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Donna Pomerantz, President
1115 Cordova Street #402
Pasadena, CA 91106-3036
626-844-4388
donna.pomerantz@ccbnet.org

Executive Office:
California Council of the Blind
1303 J Street Suite 400
Sacramento, CA 95814-2900
800-221-6359 toll free
916-441-2100 voice
916-441-2188 fax
Email: ccotb@ccbnet.org
Website: www.ccbnet.org

San Francisco Bay Area Office:
Catherine Skivers
836 Resota Street
Hayward, CA 94545-2120
510-357-1986
cathie.skivers@ccbnet.org

**Los Angeles Area Office:
Donna Pomerantz
1115 Cordova Street #402
Pasadena, CA 91106-3036
626-844-4388
donna.pomerantz@ccbnet.org**

**Jeff Thom, Director
Advocacy and Governmental Affairs
800-221-6359 toll free
916-995-3967 cell
governmentalaffairs@ccbnet.org**

**Webmaster:
webmaster@ccbnet.org**

**Judy Wilkinson, Editor:
1550 Bancroft Avenue #113
San Leandro, CA 94577-5264
510-357-1844
editor@ccbnet.org**

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Submissions for the California Connection can be emailed to ca.connection@ccbnet.org. Non-

members are requested and members are invited to pay a yearly subscription fee of \$10 toward the production of THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN.

If you or a friend would like to remember the California Council of the Blind in your Will, you can do so by employing the following language:

"I give, devise, and bequeath unto the California Council of the Blind, a nonprofit charitable organization in California, the sum of \$_____ (or _____) to be used for its worthy purposes on behalf of blind persons."

If your wishes are more complex, you may have your attorney communicate with the Executive Office for other suggested forms. Thank you.

In accepting material for THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN, priority will be given to articles concerning the activities and policies of the California Council of the Blind and to the experiences and concerns of blind persons. Recommended length is under three pages or 1800 words.

The deadline to submit material for the Summer, 2014 issue of THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN is noon, May 15, 2014.

Please send all address changes to Executive Office.

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From The Editor's Desk

Judy Wilkinson

"You know, we've got it pretty good these days. We have so many more tools and access, there aren't really any mountains to climb, no big battles to fight. Maybe that's why people with visual impairments aren't joining organizations like the CCB." So said a blind friend of mine recently. It is indeed

gratifying as one climbs to look behind and see the distance traveled, the obstacles overcome: achievements in web accessibility, in access to books and periodicals, in accommodations in our physical environment like 2 talking pedestrian signals, to mention a

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mere handful of examples. But look ahead: the mountain looms.

Certainly money makes a lot of this access easier, but that's what much of our community doesn't have enough of to stretch much beyond basic necessities, much less afford the goodies like braille notetakers, smart phones and the like. I'm lucky enough to own an array of wonderful tools which have made my life so much easier: a notetaker, portable scanner, barcode reader, color identifier, smart phone, talking blood pressure machine and scale.

Yet for all too many

blind people, accomplishing basic tasks remains challenging: reading the mail, shopping for groceries. Their access to books is limited to NLS services (and only what might be available on cartridge which for most regional and subregional libraries doesn't cover the entire collection available to those of us who can download from BARD). They aren't able to roam BookShare, Amazon, Audible and other ebook providers. Everything I'm about to discuss represents my frustrations, but think how those frustrations are compounded for the members of our community who can't even get in the door.

Access to in-depth research material. This morning on the BARD website, I opened the "health and medicine" category: amazing! Over a thousand books! I then typed the search term "breast cancer". Amazing again: some 20-plus books with those words in their title. Don't get me wrong, the scope of what NLS offers us never ceases to astound me. But think of the resources available to a blind person searching the web for books on "health and medicine" or "breast cancer". Books abound for ebook readers or those with notetakers who can access material from BookShare or Amazon, much of it up-to-date

and cutting edge. But the quantity of material available to the sighted world is exponentially larger than even that. My husband Steve is a serious investor in stocks and options: the advanced material is unavailable at worst and inaccessible at best. If he had access to additional and better material, who knows what island I'd be basking on today. These are examples of compelling, perhaps even life-saving research, but this problem of finding in-depth material permeates my life. I'm a wine enthusiast: I do find lots of material on the internet as well as choices from BookShare and Amazon, but many many key books which

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I'd love to have are just plain unavailable. I'm a knitter to whom the number of patterns actually available is minuscule compared to the probably millions of patterns available to sighted needle clickers. Too many subjects of interest to us (especially if they are specialized) just aren't covered by Amazon's Kindle! And serious reference books are still mostly unavailable.

Shifting to another area of frustration, I become apoplectic on the topic of inaccessible household appliances! Touch sensitive flat screens are becoming ubiquitous. Rarer and rarer are pressure-sensitive screens

which you can at least mark with dots or scotch tape. My oven has a touch-sensitive panel, meaning that if I touch it anywhere, I activate something. My solution was to have made a plastic overlay with holes so I could count until the place I wanted to push before inserting my finger. But that cost me time, assistance time (drawing the panel) and the cost of having a plastics manufacturer create the template. But I was at least able to create a work-around. I dread when my dial-style dishwasher goes south. The American Foundation for the Blind's website has information about accessible appliances: but try finding those actual models in a real

store that you can touch and play with. And when you do go to that Sears showroom, notice how many choices your sighted peers have. And your Cable box? Well help may be coming soon, but it isn't here yet, and to my knowledge TiVo-like devices still aren't available to the likes of us.

If you ever want an icebreaker in a conversation among blind folks, just mention paratransit services! Talk about issues which still have challenges! It isn't for nothing that we spend several hours each Friday morning of our conference/convention dealing with important transportation issues.

Underemployment still is our supreme problem. Job searching is basically impossible without access to a computer, but though progress has been made on some of the megasites, once you're on the employer's site where details and applications are found, all too many are inaccessible, giving the upper hand to sighted job seekers.

Obviously I could cite many challenges which still face us despite how much better things have become. Though we've won many battles, the war continues. No need for organizations like the CCB?

6 Reflections And Thoughts about CCB

Donna Pomerantz

As our CCB nears the close of my time as your president, I wish to share a number of things with you in this article. First and foremost, sincere thanks to each of you who, no matter what, continued your support of our CCB in all its endeavors. We would not be where we are today without you.

