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- **Or on the web at www.ccbnet.org.**

Submissions for CCB Happenings can be emailed to submit.happenings@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.

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 900 words, 1800 max.

The deadline to submit material for the spring, 2021 issue of THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN is noon, February 15, 2021.

Shop at Amazon, donate to CCB. Access smile.amazon.com/, log on to your account and select California Council of the Blind as your charity.

Please send all address changes to the Executive Office.

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Editor's Corner

By Mike Keithley

Happy holidays and best new year. And welcome to volume 65 of the Blind Californian.

This issue of the BC is dedicated to harmony, compassion, advocacy, and fun. It all seems appropriate during Covid time and a divisive election.

We have Regina Brink's article about

marginalized people in the blind community; Deved Mandell shows how low income visually impaired people don't have access to the life enhancing technology they should have; Jeff Thom reminds us of the upcoming virtual ACB Legislative Seminar. And, of course, there's more. Enjoy!

* * *

We Need To All Get Along

By Gabe Griffith

As I write this in mid November, we have more or less survived the 2020 election season. The campaigning is over (at least in California) and it appears we know who the President will be. However, there is one thing that is clearer to me now than ever. Our country is more divided than at almost any time since the 1850s and 1860s.

A couple of differences between then and now are that in 1860, there were four candidates for President. At least this year there were only two main candidates. In 1860, Abraham Lincoln won with 40% of the popular vote. This Year, Joe Biden won

with a slight majority of the popular vote. Out of a little more than 160 million votes cast, Mr. Biden received roughly 5 million more than did Mr. Trump.

In the House, the Republicans gained a few seats, making the Democratic majority smaller than it has been in the last couple of years. In the Senate, the Democrats have picked up a couple of seats, and if the Republicans maintain a majority at all, it looks like it will also be smaller than in the last couple of years.

All of this is to say that no matter what way you look at our country, people are divided

politically. However, we as people who are blind or have low vision still face the same issues. As we close out this crazy year of 2020 and get ready for 2021, we still face the same issues, such as access to technology (maybe even more important in today's world than ever before), and pedestrian safety (when finally we're allowed to leave our houses).

Band together to work on the issues most important to our community. I encourage us, in all of our committees, chapters and other calls, not to focus on a particular political party whether winning or losing, or on the personalities of any of the candidates, or on other subjective

qualities, but to focus on how we as an organization can work with all people and parties to accomplish what we need to accomplish. I encourage us to focus on CCB's mission, which is to increase the independence and equality for all Californians who are blind or low vision.

As a student of history, I am reminded of a quote by one of our founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin. When signing the Declaration of Independence, he said, "we must all hang together or we will most assuredly all hang separately." Obviously we aren't in danger of being hung the way the colonists were in 1776, but

if we as CCB members don't stick together on the issues of importance to us, we won't be able to accomplish the work that needs to be done.

These are definitely tumultuous times in which we live, but working

together, we can make it through. I am very positive about CCB, our members, and our future. I look forward to working with everyone to make CCB the absolute best organization of and for the blind as we move forward.

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Save The Date!

By Sarah Harris

The California Council of the Blind is pleased to announce:

**Building Our Future,
Remembering Our Past
The 2021 CCB Virtual
Conference and
Convention**

**Pre-Convention
Activities: April 5-21, 2021**

**Main Event: April 22-
25, 2021**

**CCB will hold its 2021
Virtual Conference and
Convention on Zoom with
live streaming of the main
event courtesy of ACB
Radio. This will be a
unique experience to
enjoy from the comfort of
your home!**

What to Expect

- **Informational Panel Discussions**
- **Breakout Presentations**
- **A Salute to CCB History**
- **Sponsorship and Exhibitor Opportunities**
- **Entertainment**
- **A Whole Month of Fun!!**

**For more information,
call the CCB office toll free
at 800-221-6359 or 916-
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ccotb@ccbnet.org.**

**You can also visit our
website at
www.ccbnet.org.**

Accessibility For Some: Why Have Low-Income Blind Californians Been Left Behind?

By Daveed Mandell

Daveed Mandell is a member of the San Francisco Chapter. He worked as a journalist for more than thirty years and has been an advocate for a long time, especially regarding transportation, and environmental and information accessibility.

Without a doubt, the past decade has witnessed life-changing, mind-boggling advances in accessibility for hundreds of thousands of blind and visually impaired people around the globe. Thanks to a whole new generation of smartphones and tablets

—and millions of free or low-cost applications—many of us can now:

- read current books, newspapers and magazines;
- scan printed and handwritten material;
- navigate our neighborhoods and beyond;
- identify objects, money, colors and people;
- send and receive email;
- conduct online transactions;
- play games; and

- **obtain visual assistance anywhere at any time.**

Developments in artificial intelligence have introduced a technology revolution that has resulted in access to the digital world and the built environment like never before. Yet not everyone has benefited from it. While the gap between technology "haves" and "have-nots" has considerably narrowed, most blind and visually impaired people still live on extremely low fixed incomes. By and large, they cannot afford to buy smartphones and tablets, and many of them have no internet access. Although some of these people have bought, or have been given, Amazon and Google

devices with voice assistants, for the most part this bright, new technology era remains closed to them.

The internet has become increasingly invaluable, and even indispensable, for many people around the world, including many blind and visually impaired individuals. The staggering amount of information, resources, webinars, virtual meetings and community calls surrounding the current Covid-19 pandemic is a case in point. However, many blind people who lack internet access have not been able to easily learn about these important resources and virtual events.

We in CCB and ACB strive to attain equal access with sighted people to the world around us. After all, accessibility is a civil and human right. However, despite the well-known digital divide in this country and around the globe, most sighted people don't have to depend entirely on digital devices and applications to access the world around them. Without smartphones and tablets, they can still follow signs, read print, identify objects and people, and navigate their neighborhoods and beyond.

Most dedicated devices manufactured especially for blind people are even more costly and unaffordable for low-

income individuals. Unlike many other industrialized countries, the United States does not provide heavily subsidized or free assistive and mainstream technology equipment to most disabled people. Because of this glaring deficiency, many blind people find it extremely difficult to obtain adequate education and employment. They cannot compete equally with their blind technology-equipped peers and sighted people. They cannot travel as easily as those blind people who have the latest artificial intelligence-based applications.

Most industrialized nations provide disabled people with a disability pension or allowance to offset the high costs of

living with a disability. Not so the United States. Interestingly, however, one state, Missouri, does provide a disability pension to its disabled residents. A disability pension allows people to save money for such expenses as paying readers, shoppers and attendants, and acquiring money to buy mainstream and assistive technology devices.

One of the reasons that low-income blind people have been left behind is that accessibility to many aspects of daily life is increasingly based on smart devices and applications. That is all well and good for some of us. But is it fair to depend completely on this type of accessibility which

excludes the majority of blind people? Shouldn't we also strive to advocate for accessibility technologies and standards that don't depend on devices and applications?

Several examples of accessibility technologies, adopted in the United States, that don't require smartphones and applications immediately come to mind. Accessible pedestrian signals are readily available in the built environments of many jurisdictions. We don't have to carry devices in order to use them. Talking ATMs are now standard equipment at most financial institutions. All one needs to use them is a pair of earbuds. Tactile and high-

contrast tiles warn us of subway platform edges. In the same way, truncated domes on street corners warn us to be careful.

Nonvisual technologies in the built environment are highly controversial and, therefore, remain largely and relatively undeveloped and unrefined. Many physically disabled people feel that tactile detectable warnings are themselves hazards, because some people trip over them. Many wheelchair users detest them, because wheelchairs cannot often smoothly travel over them.

Several countries have adopted additional nonvisual elements in their built environments. For some two decades,

blind Australians have easily been able to locate bus stops, thanks to tactile and high-contrast bus stop indicators embedded in sidewalks throughout the country. In Israel, directional guide paths assist blind people to navigate train stations. Several countries have installed tactile and high-contrast directional guide strips on streets to indicate the center of crosswalks.

Some blind people feel that guide paths in train stations and guide strips at crosswalks are not acceptable, because they in some way actually obstruct the environment. For instance, they feel that guide paths in train stations often only indicate certain specific

areas, and limit where one can travel in these stations. They say that a profusion of guide paths can be extremely confusing. Questions arise, such as how does one determine where they actually lead? If there are several of them, how does one figure out which one to take, especially if they intersect with each other? Are guide paths and guide strips actually architectural barriers?

