

THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN

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Summer: May 15 current year

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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 King Keithley

Hello everyone, I'm King, Mike's last guide dog who you met two BC issues ago.

Well summer's just about over at this writing, and fall is likely all around you by the time you read this. Nothin' wrong with fall, I remember how I'd roll around in crunchy, dry leaves and how my socializer laughed and gave me a bath, getting rid of that wonderful smell, but that's the way it is when you serve humans, you've gotta do what they say! An' so, here's what we have for you in this issue of the BC.

We start with a party, oh my, CCB's 90th birthday, and you're invited. Don't know about dogs, though, nothing's said about that. But then we're often

forgotten. But I've learned how to Zoom, so beware the barks!

Daveed Mandell writes a study in voting frustration that'll light a fire under someone!

We have a CCB legislative update from the front, and Christy is crying today.

Bev Clifford tells us why technology makes her furious. It was published here many years ago, but it's still a light for a gloomy day.

As you've likely heard, Silicon Valley Council of the Blind member Noel Runyan passed away on July 31, and SVCB hosted his memorial service on Saturday, August 17. You can listen to the memorial here:

www.svcb.cc/psaudio/memorial.mp3

Noel touched many people with his zesty lifestyle and helpfulness. He was the life of the Wednesday SVCB Social Hour, and we sure do notice his absence. He was a fantastic storyteller, and I often

heard a happy person back there, bursting with the joy of being.

Enjoy Fall and the BC, and crunch a leaf!

A Slice of Summer

By Maureen Scafe

Roses are red,

Or so it is said.

I say it, too,

And accept it is true.

But from my point of view,

They might be purple, or blue.

Legislative Update

By Jeff Thom as seen on the ccbl mailing list

1. Assembly Bill 1902: I am thrilled to report that AB1902, our bill to require accessible drug labeling be provided to people who are blind, low vision or have other print disabilities, has passed and will be sent to the Governor. This is in large part due to the great work of Assemblyman Jaun Alanis, a Modesto Republican, and our own Assistant Director of Governmental Affairs, Regina Brink. We will soon be distributing a sample support letter that can be sent to the Governor to make sure we get his signature on the bill.

What is most encouraging is the broad support we have been able to obtain among an array of health, disability and advocacy organizations.

2. Assembly Bill 3193: AB3193, our bill to reform the methodology for the purchasing of assistive technology-related goods and services by the Department of Rehabilitation for its consumers, is undergoing some last-minute amendments, which is almost certain to lead to passage, to be then sent to the Governor. These amendments were agreed to with the Newsome Administration and thus, now the bill has an outstanding chance of being signed.

Unfortunately, the bill is limited to purchases of less than \$10,000, but it will allow the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), in collaboration with the Department of General Services, advocates, and vendors, to draft new procedures under which DOR will be able to avoid competitive bidding and advertising requirements when making these purchases. This is the first time in this 30-year battle, that we have tacit acknowledgement that the existing authority of the Department of General Services is not sufficient to meet the needs of our

consumers. Thus, once we achieve our goal of obtaining a Governor's signature, we will need to work hard to ensure that the new regulations are a true step forward.

Advocacy Is a Team Sport

By Regina Marie Brink

Our whole family gathered in our living room to watch the Paris Olympics this summer. Perhaps, like our family, you fixed good food and drinks, cheered for your favorite athletes, shed some tears when people lost, and celebrated the real joy of this world event.

Very few of us put a lot of thought into how it all happened. I started thinking about all the hours upon hours of training and preparation on the part

of the athletes, all the hours and hours of coaching and mentoring, and all the hours invested by people behind the scenes. Staging the events, housing and feeding the athletes as well as the spectators, and keeping everyone safe while doing it is rarely considered by those of us watching from our comfortable homes.

A particular event spoke to me. We were watching the relay races because we all love track and field. Spoiler alert if you haven't watched it: the US men's team lost and the US women's team won. This race involves running and then passing a baton to your teammates to then run the same distance until your whole team has done it. We noticed the men were very fast runners, but they had trouble when they passed the baton to their teammates. We don't know why and there's not enough space here to figure that out, but the US women's team ran fast and also passed the baton gracefully and

quickly. It was amazing to watch and hear it described.

This reminded me of advocacy efforts. It is easy to say “Here’s problem X and it has to change now! Why doesn’t someone do something about it?” It’s easy to get mad or discouraged. The hard part is to put together a team that can get the solutions through.

It’s true. Attorneys, legislators, experienced advocates, and proven strategists are all invaluable on the team. However, in my mind, the most valuable part of the team are people who are blind or low vision and have experienced first-hand, the problems we are trying to solve. They are the friends and family who have seen the effects on real people’s lives. They might be you and me.

Small acts can help: a phone call, a letter, showing up to a hearing to say you support a bill, written and spoken public comments, filing formal

complaints, or reading long lists of facts and picking out which are the best to use. All are part of the ingredients that make a winning team, just like in the relay races. The California Council of the Blind appointed representatives work hard and we gladly do so because we believe in what we do. However, we couldn't do it without all of you! You are the element that will make CCB a winning advocacy team. Let us know how you'd like to help. There is always a space for one more!

Vote By Mail: Still Not for Blind People!

By Daveed Mandell

Every day I hear people talking about the necessity to get out the vote. Call people! Tell people! Remind people! We must all vote!

And, they say, vote early, and vote by mail!

Well, I would if I could, but California's Secretary of State, Shirley Webber, won't let me. In fact, by refusing to adopt and implement remote electronic ballot return, she has disenfranchised thousands of people with disabilities by preventing them from voting privately and independently by mail. How ironic and how sad that our African-American Secretary of State is violating the civil rights of people with disabilities!

Last year, an attorney from Disability Rights California told me they were working quietly behind the scenes, and they didn't want to rock the boat. Heaven forbid that we should make a fuss, let the public and the media know about the Secretary of State's refusal to allow us to vote accessibly by mail!

So, the upshot is that the public and the media had no idea about our predicament for over a year.

Suddenly, a few months ago, CCB and NFBC filed a

preliminary injunction against the Secretary of State, which was denied. There followed some very weak press coverage.

So why did a judge deny the preliminary injunction? Over a month has passed, and we still haven't been told the reason why this happened.

So here we are, meekly and passively accepting our fate, allowing our right to democracy to be violated! Utterly disgraceful! Inexcusable!

Where is this so-called disability rights movement headed? What is DRC doing with all of its money and its large staff? After all, it's one of the largest nonprofit organizations in the state.