During the almost 4 years of my presidency, we've made a number of large changes in our infrastructure. We are having financial struggles, but it seems many not-for-profits are in the same boat. Everyone is searching for that treasured pot

of gold.

As a result of our financial issues, we have begun to grow the CCB Mutt Strut: this is our fourth year. However, before continuing I wish to thank several people in the CCB who had this vision and shared it with me and others years before Mutt Strut became a reality (you know who you are).

In speaking with professional fundraisers, I was told from the beginning, that during the first 3 to 5 years of a fundraiser of this kind, to expect loss, not profit. The reason for a loss is because these

are the "building years". To me, that made sense, but what a gamble it would be to start. Each year, the regions and core builders added some things, and chose not to continue things that the entire group thought didn't work so well. I will say that for the past three years there was money spent, and yes, believe it, there has been profit each year. The CCB, through Mutt Strut, has also made "community friends" who knew nothing about us until sharing this Walk/Run with us. These new communities, along with those of our CCB family, are providing support to this new, uncharted territory for the organization. My hope

is that our new President and Board will continue moving to grow this fundraiser that is way outside the box for all who have been involved. I know I've gone way beyond my comfort zone, but what an adventure!

Another change in our infrastructure is we have moved to an annual conference and convention beginning in this, our 80th year of existence. With this change come new challenges for our CCB. There will be some bumps in the road as together, we define what works in the programming and what needs to be changed; however with change comes new roads we must travel and the opportunity to become

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more creative in a new environment. After this conference and convention, we will gather once again via conference call and find out how things went. The Board has given 3 years (this being the first) to use this program format. We will tweak things as we move forward in to another new territory to explore.

Infrastructure by definition means things that aren't readily visible. I am proud of our effort to establish procedures and processes for better data management: I know some of you don't like filling out those event request forms and the more exacting roster and officer information sheet documents, but

because of such changes, we can keep better tabs on our membership with the longterm goal of serving us all more satisfactorily. In addition, the Board has put in place requirements so that all who wish to serve on the Board know what is expected of them. And finally, I'm so proud of our candidates' page. Now those who wish to hold office have an opportunity to share their vision with all of us. Look for the new page some time in mid March.

Turning to other matters, at this time we do not employ a Director of Advocacy and Governmental Affairs. We currently have our

**Governmental Affairs
Committee Chair
working the Capitol,
taking the pulse of
those halls, blazing
the trail toward
barrier removal and
equal access for all
people beyond our CCB
that are blind or
visually impaired in
California. We have
had success in
legislation requiring
that content to be
evaluated for
educational purposes
must be accessible
digital material. We
have had strong
influence in
advocating for a State
Price Schedule that
would make for a
more seamless
approval so our
members and beyond
would receive
equipment in a timely
manner from the DOR.
We are currently**

**working on a
mechanism to provide
assistance to our
community for reader
services on a global
level. We are
advocating for
accessible formats in
the healthcare arena.**

**We have made our
imprint on access to
prescription
medication labels,
continued access to
point-of-sale
machines, access to
parks and trails, the
increase of accessible
pedestrian signals in
our cities, full and
equal access to that
right to a private,
independent vote as
our sighted peers
enjoy. We have done
so very much with few
resources. And there is
so much more. Please
refer to Jeff Thom's
Governmental Affairs**

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Report in this and past BC's to further read about our legislative endeavors. Also check archived presidential reports on the conference/convention pages on our website or ask for the tapes from the office.

As we move forward, we must never forget members of our CCB family who are no longer with us. I will not name anyone at this time, but I would urge you to think about those pioneers/veterans who have passed away these past few years. Think of how they touched your life; think of how they impacted the CCB.

To the people who work and give so much of their time and share

their gifts with the CCB, without you, we would not be here! Thank you all as that time and those gifts cannot be measured.

It has been a challenge for me to be your president, operate as an executive director, and to a smaller degree, bring in donations to the Council: all at the same time. I have learned a great deal from this experience. It was with sadness, reluctance and regret that I made the decision to leave office for health reasons before I could complete my likely term as your president. But it has taken its toll on me personally. I wish to thank the loves in my life for all of their

support: my partner and husband, Mitch Pomerantz, and my strong, loving family. It has not been easy, but I will always treasure your love and honesty. I must rejuvenate and be healthy. But let me say, I will continue to attempt to be of service to my successor and in a much smaller way, as a support to our CCB.

So now to my final thoughts for this article. We are a grassroots, consumer/advocacy membership organization, comprised of our chapters and statewide affiliates throughout California. How do we continue evolving as a strong viable healthy force?

What is the balance that must be achieved between that chapter to state and state to chapter co-existence relationship? Can the chapters and statewide affiliates have a strong existence without the state? Can the state have a strong existence without the chapters and statewide affiliates? What do we all need to do to strengthen each other to continue being a viable presence to gain full independence and equality of opportunity for all blind and visually impaired Californians? Is that still our current mission? If so, how do we achieve it in today's world, knowing nothing will be immediate and

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perfect?

**Thank you all for
allowing me to be a**

**part of the California
Council of the Blind
story.**

**Governor Brown Appoints Joe Xavier As Director
of the Department of Rehabilitation**

**Juney Lee, Chief Deputy Director, Department of
Rehabilitation**

**Date: February 14,
2014**

**I am extremely
pleased and honored
to share the
Governor's
announcement
appointing Joe Xavier
as the Director of the
Department of
Rehabilitation (DOR).
We are fortunate to
have someone from
our own team, whose
relationship with DOR
began more than
thirty years ago as a
consumer, someone
with extensive
involvement with the
disability community,**

**and vibrant passion
for public service as
our new Director. Joe
shares former Director
Tony Sauer's
dedication to strong
leadership and
unyielding
commitment to
collaboration with
stakeholders. In
addition, Joe supports
DOR's modernization
efforts, vowing to put
20,000 or more
consumers to work
annually.**

**Sixteen years ago, in
1998, Joe began his
state service career in**

the Business Enterprises Program (BEP) as a Supervising Consultant and promoted in 2001 to an Auditor. He has served in leadership roles within the Department for almost a decade, beginning in 2005 as the Business Services Section Chief. Because of his strong management skills, Joe was recruited in 2008 to interim acting BEP Program Manager. Joe was later appointed to Deputy Director of Independent Living and External Affairs and most recently served DOR as Deputy Director of Specialized Services Division.

