**The GCB DIGEST**

**A publication of the Georgia Council of the Blind**

**An affiliate of the American Council of the Blind**

**An organization promoting a hand up and not a hand out**

**Winter 2019**

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**From Your Editor, by Amanda Wilson**

Hello, GCB Family, we thank each one who has submitted articles in this issue of our magazine. If you have any change of address, telephone number, email address or desired change of format, please inform the GCB Digest newsletter editor, Amanda Wilson at 770-547-4700, or via email at moonrocks@bellsouth.net. We would like to thank everyone who makes our GCB Digest such a big success. I want to thank our new GCB Digest newsletter committee for all of the hard work they have done on the magazine, as well as thanking our president, Alice Ritchhart, for her presidential message with information about important events, legislation and projects. I would like to let everyone know that we are trying to reconstruct the GCB Digest with more articles of interest, pictures and items contributed from our members. We would like to receive comments on what everyone thinks of this issue.

**GCB Presidential Message****, by Alice Ritchhart**

**Happy New Year! I hope the New Year brings you good health, and that you are able to stick to your resolutions. I want to talk about a resolution I hope you will all help the Georgia Council of the Blind to make and keep this year. In this date and time there are a couple of challenges we as an organization face. The first is people today are not joining organizations as they did in the past and we have seen this within our own GCB. Second because of changes to laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and Vocational Rehabilitation Services, we have begun to lose ground in what progress we had made to make our communities more accessible and welcoming to people with disabilities. Therefore, it is very important that we as members in GCB do what we can to advocate and educate our communities on what we can do and have to offer as a valuable member in our communities. What we are talking about is full inclusion, and that must start within our own organization. The GCB is not just made up of people who are just blind like it once was. Now because people are living longer and young people are being born with multiple disabilities, our make up as an organization has changed. With that said, it is important that before we can get our abled body peers to accept us, in turn, we must be accepting of all our members within the GCB. It is important to remember that each of us joined GCB with a purpose in mind. It may be that you joined to be able to socialize with peers who can relate to your disabilities, or maybe you joined because you wanted to make a difference in your community for people with blindness and low vision. Whatever the reason we are a family and we must work together as a family if we are going to make a difference in our lives. To do this we must be willing to work together and encourage each other in whatever role each member takes in GCB. That is why as President I**

**have tried to encourage members to get involved and serve on whatever committees they have an interest in. It is why I have been trying to encourage new members to seek out help from long time members to help mentor them, so they may take on more of a leadership role. If GC B is going to continue to survive, it is necessary that we help every member to reach their full potential. So, the resolution I am asking you to make and keep is for each one of you to get involved either at your local level or at the state level. Be willing to step out of your comfort zone and make a difference. The other part of that is be willing to help other members to get involved as well. This means do not be little a member who is trying to step up and help, but encourage them, be patient with them and mentor them. Also, I call on each board member to remember we are here to represent the membership between our annual meetings, and so it is important that you keep all your members informed about what is happening at the state level. Each quarter we meet and discuss and plan things that affect the entire membership, and so as a representative to the board it is your responsibility to go back to your members, tell them what was discussed and get their input. Just remember we can make a difference, but to do so we must start from within and be accepting of each member and what they have to offer this organization. In closing I just want to say thank you to each one of you for your being a part of GCB, and I hope to see you at some time at either a board meeting or conference, or I would love to be invited to come and visit you at your local meetings. Just remember you are important. Your, being a member of GCB makes a difference in the lives of all who are blind or have low vision.**

**GCB Georgia Council of the Blind Board Meeting minutes, by Betsy Grenevitch.**

**Georgia Academy for the Blind, 2895 Vineville Avenue, Macon, GA 31204**

**October 20, 2018**

**Announcements:**

**President Alice Ritchhart unofficially called the meeting to order at 10:45 A.M. Due to Steve Longmire and Roderick Parker being delayed we did announcements first. Dianne Roberts thanked us for our support during her mother’s illness. Marj Schneider announced that the Savannah chapter was selling white cane earrings. The earrings were made by Savannah chapter members. They are also selling tie tacks with white canes on them.**

**Amanda Wilson announced that** **Bronwyn Rumery, with the Northwest chapter is selling Christmas wreaths and ornaments.**

**Deborah Lovell, from the Augusta chapter, announced that they will be having a technology social for people in the community.**

 **Where to Meet Next: Marsha Farrow told us that there is a Methodist Center in Macon that we can utilize for a meeting place. The cost would be $200. The Centerville Lions Club facility was another option that was discussed. Alice mentioned Disability Links in tucker had also been offered to us as an option. It cost over $400 to meet at the**

**Georgia Academy for the Blind this time. We were able to meet there this time because of a donation. Alice explained that we now pay for the use of the Academy because they are a state property and are really onto the liability issues. They are now required to have security and staff on the property when people are present. We now must pay at CVI because of their funds being cut. Those present were charged to look for meeting locations in their local areas.**

**Call to Order, President Alice Ritchhart:**

**The meeting was officially called to order by President Alice Ritchhart at 11:22 AM.**

**Invocation:**

**Our invocation was led by our chaplain, Fred McDade.**

**Roll Call:**

**Those present were: Alice Ritchhart, President; Phil Jones, First Vice-President; Jamaica Miller, 2nd Vice-President; Betsy Grenevitch, Secretary; Marsha Farrow, Treasurer; Valerie Hester, Member-At-Large representative; Keith Morris, GCB Past President; Jerrie Toney, Athens; Deborah Lovell, Augusta; Cecily Nipper, East Georgia and Dianne Roberts, Hall County; Harvey Roberts, Hall County; Amanda Wilson , North Central Georgia representative; Ron Burgess, Northwest; Tonia Clayton, Rome Floyd; Marj Schneider, Savannah; Lisa Jones, South Atlanta; Roderick Parker, Parliamentarian; Amanda Wilson, GCB digest editor; Steve Longmire, webmaster; and Teresa Brenner, Georgia Guide Dog Users. Guests present were: Audrey and Jim Menefee, Janet and Keith Parmerter, Kathy Morris,**

**Tiyah Fowlkes-Mansah, Todd Turansky, Cecily Nipper Sr., Joe James, DJ McIntyre, Charles Stubblefield, Tom Bain, Evelyn Jackson, Sharon Beasley, Ronald Beasley, Billie Lloyd, Charlotte Arnold, Bethany Kinsey-Lane, and JoAnn.**

**Approval of Minutes, Betsy Grenevitch:**

**Betsy asked that the minutes for the meeting held on July 21 be approved as they were sent out. Deborah Lovell made a motion that the minutes be approved, and the motion was seconded by Phil Jones. The motion passed unanimously. Betsy also asked for a motion to approve the minutes for August 30, 2018, as they were sent out with the correction that Phil Jones was present on the call. Deborah Lovell made a motion to approve the minutes for the August 30, 2018 meeting which was seconded by Keith Morris. The motion uanimously passed.**

**Treasurer’s report, Marsha Farrow:**

**Marsha Farrow told us that in the main checking account we have $3844.60. This account includes $710 that is designated for the Martha Craig Memorial fund for the Deaf-Blind. It also includes the fund for the Older Blind fund which is $4274.14. Our actual available amount for operating expenses is $1860.56. The Al and Cora Camp Scholarship Fund have $556.998. We have received $1181.70 in interest from the Way Financial since May. The GCB Money market has $5741.42. This is our emergency fund. The Evan Barnard Cd has $901.88. Interest gained in 2018 so far has ben $.33. The GCB Long-term Investment is $18,130.62. Interest gained since 2017 is $350.11. This CD matures on March 20, 2021. The GCB Conference Account has $1378.77. The Way Financial has $64,561.69. This report will be filed for audit.**

**Finance Report Jerrie Toney:**

**Jerrie previously sent out the budget report. She mentioned that $302.30 in the conference account is for the first-timers scholarship to attend the conference and convention. The Older Blind Fund is now a stand-alone item in the budget.**

**Conference and convention, Report, Betsy Grenevitch and other committee members:**

**Cecily explained that we toured several hotels and ended** **up selecting the “Days Inn” in Madison. It has a room we can use for the hospitality suite as well as a good number of hotel rooms. Because they are under construction with their meeting rooms Betsy proposed to the committee that we hold our conference sessions at Philadelphia Baptist church in Rutledge, Georgia. The hotel rate is $63 per night plus tax. Betsy and DJ talked to their pastor about using the church location which was a former school, as the facility for the conference and convention. This has been approved by the pastor and he will take whatever donation we offer to use the facility. Betsy made a motion that we hold our 2019 conference and** **convention hotel at the Madison Days In, and at the Rutledge, Philadelphia Baptist Church for the meeting space. Marsha Farrow seconded the motion and it** **unanimously passed. Cecily reported that the dog relief areas were nice and that there would be trash cans for us to use. It is an outdoor access to the rooms, but the walkway is covered. Continental breakfast is included in the room price.**

