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Please send all address changes to the Executive Office.

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Editor's Corner

By Susan Glass and Omni Glass

Welcome to the Summer 2024 issue of The Blind Californian! Amid your happy summer pastimes like picnics, and parties, and hikes, and walks, and shopping sprees and vacations, we hope you'll also enjoy reading this magazine.

"Mom, that sentence was so long—I'm panting."

Sorry, Omni. Spring and summer make me enthusiastic.

"I'll say!"

Omni also says that this issue of the BC is "meaty". She's right. As he leaves the CCB Board of Directors after serving for more than 3 decades, Jeff Thom reflects on the future challenges facing CCB, its

board and most significantly, its membership, which is to say all of us. Deborah Armstrong and Lorraine Brown succinctly highlight this year's CCB convention sessions, and Regina Brink contributes a rich Governmental Affairs Report covering the key Legislative Imperatives adopted by ACB for its midyear Legislative Seminar.

If you attended the spring CCB convention, you've already heard about The Department of Rehabilitation's rebranding of itself (it's now called Disability Works California) and restructuring of its services to more effectively meet the needs of disabled people and employers who hire them. You can read about it in detail in the Press Release submitted by Kim Rutledge, DOR's Deputy Director Office of Legislation and Communications.

There's also an editorial by Daveed Mandell, and a suggested resource list for birding by ear from Susan Glass.

“Where are the articles about chew toys and how to sneak unnoticed into summer barbecues?”

“Wasn’t your friend King supposed to write those articles?”

“He can’t. He’s investigating a squirrel trail, and then he plans to swim across a reservoir.” I hope he told Master Mike about that.

If you want dog articles, Omni, you and your friends will have to write them.

“Yeah, OK. Well, happy digging, happy swimming, happy tails, and happy reading.”

Reflections on the Future of CCB

By Jeff Thom

By the time you read this, I will be serving my final few days on the CCB board of directors. Having been on the board for more than three decades, it is long past time for me to fade into the sunset and let others lead this organization into a brighter future. That's why the goal of this article is not to look back, but to look ahead and provide some personal reflections on the decisions ahead of our leaders.

Before examining some of the issues that we face, it is important that we applaud ourselves for not allowing the crises that we face from undermining our efforts at carrying out the primary purpose of this organization: to advocate for a better California for those who are blind or have low vision. I am proud of the work that so many of you do, either at

the local level or advocating on statewide issues. However, as I've said many times before, we can't rest on our laurels, but must continue to strive to remain the leading advocacy organization of people with vision loss in California.

I do not envy incoming President Harris and her board. They clearly have issues of great consequence to wrestle with, including an unresolved nonprofit status that has dramatically complicated our financial situation, a declining membership, a decrease in the number of affiliates, concerns over future conventions, and more. Of course, in addition to all of this, is the day-to-day matters that can often turn into brush fires that need to be put out. I don't claim to have any magic bullets to resolve these issues or I would certainly have mentioned them before now. What I want to do is to make a few broad observations that I hope will be helpful.

In my view, at least, the most important item on this board's agenda is to undertake a strategic planning process that can prioritize goals, and set strategies for implementing them during the next three years or so. One might argue that our precarious fiscal situation makes it impossible to plan. I would answer that by saying that the current situation makes it more essential than ever that we take a careful look at what issues we most need to address, and decide how to work on those issues. Circumstances may negate our ability to achieve what we set out to do and require changes in our plans as we go along. However, if we lack a roadmap to start with, we will find it very difficult to be proactive rather than reactive to whatever challenges we face.

Strategic planning should be based upon as much relevant information as it is possible to obtain. Let me give you an example. Since the advent of our nonprofit status issue, there has been much debate

concerning what, if any, resource development initiatives in which either the state organization or our affiliates should be engaged. Members have taken various positions based upon legal and ethical considerations, and I am one of those who has done so. However, my reason for bringing up this example is not to debate the issue, but rather to say that we absolutely need the appropriate legal guidance before we make planning decisions concerning resource development.

I would also hope that our planning process takes into consideration our most urgent needs, whatever they are defined as being. As an example, at our May board meeting a consensus was reached that we would likely need to allocate resources in the next few months for our website and for changing the platform we use for the site. It was felt that, in today's nonprofit world, it is crucial to the health of an organization to maintain a viable and accessible website. A question to ponder for all of us and

certainly for our leaders, is whether a convention that is not purely virtual is an urgent need for CCB.