Joe is a graduate of the Sierra Health Foundation Leadership Program through the

University of Southern California and the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute through San Diego State and George Washington Universities.

Joe's enduring commitment to the DOR mission will ensure the continuation of the positive changes that have begun in our programs and organization that are so essential to advancing the vision of employment, independence, and equality for all Californian's [sic] with disabilities. Please join me in congratulating Joe as our new DOR Director.

The following is [sic] Governor's Press

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**Release dated
February 14, 2014:**

Joe Xavier, 54, of Elk Grove, has been appointed director of the California Department of Rehabilitation, where he has served in multiple positions since 1998, including deputy director of the Specialized Services Division and of the Independent Living and External Affairs Division. He was owner and operator at

Snack N Things from 1996 to 1998, at Skyline Food Services from 1986 to 1996 and at the Gold Star Café from 1984 to 1986. Xavier is a member of the Association of California State Employees with Disabilities and the California Council of the Blind. This position requires Senate confirmation and the compensation is \$142,968. Xavier is registered without party preference.

Out Of The Dog House

Ken Metz

[Editor's Note: It's been far too long since we've had this column. We're glad to have it back and we will print it whenever space permits.]

Yes, it's true!!! Guide Dog Users of California (GDUC) is out of the Dog House and on its paws, moving forward with speed. We are

more than pleased at this time to report that this great affiliate is back on its feet and again growing in membership and stature in order to work to advance the rights of all guide dogs and their handlers in California.

We have begun writing advocacy letters on behalf of GDUC. Our program at the convention will be a hands-on workshop: Pamper Your Pooch, learning how to provide a massage for your guide dog with Carla Campbell. We'll have a booth at the convention selling dog beds and other goodies. Of course, we will have our traditional luncheon with updates on the various California

guide dog schools.

For many years we have worked on the rights of guide dog handlers to bring about equal access using guide dogs as their mobility partners in such areas as housing, public transportation, employment, hotels, motels, all public places of business including, but not limited to, grocery stores, restaurants, department stores, etc., and so much more.

We have also worked for a long period of time to aim for fines or penalties for persons and/or their pet dogs who interfere with our guide dogs while they are working, increasing fines for

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pet dogs attacking our guide dogs. Other concerns of interest include arbitration with guide dog schools when they took our dogs away without any provocation other than someone in the public reporting us as being cruel to our guide dogs for giving what they assumed was an inhumane correction by giving a quick jerk on the training collar if the guide dog misbehaved. Such incidents led to the guide dog ownership laws in California.

Well, my friends, we still have many directions to go to ease the problems we have with our guide dogs in California and are ready to fight the battle with you and for

you. We can accomplish this in a couple of ways. One would be by your joining Guide Dog Users of California (GDUC) and working with us, and the second is by notifying us of issues that you are facing with your guide dogs which may require favorable resolution.

To obtain further information about joining GDUC, or how to notify us with any problems you are having with your dogs be it with your family, the public, or even a guide dog school, please notify our President, Frank Welte by email at frank-welte@sbcglobal.net, or contact the current GDUC Advocacy Chair, Ken Metz at

kenmetz1946@gmail.com or by phone at

323-793-1805.

CCB Can Help with Social Security Problems

Many CCB members would agree that along with areas like employment and transportation, an important source of problems facing people who are blind or visually impaired is income maintenance, aka Social Security. Knowledgeable CCB members have always tried to help other members having difficulty with eligibility or benefit levels under SSA programs. One reason for many of these difficulties is that the rules for "legally or statutorily blind" people are somewhat different from those for people with other

disabilities, but blindness is a "low incidence" condition, and thus SSA employees don't see people with such conditions very often and are not necessarily current on these special rules or how to implement them.

In an attempt to deal more systematically with these issues, the CCB president has asked some CCB members with SSA experience to form an advocacy team to handle cases that come up. To date, the team has had some success. Members who did not apply when

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they first became potentially eligible have begun receiving benefits, although by waiting, they lost substantial amounts of benefits(over \$30,000 in one case). Members who gave up after being rejected upon initial application, appealed with the help of the team and won benefits, including substantial retroactive money. Members have been subjected to complex disability determination examinations, although legal or statutory blindness is a presumptive disability. And

members who have been informed by SSA that they have been overpaid and must refund thousands of dollars have, with the help of the team, requested and won waiver of the repayment.

If you have an issue with Social Security which you would like to discuss with the team, a special email address has been established for you to use. It is advocacy.ssa@ccbnet.org. You can also reach the team by telephone at 650-969-3155.

A Dynamic Organization: Divisions and Growth

Catherine Skivers

[Note from Catherine Skivers: This excerpt

is another part of [The History Of The](#)

California Council Of The Blind : 50th Anniversary Edition, 1984, by Perry Sundquist. It gives a broad picture of the blind organizations, their goals, their objectives, their many changes and struggles, and their future dreams for an organization that respects and works for the blind.]

As previously mentioned, the history of the California Council of the Blind is intertwined with that of the National Federation of the Blind. A California leader, young Professor Jacobus tenBroek, founded the National Federation in 1940 upon the urging and with the warm support of his old

mentor, Dr. Newel Perry. For many years, Californians, and chiefly Dr. tenBroek, provided a substantial part of the leadership-both political and in the development of philosophical thought-for the NFB.

No social action organization, be it national, regional, or statewide in character, can hope to avoid divergent opinions. Such organizations are the products of strong opinions, strong characters, and forceful personalities. Thus it is with organizations of the blind, since the blind are a normal cross section of society. The normality of the blind is demonstrated amply by a review of three

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issues which threatened the very integrity of the CCB: and in two cases, the credibility and future of the national organization.

During the decade of the fifties the NFB went through a time of great troubles.

Paradoxically, this was at the very time of the Federation's most spectacular growth and achievement.

There was the external struggle with the forces of agencies for the blind, hostile to the independent objectives of the blind themselves: and for a time these were almost matched in severity by a wave of internal dissension which preoccupied the Federation for several years.