**Program Update, Marsha Farrow:**

**The program committee met and had most chapters represented. They are looking at having multiple tracks during our upcoming conference and convention. We might have a carnival experience for the younger children, technology, possibly food prep with a blind chef for youth and college age, programs for the older blind concerning aging issues, a deaf-blind segment and more.**

**Tours, Cecily and Jamaica:**

**Jamaica is working on the Tour of Historic Homes. Cecily is planning a bingo night on Thursday night for those who arrive early. She and Jamaica will be speaking to someone from the Madison chamber of commerce about what they have to offer as far as tours.**

**Scholarship, Marj Schneider:**

**GCB will be offering academic scholarships in 2019, and guidelines have been completed. The board will receive and electronic copy of these guidelines, so they can be approved by a specially called meeting of the board. March 1 is the deadline to receive applications for the academic and first-timers scholarship. The academic scholarship will be presented at the annual GCB conference and convention.**

**Membership, Amanda Wilson:**

**We now have 190 members. We have had three pass away recently and one new member so now we have 190. Amanda made a motion to accept the new membership**

**form that will be used for those paying through PayPal. Marj felt that more work is needed on the form before it is ready to be used. Marj made a motion to refer the form back to the committee. The motion was seconded by Betsy. The motion unanimously passed.**

**Technology, Steve Longmire:**

**Steve Longmire stated that at their last technology meeting that they discussed the website. The new brochure and logo will be put up on the site. Each chapter can go on the website and edit their chapter information on their chapter page. Steve and Jerrie will assist the chapter person who has been assigned to do the update if it is needed. As soon as the membership application is completed it will be posted on the website. There has been a request to set up an application so that a person can go on the website to join a specific chapter. Steve said that this could be done as long as they are given the dues amount for each chapter. There will also be an online conference and convention form per the suggestion of Jamaica. You can make a payment through PayPal or print the form off and mail it to the treasurer. This option will be available to join GCB as well. As part of the technology call, they discussed different technology options. He is willing to have these calls more often than just before the board meeting. Amazon Smile is up and running and we are receiving checks from Amazon.**

**Fund-raising, Valerie Hester:**

**Valerie Hester stated that Kroger is still used to help fund GCB. The other current fundraisers are: Amazon Smiles,**

**50/50 raffle and MMS. We had the bluegrass concert this past conference and convention to help** **subsidize** **the scholarship fund. Valerie has not been able** **to; once again****, contact the person concerning the Braille Rally. At the conference and convention, we will be selling smoothies. We will also be having an auction focusing on technology. We would like items that talk, have Braille, magnifying, etc. We have not been doing well with selling the baskets. Selling Items with the GCB Logo: Selling items with the new GCB logo will be discussed at the next fund- raising committee meeting.**

**GGDU, Betsy Grenevitch:**

**Betsy stated that GGDU held an in-person meeting on September 29, 2018.**

**GCB Digest, Amanda Wilson:**

**Amanda stated that we are moving to digital cartridges with the audio version of The GCB Digest.**

**Unfinished business:**

**Evan Barnard Account, Marsha Farrow: Evan is beginning to create a nonprofit foundation for his Nature for all company. Marsha made a motion that we return the CD to Evan Barnard so that he can receive his nonprofit status for Nature for All. The motion was seconded and unanimously passed.**

**GCB Brochures, Amanda Wilson:**

**Amanda stated that we now have new brochures and a**

**new GCB logo. Audrey and Jim Menefee were presented with a plaque and a Chili’s gift card, as a “thank you” for their work on the logo.**

**Website, Marj Schneider:**

**Marj reminded us that there is still unfinished work that needs to be completed on our website.**

**New Business:**

**Liability Insurance:**

**Marsha Farrow stated that it will cost us $940 for the next 12 months of liability insurance. We have one million dollars’ worth of coverage. This protects each board member. Marsha suggested that each chapter donate $50 toward this expense. This insurance also covers any violence that could take place at one of our meetings. Marsha requested that the board members discuss this with their chapters. This donation would be given annually.**

**Next Meeting:**

**Deborah Lovell made a motion that we meet in January at disability Links, in Tucker. Jamaica seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.**

**Adjourn: We adjourned at 1:15 PM.**

**Respectfully submitted by**

**Betsy Grenevitch, GCB Secretary**

**Georgia Council of the Blind**

**Special Called Board Meeting, Telephone Conference Call**

**November 19, 2018**

**Call to Order:**

**The meeting was called to order by President Alice Ritchhart at 7:38 PM.**

**Roll Call:**

**Those present were: Alice Ritchhart, President; Phil Jones, First vice-President; Jamaica Miller, Second vice-President; Valerie Hester, Member-at-Large representative; Bowles Dean, Athens chapter; Deborah Lovell, Augusta chapter; Cecily Nipper, East Georgia chapter; Bronwyn Rumery, North Central Georgia chapter; Tonia Clayton, Rome-Floyd chapter; Marj Schneider, Savannah chapter; Lisa Jones, South Atlanta chapter; Amanda Wilson, Digest Editor; and Teresa Brenner, Georgia Guide Dog Users.**

**Al and Cora Camp Scholarship Guidelines, Marj Schneider: parliamentarian Roderick Parker had expressed concern about applicants providing their financial information to the scholarship committee. Marj wanted to know if it was OK to add on the application that "all information will be kept confidential by the committee," to the guidelines that would be read by applicants. Deborah Lovell brought up that once a person turned 18, we would not need to know their parents’ financial status. The need for financial information will be decided on a case by case basis. Marj made a motion that we approve the Al and Cora Camp Scholarship Guidelines with a sentence added about confidentiality. Deborah Lovell seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.**

**Theme of the 2019 Conference and convention, Betsy Grenevitch:**

**Betsy read the three theme choices that had been submitted. Teresa Brenner made a motion that we accept the theme submitted by the Athens chapter. The motion was seconded by Bronwyn Rumery. The motion was unanimously approved. The theme that was chosen is "Courage to Empower Your Dreams".**

**GVRA speaking at the January Board Meeting, Alice Ritchhart:**

**Alice heard from Shirley Robinson after the President’s Message she had written for the most recent GCB Digest. Shirley said that she did not realize things were so bad. Some of the staff with GVRA would like to speak to us. They would include Shirley Robinson, Paul Raymond, and Denine Woodson. Deborah Lovell made a motion that we invite the people from GVRA to speak to us at our January board meeting. Marj Schneider seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The panel will speak with us for an hour, at the conclusion of our board meeting.**

**Board Meeting Location for January, Alice Ritchhart:**

**Alice will be contacting Disability Link in Tucker, Georgia to find out if we can meet there for our January board meeting. Once the location is confirmed she will contact GVRA.**

**Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 PM.**

**Respectfully submitted by**

**Betsy Grenevitch, Secretary**

**GCB Member Profile: Ron burgess**

**Ron Burgess was born and raised in Lafayette, Georgia and still resides in that Georgia mountain community. After graduating high school in 1974, he attended Georgia Northwestern in 1975 and returned to Georgia Northwestern in 1994 to study computers and medical terminology. Though being visually** **impaired for the past 42 years, due to Retinitis Pigmentosa, RP, Ron Burgess served as President of the Northwest Chapter of the Georgia Council of the Blind, for eight years. Ron is active writing emails for his chapter to send to the local radio station, local television station and the Chamber of Commerce and arranged the Christmas party at the Dairy Dip. At home, he keeps busy with the never-ending war against yard weeds, buying groceries, cooking tasty treats and doing other household duties. Ron Burgess is single, 63-years old, and he loves his family. He has two nieces that are both fighting severe health challenges. He has one nephew, one sister-in-law, one great niece, one great nephew and two great-great nephews. He has a sixteen- year old blind Peekapoo dog named Bridgette who is Ron’s faithful companion. To relax, Ron uses his telephone to listen to the Georgia Radio Reading Service, GARRS. It was two years ago, when Ron first heard of GARRS, from the Georgia Council of the Blind, GCB. It is his belief that all programs by G.A.R.R.S, are very valuable to people throughout the state of**

**Georgia and he truly enjoys all the entertaining programs and excellent readers. For fifty-four years, Ron has been a member of the Second Baptist Church of Lafayette and enjoys being a member of the men’s Bible class. When asked how he would describe himself, Ron said, “I’m just an outgoing, loving Christian man”.** **If you wish to contact Ron burgess, please call him at (706) 638-1132, or via e-mail at** **ronburgess1132@gmail.com****.**

**GCB Chapter News**

**Athens:**

**The Athens chapter reported that in October, we discussed finding restaurants to hold fundraisers where part of the proceeds goes to our chapter. On November 17, 2018, we held a phone conference meeting. We once again discussed possible locations for fundraisers. We talked about little tricks to help us deal with everyday problems for people with visual impairments. We discussed contrast where you can place a white cloth on a dark dresser. This will allow us to locate dark objects easier. During, our, “Would you change, if you had the power to change anything,” discussion, we stated how confusing public restrooms are. No two restrooms seem to be the same. Since this is a highly personal situation not everyone can help you all the time. We talked about audio instructions but could not come up with a workable answer at the time. We talked about how Netflix and Amazon Prime have a lot of movies with audio description. On December 8, 2018, we held our yearly Christmas party at the, “Blind Pig” restaurant, which is located at 312 East Washington Street in Athens, Georgia. You can't say that we don't have a good sense of humour. There were 11, present, in spite, of the bad weather. We welcomed a new member named**

