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Gabe Griffith, CCB President

Concord, CA

925-222-5762

president@ccbnet.org

Executive Office

California Council of the Blind

**2143 Hurley Way Suite 102, Sacramento,
CA 95825**

**916-441-2100 voice; 916-441-2188 fax;
1-800-221-6359 Toll Free**

Email: ccotb@ccbnet.org

Website: www.ccbnet.org

Ardis Bazyn and Alice Turner, Co-Chairs

Governmental Affairs Committee

800-221-6359 Toll Free

governmentalaffairs@ccbnet.org

Webmaster

webmaster@ccbnet.org

Mike Keithley, Editor

650-386-6286

editor@ccbnet.org

Susan Glass, Associate Editor

408-257-1034

editor@ccbnet.org

Deb Runyan, proofing and large print production.

Andrea DeKlotz, CCB Happenings Editor

Email submissions for the CCB

Happenings to:

submit.happenings@ccbnet.org

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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**

Please send all address changes to the Executive Office.

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Editor's Corner

By Mike Keithley

In assembling the summer issue of the BC, two words and concepts continually come to mind for me: anthology and community. Anthology, as you know, refers to a collection of poems, stories, articles, musical compositions or pieces of art, that are either thematically or emotionally related. The word community refers to a group of people who are bound together by shared attributes, challenges, needs, and fellowship. This definition of community sounds a lot like CCB, doesn't it?

This issue of the BC features the voices of many members: Shana Ray, Sarah Harris, Christy Crespin, Frank Welte, Andrea DeKlotz, Deborah Armstrong, Linda Samulski, Margie Donovan, Olivia Ostergard, Daveed Mandell, and Susan Glass. I apologize if I left anyone off this list. Each of these 11 voices contributes a unique theme and story. Andrea DeKlotz, Margie Donovan, Olivia Ostergard, and Susan Glass, together paint a well-rounded picture of this year's CCB convention. Deborah Armstrong addresses the obstacles and challenges involved in teaching STEM curriculum to visually impaired, blind students. In another article, she eloquently argues the case for why all of us need to be

fluent users of the internet. Daveed Mandell's editorial asserts that people with disabilities are still an ignored minority. Shana Ray laments the loss of a valued CCB member to a senseless tragedy, and also celebrates the beauty of his life. Sarah Harris shares 2 delightful vignettes: one about childhood summer pastimes, and the other celebrating the first word that she ever read in braille. Frank Welte asserts the truth about fund-raising and grants, a topic surely of interest to all CCB chapters. And there's more, so much more in this issue of the BC. So please read and enjoy this anthology of member voices, and testament to our community.

People with Disabilities: The Ignored Minority? By Daveed Mandell

Have you ever felt ignored? When you try to contribute to a discussion, do you ever feel that people don't take you seriously?

Over the years I have read articles and listened to commentaries by politicians and activists, whether they be left-, center or right-wing. One thing they have in common is that they all have tended to ignore people with disabilities.

Back in 2007, speaking about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF) staff attorney Sylvia Yee said, “Small businesses across the country remain unaware of their access obligations and are unwilling to take proactive steps to comply with the law. Employment remains an area where progress has been elusive and difficult to measure. Healthcare in the private provider offices, where almost 90% of outpatient visits occur, continues to be rife with structural and programmatic barriers. There’s also the ongoing fact of a media that often sacrifices reporting on larger social issues, in favor of those personal stories that either stereotype or demonize a person with a disability. And in all areas, there is not enough

enforcement, not enough will, and too much inertia.”

Sixteen years later, compliance with the ADA is still problematic. Its provisions are often much too minimal and inadequate. Many people consider the ADA to be the bedrock or floor, rather than the ceiling.

People who ignore disability issues are not necessarily mean-spirited, cruel or evil. I do believe, however, that subconsciously they avoid dealing with disability issues for various reasons, one of which might be fear of confronting disability. Perhaps they watch people walking with a white cane, or rolling

down the street in a wheelchair, and think, “Oh my goodness, that could be me!”

I think sometimes it is easier for them to interact with people of color on racial and ethnic issues, because the fear factor probably isn’t as paramount. Whereas, anyone can become disabled at any time, regardless of who one is. After all, disability knows no discrimination.

I wish we people with disabilities could find ways to help able-bodied individuals feel more comfortable with disability. I believe that nervousness and anxiety also contribute to why it is often hard for able-bodied individuals to understand

and confront the serious inequity that we people with disabilities too often face.

The complexity of disability can be overwhelming. There are so many disabilities. I think for many able-bodied persons, accessibility issues can be rather daunting. How do you design a housing complex or a transit network that meets everyone's needs? What exactly are "reasonable" accommodations for school or work? If accessibility is not part of their general world view, because they don't require it, how can able-bodied individuals truly understand what it is like for us to live in an inaccessible world?

Recently, San Francisco Mayor's Office on Disability Deputy-Director Deborah Kaplan said that the most desirable way to ensure maximum accessibility and usability is to hire and incorporate people with lived experience as accessibility specialists and testers. No matter how hard they try, able-bodied individuals don't often understand what accessibility requires. I agree with Kaplan. Able-bodied individuals might have good intentions, but good intentions cannot and will not insure accessibility and equity for people with disabilities.