What can we do to insure that low-income blind people are able to acquire at least some current technology which would allow them to

participate in the modern world? If we are truly concerned about diversity and inclusion, shouldn't CCB and ACB strive to insure that all blind and visually impaired people have equal and fair access to the world around us?

What do BC readers think? Do you agree or disagree with this position? Should there, or should there not, be more nonvisual indicators in the built environment? All comments and ideas are welcome and encouraged. Please address them to editor@ccbnet.org. [Editor: Bring on those Letters to the Editor!]

* * *

2021 ACB Legislative Seminar: A Unique Opportunity

By Jeff Thom

For more than three decades, ACB, as part of its February activities in Washington, D.C., has conducted a Legislative Seminar. Members from throughout the nation, including California of course, are given information on certain key legislative issues, and then asked to visit their members of the House of Representatives and Senate and advocate on these issues. At times, our advocacy efforts are very influential, while on many other occasions, as is true with most interest groups that advocate with Congress, we don't achieve what we would

like. However, I can personally attest to the fact that quite a number of CCB members who have made the trip for the first time return energized and end up being passionate advocates for CCB.

The 2021 ACB Legislative Seminar will be occurring during the week of February 22. Due to the Covid19 pandemic, the 2021 ACB Legislative Seminar will be virtual, thus denying us the opportunity to have face-to-face contact with members of Congress or, as is usually the case in a large state like ours, their staff members. However, as will be shown in this

article, the virtual ACB Legislative Seminar will provide us with a unique opportunity in the advocacy realm in many respects.

As the largest state in the nation, and with 53 members of Congress and our two Senators, it is extremely challenging to send enough members back to Washington to meet with the entire delegation. This is especially the case in light of the higher cost of coming from the West Coast and the lack of funds that CCB has to pay to send advocates to the Legislative Seminar. In 2021, however, cost will not be a concern and thus we can work to have advocates from throughout the state

participate. Another way in which this creates an advantage is that some members of Congress don't like to give appointments unless the advocate resides in their district. Moreover, a Congressman's own constituent generally carries more weight than advocates who reside elsewhere. The virtual Legislative Seminar gives CCB an enhanced opportunity to have representation from most, if not all, Congressional districts. In addition, by including more members as part of the ACB Legislative Seminar, it affords more people the chance to learn firsthand about advocacy, and hopefully develop knowledge and passion

that are important to its success.

Holding a virtual Legislative Seminar also affords ACB greater flexibility in planning the event. As veterans of past seminars know, we receive one days' worth of information about national issues, including those about which we will be advocating with Congress. This year, however, although plans are not finalized, we intend to provide, on February 22 and 23, two days of information on national issues of importance, including those legislative imperatives for our Capitol Hill appointments themselves. This will mean that ACB will devote twice the amount of time for providing this

information. Also, plans are beginning to be made so that ACB can provide logistical information about the platforms we can expect to use in making virtual appointments, and the etiquette that we need to follow to produce best results.

In order to maximize the potential that the virtual Legislative Seminar affords us, it will take organizational efforts on the state level. By the time you read this, I suspect that the wheels will have been set in motion to organize CCB's Congressional advocacy. We want to involve as many of you as possible. However, it is important that participants have the skills to ensure that their

involvement will have a positive impact on our Congressional delegation. Ardis Bazyn and Alice Turner, our Governmental Affairs Committee co-chairs, compiled some skills that are essential for those who intend to participate as CCB advocates.

They include:

- **An interest in connecting with legislators;**
- **Good computer skills and the ability to use the internet;**
- **The ability to assemble information on legislative issues;**
- **The ability to present information, including both policy discussions and stories related to those policies;**
- **Navigating the extremely difficult**

appointment-making process, including obtaining Zoom or other conferencing platform information;

- **Using appropriate Zoom etiquette, including managing visual background and noise and dressing appropriately;**
- **Compiling notes on their Congressional appointments.**

If this sounds daunting, remember that we will be providing training to assist those who have the passion for advocacy and the ability to absorb information quickly. We will be providing training on the fine points of the process, so don't think you need to be a veteran of Capitol Hill visits to be successful.

In conclusion, let's turn the virtual 2021

**Legislative Seminar into
California's most effective**

**and influential Capitol Hill
campaign.**

*** * ***

Black Hills

By Ed and Toni Eames

"Are your dogs afraid of buffalo?", inquired Professor Miller. It was an intriguing question. As far as we knew, our Golden Retriever guide dogs Echo and Escort had never encountered a buffalo before. We were soon to discover that they reacted with complete indifference. As we entered the Heritage Museum in Spearfish, South Dakota, we headed directly for the life-sized stuffed buffalo or, more correctly, American bison. As we explored his massive head, curved horns, thick, luxurious fur and short, spindly tail, our dogs unconcernedly snoozed at the feet of this

massive creature who once dominated the central plains.

Wandering around this incredible museum, we explored exhibits such as a stage coach, prairie schooner, surrey, horse-drawn hearse, and a variety of extremely detailed bronze sculptures created by a local Lakota Indian. Toni's favorite piece depicted a mare trying to protect her foal from three circling wolves. Another intriguing touchable exhibit was a scale model of Mount Rushmore. Tracing the features of the four presidents' faces with our fingers gave us an idea of what sighted visitors

observe when they visit this famous monument.

Having shown their stability in the face of a wild buffalo, the dogs' steadiness was again tested. A sudden hail storm replete with thunder and lightning hit the area. Echo and Escort ignored the violent outdoor elements as they nonchalantly guided us around the museum. By the time we left, the storm had ended and the sun had re-appeared.

Usually we do not enjoy visiting museums because most of the exhibits are inaccessible to blind people. The Heritage Museum, however, provided an almost total hands-on experience.

We were in South Dakota attending an eight-day educational experience similar to an elder hostel. Rather than an age requirement, attendees had to be blind or visually impaired. Although we had heard of the Black Hills State University program for the past several years, we were motivated to attend this year because a friend, who had previously attended, gave it a glowing recommendation. In addition, our travels had never taken us to this part of the United States.

One of the accommodations made for this program was the availability of a large cadre of volunteers. As a result, we did not have to concentrate on learning

our way around the campus. The dogs guided us while following a volunteer from the dormitory to the dining hall and to the classroom building.

Among the volunteers were four teenagers, grandchildren of the program's director. They took their responsibilities as volunteers seriously and were always responsive to the needs of the blind attendees. We jumped at their offer to take the dogs for a well-deserved play session during one of the class periods. Echo and Escort were able to burn off some excess energy by running and playing fetch with the kids. We were proud of how quickly the dogs settled back into guide

work after these play sessions.

After our educational mornings, the group went on a variety of field trips. During theatrical performances of *Fiddler on the Roof* and *The Foreigner*, our guide dogs slept through the productions. When we went horseback riding at the Circle B Ranch, our Goldens happily stayed with the volunteers. When we arrived at the 1880s steam engine train ride, our dogs calmly boarded as if we were taking Amtrak to San Francisco. After the one-hour ride in the open train car, we all had to shake cinders out of our hair and fur. The dogs were probably somewhat bored with the Homestake Gold Mine

Museum tour. Every few feet we'd ask them to SIT STAY while we enjoyed a hands-on exploration of mining tools and equipment. During our gold panning experience, we accumulated a vial of gold dust assessed at a value of \$2!

If the dogs weren't buffaloed by a bison, they certainly weren't impressed by the 35-pound python we handled at the Reptile Gardens. Other trips took us to Mount Rushmore, Custer State Park and Bear Butte. While Toni and Escort completed their gift shopping spree, Ed and

Echo went to Mount Mariah in nearby Deadwood to visit the graves of Wild Bill Hickock and Calamity Jane. On our day off from scheduled activities, we went state hopping. We drove to Aladdin, Wyoming where we visited a delightful general store, and to Alzada, Montana where we had a brief stop at an old saloon. Ed was curious about prairie grass and had the opportunity to stroll through a field of it in Montana.

Our stay in the Black Hills was fantastic, and we hope to return in a few years.