**John and look forward to having him in our chapter. We all enjoyed good company and good food. We wished everyone Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. The Athens Chapter officers are Ernest Bowls Dean, President, Jerrie Toney, First Vice-President, Jamie Teal, Second Vice-President, Rebecca Verhine, Secretary and Robin Oliver, Treasurer. Their meetings are held at MULTIPLE Choices at 145 Barrington Drive in Athens, Georgia on the fourth Saturday, from 10:30 am until 12:00 pm. For more information, please contact Earnest Bowls-Dean at** **706-705-1109, or via email at** **eb46dean@gmail.com****.**

**Augusta:**

**The Augusta Chapter reported that we sponsored a game afternoon and spaghetti dinner for the blind veterans at the Charlie Norwood VAMC, blind rehabilitation unit on Saturday, September 29, 2018, as one of our community service projects.  In October, we held our elections. Officers are as follows: President, Deborah Lovell, first vice-president, Stanley Lopez, secretary, Ronald Worley and Treasurer Kathy Morris. On Saturday, October 27, 2018, we hosted a technology Social, this is where members and guest met for breakfast and shared information on iOS devices and on updates to iOS version 12. The Augusta chapter Christmas party was held on Saturday, December 8, 2018, at the home of Mark and Kay Armstrong. We had several guests, 2 of whom are planning on joining our chapter early in the New Year. In January, we are planning on having the compliance manager for Augusta/Richman County at our meeting. She will discuss services for individuals with disabilities and answer questions and address concerns. The Augusta chapter**

**meetings are held at the Friedman Branch Library which is located at 1447 Jackson Road, Augusta, Georgia, on the second Saturday from 1:00 pm until 3:00 pm. For more information, please contact Deborah Lovell at 706-72-4054, or via email at** **lovell.d2000@gmail.com****.**

**East Georgia Chapter:**

**The East Georgia Chapter reported that Cecily Nipper Sr. served as Presenter for our November meeting. She gave instruction on how to prepare her special recipe of Hot Chocolate and marshmallows. The gift jars were decorated with ribbons. We held our annual Christmas event on Saturday, December 8, 2018. We played Christmas Trivia hosted by Carle Wahyudi. WE sang Christmas carols accompanied on piano by Cecily Nipper; Jr. Elsie Aguilar sang, Feliz Navidad and Brailed Christmas cards for our friends and families. We had Door prizes, food, and fun. Lucas Montalvo won the Spelling Bee for his class and will represent his school in further competition. Congratulations, Lucas. Sarah Maddox rode in the Jackson Christmas parade. Brenda Maddox drove the Special Olympics Share Pathfinders pickup truck. The truck was decked out in Silver bells and garland. Sarah and 6 other young people dressed in red and green shirts rode on the back. She traveled to Bryson, North Carolina to ride the Polar Express train to the North Pole village. Santa boards the Polar Express train at the village. He gives the young people a silver bell. There is an article in the GARRS October newsletter,” about Rosetta Brown who was selected “Garrs, Listener of the month.” The East Georgia Chapter is deeply saddened by the passing of Beloved former President and Board member, Neb Houston. He**

**passed away on Saturday, December 8, 2018 following a period of illness. Neb was a vital part of our East Georgia family and he is greatly missed. We appreciate the exemplary service Neb rendered. It is truly a sad, broken time, in our lives, when it has come to close out our Friend Neb’s life here on earth. This is one of the darkest hours of our Chapter Family’s history. We are Broken and grieving. We join with you to finalize his path. The East Georgia chapter officers are Patricia Ganger as president; Cecily Nipper, Jr. as first vice-president; Anne Wheeler as second vice-president; Linda Williams as secretary; Linda Cox as treasurer. The East Georgia Chapter meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month from 10:00 AM until 12:00 pm. The East Georgia Chapter meetings are held at the Covington First United Methodist Church which is located at 1113 Conyers Street in Covington, Georgia.** **For more information, please contact Patricia Ganger at or via email a t 770-853-2040, or via email at** **Patricia.Ganger@outlook.com****.**

**Greater Hall:**

**The Greater Hall County chapter reported that in October, we had the following guests at our meeting. Henry and Rita Harris of East Georgia Chapter shared highlights from her mission trip to Ghana, Africa.  She really gave us a close-up perspective of life with vision impairment in another culture.  In November, Judy Presley, and Jeremy Adams presented wonderful demonstrations of Be My Eyes and Seeing A I technology.  Jeremy also shared important information regarding procedures, accessibility and upcoming updates to Georgia’s voting process.  Judy participated in the Fall Belk Charity Day Event on Saturday, November 3, 2018.  We receive a portion of the proceeds**

**from all sales.  This fundraiser enables us to sponsor area students with visual impairments to camps each year. We welcomed new members, Mrs. Louise Hall, Mike Hall, Jane Bell, Joseph Forry and Bobbie Bethel.  Sadly, Paula Newkirk passed away on Saturday, December 1, 2018. We had our Christmas party on Saturday, December 8, 2018, at Luna’s Restaurant which is located at 200 Main Street Southwest, in Gainesville, Georgia. We partnered with the Gainesville Lions and collected children’s gifts and donated them to the Chattahoochee Baptist Association’s Secret Santa ministry. Harvey and Dianne Roberts have made a fun adventure of camping, hiking and fishing in Georgia’s many state parks.  Their goal is to camp in all of Georgia’s state parks and visit its historic sites.  All of Georgia’s state parks have a natural and/or historic significance and are worth exploring.  So far, they have made it to fifteen of the forty-one camping-friendly parks, including those in all four corners of the state.  Harvey and Dianne encourage everyone to visit a state park near you, and they would be glad to share information with anyone who is interested. Judy Presley was fortunate to be able to attend the American Council of the Blind 2018 national convention, held in Saint Louis, Missouri last July.  She gained much information she was able to share with her chapter.  She is hoping to attend the ACB national convention 2019, to be held in Rochester, New York next July.  Judy will be looking for a roommate to share a room. The Greater Hall County chapter officers are Diane Roberts, president; Judy Presley, vice-president; Sue Heskett, secretary; Roy Carder, treasurer. Their meetings are held at the Smokey Springs Retirement Residence at 940 South Enota Drive in Gainesville, Georgia, on the second Saturday from 10:00 am until 12:00 pm. For more information, please contact Diane Roberts at 770-932-1112, or via email at** **harveyroberts2@att.net****.**

**North Central:**

**The North Central Georgia Chapter reported that we did not meet in November due to several scheduling conflicts; however, this did not keep its president, Bronwyn Rumery from trying to raise some funds for NCGC by selling some of her hand made Christmas items at her church. She also passed out some GCB and NCGC brochures along with some Braille/Print alphabet cards. You go girl! Bronwyn, along with Treasurer Wendy Simone, celebrated their birthdays the first week of December. They both turned a year older but are not willing to divulge their actual age! The North Central Georgia chapter held our Christmas party on Wednesday, December 19, 2018, at the Jasper United Methodist Church which is located at 85 West Church St in Jasper, Georgia, from 11:00 am until 1:00 pm. We enjoyed light refreshments, Christmas trivia and we had lots of fun. The North Central chapter officers are Bronwyn Rumery, president, vice-President, Wendy Simone, treasurer, Rachel Simone, secretary, and Scott Rumery, board member. Their meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday of the month from 10:00 AM until 12:00 pm. Their meetings are held at the Pickens County Chamber of Commerce, 500 Stegall Drive, in Jasper, Georgia. For more information, please contact Bronwyn Rumery at 706-669-2115 or via email at** **northcentral.ga.chapter@gmail.com****.**

**Northwest:**

**The Northwest chapter reported that we met on Tuesday, November 13, 2018. We held elections for our chapter officers. WE voted in Fred McDade as president; Sharon**

**Nichols as vice-president; Bethany Leigh as secretary; Charles Stubblefield as treasurer; and Robert Sprayberry as Chaplin. On Tuesday, December 11, 2018, we held their annual Christmas party at the dairy dip restaurant which is located at 302 West Villanow Street in Lafayette, Georgia. We discussed that 2018 has been a great year for our chapter. WE have grown in membership. We joined the chamber of commerce. We have had several guests at our meetings. We discussed new products and benefits for people who are blind in our community. We are looking forward to continuing building our membership. We wish to be a strong force in our community. The Northwest chapter meetings are held on the second Tuesday at the Bank of Lafayette Community room which is located at 104 North Main Street in Lafayette, Georgia from 1:00 pm until 3:00 pm. For more information, please contact Fred McDade at** **706-278-4084, or via email at** **nwgachaptergcb@gmail.com****.**

