

# **THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN**

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CALIFORNIA COUNCIL OF THE  
BLIND**

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**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 people who are blind or have low vision. Recommended length is 900 words, 1800 max.**

**Article deadlines for THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN are:**

**Winter: November 15 of previous year**

**Spring: February 15 current year**

**Summer: May 15 current year**

**Fall: August 15 current year**

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

**Please send all address changes to the Executive Office.**

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## **Editor's Corner**

### **By Mike Keithley**

**Welcome to the Spring, 2023 Blind Californian.**

**Yes, it's really getting warmer, the days longer, and by the time you read this, daylight savings time will happen, and I'll have to stay up later to work DX on 40 meters! We have an interesting article from Regina Brink on whether diversity is all that important. Who knows, maybe it isn't.**

**It seems like advocacy is reborn with spring, so you'll want to read Jeff Thom's Governmental Affairs report and ACB's**

**Legislative Imperatives for 2023. And if Deved Mandell doesn't inspire you to advocate, nothing will!**

**And then there's Debee Armstrong's "What Can You Do with a Comma.," just the thing to get you over those pesky phone menus.**

**Here comes Frank Welte, galloping on his "CCB 2050" horse. What's up, Frank?  
"Getting young people to join CCB, read about it."**

**There's more, Enjoy!**

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## **Governmental Affairs Report: A New Set of Challenges By Jeff Thom**

**Every year brings with it a new set of advocacy challenges for CCB, and this one is no exception. Some grow out of items we've already been working on, while others are brand new.**

**The first is an item that derives from our ground-breaking bill, AB371 by Assemblymember Jones-Sawyer, that requires insurance for renters of e-scooters to protect against injuries to pedestrians. That bill also contains tactile, braille and large font signage requirements for the e-scooters so that**

**we can identify the scooter manufacturer and contact them in case of a pedestrian injury. As written, the signage requirements create some challenges for the scooter manufacturers and, with the very able assistance of our signage guru Gene Lozano, we are beginning to craft legislation that will provide us with the information we need in a way that will work on the configuration of the scooters. Rest assured, however, that the outcome of this issue will not jeopardize the operation of the insurance requirements, which will become effective July 1, 2023. The bill to resolve these problems is AB410, and it is again being authored by Assemblymember Jones-Sawyer.**

**Another of our existing items is that of establishing a Prescription Drug Labeling Legislative Taskforce. Assistant Director of Governmental Affairs Regina Brink is heading up this effort, and there appears to be a good chance her work will bear fruit. If we can get an author to take on this measure, we can try to pass this very important resolution. The taskforce would bring together all the important players to work out solutions that will allow all Californians with a significant impairment to obtain accessible drug labeling, whether they obtain their prescription drugs via mail-order, from a chain pharmacy or from a small, neighborhood pharmacy.**

**Another item left over from last year arose from the Governor's having vetoed AB1999. This CCB bill, authored by Assemblymember Arambula, would have targeted Medi-Cal dollars for the mental health needs of people who are blind or have low vision. Mr. Arambula will, again, be authoring a bill on this topic for CCB. However, for various reasons, he has decided to wait until next year to do so.**

**Next, we are hoping to introduce a bill authored by Assemblywoman Friedman's office that would establish an educational campaign aimed at businesses and other places of public**

**accommodation to provide them with information about service animals and the right of a place of public accommodation to remove a dog that is not behaving appropriately. We hope that this campaign will reduce the number of attacks against service animals by other dogs. Before you read this report, we will know whether we have a bill for this year.**

**I have left perhaps the most exciting news for last. Our new advocacy issue for this year relates to the need for staff training and program improvements for nursing homes with respect to residents with vision loss. This area has cried out for CCB advocacy, and the advocacy has**

**finally begun. Assemblywoman Nguyen, a new member from Sacramento, has introduced AB488, to target some existing funding for skilled nursing facility staff training and program improvement that relate to the needs of people who are blind or have low vision. We are already reaching out and garnering support for this important piece of legislation. However, your advocacy efforts will be a crucial element of seeking passage of this bill.**

**Stay tuned for details of how you can make a difference through advocacy on these various items. CCB showed how much we could do when we set our minds to it with the passage of AB371.**



**Now, let's continue to blaze the trail for people who are blind or have low vision.**

**Editor's note: ACB's 2023 Legislative Imperatives are unchanged from 2022. This is because bills sponsored last year were not acted upon and need to be re-introduced.**

**In summary, these are the 2022 ACB Legislative Imperatives:**

- **The Exercise and Fitness for All Act**
- **The Medical Device Nonvisual Accessibility Act**
- **The Website and Application Accessibility Act**
- **The Communications and Video Accessibility Amendments Act**

**For questions or further information on the 2022 ACB Legislative Imperatives, please contact Clark Rachfal, ACB's Director of Advocacy and Governmental Affairs:**

**[crachfal@acb.org](mailto:crachfal@acb.org)**

**or by calling**

**(202) 467-5081**

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## **Making a Difference: You Too Can Advocate** **By Daveed Mandell**

**Who says you can't become an advocate? In fact, you probably already advocate without realizing it.**

**Every time you enter a supermarket and**

**ask for assistance, every time you ask someone to help you fill out a form, every time you call your paratransit agency with a complaint, you are advocating.**

