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 handout

Fall 2019

GCB officers for 2018-2020:

Alice Ritchhart, President, 912-996-4213, [alice.ritchhart@comcast.net](mailto:alice.ritchhart@comcast.net)

Philip Jones, First Vice-President, 770-713-3306, [brilman1952@bellsouth.net](mailto:brilman1952@bellsouth.net)

/Jamaica Miller, Second Vice-President, 706-316-9766, [mai2@bellsouth.net](mailto:mai2@bellsouth.net)

Betsy Grenevitch, Secretary, 678-862-3876, [blindangel61@gmail.com](mailto:blindangel61@gmail.com)

Marsha Farrow, Treasurer, 706-859-2624, [marshafarrow@windstream.net](mailto:marshafarrow@windstream.net)

Valerie Hester, Member at Large Representative, 912-398-9985, [valerie\_hester@yahoo.com](mailto:valerie_hester@yahoo.com)

Amanda Wilson, Digest Editor, 770-547-4700, [moonrocks@bellsouth.net](mailto:moonrocks@bellsouth.net)

Janet Parmerter, Assistant Editor, 678-407-9787, [Janet@ParmerTours.com](mailto:Janet@ParmerTours.com)

\*\*\*\*\*Table of Contents:

From Your Editor, by Amanda Wilson

Presidential Message, by Alice Ritchhart

Board Meeting Minutes January 2019, by Betsy Grenevitch

Board Meeting Minutes May 2019, by Betsy Grenevitch

Member profile: Alice Ritchhart

GCB Chapter News

Georgia Guide Dog Users News, by Betsy Grenevitch

In Memory Of: Harvey Roberts

Experiences at the 2019 American Council of the Blind Conference and Convention

By Cecily Nipper, Jr., Cecily Nipper, SR., and Phil Jones

Georgia Lions Camp for the Blind 2019 update, by Ron Worley

Sun, Sand, and Surf without Sight, by Janet Parmerter

Update from Timothy Jones

Update from Thomas Woodyard

Post, by Rodrick parker

Summer Camp at Sloppy Floyd Park

Braille Calendars

\*\*\*\*\*From Your Editor, by Amanda Wilson

Hello GCB Family. We thank everyone who submitted articles in this issue of our magazine. If you have any change of address, telephone number, email address, or desire a change of format, please inform our GCB treasurer. Thanks to everyone who makes our GCB Digest such a big success. I particularly want to thank Janet Parmerter, assistant editor, for the many hours she has worked on the magazine and for her editing skills. I would also like to thank our president, Alice Ritchhart, for her presidential message with information about important events, legislation and projects. I also appreciate the contributions from our new GCB digest committee and how each member contributes articles and offers suggestions.

In that regard, we have two important notes. First, from this point forward, please send any comments, articles or messages to the GCB Digest editor in Font: Arial; Font Style: Bold; Font Size: 16 point; Font Heading Size: 20 point and please underline the Heading. This will make things more consistent for reading and for Braille.

Second, to easily navigate between articles, as the ACB National Newsletter, each new topic will have asterisks to divide the subject and topic. We will now place five asterisks at the beginning of each new heading title.

Thank You,

\*\*\*\*\*GCB Presidential Message

By Alice Ritchhart

As I write this message, summer is winding down and hopefully, you all found some time to relax and have a little summer.   
Though I kept busy doing a little work for GCB, most of my summer was spent traveling and hanging out with friends. Now it is time to get back to work and focus on issues that can, and will have an impact on blind and low vision Georgians.

First of all, our students are returning to school for another year, which can prove to be a challenge not only for those who are blind or visually impaired, but also for their parents. Some parents, who have already contacted me, are struggling to receive needed services for their children to have a successful school year. The other issue facing us, which may be a problem as we start gearing up to go to the voting polls, is that Georgia has decided on new voting machines which may or may not be a good thing for us. When it is time to cast our ballot, Will we have a private and independent ballot? In addition, we learned there are a couple of pieces of legislation at the national level which could have an impact on us. This bill is, HR 4129. The Medicare Demonstration of Coverage of Low Vision Devices Act, and the U.S. Senate, has introduced the Exercise and Fitness for All bills which would make equipment accessible.