**Rome Floyd:**

**The Rome Floyd County chapter held their Christmas party on Tuesday, December 18, 2018. The Rome Floyd County chapter officers are Marsha Farrow, president; Dr. Philip Dillard, vice-president; Tonia Clayton, secretary; Suzanne Jackson, treasurer. Their meetings are held at the Rome Floyd County Library at 205 Riverside Parkway, in Rome, Georgia, on the third Tuesday, from 11:00 am until 1; 00 pm. For more information, please contact Marsha Farrow at 706-859-2624, or via email at** **marshafarrow@windstream.net**

**Savannah:**

**On Thursday, December 6 the Savannah chapter held its annual Christmas dinner, this time at Carey Hilliard’s restaurant in Savannah. Around 25 members, guests and friends attended. SCB member Vivian Loesch put together gift bags for everyone and made centerpieces for the tables, which we raffled off at the end. Along with thanking Vivian and everyone who worked on this event, we took time to recognize the passing on September 29 of one of our former members, Loretta Thomson, who was a friend of both Kim Harrison and Teresa Brenner. Loretta served as our treasurer and hosted holiday parties and summer get-togethers for our chapter. She was missed at our Christmas dinner this year. In the past few years at our Christmas gathering we have collected donations of either toys or funds and this year was no exception. We raised $175, which will be matched by funds from our chapter treasury, to donate to the Bainbridge Decatur County Animal Humane Society to help with their recovery from Hurricane Michael. We know our funds will be put to good use by this organization, and it makes us feel good to give back to the community. The Savannah chapter will be heading into 2019 with having gained another new member and with enthusiasm for doing whatever we can to improve the quality of life for blind people in our community and in the State of Georgia. The Savannah chapter officers are Marj Schneider, president; Bob Walls, vice-president; Teresa Brenner, secretary; Jon Bairnsfather, treasurer. Their meetings are held at the conference room at J. C. Lewis Ford which is located at 9505 Abercorn Street, Savannah, Georgia. Their meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month at 6:00 pm. For more information, please contact Marj Schneider at 912-352-1415, or via email at** **marjschneider@bellsouth.net****.**

**South Atlanta:**

**The South Atlanta chapter held our Christmas party during our regular meeting time. It was held on Thursday, December 13, 2018, from 4:00 until 6:00 pm. It was held at the Piccadilly Cafeteria which is located at 2000 Crescent Center Boulevard in Tucker, Georgia. The South Atlanta Chapter officers are /Brent Reynolds, president; Sam Howard, vice-President; Chris Baldridge, secretary; Steve Longmire, treasurer. Meetings are held at the Piccadilly Cafeteria, which is located at 2000 Crescent Center Boulevard in Tucker, Georgia on the second Thursday from 4:00 until 6:00 pm. For more information, please contact Brent Reynolds, at** 404-814-0768, or via email at jbr53@samobile.net.

**Georgia** **Guide Dog Users, GDDU News:**

**By Betsy Grenevitch**

**Please mark your calendars for our in-person meeting that will take place during the Georgia council of the Blind conference and convention in May of 2019. We will be meeting as part of our GCB 2019 conference and convention. We are currently working on getting a speaker for our luncheon meeting. I have contacted someone and she is checking her calendar. Once a speaker is confirmed I will send more information to you. We will also be holding elections for the two boards of director positions. We hope to see many of you on May 3, 2019. If you have not yet paid your dues for 2019 and/or would like to join for the first time, please send $20 to our treasurer.**

**Alice Ritchhart, 139 Atlanta Connector #188 Brunswick GA 31525**

**The Georgia Guide Dog Users officers are Betsy Grenevitch, president, Sam Hogle, vice-president, Marj Schneider, secretary, Alice Ritchhart, treasurer, Tonia Clayton, Director.** **For more information, pl****ease contact Betsy Grenevitch at 678-862-3876, or via email at** **blindangel61@gmail.com****. You can visit their web site by going to:** [**www.georgiaguidedogusers.org**](http://www.georgiaguidedogusers.org)

**GCB In Memory of:**

**Paula Newkirk was born on June 6, 1934 and passed away on December 1, 2018. Paula Ball Newkirk, 84, of Gainesville, passed away Saturday, Dec. 1, 2018. B**

**Born on June 6, 1964, her parents were Edgar and Pauline Ball of Gainesville. "Captain" Ball established the bands at Riverside Academy and several other Hall County schools, and Pauline taught piano to generations of local youth. Graduating from Gainesville High School ('52), Paula went on to Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia ('56) and the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia. In 1958, she married Richard Newkirk, a Presbyterian seminarian. With his career in the ministry, they were a part of churches in West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and North Carolina. At each step along the way, Paula** **supported the ministry of the church, by playing the organ, leading the volunteer choir and teaching Sunday school classes for adults. In Marlinton, West Virginia, where she last lived before retirement, she taught English at the local middle school for over two decades. In 1996, Paula returned to Gainesville for retirement with her**

**husband and she continued teaching adult Sunday school classes at First Presbyterian Church. Remaining active in the church and community, her unique combination of wit, seriousness, devotion to teaching, and loving acceptance of others enabled her to establish lasting friendships and leave a profound impression on all who knew her. Preceded in death by her parents and husband, Paula’s survivors include son Mark Newkirk; daughter Elizabeth Newkirk Parsons; daughter-in-law Veronika Newkirk; four grandchildren, Tony and Becca Parsons, Anna and Eduard Newkirk; niece Pat Newkirk and her family; and nephew Donald Ebeling and his family. The memorial service was held at First Presbyterian Church in Gainesville, Georgia, on Saturday, December 15, 2018 at 2:00 pm. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to the First Presbyterian Church missions committee. Those wishing to send online condolences to the family may do so at** **[littledavenport.com](http://littledavenport.com/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) Little & Davenport Funeral Home, Gainesville. Little-Davenport Funeral Home 355 Dawsonville Highway Southwest, Gainesville, GA 30501.**

# Nebuchadnezzar Houston was born on May 23, 1952 and passed away on December 8, 2018. Celebration of life for Mr. Nebuchadnezzar Houston was held Saturday, December 15, 2018 at 11:00 am, at Chestnut Grove Baptist Church, 3890 Prospect Road, Rutledge, Georgia. Rev. Marcus Young, pastor. His remains lay in state at 10:00 are Interment, church cemetery. Visitation was held on FRIDAY, December 14, 2018 from 12:00 - 8:00 pm with family hour 6:00 - 8:00 pm. Family and friends are asked to assemble 10:00 am at the funeral home, 129 West Washington Street, Monroe. Young-Levett Funeral Home MONROE CHAPEL, 770-267-2642.

**Dolores Ellen Camp Rutenber, age 63, of Toccoa, Georgia, passed away on Monday, December 10, 2018 at her home. She was born on May 22, 1955 in Talladega, Alabama. She was the daughter of the late Alfred William and Cora Ellen Bryson Camp. She was a member of the Sunnyside Baptist Church. She was the manager of the witOh Burger King for many years. Family members include her daughters and a son-in-law, Leah Lawson and Shane and Jennifer Rutenber; granddaughter, Dayana Rutenber; sister and brother-in-law, Debra Camp Williams and Jeff Williams; and three nephews, great nephews, nieces, and numerous cousins. She was preceded in death by her husband, David Carl Rutenber; and her brother, William Russell Camp. A memorial service was held on Thursday, December 13, 2018 at 2:00 pm at the Sunnyside Baptist Church with the Rev. Jesse Colbert officiating. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Al and Cora Camp Georgia Council of the Blind Scholarship Fund @** [**www.georgiacounciloftheblind.org/scholarship.aspx**](http://www.georgiacounciloftheblind.org/scholarship.aspx)**. Condolences may be sent to the family at**[**www.whitlockmortuary.net**](http://www.whitlockmortuary.net/)**.**

**GCB Voting in the 2018 Election: By Marj Schneider**

**I had an unusual experience voting in this year’s election that I just have to share! Since Georgia offers early voting; Don and I decided on the Wednesday morning before November 6th to travel to the Southwest Chatham County Library at the Savannah Mall to cast our votes. The line was long, though moving steadily, and the wait must have been under half an hour. In the past voting for me has sometimes been an ordeal. In Minneapolis an election judge from both major parties would crowd into the voting**

**booth with me or stand with me in a huddle in front of the paper ballot. I would quietly state my choice, but invariably one of the judges would loudly declare, “You want to vote for…?” He was simply confirming what I’d said, but my act of voting privately turned into announcements for everyone around to hear. It got better in Georgia when in 2008 the voting equipment included options for a large print or audio ballot. At the two polling places I’ve voted at since then, while the poll workers were supposed to have been trained in setting up a machine to run the audio ballot, they were never successful on the first try. They hoped I just wanted the large print ballot; that would have been far easier for them. Large print is useless to me, so they usually had to make calls to the election board for remedial instruction. Either I went to the polling place alone or sometimes sent Don home ahead of me while I waited a good while for the audio ballot to be up and running. Having voted successfully at the Southwest Chatham Library before, I was hopeful this time that the process would be relatively quick, and it didn’t take long before we were at the front of the line filling out forms. I had to intervene and clearly repeat a few times that, “no, I want the audio ballot,” to the poll workers’ question to Don: “Will you be assisting her?”** **We walked over to two adjacent voting machines, and because I can never remember where the slot is for the voting card, the poll worker inserted it for me. Once she moved away from blocking the keypad, I could put on the clunky old headphones, which clearly hadn’t been used that day, and let her know when I started hearing the voting instructions. At the same time, Don was inserting his voting card in the machine next to mine and the words,**