**Think about it. How many times have people grabbed you on the street, assuming you need help, when you actually may not need it at all? How often do you explain to them that it's better to ask if we need assistance, and that grabbing people isn't appropriate? Yes, even then, you are advocating.**

**When you advocate, no matter the issue you are concerned about, you are making a difference. Don't sell your action short.**

**Your advocacy effort can lead to significantly improving access to a particular program, service or facility.**

**While we often advocate for ourselves without even realizing it, it's also important to advocate for and with others. You can do that as well. How, you ask?**

**Attend agency and/or community meetings and make public comment.**

**Write letters to influential officials and state your case. Get together with others and organize a letter writing party.**

**Call influential officials and briefly state your request or demand.**

**Conduct research on a particular accessibility issue, reach out to agency staff and offer to deliver a presentation on it.**

**Reach out to the media. Write an op-ed piece on a particular issue.**

**Reach out to your CCB chapter and establish an advocacy committee. What are some of the pressing issues of concern to blind people and people with low vision who live in your community? Choose two or three issues, to begin with, decide who will focus on which issues, and start advocating.**

**One effective way to advocate is to tell**

**your story. Your goal in doing this should be to move staff and officials, so they will believe you and care about your issue. A convincing story can be extremely effective.**

**Although you might be frustrated and even angry about a particular issue, approach staff and officials calmly, and express your points with warmth and sincerity. Be firm, stand up for your convictions, but, at the same time, always be tactful and diplomatic.**

**So, raise your voice, speak your mind, make a difference, advocate! Good luck!**

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## **Orange Blossoms: 1944**

### **By Susan Glass**

**My father and his Air Force buddies ride  
a night train toward San Diego  
where navigator school waits.**

**Two friends, Freddy Westfall and Bill  
Fowler, already shipped  
to France, and Danny Saminski to  
Okinawa.**

**But rumors are the war is ending:  
there may be no theater for my father.**

**Cresting the Temblor Mountains near San  
Bernardino**

**A Santa Anna wind pushes**

scent of 300 thousand orange blossoms  
into the amazed train cars.

My father feels as if seven dancing  
partners, all of them my mother,  
are gliding him through Glen Miller joy  
and jitterbug.

or maybe he's a raptor riding the updraft  
of time,

or gravity's forever checked out,  
and the pneumonia he contracted in  
Saint Louis,

the ear he'd deafened shooting rabbits,  
the polio narrowly avoided at Camp  
Stohr,

belonged to some other wheezing boy.

While This Boy, lately a young man,



**need never shovel ice  
or behead chickens  
or slice cheese  
or chop wood again.**

**Of course he'd have seen oil fields from  
that train  
and derricks: the crude that drove this  
war.**

**Later he'd work in Defense.  
Lockheed, Vandenberg, Alameda  
all brought our family's bread.**

**But sixty-three years hence, lying in his  
hospice bed,  
what he remembers of San Bernardino  
is the scent of orange blossoms**

**and the westering decision he made that night.**

**\*\*\***

## **What Can You Do with a Comma?**

### **By Deborah Armstrong**

**Do you have a smartphone? Do you find it hard to enter multiple keypad numbers when you must press 1 for English, 5 for customer service, 4 for billing and 7, to (hopefully!) talk to a real human? One punctuation mark, the lowly comma, can partially resolve this issue.**

**If you dial a system frequently where you must enter multiple digits, simply enter it in your contacts app. Then for**

**the digits you must press after the call connects, precede them with a comma, and separate each with a comma. You can use multiple commas too, especially if it's a slow system and doesn't immediately respond. Each comma tells your phone to pause for a second before entering the following digit.**

**For example, when I call my local paratransit service, I must press the number zero for customer service and three for dispatch--to find out where in the heck my late ride went. I have the paratransit service's number preceded by the digit 1 and area code.**

**Immediately following the number, I have three commas to give the system**

**robot time to answer. This is followed by a zero and two commas to get to the next menu. That's followed by a 3 to summon dispatch.**

**The entire sequence looks like this:**

**1 408 321 2380 ,,, 0 ,, 3**

**Once that is entered in your contacts, give it a meaningful name such as Paratransit dispatch.**

**You can now tell your voice assistant to call. For example I can say:**

**“Hey Siri, call Paratransit dispatch”**

**and those keypad entries are automatically entered for me.**

**I can make it more complicated. For**

**example, I have an entry that keys the number one for English followed by my ID and password and menu choices to confirm a ride for the next day.**

**What if you have to temporarily navigate an annoying system, for example to make a payment, check your balance or handle a health care issue? If you know the sequence, you can type it in before pressing Send. It's even easier if you use a braille display or Bluetooth keyboard. If you don't know the sequence, pull out a recorder before making the call and log which digits you need to press. Listening back to your log, you can now save those digits in a file, so you can paste them in when needed, but don't forget to**

separate them with commas to get the system's menus time to react to each keypress.