*** * ***

Shades Of Pain

By Regina Brink

As people who are blind or have low vision, many of us share similar experiences. Some are amazing: the first time we successfully travel somewhere all on our own without any sighted assistance, or the first time we overcome a barrier to participation in the workplace. We also share heartaches: incidents of bullying because of our vision loss at school, or the pain of being rejected by sighted people at a gathering where we sit alone while others talk and mingle. However, many people who are blind or have low vision do not realize there are unique experiences

not shared by the whole vision loss community. They are just as painful, if not more so, because they are sometimes at the hands of other people who are blind or have low vision. When these experiences are dismissed by our peers in the vision loss community, then the hurt becomes layered and potentially toxic, both to ourselves and to the whole society

Most of us have seen or heard about the many unarmed black and brown people, mostly men, who have been injured or killed at the hands of law enforcement. This has been going on for a long while, although people

outside those communities did not want to believe it. With current video evidence mounting, it has become a sad reality that we can no longer dismiss. There are years of built-up pain as wounds are constantly being reopened each time a new case is highlighted in the news. Many people are unaware that, according to Eastern Kentucky University featured in Time magazine, the roots of policing in the United States were to manage black slaves and to control indigenous and immigrant populations. It is no wonder there are some underlying racial stereotypes accepted as fact by many police officers. On top of this historical context, people in general relate more

positively to people who look like them and tend to fear those who are "different." This fear of "the other" also works against fair and equitable policing in our nation today.

Education is another area where inequity is alive and well and acceptable to many professionals. Despite our best efforts since the civil rights movement, educational resources and opportunities are not equally available to all. Even in schools for the blind, there are still people today who remember attending segregated schools, riding segregated public transport, and being unable to stop to use the bathroom or get a bite to eat on a road trip,

all because black people would not be served. In some areas of the country, this ban extended to all people who were people of indigenous, Latino and Asian descent. Many people do not know that seven years before the Brown vs Board of Education case, there was a similar case in California, Mendez vs Westminster, that ended the segregation of Mexican children into separate schools. Imagine this: on top of common stereotypes about people who are blind or have low vision, there is a whole other layer of stereotypes making you a threat, offensive, or undesirable to sighted and other blind people. Imagine being considered undeserving of success, second class, or

primitive not just by sighted people, but your fellow citizens who are blind or have low vision.

A third major area of discrimination against marginalized populations is the medical field. Many people with disabilities, including those with vision loss, relate experiencing major bias and discriminatory attitudes in the medical vocation, such as those in a book by Debra Kendrick "Navigating Healthcare, When All They Can See Is That You Can't." This is only compounded when you are black, indigenous, Latinx, or Asian. Many people do not realize experimentation on black and brown bodies has been a part of our medical practice in this society.

Black, indigenous, and other populations of color have been subjects of medical experimentation, forced sterilization, and misdiagnosis leading to serious illness or death. Some infamous examples from American history are the Tuskegee airmen, La Operacion and other eugenics programs in Puerto Rico and across the U.S., and the experiments on black female slaves by the "father of gynecology", James Marion Sims.

Infant mortality rates are also significantly higher among people of color than in the white population. Black people relate experiences where they are told that painful procedures, such as spinal taps, shots directly

administered to the eye, or resetting of bones "shouldn't hurt" or "should be just a pinprick" while there is empathy for white patients going through the same procedures. Black and brown people with similar symptoms to white patients are more likely to be denied pain medicine. Somehow, according to a study conducted by the University of Virginia and published in the April 4, 2016 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the medical discipline has come to accept as fact that black and brown people do not experience pain and illness the same as white people, even though there is no scientific evidence to substantiate this belief.

According to Dr. Neil Singh in an article published by The Guardian, inexperience with the appearance of certain medical conditions with dark skin also can cause misdiagnosis. I will never forget the heart-wrenching pain when my 12 year old son was injured playing basketball and had to be taken to the emergency room. Prior to stitching him up, the resident carefully cleaned the wound and prepared to do the stitching. The attending physician insisted the pigment of his skin in the wound was dirt. She ordered the resident to scrub the wound vigorously with a brush. The resident tried to point out it was skin pigment and would cause undue suffering to do such a

procedure on my child. The attending physician would not listen and my brave son, who had not cried till then, broke down under the unnecessary ministrations. Meanwhile, I stood by helplessly.

I could go on with further examples of racism in society. Many incidents go unfiled and unreported. Men are stopped with white canes in their pockets, suspected of carrying weapons. Wedding parties find themselves at a restaurant for breakfast and white people are served ahead of them, seated before them, and waiters act clueless when questioned. Young black and brown men are stopped, spread-eagled on the sidewalk at gunpoint,

and questioned, their ID's scanned for warrants, only to be released without charges. Crosses are burned on the lawns of families because they have moved into white areas and young people are told they must get permission to date outside their race if they attend certain private religious colleges.

People who are blind or have low vision do not exist in a vacuum. They are also products of the communities in which they live and move. When some people hear these stories, they are shocked and many do not believe they are true. Black and brown people are told they "feel" they are being discriminated against but it is actually not real. For

some reason, people in the vision loss community who are white imagine life is the same for their black and brown brothers and sisters. It is not! This misconception only makes the pain more intense for those of us from other cultural backgrounds.

I have no doubt that reports and videos of such discrimination and dehumanization evoke feelings of distress in many white people who are blind or have low vision. Nevertheless those feelings are nowhere near the anguish, hurt, anger, and terror felt by those of us who are black, indigenous, Latinx, or Asian listening or watching the same stories. Many white people could never imagine they would

be hurt or dead at the hands of people sworn to defend and protect them. Just like the pain of discrimination because of vision loss, racial prejudice and bigotry rear their ugly heads unexpectedly, shattering happy moments like weddings, graduations, or new births. For blind people of color, intolerance and prejudice against us become entangled till it is impossible to tease out which incidences are due to stereotypes about vision loss and which are due to race or ethnic background. No matter why, when the response of other people in the vision loss community is the same or even more vitriolic than in the sighted society as a whole, these

feelings are magnified. When my fellow people with vision loss tell me what black and brown and indigenous people "should have done" or "ought to do", I want to ask them questions like, where do you think your breaking point would be? How much hurt, rage, and revulsion could you endure before cracking under the pressure? Instead of being remarkable because of the reactions currently exhibited, it is more extraordinary to me that more black and brown people do not break under these layers of marginalization. I haven't even mentioned the experience of our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters with vision loss who are also black, indigenous, or other

people of color which would require a whole new article to examine and thoroughly understand.

I did not write this article to elicit feelings of guilt or shame or to condemn any group of people. I decided to write this article to foster understanding and compassion. Precisely because we do share the common experiences of vision loss, I believe our community can reach into our hearts and find a sense of responsibility for social justice issues for marginalized groups, offering empathy and advocacy to them. Our knowledge of how discrimination feels because of our shared

vision loss positions us to be able to broaden our mentality to grasp the extra layers of hurt and pain experienced by people who are blind or have low vision from diverse backgrounds. We must open our arms and welcome them into our organization. I want the California Council of the Blind to be a place where they can find compassion, acceptance, and restoration. I want our organization to be a place where they are respected and empowered. I want this organization to be a place where they experience equity and are valued. If we do this, we can be a beacon for the sighted society.

Further Reading

- <https://plsonline.eku.edu/insidelook/brief-history-slavery-and-origins-american-policing>
- <https://time.com/4779112/police-history-origins/>
- <https://lawenforcementmuseum.org/2019/07/10/slave-patrols-an-early-form-of-american-policing/>
- <https://blog.nbp.org/blog/authors-introduction-navigating-healthcare-when-all-they-see-is-that-you-cant>
- <https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/book-excerpts/health-article/forced-sterilization/>
- <https://www.history.com/news/the-father-of-modern-gynecology-performed-shocking-experiments-on-slaves>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4843483/> [Racial Bias and pain Assessment]
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/aug/13/decolonising-dermatology-why-black-and-brown-skin-need-better-treatment>

* * *

The CAAVLry Is Charging Into 2021!

By Frank Welte

The California Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss is continuing to grow and to make our presence felt as we move into 2021.

As of this writing we now have 35 members, and we expect to have been accepted as an affiliate of the Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss by the time you read this article.

Most of our committees have met, and they are working on a variety of projects.