**“vote canceled” came up on the screen. He asked the poll worker what was going on, but I didn’t hear her response, preoccupied as I was with hearing the start of the audio ballot. Don tried more than once to tell me something, but I told him to hush, that I had to listen to those instructions.**

**The audio ballot is no joy to listen to. The sound is scratchy and distorted and at least two voices are narrating things, while the volume level wildly fluctuates. I always must be reminded which key to press to move between candidates and races and which key to push to cast a vote. Then there were the several state referenda and local issues to vote on. Fortunately, I had done my homework and knew which ones I wanted to vote for and which ones against. Finally, I was at the end of the ballot, my card popped out and I took off the clunky headphones. I felt grateful that no one else heard or saw how I voted. It was then that Don was finally able to tell me that he still hadn’t been able to vote. It seems that not only was the voting machine I used connected centrally to some secret vote repository, but that machine was linked to every other voting machine in the library. When my card was inserted, it blocked Don and two other voters, who had also inserted their cards, from starting the voting process. And beyond that, the operation of the audio ballot locked up every other machine in the place! Don and those two other voters had to have their cards revalidated, which the poll workers were able to do, before they could vote. Probably most of the people in line had no idea how I’d held them up, but I had to laugh! After all the voting challenges I’ve been through since I first voted in 1976, this time the tables were turned!**

**GCB Apply for a GCB Scholarship: By Marj Schneider**

**Each year the Georgia Council of the Blind awards several scholarships of up to $1000 through the Al and Cora Camp Memorial Scholarship Fund, to support blind and visually impaired students in their academic pursuits. Scholarships will once again be awarded by GCB in the spring of 2019. Please share this information with high school and college students who are blind or visually impaired throughout the State of Georgia and encourage them to visit the GCB website for the scholarship application and guidelines. Applications are due by March 1, 2019. GCB also offers its members the opportunity to apply for a leadership or first timer’s scholarship. The leadership scholarship provides financial support to GCB members who want to attend seminars or other training opportunities to develop their leadership skills. The first timer’s scholarship provides financial support to one member who has not attended the annual GCB conference and convention to participate for the first time. Updated guidelines and procedures to apply for both the leadership and first timer’s scholarship are available on the GCB website. Applications for leadership scholarships can be submitted at any time. The deadline to apply for the 2019 first timer’s scholarship is March 1.**

**GCB Next generation: By Ali Herky**

**Ali Herky from the Missouri Council of the Blind wants to let you know that they are developing a new affiliate for people with visual impairments that are under the** **age of forty. Next generation is a developing national committee in which we aim to connect members under 40. This will encompass professional as well as social aspects. We have**

**committees for each. We hope to have frequent chats about blindness related topics. If you are interested, please contact Ali Herky at 314-623-0794, or via email at** **aliherky@gmail.com****.**

**GCB 2019 Conference and Convention by Betsy Grenevitch**

**The GCB 2019 Conference and Convention committee have been very busy planning the upcoming event on May 2-4, 2019. You can reserve a room at the hotel for $63.00 per night plus tax. Please call the Days Inn in Madison at 706-342-2121 to reserve your room. Tell them you are with the Georgia Council of the Blind. Our meeting location for the conference and convention will be held about a 10-minute drive from the hotel at Philadelphia Baptist Church in Rutledge, Georgia. Transportation will be provided to and from the hotel if you do not have a driver with you. The theme for the 2019 Conference and Convention that was chosen was given to us from the Athens chapter. The theme is “Courage to Empower Your Dreams”. We are planning on sending out regular announcements about the Conference and Convention beginning in January. Please spread the word. The addresses for the two locations are: Philadelphia Baptist Church, 4031 Davis Academy Road, Rutledge, Georgia 30663; Days Inn, 2020 Eatonton Road, Madison, Georgia 30250. If you have any further questions please call Betsy Grenevitch, at 678-862-3876 or via email at** **blindangel61@gmail.com****. We hope to see all of you in May.**

**GCB to take out or not to take out that is the Question**

**By Janet Parmerter**

**When our five-and-a-half-year-old grandson Tyler arrived at our home, he shocked us with an extraordinary announcement. He firmly professed, “My name is not Tyler, it’s REALLY Chris!” A bit taken back, I said, “Ok, well let’s just have a nice day together.”**

**This would mean a fun filled day with everyone who lived with us. That included Tyler’s 89-year-old great, great Auntie Rena, 82-year-old great grandma Nona Alice, his 84-year-old great grandfather Papa John, his very patient grandfather Pop-pop Keith, and me, his “Let’s play hide and seek” grandma Janet. Just between us, Tyler thinks he will always win at hide and seek, because grandma is blind. He just forgets that grandma knows the best places to hide in her own house and how well she can hear. To begin this entertaining afternoon, we planned to take out the whole gang for lunch. The Loganville I-Hop seemed like a doable choice, but could taking out three octogenarians and a feisty five-year-old really be a relaxing afternoon? That was to be the question of the day. Keith and I hoped it could be possible, and the answer could be yes, it would be a relaxing afternoon. The first step was to get Tyler, now Also Known as Chris, into the restaurant with our three seniors. Auntie Rena with her dementia and epilepsy, my father with his back problems, blood clots, heart disease and neuropathy, and my mother with her pulmonary embolism, diabetes, congestive heart**

**failure and numerous other problems. As we slowly entered the I-Hop, Keith and I tried to hold onto the whole tribe while simultaneously opening the heavy glass double doors. Unfortunately, my Dad, who always wants to be first, barreled past everyone, knocked Mom into Auntie Rena and Auntie Rena knocked into my white cane, Tyler and me. At different times the doors closed on each one of us, causing us to bounce into and off each other like rubber balls. After foolishly looking like some Charlie Chaplin comedy skit, we all made it through the entrance. Before being seated, I quietly informed the hostess not to give Auntie Rena a menu, because if she read it, she wouldn’t eat a thing. The problem is, poor Auntie Rena with her dementia, still thinks it is somewhere around 1940, and if food cost more than a dollar, she refuses to order anything except water. Auntie Rena is shocked over and over when she sees menu prices, and ALWAYS complains, “Oh my, how can they charge that much for a hot dog?” Having devoted many decades teaching the Bible for $25 a month, she watched every single penny and still does.**

**Compounding that, with her phobia about eating and getting fat, in general feeding Auntie Rena has always been a chore. Since her siblings and mother were all overweight, even with her tiny 110-pound body, she was, and still is obsessed about becoming fat. For a while I sneaked her children’s menu and she ate fine. Then, she saw the comment about the menu being for those ten years old and under and refused to eat anything off that menu. Fortunately, after a clever waitress remarked,**

**“Oh no Miss, that also means ten years under 100 years**

**old”, once again, she began eating off the children’s menu. Since those prices didn’t give her a heart attack, the frustrating feeding fight was over. Immediately after the hostess seated our group, before even taking a menu, dad called the waitress to the table and ordered his lunch. Mom took the menu from the waitress hand and began reading it. Dad looked at mom and said, “Alice, the waitress wants your order.” Mom never took her eyes off the menu and with an irritable response said, “John, I just got the menu, I’m reading it.” The server replied,**

**“No problem, I’ll come back.” Instantly, dad, who is always running the show, put his hand up in a stop position and said,**

**“No, wait!” In a frustrated tone he complained,**

 **“Alice, it’s the same thing all the time. You know what’s on the menu, just order.” Mom, who loves to read everything, replied, “I like to read it anyway, I’m not ready.” Uncomfortably, the server looked down not knowing whether to leave or stay. Having heard this same conversation my entire life, I quickly added,**

**“Excuse me, we’re not ready either, so could you please come back in a few minutes.” Gratefully and relieved, she rushed off as Dad shook his head side to side and let out a huge outward sigh of dismay. With all this going on, everyone was distracted and didn’t see Auntie Rena grab the regular menu, until we heard her muttering to herself,**

**“Forget this, who would pay that for this stuff?” We all looked over, just in time to see her throw the menu on the table and turn her head in disgust. Making the quick**