Forgive this ranting and raving, but I'm darn mad and disgusted! And what is CCB doing? Nothing! We have no public relations mechanism whatsoever! Yes, I'm angry and frustrated, because I fear that the disability rights movement is all but dormant right now. There is little if any activism in California

and the nation. Had it not been for activism, the Civil Rights movement would never have succeeded as well as it did.

Many people with disabilities cannot go to voting centers, because they are very far from their homes, and we all know how difficult transportation can be for us! Besides, when I voted in the March primary election, I had to wait over an hour before the poll workers could figure out how to set up and operate the so-called accessible voting machine.

If democracy means anything to CCB members, it's time for us to let the world know that accessible voting is a civil right that no one has a right to violate, including the California Secretary of State! I wrote her office, but never received a response. How long are we going to just stand by and accept this intolerable treatment?

I want all of us, (if we so choose) to vote early, privately and independently by mail. How dare the

Secretary of State prevent us from doing this! It's time to let her know that we mean business!

90th Birthday Party Coming Up in October

By Christopher Gray, Chair

Turning 90 is a big deal for anybody at any time. It is an even bigger deal for an organization with many members and friends. With this in mind, a group of blind and visually impaired members and friends of CCB have gathered together to create and launch a birthday party for the blind and visually impaired of California, particularly members of the organization that turns 90 on October 6, 2024, the California Council of the Blind. The name of the committee is "90th birthday party for the blind of California" and is comprised of several CCB

members from around the state including members of the CCB Board of Directors.

Mark your calendar today for October 25-27, 2024 to attend this fabulous birthday party to be held in Fresno, CA. For any who cannot attend in person, this is a hybrid event so you can come via Zoom if that is a better option for you. Registration for the event is \$25 for all attendees.

The committee has received an excellent package for this gathering from the Piccadilly Inn, 5115 E. McKinley Avenue, Fresno, CA 9327. Room rates are \$105/night which includes a free breakfast for each day. The breakfast is not a buffet, but prepared fresh by the chef when ordered. Breakfast includes bacon or sausage, scrambled eggs with or without cheese, hash browns, toast and a beverage such as coffee or orange juice. Any additions or changes will receive a small up-charge. The hotel will provide

attendees free shuttle service from the airport or Amtrak Station.

Now to the event itself. The formal proceedings begin at 7:00 P.M. Friday, October 25. After introductions and general housekeeping matters, we will focus on Newel Perry, the president of CCB for 20 years. He is honored in a 1954 speech, yes, the actual audio recording, by Jacobus tenBroek, President, National Federation of the Blind, and will then be heard in his own voice and words describing some key events in his life. To hear these leaders in their own words is truly exciting.

On Saturday, we will hear actual recordings by other key figures in the early years of the organization including Allen Jenkins. These are made available from oral archives originally made by the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley in the mid to late 1950s. In addition, a series of panel discussions will be held describing key facts of CCB over the years

including multicultural activities of the organization and the organizations that currently comprise the California Council of the Blind. On Sunday, we will move to a conversation about the present and future of CCB.

You can register with the hotel right now for the party! To do so, either contact Christopher Gray at: [415-577-5601](tel:415-577-5601)
chris@qgpremium.com

or by calling Grayce Rodriguez, Hotel contact at: [559-375-7761](tel:559-375-7761)

Room reservation cut-off date is October 11, 2024. After that day, reservations may still be available but not guaranteed. For the party registration, please contact Chris Gray directly. The hotel can only take room reservations.

On behalf of the committee, I invite you to attend this birthday celebration. It will be a great time for all. You don't want to miss it!

Remembering Noel Runyan

Memorial Speech Delivered by Arthur Runyan on Saturday, August 17, 2024

Editor's Note: It's difficult to imagine or estimate how many members of CCB have felt their lives touched by Noel Runyan and his wife Deb. If you ever used a VersaBraille or an Arkenstone Product, Noel's life touched yours. If Noel and Deb ever built you a computer, their lives touched yours. If you're blind or have low vision and you vote, Noel's life has touched yours. If you revel in the cross pollination of technology and art, you have a companion in Noel. Those of us in the Silicon Valley Council of the Blind CCB chapter enjoyed his infectious laughter, delicious storytelling, concern for others, and reverent sense of wonder. Noel died on July 31 of

this year, and the SVCB chapter hosted his memorial on Saturday August 17.

Fifty-nine people attended live, and thirty-three others joined us on zoom. Here is the eulogy delivered by Noel and Deb's son Arthur:

Noel Runyan was born in Los Alamos, NM, on December 26, 1947 and passed away in San Jose, CA, on July 31, 2024.

He and his wife, Debby Miner, were married in 1969 in Los Alamos, and then made their home in Albuquerque, while Noel completed his degree in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the University of New Mexico. While at UNM, he was a co-winner of the 1971 Electrical Engineering Student Paper Contest, took top prize at the 1971 annual University of New Mexico Engineering College Open House competition, and he was chosen by the Eta Kappa Nu national electrical engineering

Fraternity as the 1972 Top Electrical Engineering student in the United States.

In 1973 they moved to San Jose, where Noel was employed by IBM at the Advanced Systems Development Division in Los Gatos. His first assignment was to find ways of hacking the BART ticketing system that IBM was developing.

At IBM Noel was asked to spend part of his time on a special project that was tasked with developing a braille version of a computer display. In that project, he explored many ways to make a full-page braille display. At that time there were no commercially available electronic braille displays, not even single cells.

As part of the project, he did some exciting early computerized speech output work, and developed the first compact text to speech system that ran in a microprocessor. He also pioneered the use of touch

sensitive tablets for controlling information access with audio and braille displays.

In 1976, Noel and Debby had Arthur, their “Bicentennial Baby”.

In 1978 Noel moved to Telesensory Systems where he was supposed to work on making computers talk. Instead, he helped develop the VersaBraille, the first American refreshable electronic braille display. It was a portable notetaker and word processor with a 20-cell braille display. He came close to quitting, or getting fired, when he insisted on putting a serial interface on the VersaBraille. But soon he was proven right when the VersaBraille without the serial interface was phased out.

In 1981 Noel and Debby had a daughter, Tammy.

After 5 years at Telesensory, never having worked on audio devices, Noel left. And in 1983, Noel and Debby, using their savings, started developing the Talking Tablet, a computer for people who are

visually impaired. After 4 years they had a working prototype, but could not find any grant money to support producing a product.

In 1987 an article in the San Jose Mercury News attracted an angel investor. With that infusion of money, Noel and Debby incorporated as Personal Data Systems, or PDS (they wanted "Speech Works", but thought that it sounded too much like "Beach Works"). They started with developing the Audapter, the first fast response computerized speech output system with high quality speech.