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## **The Wind**

### **By Anthony Signoriello**

**In the days of my youth, I would sit on a  
hill**

**Feel the winds all around me they blow  
as they will**

**the cold winter winds would force me on  
in**

**while the warm summer winds would  
bring me back out again**

**Oh, but for the wind**

**We would begin, to wither away**

**Rain could not prevail**

**Neither the hail,**

**on that day**

**I, I, owe to the wind**

**All, all that's within**

**Was a hot summer day**

**In the year 65**

**Not a wind was a blowin'**

**To keep hope alive.**

**As I passed through the days**

**That led to the fall**

**The dry winds of autumn,**

**put an end to it all.**

**For the winds of suspicion had grown**

**And the boy was a man  
but not of his own.**

**Oh, but for the wind,  
We would begin  
To wither away,  
The rain could not prevail  
Neither the hail  
Unto that day.**

**I, I, owe to the wind all,  
all that's within.**

**Now the years have gone by  
And I have grown to a man  
I feel winds of change  
Sweeping over this land**



**There is one thing for certain**

**It is all part of a plan**

**The signs are before you**

**The time is at hand.**

**For the wind we all want to feel**

**Is the wind of a love**

**that is true and is real.**

**I, I owe to the wind,**

**All, all that's within.**

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## **Thank Goodness for the California Council of the Blind Support Group By Claude Edwards**

**In response to a plea for help in late-June 2022, a friend in the San Diego area where I live suggested that I join a weekly support group sponsored by the California Council of the Blind affiliate, California Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss (CAAVL). Frustrated and demoralized by a noticeable decline in my already diminished vision due to glaucoma, I was in need of a source of encouragement to help cope with the sadness and pain I was feeling, and**

**boost my spirits to keep going, one day at a time.**

**Facilitated by Margie Donovan and Nelly Emerson, the Friday morning, hour-long meetings have provided me a welcoming, if virtual, opportunity to share what I was going through. Since then, I've been a regular along with 4 to 6 others, who have also sought to be connected, noticed and indeed validated, as Margie and Nelly like to say. Each meeting is a little different depending on the mood and need of those who participate, but everyone is invited to share what is on their minds, how they feel, or anything else they might like to say.**

**I am grateful for these support group meetings. They have filled a need and become an important outlet for me, forming the basis of a special community of choice wherein all participants respect one another as they are. It has been a really positive experience.**

**For more information, please email**

**Margie Donovan at:**

**[Margie.donovan1@outlook.com](mailto:Margie.donovan1@outlook.com)**

**or Nelly Emerson at:**

**[nelly.emerson@att.net](mailto:nelly.emerson@att.net)**

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## **Students With Visual Impairments Empowered to Explore Chemistry Through SEPA Project By Abbey Bigler**

**Blog post:**

**<https://tinyurl.com/SEPA-chemistry>**

**Photo: High school students in lab coats and safety goggles feeling tactile graphics while two scientists perform demonstrations of experiments in fume hoods. Dr. Shaw stands in the background.**

**Credit: Jordan Koone**



**Dr. Shaw (back left) observes SEPA program students engaging with tactile graphics in his lab.**

**Students with blindness and low vision**

**are often excluded from chemistry labs and offered few accessible representations of the subject's imagery, which can significantly hinder their ability to learn about and participate in chemistry. Bryan Shaw, Ph.D., a professor of chemistry and biochemistry at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, hopes to change that through a program funded by an NIGMS Science Education Partnership Award (SEPA). His inspiration to start the program came from his son, who is visually impaired due to childhood eye cancer, and his son's friends who have also experienced partial or complete vision loss.**

**"Chemistry focuses on dreaming up**

**assistive technologies to help us visualize particles and structures too small to see with our eyes. The field is actually well equipped to make itself accessible because all it's ever been is trying to understand things we can't see," Dr. Shaw says.**

## **Experiencing Chemistry Firsthand**

**The SEPA program, which is a collaboration between Baylor and the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI), has created 3-day research experiences for high schoolers with blindness and low vision. The first research experience, held in October 2022, was split into two parts. In the**



**first, Dr. Shaw, three of his graduate students, and three chemists with blindness who serve as mentors (Matthew Guberman-Pfeffer, Ph.D.; Mona Minkara, Ph.D., also a program co-leader; and Hoby Wedler, Ph.D.), traveled to the TSBVI to give eight students a chemistry lesson. They brought a wide range of finely detailed tactile graphics that enabled students to explore scientific imagery and better understand how electron microscopes work.**

## **From Visual to Tactile**

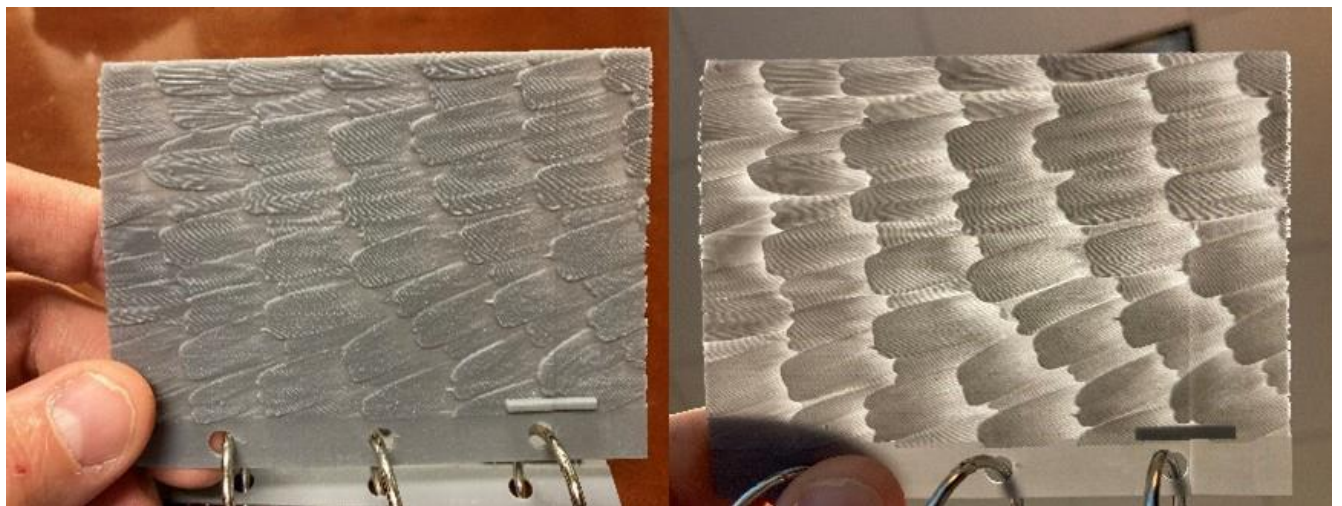
**To create high-quality tactile graphics, Dr. Shaw and other researchers replicated an ancient art form called**