Take, for example, ADA paratransit, a controversial model that some claim has

seriously and negatively affected people with disabilities for more than thirty years. Back in 1992, late renowned disability rights activist Judy Heumann said, “Many, many people feel that they have a right to leave their house, to go out on the street, to visit stores, to go to the movies, to come and go as they want with spontaneity. But, as disabled individuals, we have somehow given up that right to that type of spontaneity, the ability to come and go when we want. And we’ve accepted that as something that happens because we have a disability. But the reality is it isn’t because we have disabilities. It is because of inadequate policies. It is because of lack of appropriate money.”

It is alarming that for more than thirty years, Heumann's telling comment has gone unnoticed and unheeded. How is it that for so long, people with disabilities have allowed transit agencies throughout the country to deny us the fundamental right of freedom of movement, which is guaranteed under the United States Constitution and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

It is shocking to note that out of the nine current United Nations human rights treaties, the US has ratified only three of them. The US Senate has yet to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. 186

countries have ratified this landmark treaty, including our neighbors Canada and Mexico.

It is true that not all able-bodied individuals ignore us. In many cases people with disabilities have discovered and nurtured invaluable allies who support and go to bat for us. However, in the long run, we must go to bat for ourselves. It is time that able-bodied Americans recognized people with disabilities as a legitimate minority whose equity has yet to be ensured.

Remembrance

By Shana Ray

Soon we will celebrate Memorial Day in remembrance of those who died fighting for this country, but today I want to memorialize Dave Mejia, a beloved member of his community who died on May 10, 2022. Mejia was attending the Abilities Expo at the Los Angeles Exposition Center on March 6, 2022, when a woman in a motorized wheelchair backed into him, causing severe injuries that would cause his death just two months later. Unfortunately, the woman who hit Mejia left the scene without acknowledging her

part in the accident. Since the witnesses of this incident were visually impaired, no one was able to give a clear description of this woman. Therefore, we will never know who she was. But who was Dave Mejia?

Dave Mejia was a member of the California Council of the Blind, and a member of Eye-DAS, Eye Diseases Are Serious, a Los Angeles County Nonprofit established to assist blind and visually impaired residents of Los Angeles County. He was an active member of the San Gabriel Valley Chapter, and went to Washington D.C. along with other members of ACB to support the passage of legislation which would help the

visually impaired community. Dave participated and attended with honor, US Military events, he was there for our Veterans no matter the ask. His good friend, Debbie Cordero, remembers him as a humanitarian, someone who would go out of his way to help people, someone who would show up to a meeting place early, help people get to where they needed to be and then help them again when it came time to leave. In memory of his kindness and generosity, Eye-DAS has created the Dave Mejia Humanitarian Award to be presented annually to someone who exemplifies the kindness demonstrated by David towards all, especially the visually impaired.

So, as you gather with family to celebrate Memorial Day, remember not only those who fought and died for this country but also those like Dave Mejia, who strove to make the world a better place, who brought light and goodness to the world and left us too soon.

Reflections on the 2023 Conference and Convention, We are Truly Better Together! By Andrea DeKlotz

As we have recently completed our 2023 Conference and Convention, the first convention to have an in-person component in four years, I'd like to take this opportunity to share some of what

were, for me, personal high points of this time together.

Besides being an in-person attendee and active participant, this was also my first year as a member of the convention committee. Although I have attended many state and national conventions, I had very little if any concept of what it takes to put on an event of this scale. Even in the days before our new hybrid reality, this had to be a significant undertaking, but with the ability to expand our definition of conference and convention to include a plethora of pre- and post-convention presentations on a wide variety of topics, taken together with the challenge of our first hybrid

convention, this was truly a time of learning and growth for me. I have a new appreciation for the level of planning and coordination that must take place. We are truly blessed in California to have a great convention committee, and I feel privileged to be a part of this process. My fellow committee members bring a high level of commitment to the table, and each have their own unique skills and abilities to contribute.

Our theme for this year was Better Together: Connection, Commitment, Community. I truly felt the presence of this sentiment in those of us gathered in-person in Sacramento, and I hope that some of this feeling was conveyed to

those listening virtually. As one of my friends said, she felt a spirit of gentleness and caring for others in those gathered.

Considering the pre-convention presentations, high points for me included the Writers Workshop: Where Stories Come From, presented by the Publications Committee and led by Susan Glass. I have attended several workshops led by Susan, and they've all been special. She effortlessly conveys her love of words and teaching. This interactive experience on using different types of memories and word pictures from within each of us to build unique stories, truly had a cleansing effect on

me, as I think it did for the other participants.

The program presented by Inclusive Diversity of California entitled Increasing Compassion, Listening, Empathy and Self-Care was eye-opening as well as disturbing. The two presenters have a broad range of experience in listening and providing compassionate support to people caught in both environmental and man-made tragedies. I found myself wondering about the toll this type of intense work would have on a person. Discussion centered around learning how to give and receive empathy and compassionate support, whether the tragedy is loss of sight or responding to

someone's experience of a hate crime. We also learned strategies for self-care and avoiding mental burnout in today's world. It is indeed sobering and humbling to hear from the people involved in this work, as well as to contemplate the kinds of both physical and emotional damage that humans can perpetrate on each other.