The troubles within the national movement were related in part to the troubles without, for at least a few active members came to resist the hard line adopted by the Federation toward the agencies which opposed Federation tenets and objectives. Whether by reason of professional association, or ties of sympathy--or simple belief in the rightness of their attitudes--these members dissented from the militant attitude expressed by Dr. tenBroek in a 1957 convention address on the right of the blind to organize freely and without interference: If the course of events is not altered, if these agencies continue on

their present path, it may not be too much to say--as one blind man said recently-- that "either these agencies will ruin the blind or the blind will ruin these agencies." No struggle can be more intense than the struggle for survival.

A deeper source of schism, however, sprang from the very success of the Federation nationally-- its rapid rise in affluence and influence. Whereas in the lean years of the movement there had been a dearth of volunteer leaders and office-seekers, during the prosperous fifties aspiring leaders sprang up from all sides--some of whom won national office or responsibility while

others found their ambitions frustrated. Reinforcing this source of friction in the movement was a marked difference of personality and temperament among some of those of national prominence-- differences which, despite good will toward the organization as a whole, became so deep as to be irreconcilable. Finally, there were the quite common frustrations and suspicions aroused in many blind persons by virtue of the very real abuses and inequities which are part of the facts of daily life for the blind.

"A house divided against itself cannot stand." so declared the Federation's

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President in calling upon the organization to end the internal dissension which threatened to wreck its public stature, paralyze its program activities, and undo its achievements. The rank and file membership, represented in convention delegations, was reluctant to take strong measures against a minority of its fellows but in the end recognized the necessity and acted firmly. The cost was high: the total number of state affiliates was temporarily reduced from 47 to 37, and a number of able members withdrew from the organization.

It was almost inevitable that the

internal strife in the National Federation should lead to similar dissension within the CCB and so it did. The seeds of discord had been sown in 1953 when Dr. Perry insisted on Robert Campbell as his successor to the CCB presidency. Many members resented this, irrespective of the individual chosen. The situation was especially trying since the fifties were a time of markedly increasing unrest among the blind of California because of the poor level of services provided to the blind, especially in rehabilitation.

This growing unrest, coupled with dissatisfaction with the attitudes of some

regarding the national issues, resulted in a heated race for the Council presidency between Bob Campbell and Russ Kletzing in November, 1958. Campbell won by the narrowest of margins, but found himself with a newly-elected Executive Committee composed predominantly of those with views in opposition to his own. Hence, Campbell resigned the presidency in March, 1959, and was succeeded by Kletzing, who had been elected First Vice President just months earlier.

This change in presidential leadership of the CCB brought the state organization firmly into support of the programs,

practices and policies espoused by Jacobus tenBroek, NFB President. This crisis on the national level had most regrettably escalated into a full scale campaign for control of the NFB which was marked, on the part of some, by personal attacks upon President tenBroek's veracity and credibility. Though any brief discussion must of necessity simplify, it can be stated with certainty that at the heart of the controversy was the question of who should lead the NFB administratively: the President, or the Executive Committee. A small minority supported the view that the Executive Committee should hold such power. The

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majority of Federationists across the Country ultimately determined that the President properly should administer the affairs of the NFB between conventions. By 1960 the issue had been decided, and some NFB members chose to withdraw and establish another organization. [Editor's Note: The American Council of the Blind]

In the aftermath of the NFB controversy, which for a time unfortunately engendered bitterness between the parties, a small group of Californians chose to establish themselves as another organization of the blind in California. This organization is now known as the

American council of the Blind of California.

The second case of development by crisis occurred in California in the mid-sixties and was a crisis exclusive to California though the issue involved is a matter of concern to the national body. It came again, as a direct result of growth and activity. The essential question was, should the CCB function as an organization with a paid chief executive, breaking with the long-held tradition that the CCB is a peoples' organization with its elected officials serving without compensation? Again, feelings were intense. The controversy raged as members and chapters debated and

considered. The outcome was, for those familiar with the organization, predictable: the membership chose to remain firm in its belief in the essential voluntary nature of the CCB, and the need to prevent the organization from becoming simply another organization whose paid staff wields control of organizational policy. Again, a few persons chose to withdraw from the organization.

A third organizational crisis has been experienced by the CCB. This crisis is not so much involved with the nature of the CCB, but rather with the viability of the national organization. It involves the

relationship of state affiliates to the national administration of the NFB, and the ability of the state NFB affiliates to select their own officers free of duress or coercion from the national president currently in office and others of national stature.

The CCB had always held that the full and free participation of national officers in state conventions and similar activities was productive and to be encouraged. However, during 1976 and the years following Californians' concerns began to mount about the nature and character of national interventions into state organizations, and particularly in

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California.

Commencing in the late seventies, the CCB found itself placed in an adversary role as regards the national administration, and chiefly the present President of the NFB. [Editor's note: the reference is to NFB's former president, Kenneth Jernigan.] During 1978, marathon litigation began in a lawsuit titled the NFB vs. the NFBC: it chiefly involved the terms and conditions of affiliation with the national body, and the responsibilities of state affiliates to the national, and the national organization to its state affiliates, with particular emphasis upon the obligations of the national body in any

move to discipline or disaffiliate member chapters. Questions arose as to the degree of due process and fair hearing which must be afforded member chapters in any action against individuals, or state affiliates, and the validity of actions taken against the CCB by the National Convention on advice of those seeking the expulsion of the California group from the National. Not only was expulsion the stated aim of those involved in National policy formulation, but vigorous efforts were mounted to wrest the State treasury and other property from the valid California organization.

In 1983, having won the right to retain our

treasury and other property, our state organization agreed to change our name from National Federation of the Blind of California to California Council of the Blind, and we are now an independent organization. [Editor's note: The CCB has since affiliated with The American Council of the Blind.]

The results of this controversy in terms of the organized blind of California.

The CCB has remained firmly committed to its traditional and wholesome ideals of betterment for the blind, and continues to strive actively to make its influence and impact felt on behalf of the blind. As in the past, a small group of

persons unhappy with the decisions of the Council Convention have chosen to establish themselves as a separate body aligned with the National Federation's current thinking.

