided.

Another exciting moment was feeling the tactile Declaration of Independence. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing also makes all the military awards such as the Purple Heart and Medals of honor.

Another interesting event was a presentation by a blind female lawyer named Karla Gilbride, who was newly appointed by President Biden to be one of the lawyers for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Andy is also doing outreach to increase membership for WCB. He most recently spent time with WCB chapters in Eastern Washington.

Convention report by Cathy Wilson: Convention theme is Right Place, Right Time. Dates of the convention are Thursday through Saturday, Oct. 24-26. For more, see our “Right Place, Right Time” convention article in this section. All information concerning the WCB 2024 convention will be out earlier than last year.

Reg George reported on the WCB Newsline, saying the spring issue is done and should be online soon.

We started a new award last year to give Amazon gift cards to the first three new youth writers sending in content published by Newsline. Please publicize this program to your chapters. Reg thanked the Communications Committee for quickly posting our recent issues to the WCB website. Reg reminded us that many back issues are on the website, both in print and audio. We have 20 podcasts for you to enjoy. Watch for the 21st on the author panel from a past WCB Convention.

Linda Wilder put in a pitch for the Hat’s Off column to celebrate accomplishments of WCB members.

Dannette Dixson was happy to report on the selection of the First Timer to attend the ACB Convention in July. Congratulations, William Belina.

Kim Moberg reported on new changes for the scholarship winners. We all have wondered what happened to the previous winners. Where are they now, what are they doing, are they working, are they married, do they have children? Well, now Kim and her committee are researching to locate these past winners and writing their stories in our Newsline.

David Edick reported for the History Committee that thanks to the CD Frank Cuta recently found with both audio and written Newslines from 1992 to 2022, we will soon be able to access 30 years of Newsline as the conversion process is almost finished. The History Committee wants to start featuring excerpts from these old issues in Newsline. In addition, the History Committee has another idea for something like the Angel Wall to honor our WCB members who have passed. It might be a short synopsis of their life with a picture. There could also be a link to other places with additional information about their lives and accomplishments.

Tim Breitenfeldt reported that the Young Adult Committee is working on the constitution and will present it at the next WCB board meeting. The group is working toward building an affiliate. This affiliate chapter would be made up of people who are legally blind and who are between the ages of 18 and 40. We have 12 members of WCB interested at this time. We have reached out to all the presidents of each WCB chapter to recruit additional members.

Please join the WCB board from 1-3 p.m. Aug. 3 for our next meeting.

## Hat’s Off by Linda Wilder

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

* Kevin Jones on his 80th birthday
* Howard Underwood of Yakima on his 80th birthday
* Janice Squires on her 75th birthday
* Hayley Agers on her 50th birthday
* Happy 40th anniversary to Donny and Kim Moberg
* Happy 30th anniversary to David and Hayley Agers
* Sweetpea Moubray has received her first guide dog from Guide Dogs for the Blind in Boring, OR
* Doug Sommer on graduating from the Department of Services for the Blind’s Orientation and Training Center
* Braden Agers on graduating June 7 from Marysville Getchell High School. He completed the Regional Apprentice Program and earned his Occupational and Safety Health Administration (OSHA) 10 and OSHA 30 certifications in the trades. Braden is considering becoming an electrician or joining the Air Force Reserves.

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

The following are reasons for inclusion in this column:

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

# AROUND THE STATE

## Clark County Council of the Blind by Bob Cavinaugh

Usually, I say it’s been pretty quiet in this corner of the state, but we actually have a lot coming up. As you may have also seen in the Family Connection section, my parents and I have been quite active with Grandpa’s White Cane presentations.

In chapter news, we were supposed to be in the Hazel Dell Parade of Bands the week before Memorial Day, but we had to pull out because members kept dropping out. I guess we will try again next year.

In more positive news, while we have not gotten a check yet, our sneaker collection fundraiser is underway. Between everyone in my house and two of my neighbors, both bags I requested were full within hours and have already been sent off.

By the time you read this, our chapter will have toured the new transition center at Washington State School for the Blind on July 12. That’s about all we have going on here.