I can't forget to mention the games. I'm so glad that we've included game nights as part of our virtual convention experience. This year we had two, our own CCB version of "Scattergories" and, in honor of Saint Patrick's Day, Shamrocks or Leprechauns, a rollicking word association game. We had lots of

fun, and you get to know some of your CCB friends on a whole different level!

Some of my favorite in-person moments included:

The Country of the Blind. This live radio drama, based on the original story by H. G. Wells, was modernized and presented by members of the ACB Capitol Chapter. The event took place following dinner and prior to the second general session on the evening of Friday, March 31. The story concerns a man who, as the result of an accident, visits a mythical country where everyone is blind, and have been for generations. Thus, they have no concept of the idea of sight. The acting was amazing, and the story thought-

provoking. This was a very emotional experience for many of us as we were drawn into the story of each character attempting to grasp and understand the other's reality. The old-time radio drama style is ideally suited to visually impaired audiences, as all information relayed is verbal, so everyone listening has access to the same content.

On Saturday morning, folks got a peek at some of the pedestrian signals and other transportation-related infrastructure that helps to keep us moving safely every day. This event took place in the parking lot, where the vendors had the space to set up and truly demonstrate their equipment to advantage.

Saturday's third general session was particularly impressive. The lineup of speakers included the new director of the Lighthouse for the Blind in San Francisco, the director of the California Department of Aging, and a presentation from the newly formed California Agencies for Blind and Visually Impaired Inc. Of particular note was a first during this session: The Tale of Two Presidents, featuring our own Gabe Griffith and National Federation of the Blind of California president Tim Elder. As our two organizations have a history of being adversarial in the political and advocacy arena, it was truly refreshing to witness this free-ranging constructive discussion. I am very hopeful that, in our state,

collaboration lies ahead for our two organizations, lending further strength to our advocacy work on behalf of visually-impaired Californians.

I have only briefly touched on a few of the many activities, both in-person and virtual, that struck me during the convention. If you were not able to attend the convention or listen virtually, please be sure to obtain the recordings when they are made available, as a wealth of valuable and useful information was shared. The convention was a testament to the fact that we are truly, Better Together!

Summertime

By Sarah Harris

[Editor's Note: Sarah Harris wrote this playful vignette during our pre-convention writers' workshop presented by CCB's Publications Committee.]

It's summertime. The backyard is my playground. No need for shoes. No need for friends. My imagination is my BFF.

I wander from chicken coop to chicken coop. None of them hold chickens. Only treasures. Old beauty shop chairs that my Aunt Juanita has stored here. Tools and gadgets galore. A work bench where I like to perform dentistry on the large

ants that trespass here. If they don't have any teeth, they can't bite, right?

And there in the center is my favorite imagination station. A sink that stands alone. Built by my Grandpa to wash off his hands after working in the horse pasture. I use it as a swimming pool, a shower, a water fall, a place to wash my dirty feet, a place to drink, and a place to wash off all of My Little Ponies that I have buried and dug up.

I smell dirt and manure, hay and horses. I feel the summer sun beating down on my pale skin.

I sink my knees to the ground and draw a circle. In the center I stab a stick into

the ground. 5:00 PM by my guess. I remove the stick and set it in the sink. I brush my makeshift sun dial away with my feet. I drag myself away from my Okie playground to go hunt for food...

More 2023 CCB Convention Highlights

Contributors include Susan Glass, Margie Donovan, and Olivia Ostergard

[Editor's note: This report was first published in the May, 2023 SVCB newsletter.]

Susan Glass

This year, the California Council of the

Blind launched its first-ever hybrid convention. Since the outbreak of the COVID epidemic in 2020, we've held our conventions virtually. But this year beginning in early March, we held several pre-convention meetings on the Zoom platform. Then from Friday, March 31 through Sunday, April 2, we met in person at the Arden West Hilton Hotel in Sacramento California. We also broadcast our general sessions over Zoom, thus allowing those who couldn't be present to participate. 94 people registered for the live convention, and many joined us online. If you attended our SVCB April meeting, you got to enjoy Rob Turner's beautifully edited audio excerpts from the general sessions. I'll

add a few details here, and borrow extensively from the excellent convention report prepared by Margie Donovan and Olivia Ostergard.

As outgoing president of Golden State Guide Dog Handlers Inc, (GSGDHI) I'd like to share our affiliate's convention activities. We held our first program session over Zoom immediately following our business meeting. We featured 3 guest panelists, all of whom were guide dog puppy raisers. They shared their experiences raising and socializing puppies and discussed highs and lows: saying goodbye to dogs returning to campus for training, welcoming new pups into their homes, coping with

challenging puppy behaviors, rejoicing when their pups became guides or breeders. All on the call enjoyed an animated discussion.