**switch, I handed her the children’s menu and whispered, “Here, Auntie Rena, this one has cheaper prices” and slid the other one off the table. In a second, she pushed away the paper place mat menu with the games and coloring pictures, and then angrily said, “This says for one to twelve years old!” Remembering the line from the other waitress, I confidently added, “Oh, this menu is also good for someone one to twelve years under 100 years old.” With her dementia, once again that worked and she ordered French toast. After the ordering food confusion was over, I played giant tic-tac-toe with Tyler while mom, as usual, called the server back so many times her shoes almost wore out. First it was, “Excuse me, may I have another napkin?” Then, “Excuse me; do you have another type of syrup?” Then, excuse me, could I have this, and could you please change this spoon? “Finally, Dad said, “Alice, you are going to drive the lady nuts”, and unconcerned Mom replied with her standard comment, “WHATEVER!” Oblivious to the strained conversations, Keith and Tyler colored pictures on the paper place mat, as I perused our disconnected group and asked, “Is everyone having fun yet?” Consequently, with the fiasco of getting everyone into the restaurant, ordering, eating, and paying for the meal, Keith and I were a tad stressed. Nonetheless, since we all live together, we now had to get the octogenarians and our little man back home. Much to my dismay, as soon as we stepped outside the restaurant doors, the floodgates of heaven burst open and it poured. Holding tight to rambunctious Tyler, we trailed behind 110-pound, five-foot two-inch, white haired Auntie Rena, who with her dementia, seemed entirely baffled by the raindrops. She stared at the sky and gasped as if bowling**

**balls were falling from the clouds. Half under her breath she mumbled, “Oh my, oh my, look at this I’m getting wet!” In her state of misperception, she swayed back and forth as she tried to avoid the raindrops by vigorously swirling her arms around trying to push them away. At this point, she was stumbling over her own feet and with a quick glance; she could easily have been mistaken for, “a mid-afternoon drunk”, trying to find her car. Meanwhile, my bent over father with his sturdy, “hold me up cane” and heart problems, speedily raced past Auntie Rena so he could be first at the still locked car. Now, quite annoyed that he had to wait, in his jogging suit, sneakers and baseball cap, he impatiently leaned against the car, until we all caught up. Still paying the check, my ever-snail-paced husband Keith, who constantly brags,**

**“I only have two speeds, slow and stop”, unsuccessfully tried to catch up to Dad. When Keith finally reached the van, he could not get the door open fast enough for my impatient father. In order to make sure his displeasure was evident; dad huffed, glared at Keith and shook his head from side to side. Then, as he struggled to step off, what seemed to be a Mount Everest size curb, he held onto the mirror which folded in toward the car and he almost fell onto the ground. After regaining his balance, he huffed and puffed while complaining about the still locked door. At this point, pulling up the rear was my 82-year-old mother and her wheelie-walker. Oh no, I’m sorry, that day I forgot the walker and she only had her extra cane and my left arm. However, the hand, of my shared left arm, also firmly held Tyler who desperately tried to escape the infamous grip of grandma. Unfortunately, I could not use my other hand to grasp Tyler because I use my right hand**

**to hold onto my white, red-tipped cane for the blind. What a sight! Mom’s walking cane verses my extended white cane, battling for the spot of, “King of the Canes”.**

**Now, slowly shuffling toward the handicapped parking space, I attempted to prevent two canes and three humans from becoming a tangled five-some. Tyler, mom, both canes and I finally made it to the van, which seemed miles away. After doing a quick Mom hand off to Keith, I ran around the van with Tyler, helped Dad climb into the middle row behind the driver, and still never let go of Tyler’s slippery hand. In the meantime, always oblivious to everything around her, Auntie Rena pulled herself onto the middle row of the van, stared out the window, and did this pretend whistling thing she does prior to having a seizure. After a second, she pushed the button to open the door, and jumped out and into the van three or four hundred times. At some point, Keith told her to stop that and stay inside the van. Never quite understanding the automatic door, as she tried to climb in, she pulled the handle and of course, the door began to close onto her frail little body. Frantically, I sprang over dad, pushed the button to re-open it, as senile Auntie Rena yelled at the door,**

**“Hey, hey, now you just stop that!” Amidst all the commotion, as my double plus size mother partially climbed onto the front seat, she feverishly wheezed and gasped for breath as if she just ran a four-minute mile in three minutes. Keith, with his feet solidly planted, gave a heave ho and pushed mom onto the front seat. With half her body still hanging out of the car, he lifted her right leg, squeezed her bottom onto the seat and slammed the door. Now Keith and I did a quick, grandma to Grandpa Tyler**

**handoff and Keith carried him to the back of the van. Since Tyler could not pass these three exhausted, immovable, elderly obstacles to get a seat, the only entry for our little man was through the back hatch. So, Keith lifted the hatch and prepared to slide Tyler and his car seat in from the rear.**

**Meanwhile, dazed and confused, auntie Rena was coming out of a seizure, as Keith plopped the car seat onto the back third row and bent down to lift Tyler into the van,**

**Because Auntie Rena was always intimidated by dad, she decided to move as far away from him as possible. In a flash, she crawled to the third back row alongside the car seat and proceeded to fasten her seat belt. At the same time, of course, she sat on the belt Keith needed to lock in Tyler’s car seat. With Tyler in his arms, from behind the van, Keith struggled as he stretched over the trunk space and back seat to unfastened Auntie Rena’s belt and free the other seat belt. Finally, finding the other strap, he clicked in the car seat, placed Tyler in his chair, locked his belt, slammed the hatch, dropped into the driver’s seat, sat back without moving a muscle, and with a frustrated, unamused look, just stared ahead through the windshield as the wipers rapidly flapped back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. During this strange moment of silence, with only the constant slapping sound of the windshield wipers, not a word was spoken. Finally, everyone was settled and ready for takeoff, yet, inside the car, it remained unusually quiet and still. In silence, we all waited for Keith to drive away, but Keith remained motionless with his eyes closed and head leaning back against the headrest. Surprisingly, even Tyler did not utter**

**a single word. He sat silent; looking around the van from one elderly person to another as he intelligently scrutinized the past thirty minutes of exiting the I-Hop until now.**

**With everyone exhausted and our fatigued family securely strapped in, Keith robotically drove onto the highway chauffeuring our tired family home from our big day of, “taking them out” to lunch. While the car was still abnormally quiet, Tyler looked around at this elderly entourage, and with a smile finally announced his brilliant deduction...**

**“Grandma, do you know why it’s REALLY good to be five or even six years old?” Curiously, I responded,**

**“No little man, I don’t! Tell me why. “Looking down at his legs, with both hands he firmly patted his thighs and proudly answered, “Because my legs are good, and I can walk!” In conclusion, to take out or not to take out, that was definitely the question. Now, what is our answer? After analyzing those five fun-filled hours, Keith and I decided the next time we choose “take out,” it will be the traditional way! Pick up the food, take the food out, and peacefully bring it home to the family!**

**GCB Retreat in North Georgia for Individuals with Visual Impairments**

**On Monday, December 3, 2018, a group of adults with visual impairments attended a retreat at the Sloppy Floyd State Park. They stayed in two cabins from Monday December 3, 2018, until Wednesday, December 5, 2018. The weather was cold but clear the entire time. The following people attended this retreat. They include Marsha Farrow; Amanda Wilson; Tonia Clayton with her dog guide Jamie; Neda Lowry; Wendy Wilson; Sally Reynolds; Jan Morris; Ann Brown; Patti Smith; Barry Vaughn, with his dog guide Winston; Dustin Cochran; Chris Holbrook; Debbie Young; Sean Hogue; Dean Tapp; Alice Tapp. A great deal of delicious food was donated, and we not only appreciate that, but we also enjoyed every bite. Patti and Debbie brought craft items, so everyone could make tactile Christmas ornaments. Some went hiking or played ice breaker games and other games like Left-right and White Elephant. It was enjoyable to listen to Mr. Dean Tap, who told us a Christmas story of Jesus’ birth sang us a song and said a lovely prayer for our lunch. After talking about how to be blind in a sighted world, we discussed gadgets that we use to be more independent. Conversations also included subjects like, how to work with dog guides, because some had one now, some had one in the past and some never had a dog guide at all. The topic of coming back next year was brought up, and we all agreed we would like to do it again, only longer. If we did, then next year we would like to go fishing, ride the paddleboats and ride the beautiful horses. All in all, we had a great time.**

**GCB The beauty of online counseling; Ways technology is**

**opening doors for persons with disabilities**

**By Kimberly** **Duff**

**As a counselor who is blind, technology provides many avenues for me to interact with counselees and perform the various tasks of my job. I use a screen reader to read text on the computer screen and this enables me to access the internet, word processing and other applications.**

**Because technology has been a real game changer in my education and work, I recently became interested in one of the newest innovations in healthcare, telemental health. I currently offer both video and telephonic counseling in my practice in Georgia.** **Here, I examine 3 online platforms that offer free, accessible online mental health counseling for persons who are blind and visually impaired. In this discussion I describe ways that online counseling opens doors for persons with disabilities or chronic illnesses, those who live in rural areas and counselors and clients who need greater scheduling flexibility.**

**Accessibility of video and telephonic counseling using a screen reader means that I am constantly evaluating software and web sites for accessibility and ability to work with assistive technology. Websites that are properly formatted allow the person who is blind to navigate to various web sites and links, red all text, access buttons, use edit fields to input information and activate combo boxes. I have identified 3 free applications that work with my screen reader technology JAWS Doxi.me This platform**

**allows the therapist to conduct online sessions and includes a virtual waiting room and virtual check in the client and therapist navigate to this waiting room by simply clicking on a web link such as this:** [**https://doxy.me/kimberlyduff**](https://doxy.me/kimberlyduff)