More than ever, we need to “think outside the box”, when planning our future. We should not be afraid to abandon tradition, but we should never abandon it without considering what we will lose by doing so and whether the loss is acceptable.

I do want to put my oar in the water for one priority. Before I do that, however, I want to touch upon two observations that former CCB and ACB president Mitch Pomerantz has made a number of times. First, the mentality for joining organizations, which has been a strong part of American life, is rapidly diminishing, and this creates trouble for member-driven organizations like ours. Secondly, it can be extremely important to members and potential members that they see tangible benefits for joining and remaining in an organization. In the context of these two principles, I hope that

membership development, both with respect to recruitment and retention, becomes a top priority for CCB. If my reckoning is correct, our decline in membership over the past 15 years or so is somewhere above 40%. We must begin to turn that statistic around and, at a minimum, stabilize our membership numbers and begin to slowly increase them. To do this, we need a multi-pronged approach involving the state organization and local chapters and special interest affiliates. Most important, we need every member to show their commitment to this organization by talking up CCB on the bus or paratransit ride, the place where they receive blindness-related services, the party they attend, or wherever they find a person who is blind or low vision or a friend or loved one of such a person. We also need local leaders that make their members feel that they are an important part of their chapter, and are appreciated for all they contribute.

Through much of this article I have focused on what our leaders need to do. In reality, however, as my thoughts on membership recruitment and retention indicate, the success or failure of any plan that the board devises will be dependent on the commitment and dedication to CCB that each of us demonstrate. It is up to all of us to carve that brighter future for CCB and for all Californians who are blind or have low vision.

2024 CCB Convention Report

By Deborah Armstrong and Lorraine Brown

[From the May, 2024 SVCB In Touch newsletter]

The 2024 CCB Virtual Conference and Convention began with pre-convention activities on March 1, 2024, and continued nearly to the end of the

month. Some of the activities included the following:

- Wednesday, March 6: "A Deep Dive into All Things Zoom", with Debee Armstrong.
- Thursday, March 7: Resolutions Committee.
- Friday, March 8: Inclusive Diversity of California annual business meeting.
- Saturday, March 9: Resolutions Committee meeting; California Library Users of America (CLUA) business meeting; and the CCB Women Program.
- Sunday, March 10: "Getting from Here to There and Back Again", with Daveed Mandell, with a discussion about public transit; and the Golden State Guide Dog Handlers, Inc. annual business meeting and program.

- Monday, March 11: Mind-stretch.
- Tuesday, March 12: CCB Housing Committee Listening Session.
- Wednesday, March 13: Braille Revival League of California annual business meeting and program.
- Thursday, March 14: Pre-convention Board meeting.
- Friday, March 15: Lighthearted Improv in the Dark.
- Saturday, March 16: Tips for Birding by Ear, with Susan Glass; Untangling Vision Terminology, California Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss annual business meeting and program.

- Sunday, March 17: The Power of the Word, with Cathy Schmitt Whitaker; and the CAAVL, with "Scattergories Saint Patrick's Day Edition".
- Monday, March 18: California Council of Citizens with Low Vision (CCCLV) annual membership meeting.
- Tuesday, March 19: CCB Quizbowl.
- Wednesday, March 20: CCB Credentials Committee meeting.
- Thursday, March 21: Discussion of what book has most profoundly affected your life.
- Monday, March 25: Candidates' Forum of the upcoming CCB election of offices.

At various times during the five days of the convention, Rob Turner introduced vignettes of the

Hall of Fame History Project to celebrate CCB's 90th anniversary. These included:

Christy Crespin, Mike Keithley, Eugene Lozano Jr, Daveed Mandell, Pamela Hill Metz, Roger Petersen, Mitch Pomerantz, Don Queen, Mary Beth Randall, Jeff Thom, Rob Turner, Frank Welte, and Judy Wilkinson.

The actual 2024 CCB Virtual Convention began April 3 at 7:30 PM, and ended on April 7 at 1:00 PM with the conclusion of the business meeting.

On Wednesday, the various affiliates introduced themselves and talked a little about their accomplishments. We at SVCB are still the largest chapter.

On Thursday, the technology committee discussed old-time radio, with some great recordings of how the process of editing reel tape operated. It was

fascinating to learn about all the cutting and splicing that went in to physically editing tapes.