Finally, Georgia Vocational Services (GVS) is going through changes, and as we know the last time major changes took place at GVS it was not good for those of us with sensory disabilities. So, with the state legislation session about to get into full swing, we need to be ready.

Therefore, as members of the Georgia Council of the Blind what can we do to help move along our mission? First, I would suggest your chapters reach out to blind and low vision students and their parents to help mentor them during the school year. Maybe doing volunteer work in the school system where your chapter meets would assist these students. Try starting a parental support group which could help guide them through the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and school process. Second, since we did not really get a say in the choice of what type of voting machine the state purchased, we can still make sure before election time, we are certain to be able to have a private and independent experience at the polls. Each chapter and member should contact your election board, and find out when the state will be training them on the new machines. I would suggest you ask to attend the training so you can learn right along with your election board how the accessibility features work. Also, I would suggest you invite them to attend a chapter meeting with the new machine so your members and all individuals who are blind or low vision can have hands on experience before it is actually time to vote. Third, we need to contact our congress members and ask them to sign on as sponsors of HR 4129 the Medicare Demonstration of Coverage Low Vision Devices Act. Then, contact our U.S. Senators and as them to sign on as sponsors of the exercise Fitness for All bill. Finally how you can help to make sure that VRS starts to meet the needs of all Georgians who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf blind. The Georgia Vision Alliance has been formed to work to make sure that the services that are so desperately needed for those of us with sensory disabilities are provided. So if we are to be successful in this effort we must fight for a Commission for the Blind. Therefore, you need to get involved with the Georgia Vision Alliance. You must reach out to your legislators by phone, e- mail, or visit them on the hill. Tell your stories, and explain why separate services are necessary. No matter how you get involved to fight for change in VRS we must all be united as blind and low vision and deaf blind individuals. We must stand together and as one, and this means all consumer organizations, all services providers, all BEP venders, and GIB. Being a small group the only way to make things better is to stick together. So get involved, and follow the mission of GCB to ensure a better future for those in Georgia who want to be an active member in their community.

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

Georgia council of the Blind Board Meeting

January 19, 2019

Call to Order:

President Alice Ritchhart called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

Invocation, Fred McDade:

Fred gave the invocation.

Roll Call, Betsy Grenevitch:

Those present were Alice Ritchhart, President; Phil Jones, First Vice-President; Jamaica Miller, Second Vice-President; Betsy Grenevitch, Secretary; Marsha Farrow, Treasurer; Valerie Hester, GCB Member-at-Large Representative; Keith Morris, GCB Past President; Ernest Bowles-Dean, Athens; Deborah Lovell, Augusta; Patricia Ganger, East Georgia—by phone; Brent Reynolds, South Atlanta; Dianne Roberts, Greater Hall County; Bronwyn Rumery, North Central Georgia; Fred McDade, Northwest; Tonia Clayton, Rome/Floyd County; Teresa Brenner, Savannah; DJ McIntyre, GGDU; Roderick Parker, Parliamentarian; Amanda Wilson, Digest Editor; and Steve Longmire, Webmaster. Other members present were: Tiyah Fowlkes-Mensah, Jerrie Toney, Sam Howard, and Rosetta Brown—by phone, Cecily Nipper Jr., Cecily Nipper Sr., Todd Turansky, Harvey Roberts, Lana Carder, Roy Carder, Ken Mitchell, Bethany Kinsey-Leigh, Charles Stubblefield, Sharon Nichols, Rebecca Verhine, Joe James, and Kathy Morris.

Swearing in of New Officers, Betsy Grenevitch:

Betsy swore in the new officers on the board. The new officers were Patricia Ganger, Brent Reynolds, Fred McDade and Ernest Bowles-Dean.

President’s Report, Alice Ritchhart:

Alice Ritchhart told us that she receives a lot of calls from people who are seeking services and seeking help from Vocational Rehab. In November when the Northwest Georgia chapter was having difficulty with their elections, Roderick and Keith went to their chapter meeting to help with their elections. Roderick gave them some advice about what to do until their constitution and bylaws are completed.