Our Advocacy and Legislation Committee will focus its efforts in four areas in 2021 as follows.

1. Working on the introduction and

passage of state legislation to require pharmacies to provide prescription information in formats that are accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired.

2. Advocacy with the Legislature and the Newsome

Administration to ensure that any long-term care at home benefit under Medi-Cal includes vision rehabilitation services, daily living skills, vision therapy, orientation and mobility and technology services, and training.

- 3. Exploring partnerships with California blindness service agencies to better serve older individuals who are blind or visually impaired.**
- 4. Exploring possible collaborations with one or two counties to launch pilot proposition 63-funded projects to provide mental health services for older blind individuals.**

Our Constitution and Bylaws Committee has made important revisions to our Constitution during 2020, and they will continue to make changes that may be needed in the future.

Our Fundraising Committee is planning to launch our first major

fundraising campaign in early 2021.

Our Membership Committee is reaching out to individuals who have expressed interest in our organization, and the Committee is also hosting a support group for blind seniors on Zoom each Friday at 10:00 AM. For more information, about the support group, contact Bob Acosta at boacosta818@gmail.com, or call him at (818) 620-2200.

The Peer to Peer Committee is also starting several important projects. See Ruth Ann Acosta's article in this issue for details.

Our Quality of Life Committee is planning projects to improve the quality of life for blind and

visually impaired seniors in California.

With your help, we can accomplish even greater things in 2021.

Here's how to join California Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss.

To join, send your \$25.00 dues to our Treasurer, Denise Weddle, at the following address:

Denise Weddle

4058 Moore St.

Los Angeles, CA 90066

Also, we'll need your contact information for our member roster. We need the following information:

Name:

Home address:

Preferred phone number:

Preferred Email address:

Vision status (totally blind, legally blind, low vision, fully sighted):

Your preferred alternate media format (braille, large print, audio, Email):

***Disclosure status: (disclose, do not disclose):**

***You may elect to share your contact information with CAAVL committee chairs for their use in the conduct of official business, or to keep this information private. However, we are required to submit this information to the CCB office.**

**Please send this information to Denise Weddle at the following Email address:
deaniew21@verizon.net**

**For more information,
please contact Frank
Welte, CAAVL's Interim
President, by email at**

**Frank.A.Welte@gmail.com
or by phone at (510) 541-
1442.**

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California Alliance On Aging And Vision Loss: Report Of The Peer To Peer Committee

By Ruth Ann Acosta, Chair

Earlier this year, under the presidency of Frank Welte, the California Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss became the newest affiliate of the California Council of the Blind. I am pleased to announce that our Peer to peer Committee is now off and running.

We held a very successful committee meeting, and in later Blind Californians we will discuss our numerous goals and activities which we are now considering.

The purpose of the Peer to Peer Committee is to help those older blind

persons either facing vision loss or having particular difficulties adjusting to old age to cope in our Covid-restricted society.

Our committee members will soon be ready to speak to our CAAVL members and others who contact the Committee. We also plan to contact our CAAVL members to mentor them when asked, or to just see how they are doing.

It is hoped that we will plan special programs on blindness and aging in 2021. Those feeling alone and isolated or who just

wish to talk about a
pressing issue can call

Ruth Ann Acosta at 818-
998-0044.

Thank you.

* * *

Introduction To "The Walking Stick"

By Noel H. Runyan

The following story is from Leon Cooper, our favorite high school chemistry teacher, who often aided us in some of the mischievous capers that helped to keep our high school fun and interesting. At the time, we didn't realize that our favorite teacher was visually impaired. As a curious science student in 1945, he was fascinated by that year's sun grazing comet, which he unfortunately observed too much, while not wearing any eye protection. Too late, he discovered that he had severely damaged his eyes. Because he thought he might get in trouble for it, he didn't tell his parents

about his vision loss. Instead, he wandered around with his eyes cast down, bumping into things, and pretending to be only feeling poorly because of a cold. Despite his severe vision loss, he went on to graduate from college, earn his private pilot's license, and become a successful and popular chemistry teacher.

Now that he is 90, Leon has to use an electronic magnifier (Reading Machine) to read the newspaper, but he is still active, writing books, and developing new inventions in his personal lab and shop.

The following is one of his many stories, and it reveals that one of the world's most famous scientists also had a significant disability that most of us never knew about.

The Walking Stick

By Leon E. Cooper

About 40 years ago, I had the opportunity of working one-on-one with Edward Teller, the recognized father of the hydrogen bomb, at Los Alamos National Laboratory. He frequently returned from his California home to continue work on nuclear research.

On this particular occasion, he and I had been working three or four successive evenings at the cyclotron facility. One

evening, he was seated in front of a console of analyzing equipment, intently studying various gauges and instruments, his bushy eyebrows moving up and down from time to time. I was about 15 feet away, seated in front of another console of dials and gauges, maintaining a steady beam of high-energy alpha particles used to bombard a special target. These projects sometimes involved making isotopes of man-made elements.

Dr. Teller never went anywhere without his trademark walking stick—a slender crooked limb about equal to his 5-foot 7-inch stature and darkened with the passage of time. We occasionally made small talk, but most of the time was spent in silence as we

concentrated on the experiment at hand. As he carefully peered at the instruments, adjusting first one dial then another, he suddenly made a remark that I assumed was meant as humor.

"Mees-tuh Coop-uh, do you mind eef I take off my foot?"

I didn't look up, but replied, "Be my guest," or something to that effect.

A moment later, I glanced to my right and was surprised to see that he had in fact removed his foot! There was his shoe sitting on the console desk, complete with an artificial foot and sock! I was speechless but tried to hide any emotion. He returned the glance and smiled, explaining that the stump of his lower leg sometimes

itched after a long day and that he needed to rub it. I remarked that one of my best friends back in high school had also lost a foot.

Dr. Teller apparently thought he owed me an explanation. He described how, as a young man back in Europe (Hungary, I believe), he'd fallen off a train and his foot had been severed at the ankle.

I asked why he preferred the crooked stick rather than an ordinary walking cane. He was quick to reply, and I got a lesson in walking sticks.

"Vatch," he said. "Vit dee stick, I can raise myself to stand on von foot." He demonstrated. "Vit dee cane, you cannot do dat. Ven you poosh downvard on dee cane, dee load-bearing force ees thrust

outward een an un-stay-beel
manner, but ven you use
dee valking stick, you
actually pool yourself
opvard ahn dee load-
bearing force ees thrust
downvard rah-thah than
outvard. The result ees that

you have stay-beel-ee-tee
vit dee valking stick."

(Comment: I vil neffer
forget thees occasion, nor
vil I effer forget dee unique
and most personable Dr.
Teller.)

* * *

Local Resident Goes Through A COVID World Without Full Use Of Her Sight

By Genoa Barrow, OBSERVER Senior Staff Writer

November 9, 2020

Earlier this year, Stephanie Watts participated in the local Martin Luther King, Jr. march and followed that up with a 5K walk on Valentine's Day. She also worked out at the YWCA three times a week.

Diminishing sight hasn't stopped Stephanie Watts from living her best life. She's shown here with her husband of 22 years, Kymi, who is also legally blind. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he goes out more than she does, as Ms. Watts is not

comfortable being around people who don't take the same precautions she does.

"I didn't retire just to have all these health issues," said Ms. Watts, 60, of her pursuit of a healthier lifestyle.

She modified her diet and bought one of those three-in-one elliptical machines for her townhouse. She started to feel good and often took walks in her neighborhood, just to get some fresh air.

Then COVID-19 hit and everything changed. Seven months into the pandemic, it is common to see signs outside of businesses stating, "Closed Due To COVID," "Masks Required For Entry" or "Remember To Stay 6 feet Apart."

Because she's legally blind, Ms. Watts can't see any of those things. The Long Beach native was born with optic atrophy and glaucoma and had limited vision most of her life.

"I was able to see a little bit, mostly what was in front of me versus distance; I never really had that," she shared.

Ms. Watts retired in 2015 after 28 years of state service and was enjoying her freedom when in 2018,

what sight and light perception she did have began to diminish.

Simple things like pouring a cup of coffee became difficult.