On Friday afternoon, several panelists from the department of rehabilitation spoke about updates, including their comprehensive trainings in technology now being offered to DOR counselors. It was also emphasized that if clients need technology to succeed either in school or in a job, they must advocate for that technology and the department is open to providing it. There was also a panel speaking about research to restore sight to people with macular degeneration.

Friday, April 5, 6:00 PM to 9:30 PM

Completion of elections.

Treasurer Lisa Presley-Thomas presided over the following:

1. Remembrances: Acknowledgment of fellow CCB members who had passed away over the last year.
2. Governmental Affairs Report, with Alice Turner and Ardis Bazyn, GA Co-Chairs, along with Jeff Thom, Director of Governmental Affairs, and Regina Brink, Deputy Director of Governmental Affairs.
3. CCB elections: The results were the following:
 - A. Sarah Harris was elected President.
 - B. When Sarah Harris was elected President, the office of First Vice President became vacant. There was a contested election between Guillermo Robles and Christy Crespín, with Guillermo Robles being elected.
 - C. Rob Turner was elected Second Vice President.

D. Lisa Presley Thomas was elected Treasurer.

E. Board seats were won by the following:

Director 1: Larry Gassman

Director 2: Regina Brink

Director 3: Nelly Emerson

Director 4: Andrea DeKlotz

Saturday, April 6, 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM

Secretary Steve Bauer presided over the following presenters:

1. Leslie Spoone, ACB Get Up and Get Moving Campaign.

2. Resources for Smart Aging, with Tatiana Fassieux, Education and Training Specialist, California Health Advocates.
3. Amy Castro, United Way, was unable to make her presentation, but she did send in her PowerPoint presentation which we received Sunday evening.

Saturday afternoon session, 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM

First Vice-President Sarah Harris presided.

Paratransit Eligibility Panel Moderator: Board Member Daveed Mandell.

The panelists outlined effective strategies for filling out a paratransit eligibility application, and how to get the most from a paratransit agency interview.

Panel participants:

- Chenier Derrick: Paratransit Specialist, Handy Ride, Fresno.
- Christine Fitzgerald: Community Advocate, Silicon Valley Independent Living Center, San Jose.
- Fiona Hinze: Director of Public Policy, Independent Living Resource Center of San Francisco.

Saturday's evening session went from 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM

It was the Awards Recognition Banquet, presided by Andrea DeKlotz and Sarah Harris, Convention Planning Committee Co-Chairs.

The awards presented included the following:

- Legislator of the Year Award: Congresswoman Anna Eshoo.

- Humanitarian Award: Kathy Saychin, Sacramento Paratransit Operations Manager.
- Publications Award, award for the most outstanding first-time article: Alaina Thomason for her article "Worst Trip Yet", which appeared in the Winter, 2023 issue of "The Blind Californian".
- The award for the Best Written Article: Christy Crespín for "Making That Last Minute Adjustment When a Plan Fails", which appeared in the Fall, 2023 issue of "The Blind Californian".
- Community Service Award: Darini and her son, Ali Dobbins.
- Chapter Of the Year Award: ACB Capital Chapter.
- Hall Of Fame: Linda Parrell.

Sunday, April 7, 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM

President Gabe Griffith presided over the business meeting to conclude the 2024 virtual convention. This meeting included the 2023 Convention Minutes, Treasurer's Report, Newell Perry Report, and voting on proposed resolutions and by-law amendments:

There were three resolutions that were voted on and passed with no dissenting votes:

Resolution 2024-01: The resolution had to do with the grocery cart return area (GCRA) at grocery stores not paying attention to keeping such areas safe, especially for people with disabilities coming into the stores. It was brought up when a blind CCB member walked into the open GCRA that had low clearance and was badly injured.

Resolution 2024-02: Equitable paratransit services. It said that the CCB "commits to advocate for both

the short-term and the long-term changes in paratransit, so that riders can get where they need to go when they need to get there”.

Resolution 2024-03: Resolution for appreciation of volunteers. It said that the virtual CCB convention would not have been a success without the assistance of the outstanding volunteers.

The last major item at the convention was the report by the By-laws Committee. There was only one by-law submitted for consideration. The first reading of the proposed by-law had been Wednesday night, and the second reading and debate was to be Saturday night.

The by-law change had to do with spouses and domestic partners not being eligible to serve on the Board of Directors at the same time. Before the debate or vote took place on the by-law, there was a motion to refer it back to the committee, and act on

it next year when the committee has had time to look at the issue entirely. After the debate about whether or not to make the referral, the vote was in favor of it.