The Secretary of State’s office has decided to purchase new voting machines. According to what Alice has read they are touch screen and have a paper ballot. She has tried to contact the Secretary of State’s office to find out about the machine, but still has not received an answer from them. Democracy Live now has software so that you can vote with an absentee ballot as a visually impaired voter. She has tested the ballot and it is very accessible. The company is trying to get the State of Georgia to purchase this software. She has been trying to find out the status about this, but still has no answer. Once we find out what machine is going to be used, we will contact the manufacturer ourselves to see if the machine is accessible.

Secretary’s Report, Betsy Grenevitch:

Betsy asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the October 20, 2018 minutes as they were sent out. Deborah Lovell made the motion and it was seconded by Phil Jones. The motion was approved unanimously. Betsy asked for a motion to approve the minutes for November 19, 2018 as they were sent out. Deborah Lovell made the motion and it was seconded by Jamaica Miller. The motion was approved unanimously.

Treasurer’s Report, Marsha Farrow:

The report was sent out prior to the meeting, but she went over some of the main points. PayPal Account: $322.31

This money comes mainly from chapter dues and other payments from chapters. Main checking account: $7774.93

In this account we currently have $650 from the Martha Craig Memorial Fund for the Deaf-Blind. The Senior Support Fund: $4274.14

This total is also included in the amount listed in the main checking account. Operating Expenses: $1980.69

This is the amount we have in the main checking account for operating expenses.

Conference Account: $1378.77. Al and Cora Camp Scholarship Fund: $6735.83

$575 of this amount was donated in memory of Dolores Rutenber. The majority of the money in this account is interest from our long-term investment account. GCB Long-term Investment: Originally, we invested $17 thousand in this account when Marsha became treasurer. Now we have $18,221.32. We received $357.22 from interest in 2018. Money Market Account: $5741.87

This is an account that we have in case of an emergency. We received $.60 in interest for 2018. Evan Barnard CD: This account has been closed and the money returned to Evan. Evan plans to start a website for his Nature for All work that he is doing. The way Financial Investment Account:

This account has lost several thousand dollars. Jeff Hanna, who works for the company, is going to give us an overall report about this account. Marsha recommended that we ask that the interest money stay in this account, so that it draws interest and that when we need the money, we contact them and they will either deposit what we ask or they can send us a check for a specific amount. Deborah wanted to know if there was a penalty for withdrawal, but Marsha explained that every month they have already been withdrawing the interest and putting it into the scholarship account. Dianne made the motion that we keep the interest from the Way Financial account in the account until it is needed, so we can earn more interest on the account. Deborah seconded the motion. Brent wanted to know why the scholarship account was not already an interest bearing account. Marsha explained that there was only around $1 thousand in that account when she took over as treasurer and we were usually zeroing out the account each year. She said that we could look at the possibility of moving it to an interest bearing account. Dianne wanted to know how often we take out money. Alice explained that is about to change because of the first-timers, Leadership and Education scholarships. Money could be taken out of this account a couple of times a year with these scholarships. He motion passed unanimously. The monthly balances for the past three months are:

October: $62.690.86

November: $62.658.37

December: $60,915.31

Marsha recommended that we make the money market account a long-term investment account. Alice recommended that the finance committee come back with a recommendation concerning this account.

Finance committee, Jerrie Toney:

The committee met and sent out a revised budget for 2018. They also set a budget for 2019. The only difference is that the awards amount is changed from $200 to $150. Dianne Roberts made the motion to approve the 2019 budget report as sent out by Jerrie Toney. Bowles-Dean seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. Marsha recommended that the senior device fund be put in a separate account. This recommendation was referred back to the finance committee to bring before the next board meeting.

Conference and Convention, Betsy Grenevitch:

Betsy said that the conference and convention will be held at Philadelphia Baptist Church in Rutledge, Georgia, on May 2-4, 2019. The building used to be a school, so there is a lot of space that we can use. It has a college-sized gymnasium.