## Guide Dog Users of Washington State (GDUWS) by Vivian Conger

Guide Dog Users of Washington State will have two events at the Washington Council of the Blind annual convention, and we hope you will come and join us. On Friday, Oct. 25, we will have programming from 2:15 p.m. to 5 p.m., which will include at least two presentations. At our luncheon on Saturday, we are looking at doing something with puppy raisers. We are not sure if we will be able to have these events on Zoom but they will be recorded.

Again, please come and join us in person if you can. We plan to have lots of fun and get lots of information, too.

## Pierce County Association of the Blind by Linda Wilder

Pierce County Association of the Blind is having a busy year with great speakers and special events.

In April, Naomi Namekata spoke to us about the I Can Connect program, which is a national program with local contacts to help people stay connected with friends, family, their community, and the world. I Can Connect provides free equipment and training to people with both significant vision and hearing loss who meet disability and income guidelines.

In May, Jenny Kim from New Freedom told us about this program that is available in both Pierce and King counties. Participants in the New Freedom waiver have the choice to decide what services, goods, and supports they need within their budget. There are specific criteria. If eligible, there is an assessment to identify the needs and an allowance is provided.

We were pleased to have four new members join our chapter.

In June, we will attend the Puget Wave Beep Ball game. July 20 is our annual picnic at Spanaway Park. We are taking the month of August off. PCAB will be back in September. Contact me if you would like more information on our speakers. Have a fun and safe summer.

## Snohomish County Council of the Blind by Marilee Richards

Snohomish County Council of the Blind (SCCB) is going strong and growing. We now have 42 members. We have so many coming at the same time that it has become difficult to put anyone in the spotlight, but this month I am congratulating Sweetpea Moubray on getting her new guide dog. You will need to find out the dog’s name from Sweetpea. We have a number of guide dog users coming to our meetings each month. Several members are on a waiting list to get their dogs too.

I found out that Doug Sommer from our group graduated from the Orientation and Training Center at the same time Heidi Coggins did. Congratulations Doug!

We have started to do a 50/50 game to raise a bit of extra money at our meetings each month.

We have put together a card for the group, at Boeing Everett Credit Union (BECU), through their Clover program that set up a system to pay for dues and give contributions while using a credit or debit card. We also set up our own phone number 425 – 405 - 0093 to contact an officer of our chapter.

Shay and I finished up a grant application to one of our local Native American Tribes. If this is accepted, we will have some grant funds to provide for members and community needs.

We have been bowling several times now and hope to make it a monthly event. The group is planning a ferry trip, bus ride and meal on Whidbey Island this summer.

Hope all is going well with the rest of our chapters and affiliates.

We meet the third Saturday at Denny’s on 128th at 1:00 every month but July and August. All are welcome to visit anytime.

## South Kitsap Council of the Blind by Jessamyn Landby

Our chapter has been very busy since the last chapter update. We have had two speakers. One was Anna Chacon from the Red Cross, who talked about disaster preparedness and what to put in a disaster preparedness kit. The other was Julie Brannon, past president of Washington Council of the Blind, who talked about her journey as a WCB member and what it means to her to belong to it.

Three new members joined our chapter this year: Waldo Garcia, Suzie Smith, and Dean Smith. Our chapter is slowly growing new members, and it is great to be getting new people involved. We celebrated Kevin Jones’ 80th birthday by singing happy birthday and at the end, everyone tooted their party favors, and then had cake. Also, we went out for lunch at a restaurant called That One Place. It is a favorite restaurant our chapter likes to visit when we have socials. The portions at this restaurant are huge and everyone went home with leftovers.

In June, we will have members come with tips on how they make their homes independent for them. This should be a fun and interesting topic.

In July, we will have a social because Jessamyn Landby, president, and Kim Moberg, past president, will be gone at our meeting time, and this is what the chapter members decided to do in their absence.

In August, we will have our picnic at our meeting place.

Also, we have two members who need your prayers. Pat Whitlow is slowly healing from breaking her wrist. She says she is starting to get some feeling back in her fingers. Judy Hermon is recovering in a rehab center after breaking both ankles.