The 2024 pre-convention audio recordings are available on the ccbnet.org website. To listen to the recordings, go to:

www.ccbnet.org.

Click on the "Past Conference and Convention Audio" link in the "More About CCB" menu.

Click on the "2024 Virtual Conference and Convention Audio Recordings" link in the Past Convention list.

Proofreader's Note: Or just click on

<https://ccbnet.org/drupal7/node/963>

to get to the list of recordings.

NLS Braille-on-Demand Pilot Continues

From the March-April 2024 Talking Book Topics

Interested in braille you can keep indefinitely? The NLS Braille-on-Demand pilot program now allows all registered patrons to receive five hard-copy braille books per month with no return date. Patrons may request books directly using the form at:

www.tinyurl.com/NLS-Braille-On-Demand,

or may contact their network library for assistance in filing their requests.

Any braille book available on BARD is eligible to be produced in hard copy by this program. Books will be mailed directly to the requesting patrons.

From the CCB Governmental Affairs Committee

By Regina Brink, Assistant Director of Governmental Affairs

At our recent State Convention, April 2024, Co-chair Ardis Bazyn and Director of Governmental Affairs, Jeff Thom, reviewed the experience in Washington DC of our five California Council of the Blind (CCB) representatives on Capitol Hill at the 2024 ACB Leadership Conference. Jeff then reviewed the legislative imperatives presented by ACB during these in-person visits.

There is the Communications, Video, and Technology Accessibility Act presented by Sen. Edward J. Markey (D-MA) and Rep. Anna G. Eshoo (D-CA) that would:

(1) Improve and expand audio description standards for television programming and online video streaming platforms to ensure that people with disabilities have equitable access to the wide range of programming available to the general public.

(2) Update current requirements to ensure viewers can easily activate and select preferred settings for audio description on their video programming devices, such as televisions, smart phones, laptops, and tablets.

(3) Require the Federal Communications Commission to ensure that all video conferencing services, including those used for telehealth, distance learning, and social and civic engagement, are accessible to people with disabilities, including people who are blind, low vision, and Deafblind.

and

(4) Empower the FCC to ensure accessibility regulations keep pace with emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and augmented or virtual reality platforms.

The Websites and Software Applications Accessibility Act was also presented. It would clarify that it is unlawful for the entities currently covered by the ADA to maintain inaccessible websites and applications that exclude or otherwise discriminate against people with disabilities. It would establish a clear, enforceable accessibility standard, and establish a technical assistance center and advisory committee to provide advice and guidance on accessible websites and applications. It would also authorize a study on addressing emerging technologies. There is both a Senate version put forth by Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and a bipartisan version in the House of Representatives by Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD) and Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX).

Two imperatives concerning accessible Medical Devices and Low Vision Aids Medicare coverage were also advocated, the Medical Device Non-Visual Accessibility Act by Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and the Medicare and Medicaid Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefits Act by Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA) respectively. So far, 19 California Congress members support this last imperative.

Regina Brink, Assistant Director of Governmental Affairs, reported the COLA and special circumstances provision concerning SSI/SSP have survived in the legislative process. The Special Circumstances Provision would reinstate a program authorizing a fund to keep people in their homes by covering repairs, large appliances, or moving costs to prevent homelessness among SSI recipients.

She and Jeff further reported AB 1902 on Accessible Prescription Medication Labels and AB 3193, concerning Rehab paying more easily for assistive

technology; which was passed through the assembly Appropriations Committee on the consent calendar April 9. AB1902 was amended to remove the requirement that pharmacists notify the patient of the availability of accessible drug labels. They will keep the Council updated on their progress.

There was a discussion about electronic ballot return and the case involving CCB, National Federation of the Blind California (NFBC) and Disability Rights California (DRC). Several plaintiffs are CCB members, and one uses a wheelchair. Committee Co-chair Alice Turner thanked everyone for their hard work, especially Ardis who has worked tirelessly on electronic ballot return for many years. Going forward, the committee will continue work on the Skilled Nursing Facility bill, a bill concerning older adults, some transportation initiatives, and some legislation around accessible pedestrian signals.

Update on SSI Overpayments Incurred During the COVID-19 Emergency

**From Regina Brink as distributed on the CCB
email list**

An overpayment of Social Security (Title II) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI, or Title XVI) benefits occurs when an individual receives more money for a month than the amount that should have been paid by the Social Security Administration (SSA).