Different speakers have already been contacted and confirmed to speak for us. Jerrie is already working on contacting exhibitors. We have a large kitchen to use. The meals include: a reception Thursday night, lunch on Friday, a Lions banquet on Friday, and lunch on Saturday. This year we will be having a Kids Zone. We have 26 acres on this property so are able to offer something for the children on Saturday. Cecily is working on this program. The hotel is The Days Inn in Madison, Georgia. The cost is $63 per night plus tax. Ray and Caryn Campbell are coming as our ACB representatives. Dede DeMarks will be representing the Lions at our Lions Banquet. Our theme this year for the conference and convention is “Courage to empower your dream”. This theme was submitted by the Athens chapter.

Membership, Amanda Wilson:

We have 175 members this year. She has received all chapter rosters, but is still waiting on some money. All chapters are doing fund raising and recruiting members. She has sent out the Membership Form for approval. Deborah made a motion to approve the membership form as emailed out by Amanda. Dianne seconded the motion. Phil brought up the concern that Georgia Blind Lions is not a part of GCB so it should be taken off the form. Deborah amended the motion to accept the membership form as emailed out by Amanda with the revision that the reference to the Georgia Blind Lions be removed. Dianne seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

GCB Digest, Amanda Wilson:

She thanked Betsy for embossing and recording the digest. She said that the committee is working well together. There are members from all over the state on the committee.

Technology, Steve Longmire:

The committee is going to be updating the website with the new logo and the new membership form. The membership form will be downloadable in various formats or possible to fill out online. Online registration for the upcoming conference and convention will also be available on the website. You will be able to either print out the registration form or fill it out and pay online. They are going to check out the possibility of being able to swipe a credit card with the IPhone and/or have a card reader that can be used. At their recent technology meeting they discussed useful apps for daily living. Anyone is invited to join the technology committee meetings which meet once a quarter rights before each board meeting.

Fundraising, Valerie Hester:

The current fundraisers are:

Kroger community Rewards—5% of your total goes to GCB once you have designated this on your Kroger card. Amazon Smile—you designate GCB as the charity you want to donate to at smile.amazon.com.

Any time you purchase something a certain percentage goes to GCB. 50/50 Raffles at Meetings: We sell raffle tickets and 50% goes to the winner and 50% to GCB. MMS Program: You set this up with the finance office at ACB in Minnesota. You can designate how much goes to ACB and to GCB. Auction at GCB Conference and Convention: This year for the auction we would like the items to be technology related for the blind and visually impaired. They are asking each chapter to donate an item, as well as asking companies to donate. Once you have your item, please let DJ know the name of the item as well as the retail price. The auction will be held on Friday night of the conference and convention.

New Ideas

Volunteers needed for the 50/50 Raffle: they are looking for volunteers to sell raffle tickets during any board meeting and during the upcoming conference and convention. We would also like to sell tickets at the exhibit hall and during hospitality room hours. We will work out a schedule when we get closer to the conference and convention dates.

Smoothie Sales during the Upcoming Conference and Convention: There will be three flavors of smoothies this year. They will be sold whenever the hospitality room is open and during sessions.

Braille Rally: Vivian is working with a car club concerning holding the Braille Rally.

GCB Gear: They have chosen three items they would like to sell with the new GCB logo on them. They are a universal charger, a water bottle, and an RFID case. The set-up for the logo for the RFID case is free. The price for the charger is $11.95 and we have to order 25. The cost of the water bottle is $1, and we have to order 20to 25. The cost for the RFID case is $3.89 and we have to order 100. Marsha wanted to know where the funds would come from for these items, because this would need to be in the new budget. Marsha made a motion that we accept the fundraising ideas brought forth by Valerie, which are the universal charger, water bottle, and the RFID case. The motion was seconded by Jerrie Toney. The motion passed unanimously.

Mini Mall at our Conference and Convention: We would have companies that pay for booths to sell their items to the attendees.

Great Harvest Bread: This is the company where we are purchasing our Friday lunch for the upcoming conference and convention. Once a month, they choose a charity to donate. They choose a special menu item for that month. The profit for that item goes to the charity. Deborah made a motion that we accept the offer from Great Harvest Bread and give the money to the scholarship fund. Marsha explained that the scholarship fund was well funded, so the motion was rescinded. Jamaica made a motion that we accept the offer from Great Harvest Bread and Bronwyn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The Thrift and Wine Fashion Show in the Dark: You would wear the cheapest outfit that you can find at a thrift shop to the show. More details will follow at a later time.