"(Before), I could go to my kitchen and get the coffee pot and pour a cup of coffee visually. Now with diminished vision, I could see the cup, but not with any great accuracy. I thought to myself, "I'm going to have to get a technique for this so that I'm not just pouring coffee all over the kitchen counter," she shared.

"What was stable for me that enabled me to do what I needed to do or wanted to do was changing."

That's when Ms. Watts reached out to the Society

of the Blind in Midtown Sacramento.

"Limited vision is fine, well and good. People get used to what they get used to; it's stable, but it's that instability that gets us thrown off."

The Society of the Blind helps people adjust to being blind, largely people who become blind, suddenly or gradually, at some point. Ms. Watts, having been blind since birth, didn't have the same needs, but implored them to help her "brush up" on her mobility skills. She began participating in their Senior IMPACT Program and attended a retreat to help older people who are losing their sight learn new skills to maintain their independence.

Ms. Watts participated in a program graduation ceremony on March 13.

"By the following Monday we were on stay-at-home orders, so I haven't really been out and about much because I'm a very conscious person and I don't see a need to be places unless it's necessary," she shared.

She was asked to be a mentor to newly blind individuals and participated in a Black American Senior Support group that was started in July, helping to show people that the Society for the Blind is inclusive. Members call in twice a week to engage.

"Some seniors are feeling more isolated than I am," Ms. Watts shared. "I

have myself on Zoom and all kinds of other stuff. I was telling somebody I'm more busy now than I was before."

Ms. Watts is a member of the local chapter of the California Council of the Blind where she serves on the Legislative and Community Affairs, Inclusive Diversity, and Access and Technology committees. She also volunteers with other blindness organizations, beta testing and giving policy input.

"I want to remain active," she said.

She's largely been practicing her newfound skills close to home. She's weary of taking Lyft or Uber as she once did.

"We've got to take it on faith that they've done everything they say they did. You have to or you won't go anywhere," she said.

She's always preferred to buy groceries online rather than in-person shopping. Her husband, however, doesn't mind going into stores. He'll ask employees for help locating items. Many sight impaired folks also take advantage of services like Instacart that will shop at various stores for them.

"There's different services available now that weren't available say even 10 to 15 years ago," Ms. Watts said.

"Companies like AIRA (Artificial Intelligence Remote Assistance) that will connect with you

through your phone and then they see what's around you through your back facing camera and you can literally hold the phone up and say, 'OK what am I in front of?'... You can also use that same service to walk down the street and be able to 'observe' what's around you. They'll tell you, 'OK, you got a tree in front of you, step two steps to the left' or 'there's a telephone pole on your right' or 'someone's passing you on the left or the right' they literally see what's going on around you to enable you in these days and times to navigate. Especially with COVID you want to know if someone's getting close to you and doesn't have on a mask, you definitely

want to get out of their way."

Most days, though, she simply uses her white cane.

"Those services enhance things, but for some who don't have the money or the interest, then you certainly can get along without them," she said.

She misses her 5K walks, but having to do them while holding onto a helper's elbow doesn't allow for required social distancing and she wouldn't feel comfortable, even with face masks.

Instead, she'll continue to work out with her home gym and go for walks around the complex where she lives.

"COVID has affected that piece of my life," she said. "I need a different president with a different national plan before I feel comfortable really letting

myself out there. Too many people are doing too many things. Some make sense, some don't, so I got time. I can be conscientious."

*** * ***

Fun With The NLS Player

By Deborah Armstrong

Did you know your friendly NLS digital talking book player can do more than simply play books from your regional library? It can play commercial audiobooks, conference recordings, and any MP3 you download from the internet. It can act as a boom box and even be operated with a USB keyboard or even hands-free.

To play content which you downloaded, such as commercial audio books, music or even podcasts, you first create a folder on a cartridge or thumb drive called Audio+Podcasts. The case of the folder name doesn't matter, but there needs to be a real plus sign

between the words Audio and Podcasts, and the folder name cannot contain spaces or other punctuation.

The player will recognize that anything you copy to this folder can be played. You can buy empty cartridges from a variety of commercial sources; check the NLS website or with your regional library for recommendations as they change from time to time. A blank cartridge typically costs from \$12 to \$15.

But you can also use a thumb drive, sometimes called a flash or USB drive. Plug it in to your PC to download what you want to

hear, and plug it in to the side of your player to listen.

Turn on the player and hold the play button down for a second to activate the player's bookshelf mode. The items on your cartridge or thumb drive will appear after any digital talking books that are also loaded on the cartridge or thumb drive. If your files are not available, it might be that you forgot to put them in the special Audio+Podcasts folder, or perhaps the files are not MP3. For example the Zoom conference recordings are MP4 video files which won't play, but which a technical person can easily convert for you. In my job at a college, I often convert these so students can listen to recordings of their class lectures.

For boom box mode, simply turn up the speaker. The NLS player is surprisingly loud, and I keep mine near my treadmill with a spare cartridge loaded up with music and short podcasts to keep me entertained while working out.

Many of you may not know how well the NLS players work with what's called HID-compliant technology. HID stands for Human Interface Device.

Most USB keyboards, keypads, foot pedals and even puff and sip switches are HID-compliant.

This feature was built in to the NLS player so physically disabled folks would have equal access. The process of configuring it is called Learning Mode,

and it's similar to programming a TV remote.

In practical terms, this means:

- You can buy a \$10 foot pedal from Amazon, connect it to your player and just step on the pedal to stop and start the player.
- You can buy an inexpensive waterproof keyboard to operate all functions of the player with dirty hands, then toss the keyboard in the dishwasher.
- You can also connect a standard USB keyboard or keypad and use them to operate the player.

- You can connect a puff and sip switch for someone who cannot use their hands, and set it up for operating some of the player's functions.

I have experimented with all this; and it is really fun. I got my waterproof keyboard at a flea market for \$5. But you can find them cheap on Amazon or Ebay. They are rubberized and used in industrial situations where factory workers need to operate a computer with dirty hands. If you find it a hassle to read recipes while cooking, this is your solution.

You can purchase cheap keyboards and keypads too. A keypad with a long cord is convenient for operating the player from a bed or wheelchair. You can also put the player

on a shelf and use a small keypad on your desk. You can even keep a keypad in a zip-lock bag for reading recipes as well.

I bought the puff and sip switch online using my employer's money because I was asked to find a hands-free reading solution for a blind quadriplegic. He can now stop, start, rewind and fast-forward the player without needing to call his caregiver.

I bought the \$10 foot pedal so I could practice guitar with Bill Brown's tutorials. Now I can easily stop and start the player with my foot.

The very last section of the NLS player manual—its appendix, has instructions on how to program your HID-compliant device. You can only operate one device

at a time, but you need not keep the device connected. If you want to use a different device, simply repeat the simple learning mode process.

Here's a summary:

- 1. Turn off the player. Remove any cartridge.**
- 2. Connect your device. Turn the player on.**
- 3. Hold the Sleep button for five seconds.**
- 4. You'll be prompted to press Fast-Forward to continue; do that.**
- 5. Select a button on your player you want the device to emulate. Press that button on the player and its name will be announced.**
- 6. Press the button on your device that will be used to trigger that player button.**

7. Repeat these steps for assigning player buttons to keypresses on your HID device until you're done.
 8. Press the power button on your NLS player to exit. Your player will turn itself off and remember the settings.
- I hope this article has given you a few fun experiments to enjoy with your digital talking book player!

* * *

Accessible Pharmacy Joins Be My Eyes

By Will Butler

Two Blind-Founded Companies Are Teaming Up To Assist Blind And Low Vision Consumers With Medication Support, Covid Testing And More.

[From the Be My Eyes blog for November 9, 2020.]

Look around the pharmacy and what do you see? Small-print labels, identical pill bottles and inaccessible interfaces abound. And in the time of COVID, where drive-up testing and social distancing is the norm, blind and low-vision people have found themselves struggling more than ever

to feel healthy and informed.

That's why, starting on November 9, Be My Eyes will welcome our first partner pharmacy on to our app! Our users in the United States will be able to ask their questions about medicine, drug interactions, and starting in December, even order in-home COVID tests from trained professionals who know how to safely and effectively set up blind individuals for success. We're thrilled to welcome the newest Specialized Help partner, Accessible Pharmacy Services, to the Be My Eyes Community!