## United Blind of the Tri-Cities by Frank Cuta and Janice Squires

The United Blind of the Tri-Cities (UBTC) just keeps growing and growing. We have added four new members in the past few months. But these same months have also brought with them many difficult challenges. We are lucky that we have never lost the vitality, teamwork, and determination that it will take for us to stay positive and productive through these difficulties.

First of all, we are mourning the loss of one of our long-time and very active members, Diana Softich, who passed away in February. Diana was one of those members who is coveted by any group because she took on the task of reminding us to come to monthly activities. She will be so sorely missed by all of us.

Second on the list, we were informed that the Edith Bishel Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired will be closing its doors forever Aug. 31. The center has been the primary facility serving the blind and visually impaired in all of South-Central Washington. As well as offering training and aids and appliances, they provided the Tri-Cities with a great room where they hosted many events and social activities. Each month, UBTC held four or five of our special activities in this space, and it is a tremendous loss. We want to thank Shanna Larter at the Bishel Center for all of her hard and dedicated work with us to make the lives of those who are blind and visually impaired so much better. As this door is closing, we are looking for some windows to open.

Third, we are having difficulties with our Dial a Ride paratransit system. In so many ways, they are trying to cut our services, and it has been necessary for us to regularly show up in person at their board meetings because we are definitely not going to let this happen. In addition, Frank Cuta, Vanessa Pruitt, and Bernie Vinther serve on the Ben Franklin Transit Citizens Advisory Network and are diligently watching out for us.

It is hard to imagine that so many things could go wrong at the same time, but in April the hotel where we have held our monthly business meetings for many years was bought out by the Hilton. We loved it because it was quiet and free, and we received wonderful service. It’s possible that an agreement can be reached with the Hilton, but we are already looking at alternative locations.

We plan on continuing with our social activities, including our lunch group, book group, game day, walking, and technology group. It looks like our pottery class will be ending for the meantime, but who knows, Frank may just get it going again.

## United Blind of Walla Walla by Heather Meares

The summer is starting with a big splash here in Walla Walla. After a few of our chapter members attended the Anchor Splash fundraising event, hosted by the Whitman College Delta Gammas, one of their members, Grace Hardy, reached out to us inquiring if she could become an unpaid intern with the United Blind of Walla Walla. We talked with her and gladly accepted her offer. Grace has lots of plans to help improve the accessibility of the Whitman campus, and we are excited to have her help us with our Audio Description project around town, as well as several other collaborative efforts. We are also looking forward to a combined event in September to welcome some new students who have visual impairments, and offer our support in whatever way may be helpful to them. It’s a partnership that will be great for us all, and I’m sure will be a swimming success.

All of our committees are working diligently on their assigned areas as we continue to move forward with our goals. Wishing you all a fun-filled summer.

## United Blind of Whatcom County by Yvonne Miller

Recapping November 2023, United Blind of Whatcom County (UBWC) held its annual elections. Earl Hickey was voted in as first vice president and Yvonne Miller was voted in as secretary.

November birthday was Beth Marsau.

In December, we held our Christmas party at Bruce Radtke’s Ankar Park Clubhouse. We enjoyed Chinese food and singing Christmas carols.

In January, UBWC welcomed Andy and Colette Arvidson as guest speakers. They informed us about the Lions Club and Knights of the Blind activities. January member birthdays were Bruce Radtke and Sandy Gilliard.

In February, we welcomed Frank Cuta who informed the members about the American Council of the Blind’s Washington, D.C., legislative seminar and the four legislative imperatives for this year.

February birthdays were William Freeman and Yvonne Miller.

We held our February social at Mia Mexico Restaurant. Enjoying ourselves with tasty food and laughter, everyone sang happy birthday to Yvonne. The waiters sang while Yvonne wore the sombrero.

In March, we welcomed Steven McCray, a WCB scholarship winner, to speak to our chapter. He is becoming a social worker and serves as the current water commissioner for Spokane. Our March social was scheduled at Rustler’s Restaurant in Lynden. There was remodeling going on after a vehicle drove into the front of the restaurant. However, we were still able to enjoy good company and wonderful food.