 Scholarship, Marj Schneider:

Betsy read the report in her absence. Marj was under the understanding that the money was only allocated for the first-timer scholarship to the GCB conference and convention but not for the leadership or academic scholarships. She wanted to know if these scholarships should be included in the budget. Marsha reminded us that we have $6735.83 in the scholarship account. She explained that the scholarship fund is to be used as the scholarship committee sees fit. This means that these scholarships are included in this account. Jerrie explained that the money for the First-timers scholarship, $312 and some change—is currently in the conference and convention account because it was collected at the conference and convention. Marsha made a motion that the leadership scholarship be based on the needs of the individual applicant. Betsy seconded the motion. It was approved with one “nay”

Legislative, Teresa Brenner:

There was not a report.

Transportation, Phil Jones:

He wants to set up a conference call before the next board meeting. He would like to talk about each chapter starting their own transportation system in their local areas. He would like to have all of the chapter presidents on this call. He is also open to suggestions and ideas as to how to handle the transportation situation.

Georgia Guide Dog Users, Betsy Grenevitch:

They have a speaker for their meeting on May 2, 2019, at the upcoming conference and convention. The speaker is studying how guide dog harnesses affect physical problems handlers may have because of how they have to hold the harness.

Unfinished Business:

Braille and large print copies of the advocacy toolkit are available that were given out at the advocacy training.

New Business:

Funding for the Youth Program at the Upcoming Conference and Convention and Future Events, Alice and Marsha:

We would like to begin a youth program again, but need funding. Marsha said that she would like to see money set aside for our children and youth. She would like for us to look at ways to reestablish this program. Marsha made a motion that a task force be formed chaired by Cecily Nipper to look at establishing a children’s and youth program, with funding for this program. Betsy seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

 Next Meeting: Our next meeting will be held on Saturday, May 3, 2019 at the conference and convention.

Announcements

Ken Mitchell, who works at Disability Link, announced that they will have several disability days at the capitol. They are willing to pay some transportation expenses for those who would like to attend. They were also offering some training days to prepare people for these events.

Board Meeting Places: Cecily told us that the Rockdale County Library has a meeting place, but it costs $100.

Constitution and Bylaws, Roderick Parker:

The “constitution and Bylaws” is now usually called “Bylaws” because Bylaws are more easily amended. He encouraged us to know our Bylaws for our chapter, state, and the national organization. There cannot be any conflict of the bylaws for the local chapter with the state or national version of the bylaws. If a chapter does not have its own bylaws yet, members would abide by the state bylaws. When writing chapter bylaws, you can take some things out that are in the state bylaws and make some changes for the chapter’s version, but they cannot conflict with the state or national bylaws. The quorum should be set at a reasonable number of people you would expect to attend a meeting.

Presiding over the Next Board Meeting, Alice Ritchhart:

Alice told Phil that he would be presiding over the next board meeting in May.

 Adjourned:

We adjourned at 11:55 AM.

Respectfully submitted by

Betsy Grenevitch, Secretary

Georgia Council of the Blind Board Meeting

Philadelphia Baptist Church

4031 Davis Academy Road

Rutledge, GA 30663

May 4, 2019

Call to Order: First Vice-President Phil Jones called the meeting to order at 4:36 PM.

Roll Call, Betsy Grenevitch:

Those present were: Alice Ritchhart, President; Phil Jones, first Vice-President; Jamaica Miller, Second Vice-President; Betsy Grenevitch, Secretary; Marsha Farrow, Treasurer; Valerie Hester, Member-at -Large Representative; Jerrie Toney, Athens;; Patricia Ganger, East Georgia; Fred McDade, Northwest; Tonia Clayton, Rome Floyd; Marj Schneider, Savannah; Teresa Brenner, GGDU; Roderick Parker, Parliamentarian; Amanda Wilson, Digest Editor; and Steve Longmire, Webmaster.