**lithophane using 3D printing.**

**Lithophanes are thin engravings on translucent materials. All the details in a lithophane can be felt, and they're also revealed visually when backlit—enabling both people with visual impairments and those without to take full advantage of the medium. To make lithophanes efficiently and accurately, the researchers used free online software to convert 2D images to 3D blueprints, and then used a 3D printer to fabricate the final products. Lithophanes can be used to present microscopy images, molecular structures, equipment diagrams, graphs, and more.**

**Photo: A lithophane of a 3D printing of**

**feathers in normal lighting (left) and backlighting (right). Credit: Jordan Koone.**



**For the second part of the experience, Dr. Shaw and his team brought the students to Baylor for 2 days. The team trained the students in lab safety and provided them with lab coats, safety goggles, gloves, and Bluetooth glasses that transmitted audio input from various devices. Then they took the**

**students on a tour of Dr. Shaw's lab, including an area adapted for use by an undergraduate researcher with blindness. Other activities included:**

**A lesson on electron microscopy, during which students felt the parts of the microscope and interacted with tactile versions of images it produced**

**A demonstration of synthesizing five chemical compounds that contribute to the scents of butterscotch, banana, pear, pineapple, and wintergreen**

**An opportunity to learn about the structures of common proteins through grape-sized 3D models**

**An introduction to a robot that can assist with weighing reagents and carrying out chemical reactions**

## **A Tour of Baylor's Campus**

**Throughout the entire experience, the mentors talked with and encouraged students. "At the start, the students were somewhat skeptical, but within the first day of the program, they were excited and wanted to learn more science. Their attitudes changed so much because they had accessible materials," says Dr. Minkara, who was frequently discouraged from pursuing science throughout her own life because of her blindness. "Even I learned new things.**

**For instance, I never knew what an electron microscope looked like until this program. It's phenomenal to be part of this."**

**Photo: A student exploring parts of the electron microscope in Dr. Shaw's lab.  
Credit: Jordan Koone.**



## **Building a Bright Future**

**Moving forward, this SEPA project plans to host at least one research experience each semester. Dr. Shaw hopes that the students from the first experience will return for a second, where they will, among other things, learn about polymers and test out the lab robot. They'll also each get to choose an object for the electron microscope to image, and then they'll receive tactile graphics of the resulting pictures. He also plans to give new students the opportunity to participate in the activities of the first research experience.**

**“My ultimate goal is that, because of our**

**work, a student with blindness is inspired to become a scientist and makes discoveries that change the world,” says Dr. Shaw. “I also hope that educators all over the country, and eventually the world, start seeing how easy it is with modern technology to make scientific imagery and labs accessible to people with visual impairments.”**

**The Baylor SEPA program is funded by NIGMS grant R25GM146265.**



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## **Equity and Diversity: The ED Column**

**By Regina Brink**

**This column in the Blind Californian is dedicated to the issues surrounding equity and diversity concerning racial and ethnic disparities in all aspects of life, with an emphasis on those experiencing vision loss. The short name for it is the ED Column. We seek to educate each other. Often, bias increases because we simply do not know people outside our circle and don't hear from people who are not in our ethnic or racial group often enough or honestly enough. How much can you say in the grocery**

**store or at a bus stop?**

**Many people from our affiliate, Inclusive Diversity of California, will be submitting articles. Our Publications Committee for IDC will be glad to accept articles from members not in IDC for this column. All articles will be reviewed to make sure they are not caustic or insulting in any way and meet CCB guidelines. We want this to be a place to hear from one another and learn.**

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## **CCB 2050 Vision: Part 7 Accommodating Younger Members By Frank Welte**

**In the last installment in this series, I described things we can do to provide places for people who may not currently feel fully included in our organization. Now let's continue this theme of inclusion by taking a closer look at outreach to younger people.**

**Over the years as I've watched the aging of the membership of the American Council of the Blind and of the California Council of the Blind, I have often heard the lament, "We need to bring more**

**young people into CCB.” Building a strong cohort of younger members is critical to the long-term survival of CCB. We need new members who can replace those who have aged out of the organization and who will continue to do so. In addition to increasing our numbers, younger members would bring fresh energy and new ideas to our community. Also, they will be the leaders of CCB well into the 21st century.**