At the live convention in Sacramento, GSGDHI organized a meet and greet between attendees and their dogs, and members of the Sacramento Puppy Raising Club who also volunteered their time in the relieving area. We spent a delightful hour and a half allowing our guides to socialize with the raisers and their dogs. The raisers were both teens and adults, and to a person, they said how gratified they felt to watch guide dogs working with their handlers.

Another pre-convention activity that was lots of fun was the Creative Writing Workshop sponsored by CCB's Publications Committee. Indeed, calling it a workshop was a misnomer, as we had far too much fun listening to Sara Harris, Lisa Presley Thomas, and others read us stories based on memories from their childhoods. We feature 2 of Sarah's pieces in this newsletter.

Delegate Report from Margie Donovan

On Friday afternoon, I attended a luncheon where a representative of "Democracy Live" spoke. All voters have one thing in common: we lack

information about the candidates and issues appearing on our ballots. With Live Ballot, you get your personal, interactive ballot, and the information needed to be prepared on Election Day. Live Ballot also offers an accessible voter information guide based on zip codes. These guides are the same as the printed guides we receive in the mail from the Voter Registration Office.

OmniBallot Portal is an electronic, fully accessible vote-by-mail, absentee, UOCAVA and sample ballot solution. It offers secure, accessible remote balloting for all voters, including those with disabilities, and people living abroad or serving in the military. [Access

democracylive.com/omniballot-portal/]

Friday evening began with a dinner and a live performance of Country of the Blind, which was performed by members of the ACB Capitol Chapter.

The second general session began with a Zoom presentation from Deb Cook-Lewis, President of ACB. Deb has only been in this role since Immediate Past President Dan Spoone stepped into the role as acting ACB Executive Director.

Deb highlighted the accessible currency rally, which was held at Lafayette Park across the street from the White House. This was held during the ACB Legislative Seminar. Despite the pouring rain on

rally day, they had a great turnout. A letter was read from Harriet Tubman's family, in support of accessible currency and having a woman on the 20-dollar bill. Following the rally, the participants marched to the United States Mint.

The first tactile currency will be released in 2026, when the new 10-dollar bill is produced. ACB's first resolution on currency was presented in the early 70's. It has taken over 50 years to get accessible paper currency in the United States.

Deb discussed the many committees which ACB has. She intends to sign up for all their email lists so that she can

learn more about the affiliates. Deb also noted the legislative imperatives for 2023. There are four imperatives, which include:

- The Medical Device Non-Visual Accessibility Act;**
- The Websites and Software Applications Accessibility Act;**
- The Communications, Video, and Technology Accessibility Act;**
- And the Exercise and Fitness for All Ages Act.**

Deb concluded her remarks by inviting everyone to the ACB National Convention in Schaumburg, Illinois.

Jeff Thom and Regina Brink gave a

legislative update. We have two bills this year: AB1518, and AB410—scooter signage. Regina also gave a presentation about Cal Fresh. She is hoping to get some changes in the program. Currently, Cal Fresh considers roommates' incomes, and she is hoping to get this changed.

CCB Elections: The full slate from the nominating committee was elected to the Board of Directors. Sara Harris was re-elected as First Vice President, and Steve Bauer as Secretary. Directors elected were Christy Crespín, Joe Green, Pam Metz, and Penny Valdovinos.

The elections were followed by remembrances (the following list may

not include all the people who have passed away within the last year): John Vandervort; Loraine Brown's husband, James Brown (Jim); Elizabeth Klein (Liz); Susan Hood; Steve Fort; and Albert Contreras.

Delegate Report from Olivia Ostergard

Saturday: The morning began with a wonderful breakfast, "A Cup of Joe," with Joe Green, CCB Membership Committee Chair. We discussed several ways we could reach out to lost members and recruit new ones, everything from phone calls, an 800 number, and post cards with chapter/affiliate information.

Another suggestion was to create a public service announcement (PSA) for TV/radio stations to alert Californians that we're here, and to explain how family and friends can contact us when someone they care about is losing vision or has been newly diagnosed.

The first session was comprised of the Department of Rehabilitation's panel, and primarily dealt with our older blind OIB program. Joe Xavier, DOR's Executive Director, reported on some of the changes coming down the pike. DOR will be working with the newly formed California Agencies for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CAABVI), which will streamline the work that needs to be

done by pooling all those agencies statewide that serve us.

Laura Rasmussen from Washington, DC., outlined some of DOR's new procedures, such as their new Client Liaison, a sort of go-between connecting the counselor and the client. Next was Anita Arron, Executive Director of the California Agency on Aging, who talked about some of the efforts in adhering to the MASTER PLAN designated by Governor Newsom. Their ten-year program attempts to open wide the doors for older Californians to benefit from everything that DOR, the San Francisco LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and other agencies have to offer.

We also heard from Shelena Heber, one of their Board Members, who is Director of the Valley Center for the Blind (VCB) in Fresno. Before lunch, Jamie Gibson Barrows gave a report on how VCB is leading the way in employment of blind and visually impaired individuals with their telemarketing training program. So far, they've been quite successful.