Today the California Council continues to work positively and productively on behalf of our fellow blind. Our membership seems more united than ever before in its determination to advance the welfare of the blind despite any obstacle placed in the path of progress. Indeed, the ability of membership to deal with controversies and political disputes seems to have resulted in a more mature, sophisticated, and

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**committed
organization.**

**And what of the future
of the California
Council of the Blind?
If it continues its deep
commitment to the
purpose of bringing
security, equality, and
opportunity to the
blind boys and girls,
men and women of
California, the CCB will
have an even more
essential and exciting**

**future than the fifty
years of its past,
extending well beyond
the end of this
century. The great
dreams of visionaries
like Dr. Newel Perry
and Dr. Jacobus
tenBroek are fast
becoming the realities
of today for
California's blind, and
the CCB continues to
dream great dreams
for the future.**

2014-2015 CCB Scholarships Are Waiting For You

Christy Crespin

**As a member of the
CCB Scholarship
Committee, I want to
encourage students
who are legally blind
to apply now for the
academic year 2014-
2015. The scholarship
application went live
online on Saturday,
March 1, and will be**

**available until Friday,
May 30, 2014.**

**CCB scholarships were
awarded to six college
students during the
past academic year.
Recipients were
awarded and honored
at the banquet during
the CCB Fall**

convention and conference in San Diego. A brief introduction of each student follows.

Janet Barajas attends the University of California at Los Angeles and is enrolled in the Master's of Social Welfare program, studying to become a social worker. Mia Carius attends West Hills Community College, majoring in social science, with the goal of becoming a vocational rehabilitation counselor or social worker. Brittany Embry attends California State University Dominguez Hills, majoring in psychology. Jane Brunson attends the University of California

at Los Angeles in the fields of pre-law and English. Douglass Medley attends Wholesale University, working toward his bachelor of science in game design. Andre Green attends California State University Dominguez Hills with a major in human services.

All CCB scholarship recipients are encouraged to attend the CCB conference and convention to be honored for their academic achievements and to learn more about the CCB. The members of the CCB Scholarship Committee encourage students to fill out the application and follow the instructions given on the website in order to complete the

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process in time to meet all deadlines. The CCB Scholarship Committee awards scholarships annually. These scholarships are not intended to take the place of funding provided through the colleges or the Department of Rehabilitation. To apply, go to ccbnet.org and click on the link: "Student scholarship". Or contact the CCB Scholarship

Committee through Ed Branch, the CCB administrative assistant at 800-221-6359 or 916-441-2100. We look forward to a great and competitive scholarship application process.

CCB Scholarship Committee: Robert Wendt, chair, Christy Crespin, Gerry Konsler, Martin Jones, and Vincent Calderon.

My Story: Differences in Cultural Attitudes toward Blindness And Literacy

Tuan Nguyen

[Once again we have an article from Tuan, immediate past president of the California Council of Blind Students. He is completing physics studies at Sacramento

State, and plans to pursue graduate work in environmental geochemistry with an emphasis on biomaterial contaminations. Currently he works

with the California Department of Rehabilitation as an individual service provider tutoring math and science in Nemeth Braille on a periodic basis.]

Born prematurely in Vietnam on October 10, 1985, I am an only child, and had numerous developmental challenges as a boy. My reading ability during the childhood years was affected not only by blindness coupled with moderate hearing loss but also due to the lack of high-quality education for blind and visually-impaired students in Vietnam. When I came to the United States in August of 1993, my education and literacy improved

very gradually, and today I have made substantial progress in reading and writing skills necessary for my academic and future/personal and career goals.

Ironically, my failure in literacy turned into a success.

Vietnamese cultural beliefs on blindness are very negative and bitter. Government officials do not think blind individuals possess potential, do not believe they are capable of living independently, do not believe that they have the ability to learn competitively with sighted peers on the basis of equality, and do not think that they can explore/pursue a variety of career endeavors. Rather, the

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Vietnamese society thinks the disabled, including the blind, should be kept under supervision and be told what to do. Boldly speaking, they think we are completely broken. The only available jobs for the physically and visually impaired, ranging from the young to the elderly, are really nothing but selling lottery tickets and even worse, working as laborers in unimaginably dangerous industrial settings.

For disabled children in Vietnam, literacy is extremely limited. During my early childhood, I faced numerous personal challenges in the area of basic reading and writing. Because of

the combined visual and hearing deficits, early-childhood education was extremely difficult. No such concept as "reasonable accommodations" such as braille, existed. But worse, there was no societal expectations on my future potential and my joy of having an independent, productive life. I was completely isolated from the general education. At five-and-a-half, my parents, who treated me like a golden child, placed me in a Buddhist elementary school, hoping that it would provide some training for the visually-impaired kids. But sadly, it did not. So my parents who were quite determined

about my education, had no other options other than re-enrolling me back into the general school system.

From this point on, I did not learn anything at all. I will never forget a terrible experience when a mean teacher tried to force me to read because he thought I could see. One early afternoon, the class was asked to read a children's poem and write a short reflection. While my classmates were doing their work, I was sitting doing practically nothing but sliding my little hands across a flat sheet of paper containing words that I could not read. A short time later, the teacher came up to me and

said, "Why are you not doing your work?" I told him that I cannot read the poem, and then he angrily pulled me to another private room. In a very angry voice, he said, "of course you can read this." I tried but I could not. He immediately left the room for a brief moment, and he returned, handed me a paper and a pen, and forcefully demanded I write anything, adding that if I accomplish nothing in twenty minutes, I would be beaten. In that timeframe, I drew ridiculously wavy-looking lines, shapes, etc. on the paper because I did not know how letters look like visually or even how words are like in my mind for that

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matter; I was such a complete failure. When he came back, he examined my paper and said abusively, "What is this, kid?", lashing with the wooden stick on my arm and head a dozen times. He ended by saying, "You need to get out of this school and go home and perform child labor; this place is not for you."

When I immigrated to the United States with my family in August 1993 as political refugees, my life transformed completely with special attention to my literacy. Around the age of nine, I was enrolled in Sutterville Elementary School in Sacramento which provided special

education with an emphasis in teaching visually-impaired including Braille literacy. I was very nervous to be in a completely new academic environment and was having a hard time making new friends because I didn't know how to speak or understand English. I was isolated for most of the time in school, except when I was taught one-on-one by a special education teacher who had a specialty in Braille training for non-native blind children. I learned how to read children's Braille books/textbooks and write Braille on an old-fashioned heavy metal Braille writer, better known as Perkins Brailier which I still

keep as a personal memento inside the fancy glass-cased display at my home museum. Today, blind children are taught Braille on modern, state-of-the-art Perkins Braillers which are lighter and highly efficient and there are high-quality Braille books.