A recent court approved settlement will benefit more than two million Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who incurred overpayments during the COVID-19 National Emergency.

Administrative Guidance About COVID-19-Related Circumstances as Basis for Waiver

SSA has issued internal guidance for its employees, reminding them how to adjudicate waiver requests, and specifically directing them to consider COVID-19-related circumstances when making findings of fault for overpayments that arose during the COVID-19 National Emergency Period (March 2020-April 2023) including, for example:

- COVID-19 related failed attempts to contact the Agency, including inability to visit a field office, inability to access mail services, and inability to access transportation.
- Government-imposed COVID-19 travel restrictions.
- Overpaid individual's COVID-19 related serious illness.

- Child- or family-care changes due to COVID-19 stay-at-home orders or school-at home requirements.
- COVID-19 related death or serious illness of the overpaid person's representative payee.
- COVID-19 related death or serious illness in the overpaid individual's immediate family

Waiver of March-September 2020 Manual SSI Overpayments with No Action Required by SSI Recipients.

SSA will waive all SSI overpayments incurred for the months of March through September 2020 that were manually processed (meaning, SSA will waive all overpayments for those months except those overpayments identified through an automated process such as VA data matching). SSA will grant these waivers without SSI recipients having to take

any steps or submit any application or other paperwork. SSA will grant most of these waivers by June 2025. SSA will send eligible individuals a notice informing them about the waiver.

Additionally, SSA will not waive: Any such overpayments resulting from fraud or similar fault or involving misuse of benefits by a representative payee or that have already been reversed or waived.

Where Applicable, Refunds of Funds Previously Paid with No Action Required by SSI Recipients

For any SSI recipients who have already repaid some or all of the waived overpayments described above, SSA will issue an “underpayment”. SSA will follow its typical procedures in connection with these underpayments. Some may be used to offset other overpayments. Where applicable, SSA will

provide refunds to SSI recipients via direct deposit into their bank accounts.

SSA will issue these underpayments and refunds without SSI recipients having to take any steps or submit any application or other paperwork. SSA will issue most of these refunds by June 2025.

Notice to SSI Recipients Assessed Overpayments for COVID-19 Emergency Period

SSA will mail a notice to SSI recipients who were assessed an overpayment for the COVID-19 National Emergency Period (March 2020-April 2023) and who are not receiving the automatic waiver described above. This notice will inform the individuals about how to seek a waiver and will highlight the COVID-19-related factors that may be relevant to SSA, including those in the guidance

listed above. SSA will provide this notice in approximately Spring 2025.

To learn more about Social Security Overpayments and how legal assistance and other service providers can assist older adults, watch a recent training “Legal Basics: Social Security Overpayments” at:

www.is.gd/pGBzzY

Calling All CCB Members: Where Do We Go from Here?

By Daveed Mandell

I just got off the phone with a friend who lost his sight from retinitis pigmentosa. Over the last several years he has developed amazing mobility skills. Yet, he has great difficulty getting around town and beyond.

My friend is a consummate and articulate advocate. He has spent hours on the phone with our city's public works department, disability services specialist, traffic department, and our local transit districts. He has attended meetings and sent countless emails—all, he says in vain!

He tells me that bus service is unreliable and haphazard. It's hard to locate and identify bus stops. Buses in his locality don't run on weekends. It's impossible to navigate unfamiliar subway stations. Sidewalks are filled with debris. Pedestrian safety is poor at best.

I hear his acute despair and frustration, living in a largely inaccessible world without vision. This is no pity party. Rather, it's cold, hard reality.

My friend questions me, when I suggest that the disability community must come together, develop a list of "asks" and "expectations", reach out to the

public and the media, and deliver these asks to our city, county, state and nation. To which my friend asks, "What community? Without connections, there is no community."

My friend continues, saying that the agencies and jurisdictions, ostensibly charged with protecting our civil rights and insuring equity for people with disabilities, aren't really listening to us at all, and don't really care about our predicament. He believes that they duly note our concerns and then promptly ignore them.

Another friend recently wrote that she nearly fell in a deep hole at a construction site where a street was being repaired. There was no barricade at the site, just a piece of yellow tape, which is illegal.

During our recent CCB Board meeting, several Board members complained about inaccessible kiosks, office visits, forms that must be filled out.

They talked about not being able to get assistance navigating offices and filling out forms. Yes, we still have a lot of work ahead of us.