At our CLUA Luncheon (California Library Users of America) led by President Pam Metz, we heard from Mike Marlin, Executive Librarian for our Sacramento Regional Talking Book Library. He informed us of their continued development in obtaining the newest Victor Stream Readers, and in supporting

those who use the cartridge readers.

The afternoon session was highlighted by Sharon Giovinazzo, San Francisco LightHouse for the Blind's new CEO, who livened things up with her presentation. Sounds like things are beginning to move and groove!

The evening's Banquet, always a delight, was graced by Kenneth Simians, Chair of ACB's committees which give out the Durward K. McDaniel (DKM) First-Timer's Award and the JP Morgan Chase Fellowship Award. They will be choosing several applicants for a wonderful leadership experience at this year's ACB convention in Schaumburg, Illinois.

Kenneth encouraged us to continue the great work that we've been doing and reach out to garner new folks.

I guess the after party was okay. I didn't go. So, if you were there, jump in and give your feedback.

Margie Donovan

Sunday Business Meeting: Thirteen resolutions were read and passed. Lisa Presley-Thomas gave the treasurer's report. Our total assets are around \$650,000. The following accounts are restricted accounts and invested: Ellen Murphy, Newell Perry, Mannino, and the Lillie Perry Foundation Fund. Due to the volatility of the market, these accounts

are down. Lisa works closely with our investor, Donna Andrews, to minimize risk.

At the beginning of the Sunday morning session there was one constitutional change, which removed the term limits for the position of CCB's treasurer.

[Editor's note: The resolutions were not available for publication here.]

Letter to the Editor

By Deborah Armstrong

Dear Editor,

I read with interest your reprint of a blog post about how students at the Texas

School for the Blind learned chemistry basics from a university professor and blind assistants. The program's goal is to encourage young blind people to enter STEM fields, but I think all they really did was attract positive publicity. It's completely unrealistic to suggest blind students enter fields in science, when little support for their education exists.

The blind students in the Texas experiment had the benefit of professional presenters, tactile graphics and one-on-one instruction. At the community college where I work, for the past twenty years, we have attempted to get our science department to offer at least one course that was fully accessible

to blind and visually impaired students, and have not been successful. To transfer to university, students are often required to pass two science courses at the freshman or sophomore level. And all colleges in California require at least one course with a science-based lab component in order to graduate. So even if your major is history or philosophy, STEM is required.

When our blind students take anthropology, biology, geology, chemistry, physics, meteorology or any of our other science courses, we in Disabled Students' Services struggle. We must produce the textbook in an accessible format. We must scramble to

locate tutors and/or lab assistants. We need to crank out tactile graphics on the fly. We have to encourage the professor, who often doesn't want a blind student in his class and stubbornly refuses to make anything more accessible. Due to academic freedom, professors can use any textbook and class handouts they choose, so it's not like we can develop accessibility to a specific curriculum and avoid re-inventing the wheel! It's a big hassle and it repeats each time we get a new blind student.

A far better use of their grant funds would have been to produce an online course, in an open-source format that was fully accessible and that met the

science requirements for graduation. If someone gets grants to produce open-source fully accessible courses that all colleges can use, this would go a long way towards preparing all blind students, whether they wish to enter a science-based field or simply need to get their literature B.A.!

Inclusive Diversity of CA Wins Chapter of the Year Award By Linda Samulski, Co-chair Membership Committee

Last month at our California Council of the Blind Convention Banquet, the Inclusive Diversity of California affiliate amazingly won the Chapter of the Year

award, and we are still celebrating! The excitement was building as the chair of the awards committee took the mic and presented other awards of very deserving recipients. As this was a hybrid convention, some of us were on the phone and some were there in person. Then, surprisingly, Joe Green, our membership committee cochair, presented the award. This brought tears to my eyes because I enjoy working with Joe on his committee so much, and he is a great friend. Our vice-president of IDC, Pam Metz, accepted the award. As we have only been an affiliate for two years, we were honored to be recognized by the state organization.

One of the main projects of the affiliate was the creation of the IDC brochure, done by the Membership Committee. The Publications Committee also worked alongside the Membership Committee to create the content. Members Dharini Dobbins and Stephanie Watts worked diligently on printing and brailleing the brochure.

That's not all this affiliate has done. The Program Committee, chaired by Pam Metz, has put together excellent presentation and listening sessions. For example, at the recent CCB hybrid convention, held in March, 2023, Fred Meade, along with his colleague, spoke at our IDC program about self-care,

increasing compassion, and empathy.

Our mission is to celebrate unity while honoring diversity through advocacy, education and peer to peer support. But even more than the values and collaboration we share by working together, we also share friendship, understanding and respect. We also share smiles, fun and laughter while working hard to accomplish our mission.

I believe that it's because of our hard work that we won the Chapter of the Year award. The president, board and committees, along with our membership strive to continue the work of inclusion by coming up with diverse ideas to

promote the cause.

If you agree with these values, we'd love to have you join us. While working on different projects, you will also make new friends, and have fun while doing it.

Remember too that membership renewal is coming up, so please join us.

For more information, please call:

408-409-6634

You may also email:

InclusiveDiversityCalifornia@gmail.com

**Taco
By Sarah Harris**

[Editor's Note: Here is a second creative

gem from Sarah about learning to read braille.]