In April, we welcomed Frank Cuta again from the Tri-Cities, who spoke about avoiding falls. It was an informative presentation.

I organized a raffle to be held at the Lummi Stommish Water Festival June 14-16. The Stommish Committee approved the raffle.

Our monthly social was held at Barbra Wood’s apartment community room in Birchwood Manor. It is a potluck. We had a high turnout of members. The food was great. We had new guests attend.

In May, we welcomed Abby Griffith, a multi-talented advocate and the treasurer of the Clark County Council. She is a very inspirational speaker. Our monthly social was held at the Panda Palace Restaurant.

On May 24 in the evening, I attended the “Gathering of the Eagles” event at the community building on the Lummi reservation. I set up a vendors table to sell raffle tickets. The event had four canoes pull in the Stommish grounds and visitors attended dinner at the community building. I sold $205 worth of raffle tickets.

On May 25, Beth Marsau and I attended the Ski to Sea for the Coast Salish Day at the Maritime Heritage Park. My daughter Peggy and her cousin Chris set up the canopy. It was a cloudy day and there were many good speakers from around the country and the world. We sold all together $265.

As I am writing this, I was informed that the UBWC grant request for the Lummi Nation Community awarded our chapter a grant of $10,000. I will attend the awards dinner at the Silver Reef Casino event center to accept the check on behalf of our chapter. The funds will be used for the Accessible High Technology Project. Impressive news!

Have a wonderful summer.

# 2024 WCB Calendar of Deadlines and Events

For more details on events listed, please subscribe to the wcb-l list on groups.io or call 800-255-1147. Join WCB Coffee and Conversation Zoom call Saturdays at 10 a.m.

List of Abbreviations:

BLV Blind and Low Vision

DSB Department of Services for the Blind

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

**AUGUST**

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

**3** – WCB board meeting from 1 to 3 p.m.

**5** – Treasurer’s 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** – Deadline for WCB First-Timer applications

**31** – Last day to donate scholarship funds to be distributed to this year’s recipients

**31** – Submission deadline for WCB Newsline fall 2024 issue

**SEPTEMBER**

**1** – WCB convention registration opens

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

**9** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

**13** – SRC-B Zoom meeting from 9 a.m. to noon (2nd Friday each quarter)

**13** – Last day to donate items for the WCB fundraising auction

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

**17** – WCB committee leaders call at 7 p.m.

**23** – President’s call at 7 p.m.

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

**26** – WSSB board of trustees meeting

**29** – Proposed 2024 WCB operations budget forum call at 3 p.m. (Zoom)

**29** – WCB candidates forum call at 4 p.m. (Zoom)

**OCTOBER**

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

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

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

**4** – Last day for guaranteed $120 rate on DoubleTree hotel reservations

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

**5** – WASILC meeting

**6** – Proposed constitutional amendments forum call at 3 p.m. (Zoom)

**6** – 2024 WCB fundraising auction at 5 p.m. (Zoom)

**7** – Treasurer’s call at 7 p.m.

**14** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

**15** – White Cane Safety Day

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

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

**\*\* WCB Annual Convention at DoubleTree by Hilton Seattle Airport \*\***

**24** – WCB pre-convention board meeting

**25** – WCB sessions, breakouts, exhibit hall, and showcase of talent

**26** – WCB sessions including agency reports and job panel, WCB annual business meeting, and WCB banquet

**Washington Council of the Blind**

is pleased to acknowledge donors

who have generously supported our programs

in the second quarter of 2024

**Thank You!**

Anonymous (12)

Colette Arvidson, Rebecca Barragan, Ruth Barton, Carol Brame, Young Choi, Tim Cumings,

Kitty Cummings, Danette Dixon, Tim Downie,

Sherry Dubbin, Everett Elam, Jessamyn Landby,

Matt and Candice Langan, Maureen Mattox,

John Moberg, Kim Moberg, Michelle Musick,

Bruce Radtke, Jill Reasoner, Sheri Richardson, Christianne Sobieski, Rella Sulentich,

and Bobby Whitlow

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

**Donna Elkins**

as a new **Life Member**