Later, as a dealer for Arkenstone, with its early, awkward, scanning systems, Noel developed the EasyScan interface, where you only needed to press the space bar to scan a page. EasyScan was sold to nearly 11,000 people.

Noel also developed programs called PicTac, to convert pictures to tactile drawings that could be

brailled on heavy paper, and BuckScan to identify bills.

A lack of money prevented Noel and Debby from ever being able to complete the Talking Tablet. However, they did go on to make over 500 custom, personalized, computer systems for folks who needed speech, large print, or braille access to do word processing, scan printed books, access the Internet, read electronic books, and read and write email.

Their daughter Tammy, often stuck after school at the office with Noel and Debby, enjoyed running between computers, formatting floppy disks.

While working at PDS, Noel realized that the supposedly “accessible” voting systems being used in Santa Clara County were “junk”. Both accessibility and security were poorly designed add-ons. Noel was one of the few people who really understood how to define true accessibility for ALL

people, along with the necessity of security, to make that access mean something. He spent many years advocating for REAL accessibility and security in voting systems.

After closing PDS in 2012, Noel continued working on various projects for the visually impaired. He explored many different ways of building braille displays, which he called “The Search for the Holy Braille”. In doing so, he became an expert in how NOT to build braille displays.

He recently spent about a year servicing more than 60 Perkins Braillers for Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and others.

He was on National Braille Press’ Touch of Genius Committee and, despite being sick, attended the meeting in San Francisco this spring.

Noel enjoyed working with his hands. When he was working with wood, Debby called it “making sawdust”, and when working with rocks and

minerals, she called it “making dirt”, although, in both cases, he really produced many useful and beautiful objects.

When helping design devices for the visually impaired he would make prototypes out of wood, and the original Talking Tablet was made out of oak.

Noel also delighted friends and family with his stunning magic tricks. Many people will remember him as a gifted storyteller with many tales of youthful high jinks, pranks, and adventures. He enjoyed bringing a touch of wonder to those around him.

Noel loved to create what he called “Art Techo” out of shiny bits of old technology and polished stones. He and a friend, Gerry Perko, won 2nd place and 3rd place in the Worldwide Rock Tumbling Contest over the years they competed together. After Gerry Perko passed away, Noel continued entering the

contest. Debby is currently finishing the entries for this year's contest.

Noel's legacy is one of perseverance, creativity, and a relentless pursuit of making the world a better place. He will be remembered as a trailblazer in accessible technology, a devoted family man, and a passionate polymath who found beauty in both technology and nature.

A Book Recommendation for CCB's Budding Poets

By Susan Glass

In almost every issue of the Blind Californian, at least one or two people contribute poems. This delights me, since poetry and music are my favorite mediums. And I've just recalled one of my favorite

books on writing poetry. It's by Ted Kooser, a down-to-earth Nebraska poet with a keen sense of humor and sound practical guidance for writing and revising poetry. Ted Kooser is 85 years old now. He served as the U. S. Poet Laureate from 2004-2006, and his book *Delights and Shadows* won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for poetry. His writing is known for its clarity, precision and accessibility.

John and I had the pleasure of meeting and having coffee with Mr. Kooser while we were visiting family in Lincoln Nebraska. Mr. Kooser lives in Garland Nebraska, a tiny rural town near Lincoln.

The book I recommend is called "The Poetry Home Repair Manual: Practical Advice for Beginning Poets". DB 61714. Here is the BARD annotation:

U.S. Poet Laureate and Author of *Braided Creek*, DB 59814, draws on more than forty years' experience in this guide to writing and revising poetry. Shares his creative philosophy, and offers insights and

examples on rhyming and prose, metaphors and similes, rules and when to break them, and the writer reader relationship. (2005).

The chapter titles listed in the Table of Contents give you a pretty good idea of the friendly and informative man who speaks here:

1. A Poet's Job Description.
2. Writing For Others.
3. First Impressions.
4. Don't Worry About The Rules.
5. Rhyming, Ham Cubes, Prose Poems.
6. Writing About Feelings.
7. Can You Read Your Poem, Through Your Poem?
8. Writing From Memory.
9. Working With Detail.
10. Controlling Effects Through Careful Choices.
11. Fine Tuning Metaphors and Similes.
12. Relax and Wait.

I keep many poetry writing guides in my personal library, but this one is my favorite, and the 19 years since its publication haven't diminished the wisdom and joy I get from it every time I read it.

Here is one of my most beloved Ted Kooser poems:

Nebraska

The gravel road rides with a slow gallop
over the fields, the telephone lines
streaming behind, its billow of dust
full of the sparks of redwing blackbirds.

On either side, those dear old ladies,
the loosening barns, their little windows
dulled by cataracts of hay and cobwebs
hide broken tractors under their skirts.

So this is Nebraska. A Sunday

afternoon; July. Driving along
with your hand out squeezing the air,
a meadowlark waiting on every post.
Behind a shelterbelt of cedars,
top-deep in hollyhocks, pollen and bees,
a pickup kicks its fenders off
and settles back to read the clouds.
You feel like that; you feel like letting
your tires go flat, like letting the mice
build a nest in your muffler, like being
no more than a truck in the weeds,
clucking with chickens or sticky with honey
or holding a skinny old man in your lap
while he watches the road, waiting

for someone to wave to. You feel like waving. You feel like stopping the car and dancing around on the road. You wave instead and leave your hand out gliding larklike over the wheat, over the houses.

A Great Honor

By Linda Samulski

One of the greatest honors and experiences of my life was when I taught and coordinated the English as A Second Language Program at the Center for the Blind in San Diego.

In the beginning it was easy. I had four students who spoke Spanish, so we started out with life skills like dialing a phone. Then we moved on to the

English surrounding that topic, such as learning numbers. Every student had to learn their phone number, address, and how to dial 911. This was a must!

As time went on, we received new students from other countries, and it became a little more challenging. How was I going to teach all of those students who didn't speak English or Spanish the skills they needed to become more independent along with English? So, we just dug in, and tried something, anything and everything, and if it worked, great, and if it didn't, we tried something else.

I was able to recruit and utilize volunteers who were on board with this mission. They were amazing, and made life so much easier. Even more, we were able to find someone from adult education to help teach English to the class in the afternoons.