**If recruiting younger members were easy, we would already be doing it. The truth is that this task is both difficult and expensive. The National Federation of the Blind is well-known for its success in recruiting large numbers of members in**

**their teens and twenties. How do they do such a good job? The short answer is that they buy these members. They use their three blindness training centers as well as other training centers where they have a strong influence to pay for students at these centers to travel to the NFB convention. They also have a strong scholarship program. In addition, they sponsor the “Readers are Leaders” reading contest and a series of “BELL Academies” to promote youth braille literacy. They also sponsor a variety of other youth programs, such as summer camps, STEM camps, etc. All of these activities build loyalty to NFB in the young people who participate. This loyalty to the organization is reinforced**

**by the many friendships that these youngsters make with other blind and visually impaired people in their age group within the NFB bubble.**

**In contrast, if a young adult finds his or her way to one of our CCB chapters or to our Conference and Convention, that person is likely to feel as though he or she is a fish out of water, surrounded by strangers from his parents' or grandparents' generation, some of whom will make it very clear that they have no intention of making changes that might make young people feel more welcome. In the short term, CCB lacks the human and financial resources to duplicate the NFB's youth outreach programs.**

**However, there are many things we as individuals, local chapters and statewide affiliates and committees can do to attract and retain more young members.**

## **Individual Actions**

**Earlier in this series, I wrote about things we could do to reach out to our communities and to connect with other blind and visually impaired people. We can modify those strategies to connect with blind and visually impaired children, teens and young adults and with their families and teachers. Each of us can research what services our local school districts and county offices of education are providing to blind youngsters, and**

**we can become acquainted with the people who provide those services. We can find out what programs other government agencies and nonprofits are offering to younger blind people. Once we understand what kinds of services are available, we can offer to support those programs as volunteers or as donors.**

**Those of us who have been living with vision loss and participating in the blind community for a long time have accumulated a lot of valuable experience and knowledge which qualifies us to mentor younger people, as well as their parents. The value of blind adults to inspire the upcoming generations cannot**



**be overstated. We have something unique to offer to blind youth, to their parents and to the professionals who work with them. The time is right for each of us to contribute our unique gifts to our communities.**

## **Chapter Actions**

**That which we can do as individuals can be multiplied when we combine our efforts through our local CCB chapters. I hope every chapter will organize projects to serve blind youngsters and young adults. Here are some examples.**

**Speak to community groups, churches and at public meetings about the needs of blind youth and about the programs**

**and services that will enhance their chances of success.**

**Advocate with government officials for more funding and for better services for blind children.**

**Organize a mentoring program for blind children.**

**Sponsor social and recreational activities for blind children and for their families.**

**Organize a support group for parents of blind children.**

**Raise money to sponsor blind students to attend the CCB Conference and Convention.**

## **Statewide CCB Actions**

**Here are some things CCB can do to help younger blind individuals and to bring them into the organization.**

**Work to strengthen our CCB Students affiliate by supporting their fundraisers, assisting with their projects and providing ongoing guidance, technical assistance and mentoring.**

**Establish and support a California affiliate of ACB Next Generation.**

**Establish and support a statewide affiliate for parents of blind children and for blind parents.**

**Sponsor a program for high school and college students at every CCB Conference and Convention.**

**Set up a fund to pay for first-timers, students and young adults to attend our Conference and Convention, and encourage chapters to contribute to this fund.**

**Add two seats to the CCB Board of Directors, one for a full-time student and one for a member under the age of 40.**

**Offer student internships in the CCB office.**

**Finally, never underestimate the value of food to attract young people to CCB**

events.

**The next several articles in this series will focus on fundraising.**

**I welcome your feedback on this and future articles in this series. Send questions, ideas and criticisms to:**

**[Frank.A.Welte@gmail.com](mailto:Frank.A.Welte@gmail.com)**

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## **CCB Membership Musings By Christy Crespin**

**As I write this article, it is time, once again, to join, join, join! Although some chapters base their membership on the fiscal year, many begin their membership cycle at the beginning of the calendar**

**year. We are bucking up against the chapter roster and monetary deadline of February 15 in order for our votes to be counted, to see which chapters have grown in membership, and which have shrunk.**

**Personally, at any given time, I have belonged to as few as one chapter, my local, Active Blind Inland Valleys (ABIV), CCB, or as many as seven, including Golden State Guide Dog Handlers, Inc. (GSGDHI), California Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss (CAAVL), California Diabetics in Action (CDA), Braille Revival League of California (BRLC), California Council of Blind Students (CCBS), and California Library Users of America**

**(CLUA). The reasons for joining include interest in the subject matter, desire to focus on advocacy, involvement, and best of all, the relationships that are built in these chapters and affiliates.**

**Why CCB Students, you might ask. I have not been a formal student since 1991. However, I have not forgotten what it was like to be a student, to struggle, and how much work there is as a student. Being chair of the CCB Scholarship Committee and CCB Board Member led me to mentor this affiliate. In the mid-1970s I was once president of the Student Division of the NFB. Back then, almost 50 years ago, the membership was up and many of our leaders cut their**