Concerns about the North Central Georgia chapter of GCB, Alice Ritchhart:

Alice explained to us that the North Central Georgia chapter is out of compliance with their charter and the constitution. Alice made a motion to call a revocation hearing concerning this chapter. Teresa Brenner seconded the motion. Roderick Parker, the parliamentarian, explained how to proceed with the revocation hearing. He explained that the purpose of parliamentary procedure is to protect both the majority and the minority. This hearing will give the chapter the option to show that they follow their charter and the constitution. The chapter should forward any documentation to the board before the hearing takes place. The motion passed unanimously.

Installation of Officer, Betsy Grenevitch:

Tonia Clayton was installed as the president of the Rome Floyd County chapter.

Location of Next Board Meeting, Alice Ritchhart:

Alice made a motion that we hold our next board meeting on August 17, 2019 at the Decatur Recreation Center. Teresa Brenner seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Announcements:

Alice announced that people can still apply to attend the Lions Camp by writing to Ron Worley and letting him know of your interest. She asked each chapter president to take applications back to their members.

Marj Schneider had two tomato plants to give away.

Valerie Hester had extra food and drinks from the hospitality room for anyone to take.

Teresa Brenner had Maxi Aid catalogs for anyone who was interested.

Adjourn: It was moved and seconded to adjourn at 5:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted by

Betsy Grenevitch, Secretary

\*\*\*\*\*GCB Member Profile: Alice Ritchhart, by Cecily Nipper, Jr.

Most of you know President Alice Ritchhart, and for this profile I wanted to go deeper, to the root of Alice’s passion for advocacy work. “My dad taught me to stand up for myself, saying that the only way things would change was to be involved.” Her dad was what Alice described as, “a staunch NFBer,” and he exposed Alice to advocacy work from a very early age; even holding meetings in the family home and taking Alice with him to campaign for political candidates. This passion for advocacy was evident in Alice’s choice of career, first as a social worker and independent living coordinator, and later as a Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist. Working as an independent living coordinator, Alice realized there was an unmet need for dedicated support for the blind and visually impaired community, and this realization led her to get her Master’s degree from Florida State University as a Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist. Alice has served as president of the Georgia Council of the Blind previously and was elected to her current term in 2018. She is a strong voice for change in Georgia and does not hesitate to challenge the issues when she sees them. As Kay McGill said, “With Alice what you see is what you get.” It is this straightforward attitude that allows Alice to clearly communicate and advocate for change. She truly does see GCB as an advocacy organization, but states that we need a balance between peer support and advocacy. Around 2008, Alice really began to get involved at the national level of the American Council of the Blind while campaigning for Marsha Farrow’s election to the ACB Board. American Council of the Blind President Chris Gray invited Alice to serve on the transportation committee, which she went on to chair, based on her reputation for successful work on transportation in the Savannah, Georgia area. Alice went on to serve on the resolutions committee. “Resolutions do set policy,” Alice said. Resolutions serve as the “marching orders” for the entire organization, championing causes ranging from accessible pedestrian signals to rehabilitation. In fact, it was a resolution on rehabilitation for adjustment services for non-work oriented blind and visually impaired people that Alice helped recraft on the resolutions committee at the recent American Council of the Blind Conference and Convention 2019 in Rochester, New York. The resolutions committee holds meetings both before and during convention, often lasting until one or two in the morning, making resolutions ready to be presented on the floor at the business meeting for consideration by the members. For the future, Alice hopes to build the numbers of the Georgia Council of the Blind affiliate by reaching out to the young people as well as seniors. Alice was quick to credit the legacies of those GCB members who go before us for the rights that the blind and visually impaired enjoy today, despite the challenges we continue to face. “I’ve always been a strong advocate,” Alice says, and we appreciate her service to the GCB!

\*\*\*\*\*GCB Chapter News

The Athens chapter meetings are held at MULTIPLE Choices at 145 Barrington Drive in Athens, Georgia on fourth Saturday from 10:30 am until 12:00 pm. For more information about the Athens chapter please contact Jerrie Toney at 706-461-1013, or via email at [jerriemt2@gmail.com](mailto:jerriemt2@gmail.com).