Our first student who didn't speak English or Spanish was from Southeast Asia. She and her father became blind due to River Blindness. Unfortunately, her father wanted no part of our classes, but his daughter certainly did. She had never been in a school setting before, and when she entered our class, she took off her shoes out of respect. A missionary who came with her that first day explained that she didn't have to do that. At first, she was very scared and shy, but she soon adapted to the class setting and became one of our brightest students. Amazingly, we had students from about thirty different countries around the world, including Cuba, Afghanistan, Somalia, Ethiopia, the Philippines, and more. Causes of blindness ranged from river blindness, gang violence, war, diabetes, and on the job accidents, etc.

The structure of the class stayed the same; life skills in the morning, English in the afternoon.

As time went on, we were able to start teaching Braille, and keyboarding skills to more advanced students. We had the room break up into smaller groups, and our volunteers were able to work with students at their levels of skills, as well as English.

Even more, we were able to use social work interns to help fill out applications for programs where they might be eligible. For those who had pending immigration applications, we had an inside contact through immigration and naturalization services (INS) located in Washington D.C. to assist wherever she could. At that time INS was very inaccessible. If someone had an appointment, the agent would make it so early that a person couldn't get there on time. If they did get there, numbers would be flashed on the screen, and if you can't see them, you miss your appointment. Too bad! INS would also ask some students to come back three or four times to take their finger prints, charging them each time. Where is the justice in that?

We were also able to advocate for students who wanted to attend adult education classes. Adult education English classes are very inaccessible as they use books, pictures, and chalk or white boards.

Several of our students were able to go to classes because of our advocacy. Some even went on to college, and became employed.

Well, there is way too much to tell here. I would love to tell you more, and I will! Stay tuned, I will tell you all a wonderful holiday story in the next edition of the Blind Californian.

Please, if you are moved by this, become a member of Inclusive Diversity Committee of California (IDC). We know that blind people of color fall through the cracks, and have other needs due to discrimination, and lack of compassion and understanding. IDC is very important in helping bring cultural awareness, advocacy, and help to those who need it.

Until next time, take care.

Today I Cry

By Christy Crespín

For many years my heart would sing!

I'd dance with abandon and laugh with joy!

That all happened in summer, fall and spring,

But now all is abandoned and waiting to destroy.

We all read the history and the Kool Aid we drank;

We resembled the Ever-Ready Energizer Bunny.

From absolutely nothing we shrank,

We rallied, protested, and sang songs that were
funny.

For many years we fought the good fight;

We stood shoulder to shoulder and were vocal and loud.

Now what we fought for, laws, statutes, civil rights,
Are being lost, rejected, and no longer allowed.

What happened to our visibility?

Why have we begun to lose?

What is our disability?

Why have we begun to snooze?

So far we have come but forgotten our history,

How our brothers and sisters fought with blood,
sweat and tears as they gave their all,

But this is not just a simple mystery

And my heart cries over our apathy, as our
movement has become so small.

I'm just too tired; I can't be bothered now!

No, I won't help anyone today!

Yes, I've stopped fighting, joining and caring somehow!

So all of our gains are just fading away!

Today I cry as I witness the downfall,

The strife, dissension, apathy, denial,

Lack of interest, care or heeding the call;

My heart hurts for our future trials.

Please come back to advocacy;

Please lend your wisdom, energy and care;

Please let us know what you can do to help us be

The best CCB that we dare~

What is OIB, and Why is It Important to You?

By Frank Welte, President, California Alliance in Aging and Vision Loss

Blind and visually impaired Californians are facing a crisis that we must all take seriously.

United States and California laws provide for a robust system of blindness support services for school children, working-age adults and military veterans. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA, provides regulations and supporting funding for support services for blind and visually impaired school children. The Rehabilitation Act provides regulations and funding support for working-age adults through state vocational rehabilitation agencies and commissions for the blind. The Veterans Administration operates a well-

funded network of rehabilitation programs for blind and visually impaired veterans through VA facilities throughout the United States.

Most of us have graduated from high school. Many of us never served in the military, some of us are retired. One thing we all have in common is that we are aging. Older adults comprise the largest cohort of blind and low vision Americans, and it is expected that nearly all of us are, or will become members of that cohort. Sadly, the weakest part of the blindness service system in the United States is the Older Individuals who are Blind Program, OIB. That means that most of us are now or will eventually be facing a situation in which blindness rehabilitation services are least available at the very time when many of us need them the most.

It has been estimated that the funding levels for the OIB program only cover the needs of three percent of the older blind and low vision population. This is a

crisis, and sooner or later, it will threaten the quality of your life. Many older Americans are already languishing unnecessarily in nursing homes because they don't have access to the blindness services, available to younger people, that would keep them independent.

Imagine if public schools could only serve three percent of U.S. children. Imagine if government employment programs only served three percent of workers. Imagine if the VA only took care of three percent of our veterans. Nobody would stand for it. It would be the hottest political issue in the country.

The OIB funding crisis and also the failure of the federal Older Americans Act to address the specific concerns of older blind Americans, commands our utmost attention. Fortunately, we're starting to mobilize around this issue. The CCB special interest affiliate, California Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss, along with its ACB counterpart, the Alliance on

Aging and Vision Loss, and a coalition of blindness agencies, the Vision Serve Alliance, are working together at all levels of government to change legislation and advocate with stakeholders to correct these severe deficiencies in the American system of rehabilitation services for older blind and low vision adults. This effort needs to take place simultaneously at the national, state and local levels, and we all need to get involved if we don't want to wind up trying to maintain our independence and dignity without sufficient support services. If you wait until you retire to pay attention to this crisis, it'll be too late!

Join CAAVL today! For more information, Contact CAAVL President, Frank Welte by email at:

Frank.A.Welte@gmail.com

or call

[510-541-1442](tel:510-541-1442)

To join CAAVL, contact our Treasurer, Denise Weddle, by writing to:

deaniew21@verizon.net

or call

[310-306-8149](tel:310-306-8149)

Mythology Meets Technology—Why I’m Not Curious

By Bev Clifford

Recently a friend of mine gleaned a phrase from an NPR piece called “Curious, Not Furious”. It described how we should relate to people from the vantage point of curiosity about their circumstances, as opposed to getting furious at them for whatever it was they had done. I’m going to tell you a story from Greek mythology which may not appear

relevant to that theme, but have patience—the meaning will become clear.