Below you can find out more about how and why this partnership came together, and the story behind how Accessible Pharmacy was founded.

COVID hits hard, and two blind founded-companies team up to help

"What if we start exhibiting symptoms of COVID? How do we go through the drive-through testing sites in an ethical way?" Stacy Cervenka, Director of Public Policy at the American Foundation for the Blind, outlined the many new challenges facing blind people for Bloomberg this spring. "We could use a ride-sharing service; You could call a family, friend or neighbor; But then you're putting them in danger." As the pandemic has progressed,

COVID-19 has only continued to expose the weaknesses in access and inclusion for individuals with visual impairments in getting their most basic needs met.

From ABC to the BBC, the travails of being blind during a pandemic have been well-documented — and speculated upon — by outside observers. But who has actually offered solutions? That's why, like most great breakthroughs, it took entrepreneurs with lived experience to come up with new channels for our community to adapt.

At Be My Eyes, we believe companies and products are truly special when they're designed by those who actually need and use them. You probably know the story of Hans

Jørgen, the blind craftsman who conceived of Be My Eyes in Denmark in 2012. But you might not know the story of Alex Cohen, the blind man behind Accessible Pharmacy.

How Accessible Pharmacy Got Its Start

When Alex Cohen was pursuing his Ph.D. in marketing with the goal of becoming a college professor, his dissertation research dealt with examining the accessibility of both the online and physical marketplace and how they could be made more inclusive for the blind and low vision community. After earning his doctorate, he continued his research in this area, and repeatedly uncovered both practical and philosophical obstacles to implementing these

solutions. Importantly, through his research and own lived experience, he discovered that these accessibility-related shortcomings were particularly apparent in pharmacies. Yes, accessibility and inclusion is important in all aspects of the retailing marketplace, but when you're dealing with healthcare-related services and medication management the importance grows exponentially.

Deciding that continued efforts trying to make the existing pharmacy marketplace more accessible was far too exhausting, Cohen came together with his business partners to create a brand new marketplace specially made for the blind and low

vision community. They wanted to create a community where high quality medication management services are individually crafted to meet the unique needs of every patient, and where accessibility and inclusion are never an afterthought. This is how Accessible Pharmacy Services came to be a reality.

In 2020, Accessible Pharmacy launched as a comprehensive, home delivery pharmacy service specializing in the needs of people who are blind or have low vision. Founded by blind and sighted experts in the areas of accessibility, technology and medicine, Accessible Pharmacy is the only provider of its kind.

Accessible Pharmacy offers

free home delivery of prescription medication, OTC medication, Accessible Pharmacy brand vitamins, supplements, small home medical devices, and COVID home tests. Furthermore, they offer more than 10 different types of accessible packaging, including ScripTalk, so you can find the packaging that suits you best at no further cost.

Picture the full pharmacy experience, specifically designed by and for those who are blind or low vision.

Accessible Pharmacy's team is available for blind and low-vision Be My Eyes users in the US—you don't even have to be an Accessible Pharmacy patient. Accessible Pharmacy can answer any

questions you might have related to medicines, vitamins and supplements, as well as guide you through the services they offer and your home COVID-19 test.

Making a call to Accessible Pharmacy through Be My Eyes is easy. Just open the Be My Eyes app, enter the Specialized Help menu, and locate Accessible Pharmacy in the Personal Health Category. The Accessible Pharmacy team is ready to take your call

Monday through Friday from 10am to 3pm ET.

For more information about what Accessible Pharmacy can offer, visit their website at

<https://www.accessiblepharmacy.com/> or give them a call on Be My Eyes today!

Please note: Accessible Pharmacy is only available for blind and low-vision users in the US through Be My Eyes. Please do not contact regular Be My Eyes volunteers for questions regarding medications and health issues.

* * *

Benefits Of Audio Description In Education Contest

Submitted by Susan Glass

The American Council of the Blind's Audio Description Project (ACB-ADP) and the Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) are continuing their co-sponsorship of an exciting opportunity for blind and visually impaired young people, in four categories from ages 7 to 21: the Benefits of Audio Description in Education (BADIE) contest.

Students choose an audio described film or video from the thousands of titles available through DCMP via streaming or on DVDs—visit www.dcmp.org.

Reviews can be submitted in writing, in braille, or via an audio recording. Register for the contest at: <http://listeningislearning.org/badie.html>. Entries can also be submitted via e-mail or postal mail.

DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES: Friday, January 22, 2021

Contest winners in each category will be chosen by February 19, 2021, and the grand prize winner will receive an iPad Mini! Each first-place winner will receive a \$100 iTunes gift card. Second-place winners will receive a \$50 iTunes gift card, and

third-place winners will receive a \$25 iTunes gift card. Each supporting teacher who has a first-place winning student will

be awarded a \$100 Amazon gift card.

Go to ACB's website for details.

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CCB Board Meeting Minutes

By Linda Porelle, CCB Secretary

**California Council of
the Blind**

Public Board Meeting

**Thursday, June 11,
2020**

Agenda:

1. Call to order, roll call and introduction of guests.
2. Additions to and adoption of agenda.
3. Approval of minutes for May 14—Linda Porelle.
4. President's report—Judy Wilkinson.
5. Treasurer's report—Lisa Thomas.
6. Convention update—Jeff Thom.
7. Approval of credit card for treasurer.
8. Post-convention resolution transferring bank accounts to new president.
9. Other business.
10. New business.
11. Listening to our members.
12. Adjournment.

The meeting was called to order by President Wilkinson at 7:02 PM.

Roll call

Present:

Officers:

President: Judy Wilkinson

First Vice President: Gabe Griffith

Second Vice President: Sarah Harris

Secretary: Linda Porelle

Treasurer: Lisa Thomas

**Immediate Past President:
Jeff Thom**

**Directors: Steve Bauer,
Christy Crespin, Nelly
Emerson, Pam Metz,
Sharlene Ornelas, Rob
Turner, Penny Valdovinos,
and Frank Welte**

Absent:

Paul Patche Jr

BDM2020-31

**Motion to approve
agenda. Sharlene moved
and Penny seconded. The
motion passed
unanimously.**

BDM2020-32

**Motion to approve May
14 Board meeting minutes.
Linda moved and Sarah
seconded. The motion
passed unanimously.**

President's report

**Judy reported that we
will submit a 30% larger
budget for Energy Upgrade
California (EUC.) We will
begin to receive payment in
July.**

BDM2020-33

**Motion to appoint a
task force from the Board to
oversee structure of new
EUC grant. Jeff moved and
Sarah seconded. The
motion passed
unanimously.**

**Judy noted that July
will mark the last month of
50% reduction in our rent.
Nicole Pachico will be
returning to work in the
office after convention.
Sharlene asked about the
landlord's measures for
preparing the building.
Judy will check on that.**

Judy also reported that we have signed papers for confidentiality in our negotiation regarding the Mel Kahn Trust. There will be a mediation hearing in July. His daughter has agreed to the mediator. We are now asking for valuation of the assets in the trust. Jeff Thom asked if Board needs to approve settlement. Christy Crespino wondered if we have any recordings of Mel at convention. Rob Turner said that John Glass can help with that. Bernice Kandarian suggested getting the ACB digest.

Update on On-the-MuV

We decided that we won't donate a sit mill to the ACB auction. We'll donate the Echo studio instead. We'll be launching On-the-MuV at our

convention. Joanna has an intern for us for 10 hours a week to help with the project.

BDM2020-34

Motion to accept the treasurer's report. Lisa moved and Rob seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Summary: Lisa will present a full report at our regular meeting in July and a longer report at convention.

General Bank Balance as of June 11, 2020: \$50,923.85

Payables Outstanding: \$5,303.88

Deposits In Transit: \$4,165.00

Expected Bank Balance at June 30, 2020: \$49,784.97

As part of a brief discussion, Mitch

Pomerantz, chair of the Newel Perry Trustees, clarified that we had made two withdrawals of \$20,000 each in 2019.