The Augusta chapter meetings are held at the Friedman Branch Library, 1447 Jackson Road, Augusta, Georgia, on the second Saturday from 10:00 am until 12:00 pm. For more information, please contact Deborah Lovell at 706-726-4054, or via email at [lovell.d2000@gmail.com](mailto:lovell.d2000@gmail.com).

The East Georgia chapter reports, at our May meeting we heard from Judy Presley, who is from the Greater Hall County chapter. She told us about her relationship with braille and how Ann Wheeler inspired her to learn Braille while attending a workshop at the state convention. She is fiercely independent and willing to learn to use whatever tools make independence possible, such as cane skills, the computer and using a guide dog. To identify cans, Judy uses Braille labels, and for boxes and bags, she uses the Seeing AI app. Through the Hadley School for the Blind, Judy learned her Braille skills, which requires you to learn first with a slate and stylus (having to braille backwards).

Using a Braille alphabet card as a guide, Judy planned a game for all present who did not know Braille to be able to read two words in Braille. Linda Williams explained a little about contracted braille and how it differs from uncontracted braille. Judy won the Rhoda Walker award at the convention for inspiring others to learn braille. Phil commended Judy for her attitude and inspiration to be successful in a sighted world. IN June, we held our annual picnic. This year’s event was an Ice Cream Social. We enjoyed several choices of delicious Ice Cream Flavors and toppings. There were unsweetened choices and fruit.

Pastor Zack Nipper hosted “Name That Tune”. First Vice-President Cecily Nipper played the Piano. In August, we met at the Conyers Presbyterian Church, which is located at 911 Main Street, Northwest, in Conyers, Georgia. It was like a coming home celebration. This was our previous meeting place.

Ann Wheeler introduced our Keynote speaker, Mary lean roller, an Elementary Music Teacher who spoke on the history of the Violin. Mary said most Violins are made of Pine wood and the bows are Horse tail hair. She related that Strat Averie made over one thousand violins, however only a few, mostly in museums, still exist. Mary brought several musical instruments for us to try. The instruments were the Drum, Violin, Gourds, Rattles, cymbals and the Guitar. Mary led us in a sing a long, and we experimented with the different instruments. Cecily Nipper gave a National ACB convention report. Patricia Ganger spoke about her role as vision teacher at her alma mater, Parkview High School. Elizabeth Cantrell recently joined our ranks. In September, Dorothy Griffin, President of the Georgia NFB, President of the Metro Atlanta Chapter of NFB and Outreach Manager (AUIAS)

NFB Newsline Service Georgia will be our Guest speaker. Please join us to learn the up-to-date information about NFB Newsline. The East Georgia chapter meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month at 10:00 AM at the Covington First United Methodist Church, 1113 Conyers Street in Covington. For more information, please contact Patricia Ganger at 770-853-2040, or via email at [Patricia.Ganger@outlook.com](mailto:Patricia.Ganger@outlook.com).

The Greater Hall County Chapter reports, we invited Maria Tuck as our May guest speaker. As the Hall County ADA Coordinator, Maria Tuck shared updates and news in our area.  The June meeting was our end-of-year picnic and we enjoyed a great lunch at the Gainesville O’Charley’s. After a short summer break, we resumed meeting in August and focused on our students, Tommy Woodyard and Timothy Jones by inviting them to share what they are working on in college.  Also, area school students were invited to come share their experiences and goals for the school year.  Good speakers and demonstrations are planned for the autumn meetings. May 26, 20199, we lost board member, Harvey Roberts, who passed away and will be greatly missed.

The Greater Hall County chapter meetings are held at the Smokey Springs Retirement Residence, 940 South Enota Drive in Gainesville on the second Saturday at 10:30. For more information about the Chapter, please contact Diane Roberts at 770-932-1112, or via email at [harveyroberts2@att.net](mailto:harveyroberts2@att.net).