The Furies were three sister goddesses, whose names were Alecto (meaning Unceasing in Anger), Tisiphone (meaning Avenger of Murder), and Megaera (meaning Jealous). And they looked just like what the word “furious” might bring to your mind if you were into Greek mythology—ugly women with wings, carrying whips, with poisonous snakes entwined in their hair and around their arms and waists, and dressed either in black mourning robes or as huntresses. They lived in the underworld, but they came to the overworld of Earth to pursue the wicked. A couple of their primary concerns were wreaking vengeance upon men, and meting out retribution for offenses against the gods. A person could call down the curse of the Furies, who would express their wrath in a most severe fashion: by inflicting tormenting madness upon the offender, not to mention a possible fatal

disease! You could only pacify the wrath of the Furies by undergoing a ritual of purification, and by completing an assigned task of atonement.

Strange as it may seem, this myth connects directly with my own life experience. You see, I constantly find myself furious when it comes to my daily dealings with computers. I need to admit here that there is not a curious bone in my body when I'm trying to relate to technology. I want my machines to work—now! The Furies live inside me, and they demand their pound of flesh—in this case, they want a pound or two of software and hardware and storage space, and I'm just fighting to stay afloat on buffeting waves of frustration. Am I curious about why something I worked hard on turned out to be a tangled-up mess of a disaster, just because I failed to follow some little step or other on the machine? Am I curious about how I might solve the problem? Absolutely not! Alecto's unceasing anger causes me to gnash my teeth. Tisiphone's desire to avenge

murder just makes me want to kill my Android tablet by throwing it across the room, where it will finally get what it so richly deserves. And Megaera's jealous nature manifests in me by increasing my jealousy and envy of the people I know who are tech wizards and who, when confronted by a computer dilemma, simply stop for a minute to think, and then say smugly, "Hmmmm! that's interesting, what's this about? let's figure it out."

Those furious goddesses within me, with their smothering, ugly wings, suffocate any inkling of curiosity, beat my brain with their whips, and strangle any feeble confidence I may have with their venomous serpents. It's hard for me to foster a positive attitude toward resolving a pesky computer issue when those three Furies are working overtime to instill negativity and squelch curiosity.

I'm not really a wicked person who deserves vengeance, and to my knowledge I haven't offended

any gods lately—unless you care to count the Zoom gods who may be angry when I’ve blamed them for technical glitches during meetings—but those Furies still hunt and torture me by driving me into impotent madness, which doesn’t help one little bit! Do I now have to look forward to an even more fatal fate? Enough is enough, I say! Leave me be, you three, and lift your curse!

But perhaps there’s hope in sight. What about that ritual of purification, and that task of atonement, which might placate the Furies in my head? Since curiosity (in the light of technology and in the pressure of the moment) seems to be more than I’m capable of at present, I need to find some effective way to combat being furious. Maybe I need to step away from the machine and all its complications, sit down far away from it and, in a spirit of meditation and calm, allow my mind to cleanse itself. Just a few quiet moments might help—or it could take a bit longer.

Back in my college days, when I was younger and wiser—yes, one can sometimes forget the wisdom of youth—I would stop in the middle of a fruitless effort to write a term paper or study a difficult passage, forget it for the time being, and put on some of my favorite music, letting it pervade my body and soul until, at some point, I could return to the task at hand, refreshed and ready to continue. It almost always worked—could it work now? Or maybe I could say to myself, “Oh, just chuck it! I’m gonna go make some spaghetti!” A bracing walk with my husband to get out of the house, plus some light conversation about the ordinary aspects of life, might be an idea. Or just a relaxing cold or hot drink out on my back patio could make a difference. Point being, the Furies don’t like it when I choose to do something I really enjoy, and they tend to leave me alone. After all, allowing joy to come in again is a kind of atonement for the fact of forgetting what’s most important in my life—forgetting that

technology isn't everything my life is made of. And after I've completely changed my line of thought and allowed myself to remember that there's much more to life than battling technology, I may be able to return to my assigned task with a purified attitude, one that might possibly let in a teensy crumb of curiosity toward figuring out my next steps.

Extract from Article: Global Policies and Subsidies for Electronic Assistive Devices: A Comprehensive Guide Across the U.S., Canada, and the U.K.

Submitted by Frank Welte

The complete version of the article below was posted on the tech-vi email list. Here is my extract of the text that is relevant to us in California.

Zoomax - Thursday, August 15, 2024

Introduction

Electronic assistive devices, such as magnifiers and screen readers, are vital tools for individuals with visual impairments. These devices enable access to education, employment, and daily activities that might otherwise be challenging. Governments in the

U.S., Canada, and the U.K. offer various programs to provide financial assistance for these devices, ensuring that individuals can access the necessary technology. This article explores the available subsidies and financial assistance for purchasing a Zoomax electronic assistive device priced at \$1,500, including details on coverage amounts and application processes. Please note that these figures are estimates, and final amounts may vary based on specific circumstances.

United States

1. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): According to the most recent IDEA guidelines from July 2024, public schools must provide necessary assistive technologies to students with disabilities as part of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). If a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) determines that a \$1,500

Zoomax electronic magnifier is necessary, the school district typically covers the full cost of the device.

Estimated Cost for the Individual: Free of Charge

Application Process: IEP Evaluation: The student is evaluated to determine the necessity of the device.

Approval: Once approved, the school district purchases the device on behalf of the student.

Receipt of Device: The device is provided through the school at no cost to the family.

For more information, visit the official IDEA website at:

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea>

2. Medicaid: Based on Medicaid policies updated in June 2024, Medicaid provides coverage for assistive devices that are deemed medically necessary. The exact coverage varies by state, but Medicaid typically covers 80% of the device's cost.

Estimated Cost for the Individual: 20%

Application Process: Medical Documentation: Obtain a prescription or documentation from a healthcare provider stating the necessity of the device.

Submit to Medicaid: Apply through the state's Medicaid program with the required documentation.

Approval and Payment: Medicaid covers 80%, and the individual is responsible for the remaining 20%.

For more details, visit the Medicaid website at:

<https://www.medicaid.gov/>

3. California's Assistive Technology Program: As per the latest guidelines from May 2024, California offers low-interest loans and grants to help individuals acquire assistive devices. The amount of financial assistance provided depends on the applicant's financial situation and the device's cost.

Estimated Cost for the Individual: Varies; could be fully covered or involve a low-interest loan repayment.

Application Process: Apply for Loan/Grant: Submit an application through the California Assistive Technology Program.

Approval and Disbursement: If approved, the funds are provided directly to the vendor or as a loan/grant to the individual.

For more information, visit the California Assistive Technology Program website at:
<https://www.cfilc.org/>

Note: These estimates are based on typical scenarios, and actual coverage amounts may vary. Please consult the relevant program websites for the most accurate and up-to-date information.