Convention registrations as of June 10, 2020 is 152

Revenue generated from convention registration fees as of June 10, 2020: \$1,520

Individual donations generated from convention registrations as of June 10, 2020: \$2,645.00

Convention update

Jeff reported that several chapters and affiliates have donated 28 \$25 gift cards so far. There is also a surprise donation from Judy. We have extended registration to Wednesday, June 17 at noon. The office will be

sending out convention info packets by email beginning on Monday, June 15. The info packets will have voting numbers, the convention program, and zoom lines, etc. we'll have webinar space of up to 500 attendees. ACB will get to observe how our remote voting works out. We are doing practice runs beforehand. Gabe is amazed at turn out for many of the pre-convention committee and affiliate meetings.

BDM2020-35

Motion to obtain a credit card for our treasurer. Gabe moved and Sharlene seconded.

BDM2020-36

Motion to limit, treasurer's credit card to \$300. Gabe moved and

Sharlene seconded. Both motions passed unanimously. Jeff suggested that we develop a written policy regarding the assignment and use of credit cards.

Other business

The new Board will ratify transfer of names on bank accounts in July.

We will be looking at life memberships during this year. The cost will stay at \$200 for now

Listening to members

Steve Mendelsohn expressed approval for extended time for convention registration. He also suggested inviting people from around the country. Steve asked Lisa if our liability insurance covers On-the-MuV. Lisa is checking on that. We'll

probably need to add a rider. Bernice announced that there will be 10 angels honored at ACB convention this year. Cathy Skivers and Durward K. McDaniel will be announced on Sunday. We have over a \$1000 for Cathy's angel. Sheila Gunn-Cushman noted that the information flier for the insights art show in 2018 was not accessible. We need a policy stating that all materials for conventions must be accessible. Chris Fendrick agrees with that. He also asked Judy to check on the gift from their chapter. Judy will look into it. Margie Donavon reiterated that everything must always be accessible. Rob assured her that we will have recordings of all convention sessions. Olivia Ostergard asked about speaking at a candidate

forum. Sheila Gunn-Cushman expressed some continuing concerns about amazon accessibility.

Judy adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM after acknowledging Sharlene and Paul who are leaving the Board at the end of June.

California Council of the Blind Public Board meeting

Open Board meeting

Thursday August 13,
2020—7:30 PM

Agenda

Call to order.

Roll call and introduction of guests.

Additions to and adoption of agenda.

Minutes July 9, 2020—
Linda Porelle.

Treasurer's report—
Lisa Thomas.

President's report—
Gabe Griffith.

Board Liaisons report—
Sarah Harris.

Policy.

List.

Solidarity statement.

Member Sound off.

Adjournment.

President Gabe Griffith called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM.

Roll Call

Present:

President: Gabe Griffith

1st Vice President: Sarah Harris.

2nd Vice President: Rob Turner.

Secretary: Linda Porelle.

Treasurer: Lisa Thomas.

BDM2020-46

**Immediate Past President:
Judy Wilkinson.**

Linda moved and Nelly seconded to accept July treasurer's report. Lisa read highlights. The motion passed unanimously.

Directors:

Steve Bauer, Nelly Emerson, Larry Gassman, Pam Metz, Guillermo Robles, Jeff Thom Penny Valdovinos, and Frank Welte.

President's report

Absent:

Christy Crespin

BDM2020-44

Rob moved and Guillermo seconded to adopt the proposed agenda for current Board meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Gabe talked with James Collins about plans for use of Energy Upgrade California (EUC) grant. CCB is still waiting for official contract letter from PG & E. We will wait to start setting up internships for that program.

BDM2020-45

Guillermo moved and Larry seconded to accept July 2020 Board meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

James will also be applying for a small grant from the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD). Under this grant, if we provide in kind services for \$10,000, we can receive \$10,000 in grant funds from them. For example, we

could provide iPhone training for that grant.

Now that we have approved the CAAVL charter, we will work on starting a CCB Next Generation group. GUILLERMO has set the first discussion meeting for September 12 at 3:30 PM. This group will focus on the interests of members aged 21 to 50.

We will be looking for more ways to capture everything we do, especially more volunteer hours.

Gabe announced that we have received an \$18,500 grant from the California Community Foundation to be used for scholarships for the 2020-2021 academic year. We also received our usual \$10,000 grant from Active

Blind as well. The combination will allow us to offer more scholarships to more students in this round.

Jeff asked about setting up EUC task force and wants to start sooner. Gabe will look into that. We need to decide how the trainees will be chosen, whether they will be sighted or blind, and what their hourly rate could be.

Jeff also noted that we need to have an audit soon. Lisa agrees and will be compiling information to make that happen. She still needs last audit report. Judy suggested we check with Nicole and Lisa can contact our previous auditor.

BDM2020-47

Guillermo moved and Rob seconded to adopt the Board CCB liaison policy which was read to the attendees by Steve Bauer. The motion passed unanimously. Then Steve read the list of liaison assignments. During the following discussion, Vita Zavoli expressed a concern about skills of liaisons. Judy felt that we don't need another layer of oversight at this time. We can still have the original planning committee for this purpose, if the need arises.

BDM2020-48

Jeff moved adoption of the proposed CCB Solidarity Statement, which was read by Guillermo, and Larry seconded. The motion passed unanimously. There was a short discussion

about using "respectful" rather than "safe" and adding "people with disabilities." The proposed language as read was adopted.

Member sound off

Here are some concerns raised during this portion of the meeting. -

In a more general way, could we figure out the skills that some folks may have and share them with others.

Bob asked how can liaisons help with in-person meetings.

Why did we choose March and October as reporting dates for liaisons? March is after rosters are submitted and October is before most chapter elections.

Will we need to use SMUD funds in Sacramento area only? The answer seems to be no.

Can we share reports from liaisons with chapter presidents? There could be some confidentiality challenges with that idea. We'll need to re-evaluate the work of the liaisons as we go along.

BDM2020-49

Guillermo moved and Larry seconded to move to executive session. The motion passed unanimously.

CCB Board Executive Session

Thursday, August 13, 2020

President Gabe Griffith called the meeting to order at 9:35 PM.

Roll Call:

Present:

President: Gabe Griffith

1st Vice President: Sarah Harris

2nd Vice President: Rob Turner

Secretary: Linda Porelle

Treasurer: Lisa Thomas

Immediate Past President: Judy Wilkinson

Directors:

Steve Bauer, Nelly Emerson, Larry Gassman, Pam Metz, Guillermo Robles, Jeff Thom, Penny Valdovinos, and Frank Welte

Absent:

Christy Crespin

Invited member:

Andrea De Klotz.

BDM2020-50

Jeff moved and Guillermo seconded that CCB shall enter into structured negotiations with the California Department of Parks and Recreation and other appropriate parties regarding the accessibility/usability of their web site, and if those negotiations do not occur, CCB shall commence legal action against the department, provided that damages shall not be sought. The motion passed unanimously.

BDM2020-51

Judy moved and Steve seconded that CCB President Gabe Griffith be authorized to enter into a new contract with Calvo and Fisher based on their proposed terms regarding

the Mel Kahn Trust matter. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 PM.

**California Council of
the Blind**

**Open Board meeting
Thursday September
10, 2020—7:30 PM**

President Gabe Griffith called the meeting to order at 7:33 PM.

Agenda

Call to order—Gabe Griffith.

Roll call and introduction of guests—Linda Porelle.

Additions to and adoption of agenda—Gabe Griffith.

Minutes August 13, 2020—Linda Porelle.

**Treasurer's report—
Lisa Thomas.**

**Monetary
reimbursement reversal,
Gabe Griffith.**

**President's report—
Gabe Griffith.**

**Onthemuv update—
Judy Wilkinson.**

**CCB 2021 convention—
Sarah Harris.**

**CCB 2020 auction—
Andrea DeKlotz**

Member sound off.

Adjournment.

Roll Call.

Present:

President: Gabe Griffith

**1st Vice President: Sarah
Harris**

**2nd Vice President: Rob
Turner**

Secretary: Linda Porelle

Treasurer: Lisa Thomas

**Immediate Past President,
Judy Wilkinson**

Directors:

**Steve Bauer, Christy
Crespin, Nelly Emerson,
Pam Metz, Guillermo
Robles, Jeff Thom, Penny
Valdovinos, and Frank
Welte.**

Absent:

Larry Gassman

BDM2020-53

**Rob moved and
Guillermo seconded to
adopt the proposed
meeting agenda. The
motion passed
unanimously.**

BDM2020-54

**Linda moved and
Christy seconded to
approve the open Board
meeting minutes for August**

13, 2020. The motion passed unanimously.