**teeth as involved students. I have chosen not to renew my membership with CCB Students in 2023.**

**Why GSGDHI? In my history of being a handler of eight guide dogs beginning in 1976, I retired Caroline, my Labradoodle, in 2020, just prior to the pandemic lockdown. While I recognized I would no longer have a guide dog in my life due to my lifestyle changes and nearing retirement, I continued to desire advocating, educating, and relating with affiliate members. I did not renew my membership for 2022.**

**I am currently a member of ABIV as its president, CDA as its president, CAAVL as**



**a board member, and plan to remain active with CLUA and BRLC. I am also a member of ACBDA. My finances allow for multiple chapter memberships, as well as membership in three professional organizations.**

**When I put out the call for membership renewal for CDA and ABIV, I have been met with comments such as, “Yeah, I’ll join,” but no money follows; “I can’t join because I can’t afford it.” Further, when holding or attending meetings, I notice that the attendance is down. People have found much more to keep themselves occupied. They believe that someone else will advocate, or that since we already have rights, privileges and perks,**

**our work is done. When asked, they may say things like, “I’ll be there,” and never show, or “I just can’t do it.”**

**I know you have heard that 20% of any organizations are the worker bees who get the work done. How much more powerful and less burned out would we be if even 50% took up some task to help with the work at hand?**

**This brings me to two thoughts. First, how might we structure the cost of membership in such a way that more people could afford to join? What benefits and perks could we offer to capture the interest and buy-in of new and returning members?**

**Second, how might we tap into the gifts and talents of our membership? If we only knew how our members could and would give to this organization in other than monetary means, might we be strengthened and flourish?**

**I believe these are two areas to explore in our immediate future. While I recognize I may sound idealistic and do not have answers, I believe it is time to address the difficulty of less involvement, especially by younger people who are living with blindness/sight loss. We are a graying organization. However, we have yet to tap into the older population of those who are newly experiencing sight loss**

and all it entails.

**We are not alone in our membership and involvement shrinkage. Several years ago, Mitch Pomerantz asked us to read the book *Bowling Alone* by Robert D. Putnam, copyright 2000, available on BARD. However, I found the 20th anniversary edition available on BookShare, with an updated Forward and Afterward in 2020, and which also gives more updated information and titles to later books authored by Robert D. Putnam, including *Better Together*, and *The Upswing: How America Came Together A Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again*, with Shaylyn Romney Garrett. I have found this a most**

**thought-provoking book, and though I read the original volume, I found the updated forward and afterwards quite intriguing.**

**It is my hope that we in CCB endeavor to consider novel and innovative ways of growing and maintaining our membership and increase participation among our members.**

**\*\*\***

## **Is Diversity Really Our Strength Anyway?**

**By Regina Marie Brink**

**While visiting Los Angeles recently, our family was having dinner and my sister-in-law randomly commented, "All I see**

**are Asians and Latinos. Pretty soon, there won't be any white people in California." Full disclosure, my family heritage is Hispanic. We are all different shades, but we do not consider ourselves Caucasian.**

**This is a sentiment I hear more and more. Somehow, as more diversity is promoted and legislated, there is a feeling that whiteness is bad and will be somehow swallowed up or diminished. If I were white, this would scare me and make me very mad. If I were white and had a visual disability, I would be even more angry. How dare someone imply that the discrimination and degradation I have endured because I am blind has**

**somehow been obscured by my privilege! I would understand if white people who are blind or have low vision might feel indignant and would most definitely not feel privileged. However, walk with me into a different world. After some investigation, you might find that there is a strata in the vision loss community. We are all familiar with the visual acuity strata. We may be less cognizant of the appearance strata.**

**You may be familiar with some recent cases in Rehabilitation centers where there were reports of sexual harassment. However, along with these reports, there were also reports of bullying and name calling based on race and ethnicity. This**

**was much less publicized and has not been dealt with as openly. Employment, housing, medical treatment, and even rehabilitation services are reflective of the statistics found in the wider society. There are clear strata in the vision loss community as well. The darker one's skin, the more disparate the outcomes. In other words, people who are blind or have low vision still live and learn the attitudes of the mainstream society.**

**An owner of a BEP stand hosted a friend of mine who happened to be Jewish and African-American. He was totally blind and was working with her to see if she was a good fit for the program. He was Caucasian. My friend asked him if he has**



**sighted help hiring employees to check on appearance as in job performance in cleaning work areas and such visual assessments. He told her: "I can give you one piece of advice. Don't hire Blacks because they aren't very smart and stay away from Jews because they'll trick you out of your money."**

**We all know that racism and bigotry are not always so easily spotted. Many of our ideas, including among marginalized people, are unconsciously biased.**

**Perhaps you react differently when you hear a group of white kids laughing and talking on public transit than you do if you hear a group of African-Americans. Of course, we can't always tell by**

**listening who is white and who is not. However, the perceptions still control our reactions if we are not careful. If we were very honest with ourselves, how many of us would choose to be born "Black"?**

**So, isn't this whole diversity thing the problem? Isn't our society more divided now? Wouldn't it be better to have more homogenous communities?**

**Just as involving more people with disabilities in workplaces, recreation experiences and leadership roles enriches our communities, making sure our organizations and institutions are ethnically and racially diverse enriches**