Navigating the Financial Assistance Process

While these programs provide crucial support, navigating the application process can be complex. In the U.S., for instance, IDEA and Medicaid programs may require detailed documentation, and approval times can vary. Parents and individuals should prepare all necessary paperwork in advance and maintain communication with the relevant authorities to ensure a smooth application process.

Conclusion

Navigating financial assistance programs for assistive devices can be complex. Understanding the nuances of each program, preparing thorough documentation, and being proactive in the application process are crucial steps to securing the necessary support. By being informed and diligent, individuals can access the technology they need to enhance their education, employment

FAQ

1. How do I qualify for financial assistance for assistive devices under these programs? To qualify for financial assistance under programs like IDEA, Medicaid, ADP, or DSA, you must meet specific criteria. For IDEA, the student's disability must impact their ability to learn, and the need for the assistive device must be documented in their IEP. Medicaid requires that the device be deemed medically necessary, which involves obtaining documentation from a healthcare provider. Check the relevant program guidelines for detailed eligibility criteria.

2. How long does it take to receive funding or approval for assistive devices? The time it takes to receive funding or approval varies by program and location. For IDEA, the process depends on the school district's timeline for IEP evaluations and approvals. Medicaid applications can take several weeks, especially if additional documentation is required.

3. What can I do if my application for an assistive device is denied? If your application is denied, you have several options. You can appeal the decision through the school district or Medicaid office. Gathering additional documentation from healthcare providers or educational professionals can strengthen your case. It's also helpful to seek assistance from advocacy organizations that specialize in disability rights to guide you through the appeals process.

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Adventures of a Blind City Gardener

By Debee Armstrong

In sharing my gardening journey with readers, I also wish to pass on tips for those wondering how to garden while blind. I was lucky that I grew up with a mom who loved to grow flowers, and a dad who tried his hand at raising vegetables. There successes and failures taught me that having a green thumb was more about the willingness to experiment than having a particular talent.

When I moved in to my first apartment, being on SSI, it wasn't an inspiring place. I had no yard, no

patio, no balcony and not even a porch. But when tomato and some herb plants went on sale, I got creative. The local thrift store had a pile of half-broken chests of drawers they were selling for pennies. I brought home all the drawers, lined them up on either side of the walkway to my front door and filled them with soil from a friend's garden. There was no need to drill drainage holes: the broken nature of these drawers already had plenty of drainage! Adding a few marigolds and daisies along with the tomatoes, basil, marjoram and thyme, I had an impressive mini-garden.

Later, after reading most of the gardening books on NLS, I got more ambitious. I filled my apartment with houseplants and went to local salvage places to gather up suitable materials for tending larger plants. Examples included old washtubs, chimney flues and rusted wheelbarrows. By that time, I'd moved to an apartment complex with a run-down side yard where my motley collection of makeshift

growing containers held peas and beans, larger tomato plants and even some mini-fruit trees.

Later, as a homeowner with a career, I was able to leave SSI behind and create a garden which no longer resembled a junkyard. I had raised beds made of landscape timbers: bottomless wooden boxes that were two to three feet tall and three to four feet wide of varying lengths. Much has been written about the advantages of raised beds including their ability to support a larger number of plants in a smaller space and how they protect plants from extremes of heat and cold. They relieve the gardener from the chores of digging and turning soil and they reduce the need for water. But for the blind gardener, they have one additional advantage.

If you are sighted and grow directly in the ground, you can walk around your plot and see what needs tending. You add a little water here, pull a weed

there, prune off some dead flowers and add a stake or two to prop up a plant that needs more support.

But if you are blind, you need to touch every plant to see how it's doing. Or if you have some vision, you might have to bend close to inspect each plant.

And if your garden is on the ground, you will soon have a sore back from bending, aching knees from kneeling, and you'll become tired overall from crawling around to tend to everything.

This is why we blind folks need to use raised beds. We can walk alongside our beds touching everything at a comfortable height, or sit on a stool for a longer session.

Now that I'm a senior citizen, I garden from a sitting position even more. I have a couple of folding canvas stools and a sturdy garden cart. And, unlike when I started, raised bed kits are readily available from Amazon, Walmart, Lowes and Home Depot. They snap, clamp and/or screw together.

You no longer need to have woodworking tools or hire someone with carpentry skills to build them from scratch. There are also some wonderfully large fabric growing bags which you can place on bricks to raise them to a reasonable height for tending by touch.

Many people do garden in containers, and I still add quite a few pots to my garden. But it is far more labor saving to have one or several raised beds, as they need watering less often and can hold a larger amount of soil with its accompanying plant nutrition.

To save on the expense of soil and add to its nutrient density, I put a layer of dead fallen leaves at the bottom of my beds before the soil is added. These will gradually rot, and meanwhile keep weeds from growing up through the ground on which the bed rests.

Quality garden soil and compost can be purchased and delivered by Walmart, Lowes or Home Depot, and many cities give compost away for free at certain times of the year. Or you can search locally for landscape supplies and purchase soil by the cubic yard.

Many cities also offer composting classes and compost bins for free. Though I used to make my own compost, I no longer do so simply because I don't have a lawn with grass clippings or enough vegetable scraps to put in to it.

In my raised beds I use the square foot method which, though not designed for blind people, is a wonderfully helpful way to keep your garden organized. I divide all my beds in to one-foot squares. With wooden beds, I screwed I-hooks in to the sides of the beds and strung clothesline across the bed so each growing space was a square foot. Currently my bed is galvanized steel, so I use

magnetic I-hooks with heavy-duty twine to mark my squares.

Since I know what's supposed to grow in each square, it's easy for me to locate anything that shouldn't be there like a snail or a weed.

Keeping records is also important. I note what I planted where and when. For example, on June 29, I planted one square of salad leaf basil, two squares of royal burgundy bush beans and three squares of different varieties of Swiss chard. This way if a seed doesn't germinate, I will know when I sowed it as it can be replaced.

These days, I keep this record on a spreadsheet, but thirty years ago, I simply carried a micro-cassette recorder around my garden for recording my progress, and later transcribed my records into Braille. I also continue to note how plants are doing and what the weather is like.

I keep my seed packets in zip-lock bags with a Braille card describing the name, variety, height and growing notes. They are in a file box in alphabetical order. One tip I've shared with those new to Braille is to simply assign each seed packet a number which you can label on the zip lock with large felt-tipped marker or Braille. Then on your phone or computer, write out the information corresponding to the number. For example, your record might look like this

#22 Nasturtium, variety Little FireBird. Hanging habit, 60 days to maturity. tolerates some shade.