While the world is not as accessible as we would want it to be, we are slowly continuing to make progress. CCB and NFB are suing the Secretary of State for disenfranchising thousands of Californians with disabilities who cannot vote by mail privately and independently, because of her refusal to adopt and implement remote electronic ballot return. CCB recently passed what I consider to be a ground breaking, first-of-its-kind resolution enumerating ADA paratransit's inequities and outlining first steps to ensuring the equity we all deserve. If the State Legislature passes AB1902, pharmacies across California will have to provide accessible drug labeling for blind and low vision Californians.

As we welcome our new leadership, I call on CCB members to demonstrate courage, determination

and resolve to continue to work tirelessly to make the world fully accessible for everyone. We can do it!

California Announces Initiatives to Increase Career Pathways for People with All Disabilities

For Immediate Release

DATE: May 14, 2024

CONTACT: Kim Rutledge, Deputy Director

Office of Legislation and Communications

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: To increase work opportunity for people with all disabilities, the California Department of Rehabilitation is

rebranding to Disability Works California and establishing a new office to promote employment of people with the most significant disabilities.

SACRAMENTO: The California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), the department within the California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS) which administers the nation's largest employment and independent living programs for individuals with disabilities, announces two innovative initiatives:

Establishing the Employment First Office (EFO), which will drive the development of statewide policies that promote the employment of people with the most significant developmental disabilities, and

Renaming DOR as Disability Works California, followed by a comprehensive rebrand and outreach campaign that will enhance its reach to all people

with disabilities, as well as employers, educators, and families.

“People with disabilities and employers do not associate the word ‘rehabilitation’ with jobs, good wages, and equity, nor does rehabilitation accurately describe the services we provide”, said DOR Director Joe Xavier. “These initiatives will accelerate our work supporting pathways and removing barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities, modernizing the narrative on how disability is discussed, and advance Governor Newsom’s vision of a California for All.”

WHY THIS MATTERS: The Employment First Office is core to DOR’s mission to provide a pathway for individuals with all disabilities, including those with significant developmental disabilities, to employment at competitive wages in settings with workers both with and without disabilities. The new office’s efforts will focus on policy development to

advance employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorder and Down syndrome. The new office will further advance the Master Plan for Developmental Services. It will also support the Department and the Newsom administration's commitment to end the outdated practice of paying individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities sub-minimum wages by January 1, 2025.

"Too often, the incredible talents of people with disabilities are overlooked in the workforce", said Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary of CalHHS. "We welcome this opportunity to reach every Californian with a disability who has the desire to work and ensure right from the start and throughout their lives they have equal access to meaningful career pathways."

HOW WE GOT HERE: Both DOR's new name and the establishment of the Employment First Office

align with Governor Newsom's proposed Master Plan for Career Education, which seeks to improve access to high-paying and fulfilling careers for all students and workers, regardless of race, gender, ability, or any other barrier to employment. It also advances the goals of the proposed Master Plan for Developmental Disabilities to strengthen supports and opportunities for community living.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT: The modernization effort will begin this year [2024] and include the reimagining of DOR as Disability Works California, in partnership with all stakeholders. The new name and branding will be designed to resonate with the diverse spectrum of disability, culture, perspectives, and lived experiences within the disability community as well as with employers across different sectors and educators assisting students with career planning.

DOR will continue to work in partnership with other state departments and offices offering employment and developmental services, including the Department of Developmental Services, the Department of Social Services, and the Labor and Workforce Development Agency. DOR will further engage stakeholder input to solicit community feedback on the Department's rebrand.

BIGGER PICTURE: These initiatives align with Governor Gavin Newsom's Master Plan for Career Education and Master Plan for Developmental Services, furthering California's commitment to provide a pathway for individuals with disabilities to employment in integrated settings at competitive wages throughout their lives.

Birding By Ear Resource and Reading List

Compiled by Susan Glass

In April of 2024 as part of our CCB pre-convention line up, I gave a Birding by Ear Zoom presentation to our members. As part of the presentation, I also discussed ways of drawing on our knowledge of bird ecology, ecosystems, and bird habitats to help identify birds. Several people asked about birding resources available on Bard, Book Share, Audible, and the web, as well as apps that one could use on one's phone. Here is a partial resource list which I'm happy to add to in subsequent issues of the BC. I acknowledge here and now, that I express personal opinions in my comments on these books. But I also provide the Library of Congress annotations, which are objective. Please regard what you read here as a personal sharing and add your personal grains of salt as you see fit.