**The therapist prepares for the session by navigating to the web link and waiting for the client to join**

**Once audio and video are activated, you are ready to begin the session.**

**Doxy.me is hipaa compliant and meets strict standards for telemedicine and telehealth.**

**The application runs on Intercom and Intercom Messenger**

**Therapists can use the free version or purchase a paid version**

**Regroup and Zoom Regroup is an online application that allows the therapist to sign up for an account and begin adding clients, individual email addresses and then start scheduling clients**

**Once the therapist has input this into regroup, he or she can visit the Regroup Dashboard and choose the client, schedule the session time and duration and finalize the details before it sends an email of the session details to both client and counselor**

**Once it is time for the session the client can click on a link to download Zoom and enter the session.**

**Regroup is designed for the mental health profession and its video components work well with screen reader**

**technology I use this solution most frequently in my practice.**

**Therapists can sign up for a free account by going to** [**https://www.regroupconnect.com/register**](https://www.regroupconnect.com/register)**. The therapist navigates to the Zoom session after logging into regroup and then waits for the client to join this solution seems to work well with windows based computers and Apple technology. Facetime and telemental health. Those of us with iphones and ipads have grown to love facetime and the ability to interact with friends and family near and far. This is also a potential method for conducting therapy online.**

**Facetime calls are secure and use encryption. These calls are secure, but Apple has not yet verified the program’s hipaa compliance. The client or therapist places a Facetime call to the client/ therapist by using the iphone or ipad. Once the call is received, you are ready to begin the session. Because hipaa compliance isn’t verified by Apple it is important that the client be informed of this limitation. Yet the client may prefer this method due to the familiarity with Apple devices and Facetime. In conclusion, I am excited to offer online counseling in my practice. Persons who want more information about using hippa compliant software can visit my web site at** [**www.counselingbykimberly.com**](http://www.counselingbykimberly.com) **and clicking on the Elemental Health link. If you have any further questions for Kimberly Duff, please contact her at 404-518-5705, or via email at** **krduff@gmail.com****.**

**K9 Korner**

**A Loving Memory of “Duke the Tank”**

**by Bronwyn Rumery (NCGC President)**

**Note: By the time you read the following story Christmas will have already come and gone but it’s a sweet memorial which my husband Scott and I share each year and I just felt the need to share it with all of you.**

**Duke passed away on January 15, 2018 from a debilitating muscular disorder called Degenerative** **Myelopathy.** **He came from the Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, in Bloomfield, Connecticut and we buried him in our backyard, gripping tight to his favorite squeakable football which he constantly played with. Duke the Tank, as we affectionately called him, was a very large, black & tan German shepherd guide dog. He weighed around 100 pounds but was not fat, mostly muscle and oh how he loved to play and eat! Eating was his specialty, especially when he became a non-working dog. Don’t get me wrong, we kept to his food regiment, but there would be times that he would be known to sneak things off the counter or the dining room table. There are lots of memories of his food stealing escapades, such as the time when my daughter Makayla brought home food from Taco Bell. I was looking so forward to having my loaded Grande burrito which I had placed on the table. For just a minute, I walked away from the table to let Jadyn (Duke’s sister and my dog guide) inside the house from being in the back yard. When I heard laughter coming from behind me, I realized Duke had taken the opportunity to steal my burrito off the table and ate it, paper and all. Yes, there was nothing left. Worried yet concerned, I wondered if he**

**would get sick or if we should rush him to the emergency animal clinic, but Duke was fine because his stomach was an iron clad tank!**

**There are lots of similar stories I could tell about Duke but the funniest and most memorable one is what happened a few days before Christmas about two years ago.**

**This is a memory that always makes both Scott and me smile, but at the same time, a little sad because we miss Duke so very much. Without him, it isn’t the same around here and even Jadyn feels his loss.**

**Every Christmas it is a must that we have candy in our stockings. The one item that Scott and I both agree on, are the miniature size Reece’s Peanut Butter cups. So, I always by the largest bag available and split it between the two of us. Since candy seems to rapidly disappear in our house, not really sure how that happens, I have to hide the Christmas candy, so it will actually make it to Christmas Eve and I can put it all in our stockings. That’s exactly what I did with the large bag of peanut butter cups. I hid them!**

**After putting the candy in two tightly knotted shopping bags, I placed it in the bottom of a large plastic storage crate in my office that had been designated for the items that Santa’s helper needed to wrap. Confidently, I just knew that the peanut butter cups would make it to Christmas and that I wouldn’t have to make a lastminute trip to the store to purchase a brand new, bag before Christmas arrived. However, I was about to be proven wrong!**

**A few days before Christmas, around eleven o’clock in the evening, I believe I was putting clean clothes away when Scott yelled to me that he thought he heard some type of rustling noise coming from my office and that I probably wanted to check it out and make sure that the dogs hadn’t gotten into anything. So, I stopped what I was doing and went to the office. In shock, I couldn’t believe what I found or let’s say what I didn’t find.**

**There was Duke lying on the floor of my office, looking as innocent as could be, chewing on a piece of foil. Then I found more evidence of what he had done. Somehow, some way, he had found the peanut butter cups. Yes, the entire bag of peanut butter cups except for one, had been devoured by Duke the Tank. There was no foil wrapping or paper or crumbs left, just the plastic bag, or what was left of it, that the candy had come in. Once again, I worried all night long that he would become sick or that he would become seriously injured from digesting the foil and that we would have to spend time at our vet’s office. Surprisingly, nothing happened, and he was just as fine as could be. Needless to say, I did have to make a lastminute trip to the store to get more peanut butter cups which I hid on a shelf where Duke the Tank, could not reach them.**

**Devouring the peanut butter cups was not his last food related escapade, but it is, and will always be the most memorable one that Scott and I seem to share each and every Christmas since it happened. It makes us laugh and remember our sweet gentle giant that will always live in our hearts and souls simply known as Duke the Tank.**

**GCB Parley Post**

**By Rodrick Parker**

**Treasurer and Financial Secretary**

**The treasurer of an organization is the officer entrusted with the custody of its funds. The treasurer, and any other officers who handle funds of the society, should be bonded for a sum sufficient to protect the society from loss. The specific duties of the treasurer will vary depending on the size and complexity of the society; but this officer cannot disburse funds except by authority of the society or as the bylaws prescribe. The treasurer is required to make a full financial report annually or as the bylaws may prescribe, and to make such interim reports as the assembly or the executive board may direct. A nonprofit corporation’s financial state­ment should currently include, at least, a profit and loss statement and a balance sheet. The balance sheet reflects the assets, liabilities and fund balance of the nonprofit corporation on any particular day. Financial statements should be provided to the directors at each meeting of the board and the treasurer or appropriate staff members should be available to answer questions regarding the financial statements.**

**GCB LEARNING MORE ABOUT GEORGIA BLIND LIONS AND THEIR QUEST FOR SERVICE**

 **By Mike Hall**

**In the last issue of the GCB Digest, I described Georgia Blind Lions and what we are about. What I hope to do in this issue is to share a few more details about who we are and what we are doing. Anyone who is blind and is a member of a Lions Club can become part of the group. Members communicate primarily by phone and email. A conference call is held, once a month, on the first Thursday of the month at 8:00 PM. Callers may stay on the line and join the conference call for ACB Lions at 9:00 PM. Many members meet during the Georgia Lions State Convention or at GCB conventions. While many Georgia Blind Lions are members of GCB, that membership is not required in order to be a Georgia Blind Lion. You may recognize some of our officers who are active in GCB. Marsha Farrow is chair, Jerrie Toney is Secretary and Betsy Grenevitch has just taken the Treasurer's position, a job that has been held by Ann Wheeler since the beginning of Georgia Blind Lions. Right here, I would like to say a big thank you to Ann for her years of support to this organization. It is interesting how Lions and the GCB can connect. A couple of years ago, I was invited as a Lion to speak to the Greater Hall Chapter of GCB in Gainesville concerning White Cane Safety Day. In the 1930's, a Lion in Peoria, Illinois developed a white cane, after seeing a friend crossing the street with a cane that was not very visible. Lions begin to develop and push for the use of white canes and for traffic safety laws to favor blind pedestrians. While working on a white cane project with my Lions Club and the GCB chapter in Gainesville, and after attending the 2017 GCB**

**convention, also held in Gainesville, I decided to get back involved with GCB. Lions are about service and that's what we hope happens with Georgia Blind Lions. Currently, we are looking for an annual project we can pursue. There are some good examples to choose from. Bill Graham has involved the North Carolina Blind Lions in producing audio programs and meetings via conference call to provide diabetes awareness. Florida Blind Lions are promoting the Talking Book Library to increase awareness and getting more folks to sign up for library service. Georgia Blind Lions have interest in the Georgia Lions Camp, formerly the Georgia Lions Camp for the Blind. The camp always needs funding. I have heard that only about 3 percent of Lions Clubs in Georgia support the camp. Most of the interest in the camp happens in those counties that are located closer to Waycross. It is possible that Georgia Blind Lions could look for a way to encourage more Lions Clubs to get involved with the camp. Some folks are discussing ways to improve the camp and bringing a more meaningful experience to families and adult campers. Of course, if we obtain the funding, we certainly should consider sponsoring a camper to camp. In past years, Georgia Blind Lions did not charge membership dues. However, we are thinking of adopting a small dues charge, probably $5.00 a year to provide funds to do service projects. In addition, we need to find a good fundraiser and we are open for ideas. As we move into 2019, you can be sure that Georgia Blind Lions will be considering opportunities to serve not only among our fellow blind Lions but in our local clubs, zones and districts. If you are a Lion and you would like to join in our conference calls on the first Thursday of the month at 8:00 pm. For more information, please contact Marsha Farrow at 706-859-2624, or via email at** **marshafarrow@windstream.net****.**