Generally speaking, my reading and writing skills were extremely poor in the very early stages, meaning that I did not know how to produce simple, coherent English sentences. Furthermore, my speech was unquestionably deplorable. I was given intensive English speech training several days per week because the teachers

and school administrators were extremely concerned about my language and social development. The speech training had several stages, including learning how to fluently pronounce a variety of some elementary, one- or multiple-syllable words and orally learning how to read short passages with accuracy, flexible rate, and vocal variations, as well as utilizing verbal communications during a given social atmosphere. At first, it was not very easy for me; however over time with determination and intensive practice, my social and speech skills improved to a great extent.

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At around the age of 11, after more than two years of intensive training in both written and verbal English communications, I had made some significant progress. I was able to write simple, understandable sentences in Braille, my reading, including reading comprehension, had improved to some degree, and my speech had improved to about fifty-five percent, meaning some people still had trouble understanding my speech. Moreover, my social skills had improved, meaning I was able to make new friends and to have fun with them.

Despite the weakness in the domain of

fundamental English literacy during my early adolescent years, I exhibited a strong skill in the area of mathematics, basic science, and putting together models. For example, I could perform rudimentary mathematical operations with ease and was able to execute hands-on scientific experiments for children such as generating electric circuits with hot dogs and making liquid nitrogen with ice cream, all of which were so much fun. Furthermore, even today as an adult, I am great at and completely in love with putting together a variety of objects especially robots and naval warships, building from fancy

model kits of some top brand such as Italeri and Tamiya. As of today, I have several ship models on display at my home museum such as USS Missouri, USS Nimitz, USS Enterprise, among others, and I plan to build more as a personal hobby in the near future. My deep attraction to building models unquestionably helped in the successful development and growth of my critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.

Now, I'm pursuing my undergraduate studies in physics with a minor in mathematics, my two favorite fields. On the other hand, reading frequently on a regular basis helps my writing

substantially. For one thing, I enjoy reading novels such as The Catcher In The Rye, The Old Man And The Sea, famous memoirs such as My Life by Bill Clinton, Decision Points by George W. Bush, and I love reading and keeping up with the latest news/commentaries across the nation and around the world through various popular newspapers and magazines. I firmly believe that constantly reading enhances one's overall writing and critical thinking skills greatly, thereby making one totally an informed, intelligent contributor to our dynamic, multi-culturally complex society.

Despite personal

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challenges which remain today, I am doing substantially better in terms of academics, literacy, community involvement, and daily living, certainly better than if I had remained in Vietnam where I was treated like a slave. My deepest gratitude goes to my parents who helped me not only overcome that painful ordeal at elementary school, but who also supported me in facing numerous challenges from the time we immigrated to the US to when I became a successful adult today.

In ironic terms, my dismal failure as a child turned into a success as a blind adult. As of this writing, I am currently

finishing my undergraduate degree and simultaneously actively involved in numerous groups and organizations, such as the Buddhist Foundation, ACB, and CCB, where I have been active for over ten years.

Furthermore, I worked at a couple of summer jobs where I taught blind children how to read and write Braille, discussed with them how to cope with daily challenges as a blind/visually-impaired person, and acted as mentor. I'm trying to live up to the high expectations of one of my teachers who was proud of my accomplishments. I am working hard to obtain the best college degree possible, and then I can procure the

best employment where I can confidently compete with others on the basis of equality, thereby earning the most decent salary for building a family and becoming a valuable contributor to the American society, specifically speaking, a financial contributor to my beloved blind organizations of ACB and CCB. Because I am not comfortable residing in an urban

environment where there is a lot of criminal activity, population overcrowding, and environmental pollution, I dream of owning a five-acre farmhouse and land on which I can raise my favorite animals and plant fresh organic vegetables and finally where I can enjoy my own freedom of applying my well-developed literacy skills.

Getting the Email BC

Mike Keithley, member, Publications Committee

The Publications Committee has heard that many CCB members have been unsuccessful in receiving their Blind Californian by email. If you're having trouble,

here are tips to get things fixed.
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Since CCB gets its membership data from its chapters and affiliates, ask the person who is

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responsible for sending membership rosters to CCB to change your format to email for the BC. This person might be the Secretary, membership contact or the President. Do not call the office to resolve this as it's guaranteed to cause confusion. If you haven't been successful in changing to the BC's email format after six months or so, contact

Mike Keithley at 650-386-6286 or mike.keithley@ccbnet.org.

In closing, let me point out that while large print, Braille and audio BC formats are still available, they all eat CCB funds. Email, on the other hand, doesn't cost anything to produce and won't be jeopardized by funding. So don't give up; keep trying and good luck!

Governmental Affairs Report

Jeff Thom

It is impossible to tell how much will be accomplished this year, but I can tell you that, both in Washington, D.C. and Sacramento, things are happening that

will mean that all of us need to get to work. Let's start with federal legislation.

Some of us will be spending a few days in February at the

American Council of the Blind Legislative Seminar in Washington advocating for two major bills; it is very important that each of you call or write your Congressman about them. Before discussing these bills, let me thank those chapters and individuals that are stepping up to the plate to help make it possible for CCB to send a contingent to the ACB Legislative Seminar. Without you, we would not be able to have a presence in our Congressional offices in the nation's Capital.

The first bill, HR3749, is called the Medicare Demonstration of Coverage for Low Vision Devices Act of

2013. It would allow Medicare reimbursement for certain low vision devices that cost five-hundred dollars or more and evaluate, through this five-year pilot project, the fiscal impact of making this coverage permanent under Medicare. ACB is the lead sponsor on this bill, along with a number of other groups in the blindness field. The second bill is HR4040, the Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act. This bill would provide for comprehensive legislation to ensure that deaf and hard-of-hearing and blind and visually impaired children receive the best education possible. We are pleased to note that

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one of the three Congressional sponsors of this legislation is Mark Takano from southern California.