#23: Oak Leaf Lettuce, 8 inches high, not heat tolerant, 65 days to maturity

This numbering technique also makes creating plant labels easier should you choose to do so. I don't bother with labels because my spreadsheet tracks exactly where everything is planted, but when I did use labels, before computers, I also just gave each

plant a number and kept more detailed records corresponding to each number in my files.

These days, my iPhone can read the seed packet to me and since I order on the internet, I have all that information in my email order receipt as well. This way I can make my own labels for my zip-lock bags of seeds. Before the internet, I relied on readers or volunteers to acquire this information.

Sowing seeds by touch involves some tactile discrimination, similar to reading braille. Carefully empty a few seeds into your palm, lift out two or three, and sprinkle them around your square.

Radishes, of course take up much less space than a tomato, so you need to divide your square into a grid mentally. For example, I plant nine bush beans in one square, but only four lettuce plants.

The official square foot method—google for the square foot foundation, also has grids you can place over your squares to properly position seeds or

plants. But since I've used this method for almost forty years, I don't really need their grids to accurately space my plants.

Very fine seeds can be sprinkled too, if you mix them with sand or coffee grounds in a pepper shaker. But I use this method only if I want a haphazard bunching of wildflowers, because the more exact your spacing, the easier it will be for you to locate weeds before they take over.

Overhead sprinklers waste a great deal of water, although admittedly, they do save labor, but there will always be spots that don't get enough water while other places get too much.

Many folks simply use a hose with a spray nozzle to water plants. This can be hard to aim accurately without vision and you need to be careful not to wash soil away or drown little seedlings. It works fine for larger shrubs, but for small plants, I prefer a bucket with a dipper, such as an old sour cream

container. I simply dip out water to empty in to each square, after testing with my finger to see if the soil is dry. When I had a larger garden, and was also responsible for tending plants belonging to my sighted house-mate, I used soaker hoses—these have tiny holes drilled into them and can be strung around and in between plants to evenly water everything. Both these techniques save water and ensure all the water you use goes to your plants' roots. You can also buy drip irrigation kits with little plastic nozzles that you aim at each plant. Because I grow a lot of annual flowers and vegetables, I find these a pain to move around and fiddle with, so I no longer use them. But they are quite easy to assemble by touch.

For me, besides the pleasure of eating food directly from my own harvest, I also love fragrant plants. You don't need to visit a fragrance garden designed for the blind, and in fact you can grow a more varying collection in your own yard. The non-profits

with public fragrance gardens must stick with mostly herbs, because flowering shrubs can be fussy, but oh, the fragrance they bring is heavenly. I love scented pelargoniums which have fragrances ranging from lemon and chocolate to rose and lime. Some fragrant shrubs of course will need a large pot or raised bed of their own such as Datura, Brugmansia, Pittosporum, Jasmine, Daphne and mock Orange. But you can also grow annual fragrant flowers, like night-scented Stock or Heliotrope. Or you can grow fragrant bulbs like Fesia or Tuberose and, if you grow real roses, get yourself a pair of elbow-length lambskin gloves and you will be impervious to thorns. I have found my own scented gardens provide a much richer aromatic experience than I've ever had in a so-called garden for the blind.

Should you ever despair of having a green thumb yourself, get a volunteer to help you scope out the trash dumpster in the back of a typical plant

nursery. It's a great way to discover which plants will not grow in your area, and helps you realize that your microclimate and soil, not to mention your humidity and weather, will determine your success: your thumb has nothing to do with it!

California is Better with Braille

By Frank Welte, President, Braille Revival League of California

Reading and writing braille is one of the fundamental skills that propel blind and low vision individuals to successful lives. This has been true for nearly two centuries, and it is still the case today.

While the development of assistive technologies, such as large print books, video magnifiers, computer screen magnification and screen reading

software, and optical character reading technology have expanded our access to the printed word, braille still remains a uniquely useful tool for accessing written communication. Just as the advent of computers and smart phones have not caused the extinction of writing with a pen or pencil or the publication of printed newspapers, magazines or books, the availability of assistive technology has not rendered braille obsolete. In fact, the advent of electronic braille production and reading devices and software has made braille far more widely available and affordable than ever.

I believe that many people live with the misconception that braille is not very useful and that it is extremely difficult to learn. My experience runs counter to such assumptions. I began learning braille at the age of five or six. As a teenager and then as an adult I made the attempt to learn cursive handwriting, and I have also tried to learn a bit of Spanish, German and Italian. I have found

braille easier to learn than either handwriting or foreign languages. I believe that, with the exception of the small percentage of people in our community who live with severe neuropathy in their fingers, greatly limited hand dexterity or profound cognitive impairment, braille proficiency is attainable for anybody who is willing to make a reasonable effort to learn this skill.

I have found that it is not necessary to master the entire braille code before one can begin to make practical use of braille in daily life.

Braille is useful for accomplishing many daily tasks, such as: jotting down addresses and phone numbers; labeling controls on appliances, items of clothing, food containers, medicine packages and other household items; writing notes, preparing shopping lists, maintaining financial records, etc.

Braille is also fun. You can purchase braille playing cards and board games, and you can incorporate

braille into hobbies and other recreational pursuits. Few things can rival the enjoyment to be experienced by settling down in a comfortable chair for a quiet afternoon of reading a favorite braille book.

If you want to learn more about braille, or if you share my belief in the importance of braille, I invite you to join the Braille Revival League of California, CCB's special interest affiliate for braille enthusiasts. BRLC is making California better with braille.

For more information, contact me, Frank Welte, by email:

Frank.A.Welte@gmail.com

or call me at:

[510-541-1442](tel:510-541-1442)

Praise for new Contracted Braille 102 Course

By Andrea DeKlotz, as distributed on the ccbl mailing list

Dear participants,

Often times, I mentioned about our braille initiative, “learn-at-Home” braille, that we are pursuing at the East Bay Center for the Blind in Berkeley, California. We have received overwhelming response to our Braille 101, reading uncontracted braille and Braille 102, reading contracted braille, outlining the significance of the need for such a program.

I would like to share what one of our students said about this initiative. Please read this forwarded message and email me your feedback as well as suggestions to:

shah@eastbaycenterfortheblind.org.

Thank you for reading this message. Here is what Bett Barford says:

Subject: Praise for new Contracted Braille 102 course

August 17, 2024

Declining vision and the loss of the use and joy of print literacy is just that, a true loss.

How fortunate that last fall a friend told me of a course in beginning Braille being launched by you and your colleagues at East Bay Center for the Blind: Learn at Home Braille 101. In a few short months this newbie senior learner progressed from “why do it?” to “just do it” to “I did it.” The mass of white dots was decipherable. I was hooked.