**My fingers glide across the paper
Scrubbing at the bumps
Just like the teacher told me not to
Aloud I say "T...A...C...O"
Once again aloud I say "T....A....C...O"
My husband walks into the room
I scrub at the dots again
"Honey Muffin, What is T...A...C...O?", I
ask him
I feel him look at me with a grin.
"Taco," he says.
"Taco," I ask with surprise and I am
ashamed to admit now, a little disbelief.
In my mind I see the letters fly through
my mind's eye**

T....A....C...O

The alphabet a vibrant yellow

“I just read taco.”, I say.

My husband just stands there.

“You don’t understand. I just read my first word in Braille,” I say proudly with a broad smile and my head held high.

**CAAVL: Your User’s Manual for Aging Well with Vision Loss
By Frank Welte, CAAVL
President**

Wait! Where’s my user’s manual? When you buy a home appliance, a piece of consumer electronics, or just about anything else, it comes with a user manual or at least a set of instructions or

a getting started guide. My life is more complicated than a gadget, so where's my user manual? What? The hospital didn't give my parents my user manual when they brought me home? Where's my refund???

Seriously, life is complicated, and each part of it; infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, marriage, work and retirement, has its own unique features, most of which we learn about by experience. Even though we aren't issued a nice set of user manuals at birth, guidance is available to help us through each stage of life. The challenge is to find it.

Now that I have entered my seventh decade of life, I am preparing for retirement and getting ready to make important choices about how to spend my remaining working years, what to do after I retire, where to live, how to manage my finances, how to manage my healthcare and more. You are probably wrestling with the same questions. Indeed, even if you are a long way from retirement, it's not too early to get educated about these issues and to start planning accordingly.

The California Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss can help. Among other things, our mission is to build an active, inclusive and supportive community of

older persons who are blind that fosters each person's self-acceptance and self-confidence, helps each person to access information, resources, products, services and opportunities that will enhance his or her experience with vision loss and provides opportunities for each person to share his or her unique personality, life experiences, talents and friendship in behalf of others in the community.

One way we achieve this purpose is to provide informative programs about the various aspects of aging with vision loss. We seek to learn and to teach each other. Here is a sample of the subjects we've addressed in our recent program

sessions.

April, 2022: About the Dale Macintosh Center, tips for preparing for retirement

October, 2022: Elder law and protecting your assets

February, 2023: Emergency Preparedness

March, 2023: Nursing homes and older blind residents

Many of our program recordings, as well as similar material from our nationwide counterpart, the Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss, are available as podcasts which can be found on the ACB website.

For more information about CAAVL, contact our President, Frank Welte, by writing to him at:

Frank.A.Welte@gmail.com or calling him at: (510) 541-1442.

If you wish to join CAAVL, you can do so by contacting our Treasurer, Denise Weddle, by writing to her at:

deaniew21@verizon.net or calling her at: (310) 306-8149.

My CCB Involvement and Membership: Will I or Won't I By Christy Crespin

It is a very hot day as I "pen" this article. I have been thinking about what

CCB involvement and membership means in my life. After all, I have been involved and a member for over 50 years. What keeps me coming back?

I began my CCB history as a scholarship winner. Where are our scholarship winners? Raise your hand if you have applied for a CCB scholarship. Did you win a scholarship? Are you still here? Did you receive one or more scholarships? Are you still here?

Immediately upon attending my first chapter meeting in October, 1971, I became chapter secretary. You see, the chapter was small, and everyone was so thankful that a new person joined. Did I

start out at the meeting thinking I would be involved to this extent? No. I had really never even considered what the duties of the secretary were. The cool thing is that I found people who believed in me and helped me learn and grow. Now one of my favorite offices to hold is that of secretary. Remember, I was just starting out as an 18-year-old, sheltered girl attending a Catholic women's college, taking my first courses. I went on to win several other scholarships.

In 1972 I received another scholarship, and I joined the student chapter of the CCB. Soon I was elected president. What? President of a student affiliate? Yes, and why? I had no idea what a

president was supposed to do, but there was a need, so I stepped up. Again, I had people to help me learn and grow.

Eventually I felt pretty lonely at the top because people shy away from getting too involved. It is difficult to take on the responsibilities of CCB work and to attend classes. Still, there I was, and Ed became treasurer after we were married. After all, his involvement was contagious, and he introduced me to CCB's student chapter when we met.

As a recipient of CCB scholarships, I felt honored to carry on the tradition of involvement and advocacy that I experienced in CCB. However, it was not all fun and games, sweet and charming.

Through the years there were a lot of times I wanted to give up, drop out, run away, and disavow because of hurts, frustrations, disappointment, and anger. Lots happened in CCB history, and I took some time off between the NFB/CCB split and CCB/ACB affiliation. Read the book, *People of Vision: A History of the American Council of the Blind*, by James and Marjorie Megivern, copyright 2003. Many relationships were severed, and it was like I imagined it would be to get a divorce.