CCB also has some major work on its hands in Sacramento. Assemblymember Isadore Hall is authoring our bill to add the reading and completion of documents to the list of services covered under the In-Home Supportive Services program. We have been fighting for this change for two decades, since Ysidro (Sid) Urena was our advocate; it is long past time we won this battle. The previous governor vetoed the bill, but with your help we will achieve victory this time.

A bill of special interest to Business Enterprises for the Blind vendors is AB1602. This bill seeks to cure the problem of having blind vendors who have vending machines at roadside rest stops reimburse the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for electricity costs, which can sometimes be quite expensive when compared to the revenue generated from the machines. The bill would allow these costs to be paid to Caltrans only out of funds collected from all vendors, known as set-aside funds. We will look to our Randolph-sheppard Vendors of California affiliate for guidance

on this bill.

Within a week or so, many other bills will be introduced and I'll highlight those of importance in the next BC. However, there are many other items of importance going on in the state. Due to the upcoming retirement of the outstanding Superintendent of the California School for the Blind, Mr. Stewart Wittenstein, a new superintendent will be selected who will begin to serve in that capacity in the next school year. A major budget battle is brewing between disability advocates, including CCB, and the Governor over the issue of paying overtime to IHSS workers. The federal

government recently passed regulations that require overtime to be paid to home-care workers, including as IHSS providers. However, the Governor is proposing that no provider be allowed to work more than 40 hours per week, thus eliminating overtime pay in most circumstances.

Finally, remember that Capitol Day will be occurring on April 9, the Wednesday before the CCB Conference and Convention begins. By the time you read this, we will have provided you with more details about Capitol Day, but if you can help us on that day by visiting Sacramento and speaking to your

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legislators and their staffs, you can do far more good than I, as your advocate, can

ever hope to do. Together, we can make 2014 a big success.

Candle in The Window Presents Its 2014 Retreat

Donna Pomerantz

Retreat Dates: August 6 thru 10, 2014.

Our topic this year is: Blindness and Your Culture: How has it affected you and how do you Affect it?

We'll be meeting once again at the lovely and gracious Wooded Glen Retreat Center in

Henryville, Indiana located minutes away from Louisville, Kentucky. Visit www.woodedglen.com

It's a great opportunity to connect with friends to enjoy conversations and great food, too! Full details soon!

Looking Forward to Camping Season

Erik Smiley

[Editor's Note: As luck would have it, we have two submissions from the Humboldt Chapter. Erik Smiley completed

his term as a CCB Board member in December. Many CCB members remember the terrible accident in

which Erik and his now wife Karen were injured. We're glad he is back camping.]

By the time you read this article, spring will be here, and it will be a great time to think about outdoor activities for ourselves and our families. I enjoy this time of year because it's the time to open doors and windows, to get out and enjoy the sounds and smell of the outdoors where there are many things to see and hear. I have had the privilege of camping near the natural sounds of bird song, wind or rapids, but I have also treated my ears to other things I don't get to hear at home like freight trains pushing their way over the

Sierra, or the unearthly quiet of the central Nevada desert.

A camping trip gives us the chance to enjoy the outdoors not only for the day but to experience living outside for several days or more. Soon the campgrounds and beaches will be open for our enjoyment. In this article, I want to talk about camping, its pleasures, and the unique challenges that blind people face while on the trip. I hope to inspire folks who may have never been camping before while sharing experiences that make the reading interesting for all.

I find that I have the most fun on a camping trip where I can participate in the

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organization and preplanning because I am likely to know What kind of weather I should prepare for and what kind of terrain to expect. Blind campers young and old can still have a great time while on a camping trip.

Always demonstrate your skills and abilities whenever possible especially if there are fellow campers on the trip who don't know you. That is very similar to what we would do anywhere but the difference here is that the surroundings may be unfamiliar to everyone. If there is a lot of free space at the campground, it helps to spend the first day at the camp site learning the

boundaries of the space. Some camp sites have stones or a line of trees separating your site from your neighbor's space.

I can remember a weekend camping trip in my teens when I had left the site to get water. Though someone had shown me earlier where the tap was in relation to our site, the divisions between camp sites were not very clear. I believed I was heading straight back to camp. I followed some voices and walked right up to the group and asked, "Is this the chow line?" I was met with some giggles and a very kind, "Sur, this is the wrong camp, may I help you find your

party?" I was assisted back to our own site which was not far away and we all had a good laugh.

Here are some other ideas on meeting the challenges of camping for blind people. If you are using a tent on the trip, arrange to set it up near a point of reference such as a tree, picnic bench, or one of the cars if possible. These are solid objects for a cane tip to connect with or they will throw back a good return for someone using echo location. If you are a cane user, a roller tip works very well in the outdoors because it glides over uneven ground.

Be sure to keep valuable possessions

such as meds, talking books, electronic notetakers, or musical instruments in the same place. On my most recent camping trips I kept the talking book, a water bottle, swim trunks, and anything else for day time excursions in the tent. When camping, I have at least 2 back packs with me. The larger one usually stays at camp containing clothes and bedding while a smaller day pack can be picked up and taken out on the hikes or other activities away from the camp site.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with asking for sited assistance from members of your party or others in the

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campground if necessary. Things at the camp site can be chaotic especially on the first and last days of the trip, which is supposed to be fun and not too stressful. I am a totally blind person who has been camping since childhood, and I am finally learning to be patient with myself and fellow campers when it comes to learning my way around or participating in camp setup or breakdown. The sighted-guide technique can be great on unfamiliar hiking trails or on rough

terrain near water.

A camping trip can be a great way to enjoy family and friends while experiencing the outdoors. I find something great about the adventure of an unfamiliar place or the excitement of a favorite old spot. Whether it's a conventional campground or something more rustic like back woods, desert or stretch of beach, the camping trip can be fun for all, and I am looking forward to my next time out.

Revitalize That Old Perkins Brailer

Mel Kahn and Judy Wilkinson

Mel Kahn, a longtime member of my home Bay View Chapter

called me a couple of days before the BC deadline. Thinking he

was calling about another matter, I took my time returning his call. Mel, excitedly, "I was so worried the BC deadline would pass and I wouldn't get this information to you!"

"Judy how many Perkins Brailers do you have?" I told him two. "I have six including an electric one Jeff Thom gave me. I just got one back from being repaired and it's like new! I even had it painted purple!"