**our society. Different cultures bring more points of view and new ideas. When whole groups of people are marginalized, knowledge and innovation are stifled or missed altogether. Diversity, inclusion and equity is not about punishing white people or trying to make them feel bad. It's about creating a society where we all benefit from each other's talents and abilities. It is a place where children and adults can feel valued and that their voice matters. Diversity bridges divisions and allows us to consider another person's experience. More hopes and dreams being realized can only mean a happier, stronger society.**

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## **CCLVI Fred Scheigert Scholarship Announcement**

**This is a reminder that applications may now be submitted for the Fred Scheigert Scholarship. This Scholarship program awards four (4) students an individual prize of \$3,000. This competitive scholarship is available to full-time Incoming Freshman, Undergraduate, or Graduate level College students with low vision, chosen from among those who meet the visual acuity and academic guidelines.**

**The application period will remain open until 11:59 PM on March 15, 2023. For more information, please go to the CCLVI**

website:

<https://cclvi.info/scheigert>

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## **BART and Lighthouse Collaboration Brings Great Access Benefits By Deborah Armstrong**

**Advertised as a safety training, held the last day of January, Bay Area Rapid Transit and the San Francisco Lighthouse For the Blind collaborated on a truly educational event.**

**If you don't live in the San Francisco Bay area you might conclude this doesn't pertain to you, but I maintain that it does.**

**Your own local transit agency can also hold such an event, so encourage them by reminding them about the great publicity it will create.**

**Here in the bay area, our rapid transit trains run both above and below ground. But all platforms have an edge that a careless pedestrian could easily fall off of. The electrified third rail powers the trains at a voltage which would be instantly lethal. Plus, the trains are noisy, the underground stations echo and each station's layout is different. It's enough to strain the nerves of even the most confident traveler.**

**Recognizing this, the San Francisco**

**Lighthouse For the Blind created tactile maps of each BART station. They also crafted a full map to show the different train routes. They acquired a grant which allows residents to obtain requested maps for stations they encounter free of charge.**

**Meanwhile, BART's accessibility manager, along with many other BART employees volunteering their time, put together a tour of BART for residents who are blind or visually impaired. The tour consisted of a tactile mockup of the actual platform, including the dangerous third rail, which happens to be ten feet away from where a rider could fall on to the tracks. Participants were encouraged**

**to examine this model, to ask questions and to understand, that if they fell, they could crawl under the platform to stay safely away from an oncoming train.**

**The second part of the tour featured an unmoving BART train. We explored the “truncated domes” the ridged, bright yellow strips that mark the platform edge. We learned that the doors open on a place that has a crossbar shaped tactile mark on those domes. (When I rode BART three decades ago, you had to listen carefully for the sound of the door opening, then run like mad to enter the train before it closed.) This tactile mark makes is much easier to stand where the doors will open.**



**Travelers could enter the train and fully explore. I located all the handholds, the button to call the train operator and became familiar with the location of every seat. Though I'd ridden BART in the 1980s on a daily basis, the layout of the trains had changed to accommodate bikes and wheelchairs. This meant there were no longer seats near the entrance, and it was important to rapidly locate something to hold on to as the train accelerated immediately as soon as its doors closed.**

**When I rode BART before, I had a bit of vision. Today, I have arthritis, wear hearing aids and no longer have any**

**sight. This meant the experience required more attentiveness on my part, and this tour let me explore at my own pace.**

**While we toured the train, BART volunteers were on hand to answer questions or guide the more hesitant participants. It was also great exposure for the quantity of guide dogs, whose constant wagging thwacked happily against our legs as we explored the train.**

**After we emerged from a sea of snorting Labradors and flailing canes, Lighthouse staff passed out tactile maps and reminded us of their upcoming trainings**

on reading those maps.

For me, the experience helped me feel much more confident about Barting everywhere.

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## **Upcoming Deadline: Announcing The Benefits Of Audio Description In Education Contest**

**By Tabitha Kenlon: Coordinator  
ACB Audio Description Project**

**Lights, Camera, Description!**

**The American Council of the Blind's  
Audio Description Project (ACB-ADP) and  
the Described and Captioned Media**

**Program (DCMP) are co-sponsoring an essay contest for blind and visually impaired young people (ages 7 to 21). It's a great chance for students to engage with accessible learning materials, unleash their inner film critic, and compete for fun prizes.**

### **How Students Can Enter:**

**1. Visit the free DCMP library at**

**<https://dcmp.org/>.**

**2. Watch any audio-described film (there are more than 6,000 educational titles to choose from!).**

**3. Write an evaluation of the film, commenting on the ways audio**

**description enhanced or detracted from your experience.**

**4. Visit <https://dcmp.org/learn/657> to submit your entry. There you'll also find guidelines and prize details, tips on writing a good review, and information about how audio description is created.**

### **Categories:**

- **Sophomore — ages 7-10**
- **Junior — ages 11-15**
- **Senior — ages 16-21**
- **Alternate Assessment — students with non-traditional matriculation records**

### **Prizes and Deadlines:**

- **There will be first, second, and third**

**place winners in each category, as well as a grand prize winner who will be awarded an iPad mini and invited to read his/her essay at the American Council of the Blind's National Conference and Convention in July 2023.**

- Teachers of first-place winners also receive prizes.**

**The deadline for contest entries is March 31, 2023.**

**Winners will be notified by April 30, 2023.**

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## **CCB Officers and Directors As of July, 2022**