When my husband and I re-entered the movement after taking time out to spend with our young family, we decided to fully commit again, and since 1988 we

have stayed involved and committed. Sometimes we have felt like walking away, especially when there has been strife in our chapter, we feel unheard, or unappreciated. There is so much at stake if people slam the door and choose to refrain from staying involved and committed. We have worked so hard, and is all for naught?

I offer you some guidelines as follows:

Join an affiliate and a chapter. These days you can join chapters of your heart. Yes, by joining a chapter and affiliate you will have the opportunity to share in what interests you and work to grow our local chapters.

Find a mentor, someone you look up to, and introduce yourself. Ask to be mentored by that person or couple. If they mentor, it may be in the form of sincere friendship and/or on a more formal basis. If ACB offers a mentorship program, step in and get involved. I have learned so much from becoming a part of that program, and I will commit to do my part to help this program grow nationally and locally. Instead of waiting to be picked, instead of having hurt feelings because you have not been noticed, reach out. People have difficulty knowing their own minds, never mind reading yours.

If you have ever received an award,

scholarship, appointment, job, advocacy assistance, or any other benefit or service, consider paying your good fortune forward by becoming involved and committed with CCB.

**CCB 2050 Vision, 8.
Fundraising: The Truth About
Grants
By Frank Welte**

In the previous installment in this series, I finished the discussion about how CCB could reach out to different communities by sharing ideas about youth outreach. The next few articles will address the subject of fundraising.

At the start of this series, I outlined my expansive vision for the future of CCB.

Fulfilling this vision will take a lot of time, effort and money. Let's talk about how CCB, our chapters and our members can raise the funds we need.

This article will cover grants and other forms of fundraising. Then we'll consider the differences between chapter-level fundraising and statewide fundraising. Later, we'll learn the elements of a good fundraising plan and how to implement one. Finally, we'll wrap up this topic with a list of local and statewide fundraising ideas and resources.

Each type of fundraising is unique.

Indeed, whole books have been written about each of these areas and how to succeed in each.

Investment Fundraising: Grants

In recent years, CCB has obtained several valuable and timely grants from Energy Upgrade California and other sources. How do grants work, and how does grant fundraising affect how CCB operates?

Probably the most important thing to know here is that grants are not gifts. They're investments. That means that the people and organizations (individuals, foundations, nonprofits, businesses or governments) that provide

grants are investors, not donors. If a business owner wants to obtain investment capital, she will need to fill out a loan application and/or submit a thorough business plan to potential investors in order to prove that the business is likely to turn a profit for the investors. Similarly, a nonprofit will need to prepare a compelling grant proposal and probably complete a grant application to convince granters that the organization's proposed project will fulfill a specific charitable purpose and that the organization has the necessary personnel, expertise, processes, etc. to see the project to a successful completion.

Another thing to understand is that grant providers do so to bring about THEIR vision of a better world, not yours. This means that the nonprofit must show how its particular purpose and programs support the goals of the funder.

These two facts have several implications for how grants impact CCB.

First, to successfully compete for grants, CCB must take a more professional, businesslike approach to planning, procedures, record keeping, financial management and measuring outcomes because we need to be accountable to our “investors”.

This means that, to the extent that our

financing relies on grants, our staff, officers and directors, chapter and affiliate leaders and members can expect to spend more time on administrative activities to meet the demands of grant providers.

Second, we need to be very clear about our goals and the strategies we want to follow to obtain them, and we need to identify and seek grant opportunities that align with our goals. That means we may need to bypass certain grants if they would cause us to divert too many of our resources away from advancing our core purposes.

Third, we need to think of each grant

opportunity as a potential long-term professional relationship.

Relationship Fundraising: One-time and Periodic Donor Solicitations, seeking bequests and cultivating individual donors

Experts on philanthropy tell us that most of the dollars given to charities every year come from individual donors, not foundations, businesses and governments. Cultivating individual donors is all about building relationships. Certainly, it's important to build relationships with people who care about your cause, but it's just as important that you have a personal relationship

with individual donors, too.

The backbone of a successful individual donor cultivation strategy is a robust donor database.

Transactional Fundraising: Product sales, bake sales, raffles, events, etc.

I suspect that most of us in CCB have participated in transactional fundraising activities, both as participants and as contributors. Most clubs, churches and even schools put a lot of effort into this type of fundraising. The beauty of these activities is that they are familiar to most of us, they allow a large percentage of our members to participate without requiring a lot of professional expertise,

they don't demand a long-term commitment from contributors and they can be really fun. The downside is that these activities can involve a lot of effort, and their profitability is limited by the size of the wallets in the room during these events.

The next installment in this series will compare chapter-level fundraising strategies and statewide approaches and present tips for making each type of fundraising strategy successful. I welcome your feedback on this and future articles in this series. Send questions, ideas and criticisms to: Frank.A.Welte@gmail.com

Editorial

Why you Need to Go Online Even When You Don't Think It's Possible

By Deborah Armstrong

Today, if you want to write to your state or national representative, it's easiest to do so on the web. If you must pay a bill, locate a phone number, complete an application, compare store prices, attend a virtual meeting, handle insurance coverage, fill a prescription, read a newsletter, check your balance or even apply for most sorts of aid, it's difficult to do so if you aren't connected to the internet.