Mel went on to extol the virtues of the program offered through the Volunteers of Vacaville, a service provided through work of inmates at the facility.

He said that when you call them, they send you a carton to send in your Brailier. By the way he told me the person he spoke with suggested the old Brailiers are far better than the new ones, so he urges us all to get those old workhorses repaired (for around \$40) rather than buying a new one. The volunteers do a complete overhaul: taking the machine completely apart, some 500 parts apparently. Costs may be more if parts are needed. And you can even (for \$8 more) get a new paint job.

So satisfied with the results, Mel is sending that electric Brailier for repair, and "I'm having it painted gold!"

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I got one of the first new machines in 1953 as a third-grader. I've had it repaired many times elsewhere. My husband Steve's is not much younger. You can bet our two old Brailers are heading for a makeover!

The email containing all the contact info follows.

WHO WE ARE

The Volunteers of Vacaville is an innovative 501(c) (3) non-profit organization that was founded in 1960 for the purpose of providing the visually and physically handicapped community with audio recording. Since our inception, we have provided hundreds of

customers with thousands of books and services that they would not have been able to receive elsewhere. In recent years the program has expanded to include Braille Writer repair and Braille transcription.

Please feel free to contact us by phone, mail, e-mail, or look us up on our website:

www.volunteersofvacaville.org

Sherry.dovich@cdcr.ca.gov

**707-448-6841 x2044
1600 California Drive
Vacaville , CA. 95696.**

S. Dovich

**Correctional Officer/
Blind Project -
Program Director
California Medical
Facility**

**707-448-6841 Ext.
2044 -----**

Wellpoint to Make Healthcare Information Accessible to Customers with Visual Impairments

Steven Mendelsohn

The major health insurance firm Wellpoint, parent company to Anthem Blue Cross here in California, has entered into an agreement resulting from Structured Negotiations. The agreement was negotiated by attorneys Linda Dardarian and Lainey Feingold on behalf of Anthem customers Sam Chen and Steven Mendelsohn. Structured negotiations represents a way for parties to a dispute to work together cooperatively to

eliminate barriers to information access without having to resort to the courts or to costly, protracted and potentially acrimonious litigation.

Under the terms of the agreement announced February 12th, Anthem will make its website accessible by adopting the Worldwide Web Consortium's WCAG 2.0, Level AA web accessibility guidelines. In addition to accessible documents on the web, hard-copy documents will be available in alternative

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formats including Braille, large-print or audio format. For the time-being, customers will have to specifically request each accessible hard-copy document that they need. This can be done online or over the phone to customer service, (number on the back of your insurance health card), and that process will remain necessary until a system for handling standing requests is set up.

As a result of this accessibility initiative, a broad range of documents will become accessible, including general informational documents and, most important, documents personal to the

subscriber such as the evidence of coverage certificate, explanation of benefits statements, and coverage-related forms and notices of various kinds.

This agreement is a milestone in the accessibility of the healthcare system that will give subscribers unprecedented independence and privacy in management of their healthcare benefits. It is hoped that this agreement will become a model for other health insurers, in California and throughout the nation. All visually impaired Wellpoint customers who can benefit from these new resources are strongly encouraged to utilize

them.

To read the Wellpoint press release announcing the new policy, go to llegal.com/2014/02/

wellpoint-press/ and for the structured negotiation agreement establishing it go to llegal.com/2014/02/wellpoint-agreement/.

California Council of the Blind

2014 Officers and Board

[Editor's note: We are indebted to Bernice Kandarian who updates and corrects the list of CCB officers and board members, including the number of the term each is presently serving, the year elected to that term and the year next up for election. Terms begin on July 1 following election. The presence of an asterisk means that the individual served a partial term before the first full term.]

President, Donna Pomerantz
(12-14 2nd term)
Pasadena, CA 91106
626 844-4388 h
donna.pomerantz@ccbnet.org

1st Vice President, Eugene Lozano, Jr.
(*12-14 3rd term)
Sacramento, CA 95841
eugene.lozano@ccbnet.org

2nd Vice President, Roger Petersen
(*13-15 2nd term)
Mountain View, CA 94040

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**650 969-1688 h
roger.petersen@ccbnet.org**

**Secretary, Judy
Wilkinson
(13-15 1st term)
San Leandro, CA
94577
510 357-1844 h
judy.wilkinson@ccbnet.org**

**Treasurer, Peter
Pardini
(12-14 2nd term)
Mill Valley, CA 94941
415 990-9202 c
peter.pardini@ccbnet.org**

**Immediate Past
President, Jeff Thom
(11-??)
Sacramento, CA 95831
916-995-3967 C
jeff.thom@ccbnet.org**

Board Of Directors

**Ardis Bazyn
(*13-15 2nd term)
Burbank, CA 91504
ardis.bazyn@ccbnet.org**

**Vincent Calderon
(*12-14 3rd term)
Montclair, CA 91763
626 429-4539 c
vince.calderon@ccbnet.org**

**Leena Dawes
(*12-14 2nd term)
Sacramento, CA 95818
916 905-9034 c
leena.dawes@ccbnet.org**

**David Hanlon
(12-14 2nd term)
San Diego, CA 92117
858 610-0825 c
dave.hanlon@ccbnet.org**

**David Jackson
(12-14 4th term)
San Francisco, CA
94127**

415 239-1873 h
david.jackson@ccbnet.org

Linda Porelle
(13-15 3rd term)
San Francisco, CA
94112
415 577-8437 c
linda.porelle@ccbnet.org

John Ross
(13-15 1st term)
Bakersfield, CA 93306
661 619-5863 c
john.ross@ccbnet.org

Robert Wendt
(13-15 2nd term)
Long Beach, CA 90814
562 438-7100 h
robert.wendt@ccbnet.org

Vita Zavoli
(13-15 1st term)
San Leandro, CA
94577
vita.zavoli@ccbnet.org

Publications Committee

Linda Porelle, Chair
San Francisco, CA
94112
415 577-8437 c
linda.porelle@ccbnet.org

Judy Wilkinson, Editor
San Leandro, CA
94577
510 357-1844 h
editor@ccbnet.org

Other Members:

Annette Carter
Susan Glass
Mike Keithley
Roger Petersen
Bonnie Rennie
Donna Sanchez
Dr. Catherine Schmitt
Whitaker