On to the resource list:

BARD Books

1. Birdsong By the Seasons: A Year of Listening to Birds.

By Donald Kroodsma.

D B M1195.

Copyright 2009.

This is my all-time favorite birding by ear text. Donald Kroodsma is a renowned (now retired) ornithologist from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. More than most ornithologists, he is utterly fascinated by bird song. In this audio book, which he supports with his own field recordings, he walks us through a year of birding by ear. We begin in Amherst, where he counts and records flocks of wintering robins. Each month we visit a new destination: Costa Rica, the Florida Everglades, The

Platte River, and many other places. You'll want to wear headphones as you listen so that you can capture the full richness of Kroodsma's recordings.

Here is the BARD blurb:

"A distinguished scientist and gifted writer chronicles 4 seasons of listening to birdsong, starting out in the Northern forests, then traveling to Southern swamps and grassy plains before returning home to New England. He records, analyzes, and marvels at the sounds of nature."

(Read by Dan Wallace in the recording studio of the Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library.).

2. A Complete Guide to British Birds, And Their Calls and Songs.
By Brett Westwood.
D B 119305.

From the Library of Congress Annotation:

“Presenter Brett Westwood joins forces with Bamka award winning producer and naturalist Steven Moss, for 6 delightful and informative series introducing us to some of Britain’s most popular and best loved birds. Together with wild life sound recordist Chris Watson, they tour the UK, tracking down the rich variety of species that make their home there, from garden and woodland birds, to ones that live on water, by the coast, on farms, and in the mountains and moors.”

All of the bird species in this book are recorded on location, so again, although you can certainly enjoy listening only on a speaker, good headphones will greatly enhance what you hear. I want to thank my friend and fellow SVCB Chapter member Nancy Prior for finding and recommending this book. I had no idea that it was in the BARD collection.

3. Bird Watching with American Women: A Selection of Nature Writings.

Edited by Deborah Strom.

Copyright 1986.

Annotation: "Distinguished ornithologists, conservationists, writers and educators, as well as several wives of famous naturalists, are among the contributors. Also includes biographical sketches of the authors."

I appreciate this book's celebration of women birders and their pioneering contributions to ornithology. Beginning in the early 1900s, American women bird watchers probably did more than any group to make bird watching and listening a down-to-earth (pardon the pun) Citizen Science occupation. Ornithology is the one science where it's acceptable to refer to bird species by their common names, as opposed to their scientific nomenclature. Women are largely responsible for this. Not that they didn't and don't use scientific names; they do. But learning the common names of bird species first

does make it easier to remember them. There are no bird recordings in this book, but it's super entertaining and fun to listen to. In one of my favorite chapters, a woman is bird watching from horseback, when her horse becomes mired in quicksand, and they have quite a struggle before they free themselves. Those of you who live in Southern California from Santa Barbara on down the coast, will be delighted by some of the landscape descriptions, especially those written in the earliest years of the 20th century. The writing throughout this book is by turns, lyrical, funny, crisp, and always informative.

4. Hope Is the Thing with Feathers: A Personal Chronicle of Vanished Birds.

By Christopher Kokinos.

D B 53998.

Copyright 2000.

Annotation: "Presents the histories of 6 extinct North American birds: Carolina Parakeet, Ivory Billed Woodpecker, Heath Hen, Passenger Pigeon, Labrador Duck, and Great Awk. Discusses the people who killed these birds, and those who protected them. The author describes his visits to the birds' former habitats, and what he concluded from his research." The content of this book is both heart breaking, and heart soaring. It's a forthright window into American history, the stupidity and apathy and opportunism of some people, and the devotion, dedication, and bravery of others who struggled, albeit unsuccessfully, to save these bird species.

Of the titles I've presented thus far, this one is the most political. Since 1970, the number of individual birds in the world has dropped by 3 billion, and even some of our common birds like the American Robin are starting to decline. We know the reasons: habitat fragmentation, deforestation, climate

change, night time light pollution, pesticide use, outdoor domestic cats, and noise. Mr. Kokinos' book doesn't address these issues directly. He is chronicling America's historic past and its ideological trends. But his cautionary tale can help us protect and preserve the future of birds.

5. The Bird Way: A New Look at How Birds Talk, Work, Play, Parent and Think.

By Jennifer Ackerman.

D B 99891.

LOC Annotation: "Author of The Genius of Birds, D B 85848, reviews research into the way birds behave. Topics covered include communication, work and tool use, group social interactions, relationships between individuals, and parenting approaches." Unrated. Commercial audio book, 2020.