Sighted people still read printed newsletters, fill out paper forms and let their fingers do the walking through the yellow pages. They can argue with the bank until it issues a paper statement. They can mail letters with actual envelopes and stamps. But as blind people, we used to need sighted help to do many things that the online world now makes possible for us to accomplish completely independently.

Yet, many of us balk at learning the skills necessary to access the internet, and more often than society's prejudices, it is our own lack of belief in our abilities that holds us back.

At the college where I work, even able-bodied students complain that you must go online to apply, these days for all scholarships. So, the unwillingness to use the internet isn't solely an obstacle for the elderly or disabled. But this unwillingness will force you to become a second-class citizen, as accomplishing tasks online becomes more and more an acceptable part of mainstream American life.

If you cannot use the internet, you are often considered unemployable. But even if you don't need to work, you cannot fully participate in your community without internet access. Will you always rely on someone else to read to you, or

will you take the plunge and learn to access these resources yourself?

If you already go online, but know those in your chapter who do not, please encourage them to get this access.

I believe the main barrier for most blind folks is that it's not easy to master these skills. Sighted folks just click on things. We have to learn to use magnification or speech systems, and they do take some training and practice. Plus, we need to acquire a device, a tablet, phone or computer that lets us go online.

But in reality, it's always been more difficult for us. It takes practice to safely travel with a guide dog, cane and/or

limited vision. It takes effort to figure out how to ride the bus or train, and practice to learn to cook and clean without sight. Learning Braille is also very challenging.

But there are rewards for those of us who master these skills. We can find work, whether it's paid or volunteer. We can take classes and become involved in our community. We can give back.

If you are one of those struggling with when, where and how to master the internet, let me offer a few tips.

First, figure out how you are going to get those skills. Can you go to a local college, blindness training center or a

friend? Can you listen to technology-oriented ACB community calls? There are more and more free training opportunities out there, so ask others in your chapter how they learned to use technology. Did you try before and failed? Maybe that was because you got confusing instructions so you need to work with someone who teaches differently.

Keep asking and trying different ways to learn the skills. Not everyone learns in the same way.

Next, you need to figure out how to get the technology. One mistake people often make is to get the technology first,

then find it overwhelming and relegate it to their closet. Ask your friends if they prefer a computer, a tablet or a smartphone and why. If you are low-income you will need to pursue sources of funding such as your local Rotary or Lions club, your CCB chapter, your relatives or a rehab counselor. Do some investigating and research first, and choose the technology that's right for you. Ask hard questions and don't let your uncle or a sales representative railroad you into buying something you will find too complex. Try to choose technology that you will easily be able to get help with when you get stuck. Even those of us who are extremely tech savvy get stuck, so we choose

technology that our colleagues use so we can get assistance when needed.

Investigate internet options for fixed income users if you are concerned about its affordability. Most large internet service providers have special programs for low-income users that will reduce your monthly bill considerably. Call or ask around until you locate economical internet service in your area. The internet is also free at many libraries and community centers, and it often comes packaged with your cellphone service.

Next, leave your stress behind. Stress never helped anyone learn, and as long as you are worried about whether you

can master a skill, you most definitely will not master it.

Imagine when you read a mystery, you might try to guess who committed the murder. But you are not stressed out about it. You don't fret over whether your guess is right. You follow the clues and enjoy the journey.

Successful learning works the same way. You pick up a little each time you practice and don't agonize about whether you've memorized enough or practiced enough. You simply add one small skill each time you work with the new task, until you know way more than you did when you first started.

Lastly, remember with technology that there are multiple methods to accomplish something. For example, you can read email with a special software program or simply do it on the web. You can write with a fancy word processor or an easy text editing program. Phones have multiple apps for reading news, so just because you are taught one way of doing something, you aren't stuck with it. Always ask if there's a different way that you might find easier to master.

Once you have technology, you have a convenient way to take notes, track your calendar and friends' contact information. You have email so it's easy to stay in touch with your family, friends

and obligations. You can now pay bills and fill out many online forms without needing assistance. You can keep up with community events. You can order food, gifts and necessities without leaving your home. You can more easily track your doctor's recommendations. You can enjoy a variety of entertainment. You might be able to earn some extra money from home too. You can easily locate needed information. You can, in short, vastly improve your life.

Don't let your own fear of technology hinder you from becoming a full participant in the modern world. It's the best way to reduce the obstacles that a visual impairment presents. And if you

know another blind person who is limited by their unwillingness to embrace technology, encourage them with Franklin Roosevelt's maxim that the only thing to fear is fear itself.

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Joe.Green@ccbnet.org

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Pam.Metz@ccbnet.org**

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Jeff.Thom@ccbnet.org**

**Penny Valdovinos (2023-2025, 3rd
term), Bakersfield, CA, 661-378-8282,
Penny.Valdovinos@ccbnet.org**

Publications Committee

**Mike Keithley, Editor, 650-386-6286 H,
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**Susan Glass, Associate Editor,
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**Sarah Harris and Andrea Deklotz co-
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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.