**GCB Digest Thoughts**

**Do you have any comments? Would you like your thoughts heard? Please E-mail your thoughts to our editor so you can be a part of the GCB Digest family.**

**This is what you can do. Write your valuable e-mail comment beginning with the name of the season issue. Next, in the subject edit box type, “Thoughts from Our Readers”, then E-mail it to Amanda Wilson, Digest Editor at 770-547-4700 or via email at** **moonrocks@bellsouth.net****. We look forward to hearing your thoughts! Now, here is the first installment of:**

**THOUGHTS FROM OUR READERS:**

**GCB Digest Fall issue 2018:**

 **What a great Presidential message! It was not only informational but also motivational.**

**Thanks Alice.**

**GCB Digest Fall issue 2018:**

**Let me say how much I enjoyed reading, “Raindrops on Roses”, *in the Fall GCB digest. The thoughts Kimberly wrote about* developing an optimistic outlook was not only well-written, but they were ideas we can all benefit from. Having also read, “The Power of Positive Thinking”, I agree there is a lot we can do to help ourselves. The quote she added from Churchill, “A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty”, was outstanding. Most of all, I loved your comment about meditating on scriptures like the one mentioned in Isaiah 40:30, that was so upbuilding! Personally, Isaiah chapter 41, verses 10 and 13 have always managed to get me through everything.**

**Thanks Kimberly, for your free expert advice!**

GCB One Adventure Ending—Another Begins!!!

By Timothy Jones

First, I want to let everyone at GCB know I greatly miss being physically there with all of you. Being in college, over 100 miles away in Macon, has made it impossible for me to come to meetings or conventions. It is difficult because my school year which begins the last week in August and runs to the third week of May. Still, I often think of you and I’m so grateful for the support of the GCB for helping me be where I am today. As of this writing, January 2019, I am preparing to go back to Mercer to begin my final semester for my Bachelor of Music degree. Four years ago, I would never have imagined where I am today and what I have learned from this journey. As a freshman, the terror I had that first week, when I realized the Disabilities Department was totally unprepared to support a blind student, is something I will never forget. No Braille books, no audio-books and no assistants to work with me on visual homework which included writing out music scores. At that time, I was not conversant in Good feel and did not have any recordings of the many music examples spread throughout my textbooks. All this, even though I informed the Disabilities Coordinator a year earlier that it can take up to four months to get a textbook transcribed to Braille. They had not arranged to pre-order what I needed. She only had one prior blind student, who made do with only audio textbooks, so she assumed I did the same. I had reading assignments due I could not read, music examples I needed to analyze that I could not see or hear, and no way had been worked out for a means for me to submit my answers to homework assignments.

In the middle of that first week, in total panic about 11 pm, I phoned home and apologized to my parents because I was giving up, taking a taxi home and I was going to fail. After my mom talked me down off the ceiling, over the phone, she tried to help me do the homework by playing the examples on our home piano. Since she hadn’t played piano for many years, it was a very slow-go which made me even more tired and discouraged. Finally, about 2 am, my mother said,

“You know what we’re going to do? You are going to close this book, go to bed, and go to sleep and not worry about this anymore because I am going to send them an e-mail!” The next day, the secretary of the Music Department called me to a

mandatory Faculty meeting and it was to be that very afternoon. When I arrived, everyone was there, all the teachers I would be working with that semester: my music theory teacher, my organ and piano instructors, my musicianship professor, my Disability Coordinator, the Dean of Student Affairs and the Dean of the Townsend School of Music. At last, everyone could learn how to get on board, or on the same page with regard to my accessibility needs.

They began to make plans so that everything I needed actually happened. These were things I pleaded for, to no avail, since May.

Books were rushed in Braille, teachers worked out ways for me to do homework, take tests in alternative methods and a student assistant to help with the visual aspects of Music theory and Musicianship classes. For that reason, those first few weeks were rough, but once the school began to understand what was needed to make school have equal access for me and become more ADA compliant. In music terms, things began humming. Now, I am so grateful to Mercer for their openness and willingness to welcome

visually impaired students. Though for both the school and me, there was a steep learning-curve with regard to realizing everything this involved. The school went from having no resources for blind students to now having a very large newly designed Access Office, with an on-site full Braille Production Center for textbooks. At present, the new Disabilities Coordinator at Mercer is very knowledgeable about the latest advances in accessible technology for the blind, and has worked to put forms and accommodation requests online, to be more accessible to blind students. Mercer has outdone itself as an example for other colleges. It now accommodates the accessibility needs of blind and visually impaired students. For those using screen reading technology, Mercer’s IT Department has become very active in working with me to make their student websites more accessible. They re-vamped the Student Portal and the Mobile App, making it possible for me to navigate the Student Portal and access my own profile and personal information. They also dumped Blackboard and went to Canvas; these are the programs that enable students to access class assignments, turn in homework and view their grades. By changing the platform, Mercer put in a system that I could access via my screen-reader, whereas before, sighted help was needed to navigate my own homework page. Previously, my mom or others used “Team Viewer” to help view and explain my homework. Not only did my attendance at Mercer change the college for future visually-impaired students, but it changed me as well. It taught me how to calmly handle problems, advocate for myself, politely stand up for my rights and find a pathway from difficulties to solutions. Hopefully, this helps others realize what I learned, that I can face my challenges instead of fear them, by knowing there is (almost) always a way over, under, around, or through obstacles if one is determined enough. Sometimes, however, God closes doors completely—and that also

has been a recent learning experience for me. I thought I had my future all “planned out” as far as my next step. After finishing my Undergraduate Degree, I originally planned to go on to master’s level work at Bob Jones University. This was a college I’ve always dreamed of attending but could not afford as an Undergraduate. I was hoping to obtain a Piano Pedagogy Master’s so that I could teach piano. But last Fall, with my Graduate application complete and accepted, and only my audition date left, I received a call from the head of the Piano department. Bob Jones had to make the painful decision to discontinue its entire Graduate-level Music program. There would no longer be any Master of Music degrees. This sudden blow left me in shock! Sadly, I thought, well, that’s the end of that dream.” In researching it, I didn’t find any other colleges that offered Pedagogy degrees and learned many colleges changed to only offering a “Master of Music Education” program. This type of program is designed for public school music teachers rather than the Pedagogy program which is geared more toward private and studio teaching. My hope was to specifically teach blind students. In my own life, I have seen how few piano teachers there are for VI students who need them, especially teachers who are fluent in Music Braille. For that I only needed the Pedagogy degree. Unfortunately, the only schools offering it were too far away, or it was an Undergraduate degree, which meant I would have to start college all over again. Then, one of those “God-incidence” happened. My grandmother invited my mom to her first-ever Greek Festival at the Greek Orthodox Church in Atlanta. In the church’s bookstore, my mom and another lady recognized one another as former Mercer Atlanta alumni who had been fellow Education majors. The other lady had gone on to get a degree in Music Education and told my mom that Georgia State University

still has a Master’s of Piano Pedagogy degree! Not only could I attend while living at home, but the costs would be much less, and I could use mass transit to attend school! I am sending in my application now and hope to audition later this year so—here we are in my senior year. I will be giving my Senior Organ Recital (free) on Tuesday, February 19, at 6 pm at Mulberry Street United Methodist Church in Macon—and you all are invited to come! My graduation will be on Monday, May 13, and I hope to continue my straight-An average to graduate with a “near” 4.0 GPA (I got a B in English my first year—oh well). These last four years have been an adventure. I have grown from being an insecure and timid boy to a more self-confident young man, trusting God to open (or close) doors as He guides my future steps. My goal and prayer are to serve Him by using my talents to serve both the blind and sighted communities through teaching, performances, church music work and hopefully, employment with companies providing Assistive Technology for the blind. I am eager to find out what adventures God has ahead in my life.

GCB Auction Announcement

Going, Going, Gone!

The Auction at this year’s conference and convention will be very exciting. The fundraising committee is suggesting a theme for this year’s auction. We are asking each chapter to bring at least one assistive technology related item. This could be a color identifier, magnifying glass, braille or talking watch, or a portable reader. You can bring other items for the auction as well. However, we would like things that would help our members. Please let us know what you are donating by April 15, 2019. For more information or if you have any questions or you want to donate items please contact Valerie Hester at 912-398-9985, or via email at valerie\_hester@yahoo.com.