Reading this book deepened my conviction that human beings aren't the top of the evolutionary pyramid who can take for granted our dominion over everybody else. Ackerman's wit, and her obvious admiration for, and knowledge of, her subject, made reading this book feel like reading a novel I couldn't put down.

Here is a Book Share title that you might enjoy as it speaks eloquently to the pleasures of backyard birding:

6. Private Lives of Garden Birds.
By Calvin Simons.

A table of contents sampling shows you why I like this one:

"Mockingbirds: Virtuoso Singers."

"Swallows: Graceful Colonists of Our Buildings."

“Blue Jays: The Family Reunion at Your Feeder.”

“Chickadees: Faithful Friends in The Garden.”

“Song Sparrows: Each Region Its Own Sparrow Language.”

“Robins: Tuneful Aggression.”

Here in California, we have Mockingbirds, Swallows, Chickadees, Song Sparrows, Robins, and Jays, although our jays are different species than the Eastern Blue Jays. Yet the behaviors and characteristics that this author describes for the bird species in Massachusetts, where he lives, apply equally well to our species here in California. And all of these are backyard feeder birds, birds that you can attract to your garden by providing food, water, and shelter.

Online Resources, Apps, and Community Organizations

The Audubon Society offers an 8-part Birding By Ear course on its web site at:

audubon.org/birding-by-ear.

Quoting from the site:

“This set of web articles is a great introduction to identifying bird sounds. They explain the differences between bird songs and calls and encourage learning the language of your local birds, all the while staying mindful of regional dialects, and keeping your ears sharp for mimics. The series also provides tricks like using bird song mnemonics to serve as ‘memory hooks’ to make birding by ear less overwhelming.”

The course is reasonably navigable if you use your iPhone or computer's screen reader. My Braille Sense 6 doesn't work as efficiently on this site.

The NLS Bard magazine section offers Audubon Magazine, which is published quarterly. Audubon, by the way, is the leading national advocacy organization for legislation that protects birds. There are Audubon chapters throughout the United States that offer online and in person classes about birds, as well as walks and field trips.

A leading research, conservation and science organization for birds is The Cornell Lab of Ornithology: Type this into your web browser as your search term, and the Cornell site will come up immediately (or click [here](#)). The site is easily accessed with JAWS and NVDA, a bit clunky for the Braille Sense.

Some of the more interesting links to explore are these: Citizen Science, Project Feeder Watch, Lifelong Learning, 10 Ways to Help Birds, All About Birds, Bird Guide, Birds of the World, Bird Academy (these are online courses you can take), Merlin Bird ID App, and Macaulay Library. This last link will take you to what is probably the most in-depth library of bird sound recordings available. The Merlin Bird ID app (which you can download to your phone, note taker or computer) is built from the Macaulay Library archives. If you click on the All About Birds link, you can read the most current issue of the Cornell Lab's magazine: Living Bird.

I think that the Merlin Bird ID App warrants its own article/review. But I'll share two of its best features here. First, once the app is installed on your phone or computer, you can record any bird you hear, and based upon your geographic location, the app will offer a list of the most likely species. You can then click on these species and match sounds for

yourself. Each time you record a bird, the app will store your recording for you. The other cool feature is that it provides you with sound recordings for all birds that you might hear in your area. You can scroll through the list, listening and learning at your own speed.

Thanks, everyone, for reading. If you have additional suggestions for birding resources, please send them to me at:

susancglass@att.net.

If people are interested, I can share a list of novels and human-interest stories about birds, as well as children's books about birds.

From Print to Braille: The Key to Accessible Word Documents

From the Braillecast podcast

For many years now, Sight Scotland has championed National Braille Week, an opportunity to celebrate braille usage and raise awareness of the importance and value of braille. It runs in the second week of October, to coincide with World Sight Day.

In 2023, we celebrated National Braille Week at the Braillists by running five Masterclasses, one each day, following the journey “From Print to Braille”. These episodes are the recordings of these Masterclasses.

In this episode, discover how making a few small tweaks to your Microsoft Word documents will not

only lead to better automated braille, but also speed up your word processing tasks! Using styles, inserting proper characters and ensuring tables are created effectively will all be covered. The session was presented by Barry Coates, Technology Training Manager at RNIB.

Listen on Apple Podcasts at:

www.is.gd/GSU7ht

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July 1, 2023

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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.