### **Officers**

**President: Gabe Griffith (2022-2024, 2nd term), Concord, 925-222-5762, [gabe.griffith@ccbnet.org](mailto:gabe.griffith@ccbnet.org)**

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**2nd Vice President: Rob Turner (2022-2024, 2nd term), Sunnyvale, 408-203-9300 C, [rob.turner@ccbnet.org](mailto:rob.turner@ccbnet.org)**

**Secretary: Linda Porelle (2021-2023, 2nd term), San Francisco, 415-577-8437 C, [linda.porelle@ccbnet.org](mailto:linda.porelle@ccbnet.org)**

**Treasurer: Lisa Presley-Thomas (2022-2024, 3rd term), Fresno, 559-250-6760 C, [lisa.thomas@ccbnet.org](mailto:lisa.thomas@ccbnet.org)**

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**Roger Petersen**

**Bonnie Rennie**

**Judy Wilkinson**

**\*\*\***

## **Donations**

**If you, a family member, or a friend would like to remember the California Council of the Blind in your Will or estate planning, 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, please contact the executive office for additional information. Thank you.**

## Maximized Photos

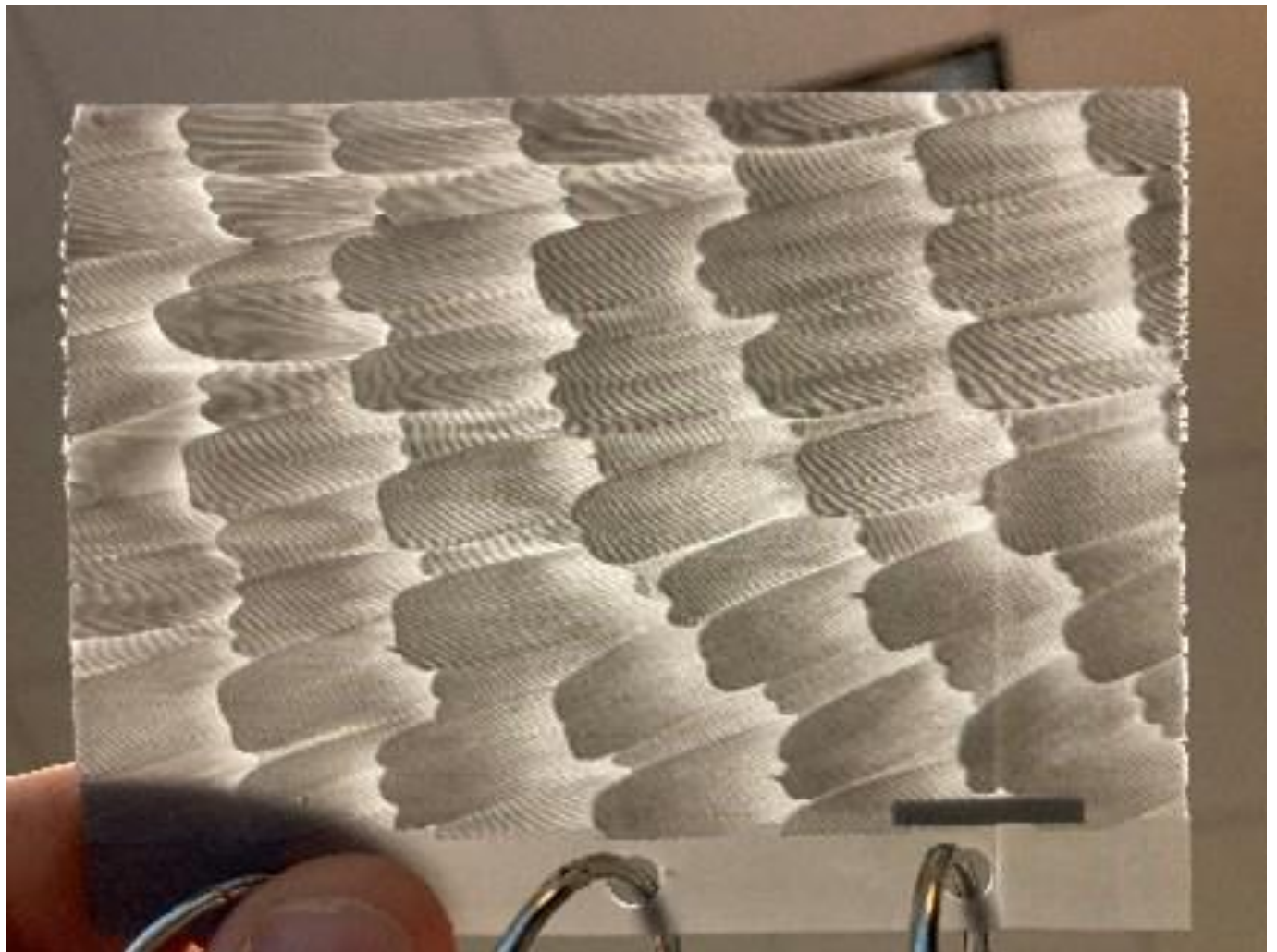
**Dr. Shaw (back left) observes SEPA program students engaging with tactile graphics in his lab.**



**A lithophane of a 3D printing of feathers  
in normal lighting**



**A lithophane of a 3D printing of feathers in backlighting.**



**A student exploring parts of the electron microscope in Dr. Shaw's lab.**