I eagerly awaited the brand-new Braille 102 Contracted Braille course which was nearing the end of its development.

It was worth the wait!

There is not enough praise for these two thick volumes of strange dots on white. In studying and reviewing and reviewing, I see that the Braille experts have created an incredibly well thought out and doable wealth of practice material. The many, many new symbols of this shorthand Braille are being gradually introduced so as not to be overwhelming.

As a former teacher of reading, I see the adroitness and sometimes humor in the composition of our practice sentences and even the words within. The flash drive included gives both tutorial and valuable feedback on reading the practice material. As an added bonus there's the weekly I Learn Braille Zoom meeting. Here we get tips and tricks from Braille experts, share experiences with fellow student explorers, and play fun games that make us think in Braille.

Oh, the homework ... its preparation and submitting is both lengthy and exacting. But how it prevents forging ahead with half-formed concepts and inadequate tactile experience!

Having been encouraged to use the "turtle approach", I'm looking forward to discovering the decoding of all the contractions. Using practical braille and ultimately enjoying reading The Real Braille is the goal. While technology is extremely useful, I say "Hail, Literacy."

Many thanks and much peace

Bette Barford

Note: I hope that you receive much funding to continue your generous work. Please feel free to use my feedback in any way that may further this effort.

Captured

A Poem by Jenifer Gass

Take a lesson folks from me: don't take shortcuts
when you can't see.

It is, at least, exasperating and can be quite
humiliating.

A snapshot captures what it's like: late for the bus,
my panic spiked.

Not wanting to wait extra hour I thought I'd use
exploring powers.

I left my doctor west of West Lane, checked watch
and stressed out my poor brain.

Striding fast, white cane in hand, I set out to catch
bus as planned.

The normal path would take too long; stick to it and bus would be gone.

I heard big traffic to my side; next driveway, shortcut, would provide!

I trotted on towards sidewalk goal. So close... then my cane struck a pole.

Traffic now only feet away, chain-link fence keeping me at bay.

No! I couldn't be trapped here. Surely an opening would appear.

I felt my way along its length and squeezed through opening secured with chain.

Free! I pushed on towards the street, sadly, another fence to meet.

Feeling no escape to be found I finally heard a human sound.

"Hello?" I asked.

Spanish reply.

"To West Lane?" (pointing) I asked the guy.

Prompted: "Where am I?"

Laughing, he choked: "In where they keep the animals."

"Can you help me out?" asked of new friend. He guided me out from the pen.

My cheeks burned redder than a cherry; captured by West Lane Veterinary!

Returned to my familiar route, late and embarrassed, now, to boot.

Needless to say, I made next bus. Waiting was not worth all that fuss!

California Diabetics in Action: Peer Support and Membership

By Nelly Emerson

Are you a person living with diabetes? Have you been diagnosed recently with adult-onset diabetes? Both of these present the affected individuals with significant challenges particularly if these persons are blind. If this is you, please work closely with your treatment team. California Diabetics in Action offers peer support through a monthly call on the second Tuesday of the month on the ACB Community at 3pm. You can reach California Diabetics in Action via email at:

cda.ccb22@gmail.com

and you can become a member. On August 24th there was a program which featured Aly Slaughter, Certified dietician and nutritionist and practitioner

of yoga. Dr. David Trefflich, family medicine doctor also spoke.

A membership drive has been launched. Three free memberships were awarded to persons attending the August 24th program.

Our member dues are \$20 annually. If you join now, your membership will continue through December 2025.

Dues can be sent via Zelle. Input 9512372960 and Nelly Emerson's name will come up as well as California Diabetics in Action.

Old school method is also available, just write a check to California Diabetics in Action and send to:
Nelly Emerson, Treasurer
California Diabetics in Action
5250 Olive Hill Rd.
Santa Maria, CA 93455

We have a collection of interesting articles on nutrition, glucose monitoring devices, and more. For further information email us at:

cda.ccb22@gmail.com

CCB Housing Committee Update

By Frank Welte, Chair, CCB Housing Committee

The CCB Housing Committee strives to improve housing conditions for blind and low vision Californians through advocacy, assistance and information.

Our current priority is to gather information about housing resources and programs in as many counties in the state as we can, and to partner with local chapters to share this information with blind

and low vision individuals in our local communities. Committee members are currently gathering lists of resources for several counties, and we will continue to compile resource lists for more counties as time permits. We are planning to contact leaders of chapters in those counties for which we have housing information to determine how we can work with each chapter to get this information to those who need it.

In the future we intend to present programs to educate CCB members and others about our state's complex housing support system in order to empower as many of us as possible to improve living conditions for ourselves and others.

You can support this effort. First, we need representatives of more counties and regions of the state to join our committee. If housing availability and affordability is important to you, you are willing to learn more about this topic, and you want to

share this knowledge with others who need it, please contact me to discuss your participation as a member of the committee.

Second, if members of your chapter are interested in working on housing issues, I encourage you to organize a chapter housing committee or to designate a chapter housing coordinator to work on this matter in conjunction with the CCB Housing Committee.

For more information, contact Housing Committee Chair, Frank Welte, by email at:

Frank.A.Welte@gmail.com

or by phone at:

[510-541-1442](tel:510-541-1442)

Do You Have a Guide Dog? Join Our Pack

By Frank Welte

Dogs are pack animals. They love the company of other dogs and humans, too. I know this because my wife and I have been partnered with a total of six guide dogs over the years. Currently we each have a guide dog and also a third dog, an energetic, fun husky that we adopted from a local animal shelter. Our dogs are delighted when all five of us go for walks together. I suspect our neighbors are also amused.

We humans aren't so different. Most of us do better when we live in community with others. All of this probably comes as no surprise for those of you who are guide dog users.

Fortunately, we have an active, friendly, pack for guide dogs and their human partners right here in

the California Council of the Blind. It's the Golden State Guide Dog Handlers, Inc., a CCB special interest affiliate. GSGDHI holds educational program sessions, advocates for beneficial state legislation, publishes an informative newsletter, "The Forward" and brings guide dog teams together in a supportive statewide community. Join the GSGDHI pack. Your dog will thank you.

For more information, contact GSGDHI President, Frank Welte by email at:

Frank.A.Welte@gmail.com

or call

[510-541-1442](tel:510-541-1442)

To join GSGDHI, write to Treasurer Vita Zavoli at:

vzavoli@gmail.com

or call

[510-846-4080](tel:510-846-4080).

July 1, 2024 CCB Officers and Directors

Officers

President: Sarah Harris (2024-2026, 1st term),
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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.