BDM2020-55

Guillermo moved and Nelly seconded to approve the executive Board meeting minutes for August 13, 2020. The motion passed unanimously.

BDM2020-56

Penny moved and Steve seconded to accept the treasurer's report. The motion passed unanimously. Jeff asked about using some Energy Upgrade California funds as reimbursement to CCB for salary for James Collins before contract was signed. Gabe and Lisa reported that they had read through the EUC contract. Under the terms of the agreement, we will be able to reimburse

CCB for past payments to James.

BDM2020-57

Christy moved and Guillermo seconded to reverse a previous motion requiring monetary reimbursement to CCB from the Ellen Murphy Fund for staff time spent on EMF matters. After a spirited discussion, the motion passed by a majority vote.

President's Report— Gabe Griffith

Lisa is working toward getting us ready for an audit, which hasn't taken place for several years. We will hold a Next generation affiliate planning session on Saturday, September 12. As noted above, we have the Energy Upgrade California (EUC) contract and have signed it. Gabe is

appointing a task force for overseeing the grant-related work.

Judy reported that Onthemuv will remain for the present as a project under CCB. We are now an official sales affiliate for Onthemuv. We are taking pre-orders for mini tread units. They are scheduled to start shipping in October. We are also selling the limited supply of sit mill samples. We have sold nearly half of the sit mills we have on hand. They are selling for \$169. The TOG is working with Onthemuv to set up our web site for ordering. We will have an audio version of the manual for the mini tread. The availability of an accessible remote is still some way off. We're planning to go live with sales on October 7.

Convention 2021 report
—Sarah Harris:
BDM2020-58

Christy moved and Linda seconded to hold a virtual CCB convention in 2021 for four days from April 22 to April 25 and to make plans to hold an in-person convention in 2022. The motion passed unanimously.

Summary:

Sarah reported that special interest affiliate meetings will be scheduled beginning around April 5 in 2021. There may also be some tracks and break-outs during the convention itself.

Auction Report:

Andrea DeKlotz: As of this evening, we have 20 participants registered already. She listed several current high bids. The

auction will begin at 3 PM on Sunday, September 20.

Member Sound Off:

Chris Fendrick requested more public comment during Board meetings. He also wondered if we should have a designated parliamentarian. Gabe responded that some considerations are Board specific and are not relevant for public comment. He will look into assigning a parliamentarian. Bernice took a point of personal privilege, in which she described having met Ellen Murphy. Bernice also suggested that we should revive the practice of giving out 25 and 50 year membership pins. She emphasized that we need a better historical

understanding of who our trusts are named after.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 PM.

California Council of the Blind

**Open Board meeting
Thursday October 12,
2020.**

First Vice President Sarah Harris called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

Roll Call:

Present:

1st Vice President, Sarah Harris

2nd Vice President: Rob Turner

Secretary: Linda Porelle

Treasurer: Lisa Thomas

Immediate Past President: Judy Wilkinson

Directors: Steve Bauer, Christy Crespin, Nelly Emerson, Larry Gassman, Pam Metz, Jeff Thom, Penny Valdovinos, and Frank Welte

Absent:

[Nobody]

Agenda

- **Call to order: Sarah Harris**
- **Roll call and introduction of guests: Linda Porelle**
- **Additions to and adoption of agenda: Sarah Harris**
- **Minutes for September 10: Linda Porelle**
- **Treasurer's report: Lisa Thomas**
- **Brenda Dillon Memorial Walk: Lisa Thomas**
- **President's report: Sarah Harris**
- **Onthemuv update: Judy Wilkinson**

- **CCB 2021 convention: Sarah Harris**
- **Member sound off**
- **Adjournment**

BDM2020-59

Larry moved and Rob seconded to approve the agenda for this evening's meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Voting on acceptance of the September 10 Board meeting was postponed due to technical challenges experienced by Secretary Linda Porelle.

BDM2020-60

Penny moved and Steve seconded to accept Lisa's treasurer's report. The motion passed unanimously.

President's report: Sarah

We received an anonymous donation of

\$4,800. CCB has billed Energy Upgrade California (EUC) for \$76,000 already. We usually get payments in 45 days. The task force for overseeing the EUC grant includes Lisa, Sarah, Gabe, and Larry Wanger. The budget and finance committee will meet to prepare the 2021 budget for presentation at our December Board meeting.

Onthemuv update: Judy

Judy first thanked Board for her retirement gift. She reported that Onthemuv will have mini treads in a week. We still have a few sample sit mills left. Anyone interested can call Judy to order. Judy listened to Steve's recording of the manual and will post it to CCB's web site. She thanked Steve, Patrick, and

Guillermo for recording it. She noted that the TOG has met with Onthemuv and the sales portal is accessible. Steve also made a recording for the sit mill. Lisa picked up a set of units from Judy for demo in Central CA. The council has 3 sets to take around to chapter meetings. Olivia Ostergard suggested that we should make a commercial.

2021 convention report: Sarah

We will have an open meeting on October 28 for program suggestions only. Christy asked when we will look for contracts for 2022. Sarah noted that her daughter, Carson, is researching hotels for us to consider.

Auction report: Larry

We had fewer prizes and participants this year. However, we still made \$9,030 with very few expenses. We're looking to expand the auction committee for 2021 and we're aware that more and more groups are doing auctions. We definitely want to make it more fun.

Member sound off

Sarah announced plans for membership spotlight on facebook. Christy announced Active Blind Inland Valley (ABIV) Pampered Chef fund-raiser on Halloween. Vita asked how soon affiliates could schedule their convention meeting preferences. Sarah said they'll be able to list their top 3 choices on a first

come first serve basis. Vita also stressed that we need to get more folks from outside California to attend our auction. She invited everyone to the SF chapter Halloween night storytelling zoom meeting. Chris mentioned the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) conference going on this week. Chris is involved with a survey for transition age group. He also noted that the blind Advisory Committee (BAC) is looking for new members. Jeff agreed with Vita about spreading the word about auction. Penny says we need an event calendar. Vita noted that this is being developed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 PM.

* * *

CCB Officers And Directors

As Of August 15, 2020

Officers

President: Gabe Griffith (2020 – 2022, 1st term), Concord, 925-222-5762, gabe.griffith@ccbnet.org

1st Vice President: Sarah Harris (2020 – 2022, 1st term), Fresno, 559-816-1507 Cell, sarah.harris@ccbnet.org

2nd Vice President: Rob Turner (2020 – 2022, 1st term), Sunnyvale, 408-203-9300 cell, rbturner2@comcast.net

Secretary: Linda Porelle (2019 – 2021, 1st term), San Francisco, 415-577-8437 Cell, linda.porelle@ccbnet.org

Treasurer: Lisa Presley-Thomas (2020 – 2022, 2nd term), Fresno, 559-250-6760 Cell, lisa.thomas@ccbnet.org

Immediate Past President: Judy Wilkinson (2020 –), San Leandro, 510-388-5079 cell, judy.wilkinson@ccbnet.org

Directors

Steve Bauer (2019 – 2021, 1st term), Los Angeles, 310-738-2853 Cell, steve.bauer@ccbnet.org

Christy Crespin (2019 – 2021, 1st term), Highland, 909-800-7189 Cell, christy.crespin@ccbnet.org

Nelly Emerson (2019 – 2021, 1st term), Santa Maria, 951-237-2960 Cell, nelly.emerson@ccbnet.org

Pamela Metz (2019 – 2021, 3rd term), Chatsworth, 818-882-3610 Home, pamela.metz@ccbnet.org

Frank Welte (2020 – 2022 2nd term), San Leandro, 510-541-1442 c, frank.welte@ccbnet.org

Jeff Thom (2020 – 2022, 1st term), Sacramento, 916-995-3967 Cell, jeff.thom@ccbnet.org

Larry Gassman (2020 – 2022, 1st term), Fullerton, 562-706-7710

Guillermo Robles (2020 – 2022, 1st term), 323-490-5753, Culver City, g.robles1@me.com

Publications Committee

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

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Susan Glass, Associate Editor, editor@ccbnet.org

Gabe Griffith

Lynne Nishihara

Sarah Harris

Roger Petersen

*** * ***

Donations

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.