The Northwest chapter reports, at their May meeting Sharon Nichols related how she drove a truck in the field while her family was doing some fencing. All enjoyed the discussion we shared about the convention. We voted as a chapter that two, GCB conferences and convention meetings were not a good idea. Bethany and John Leigh were awarded a loving cup from their chapter. At our June meeting we had a special guest speaker the school superintendent Damon Raines, who discussed his past years working with special needs children, how the dropout rate has decreased and other successes the school has achieved. In the fall, he asked our member pagiel Griffith, to speak to classes about visual impairments and being visually impaired him. He discussed about two visually impaired students in his school as well as helping Sharon Nichols become a volunteer in the school system. This was a very good meeting with lots of information. At their July meeting, we heard from Angie Ingram who is over the special Education Department in Walker County. She spoke to the group about mentoring opportunities.

New Visitors were Angela Zimmerman, Visually Impaired, and Darlene Cannon, from Kaleidoscope, which is a local adult Education center for people with developmental disabilities. In August, we held our business meeting and decided to renew our membership with the Chamber of Commerce. Fred and Charles will attend the GCB board meeting. Michelle Blaylock and Robin Levinthal from the Walker County School District Special Education department will be at our next meeting. The Northwest chapter meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month at the Lafayette-Walker Library 305 South Duke 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](mailto:nwgachaptergcb@gmail.com).

The Rome Floyd County chapter reports, at their June meeting they met at the Roma Mia restaurant in Rome, Georgia. Mia Santamaria entertained us with her comedy routine. Joshua Santamaria told us about the events going on at the Tellus science museum.

The Rome Floyd County chapter meeting is held at the Rome Floyd County Library, 205 Riverside Parkway, Rome, Georgia, on the third Tuesday, from 11:00 is until 1:00 pm. For more information, please contact Tonia Clayton, at 706-346-8940 or via email at [toniaclayton@comcast.net](mailto:toniaclayton@comcast.net).

The Savannah chapter has moved its monthly meetings to the third Thursday of each month. The time is still 6:00 PM until 7:30 and the location continues to be the conference room at J. C. Lewis Ford, 9505 Abercorn Street. Our meetings this year have included several speakers. In March we heard from Tricia Richardson and Jessica Mathis who represented Mixed Greens, a local organization that promotes projects for health and wellbeing as an approach to building community. Their projects have included healthy living seminars and participation in school gardens and their philosophy emphasizes the inclusion of people with disabilities. In May Tricia Richardson spoke again to our group, this time on the ancient Chinese practice of qigong, which encompasses slow body movements coordinated with focused breathing to promote physical and mental health. We had a chance to try a number of the exercises and members were enthusiastic about how readily they could do the movements and how much they relieve stress. A number of us were interested in learning more and in becoming involved with local qigong sessions. In June we had a speaker from Newsline for the Blind, Dorothy Griffin, who let us, know about new features for accessing the service and about the wide array of publications available to us. Dorothy may be returning in the fall to speak with us about the new Alexa skill for accessing Newsline. The savannah chapter is continuing to meet during the summer. We have Belk Charity Day in august and we are planning to take a local cruise out of Tybee Island on Saturday, October 5th. It may be a sunset cruise or a cruise earlier in the day to look for dolphins. Either way, this promises to be a very fun event. Let me know if you’ll be in Savannah then and would like to join us. In mid-October we plan to observe White Cane Safety Day by handing out flyers and talking with people in downtown Savannah. We’re hoping to set up other educational opportunities as well, possibly at local schools or churches.

The Savannah chapter meetings are held at the conference room at J. C. Lewis Ford, 9505 Abercorn Street, Savannah, Georgia, on the third 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](mailto:marjschneider@bellsouth.net).

The South Atlanta chapter meetings are held at the Piccadilly Cafeteria, 2000 Crescent Center Blvd. 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 [jbr53@samobile.net](mailto:jbr53@samobile.net).

\*\*\*\*\*Georgia Guide Dog Users, GDP News:

By Betsy Grenevitch

As part of the Georgia council of the Blind conference and convention GGDU held its spring in-person meeting. As well as taking care of business we had a speaker via the phone as she ended up not being able to come in person. Our speaker was Sue Ann Kalish who is a professor at the University of North Georgia. She is involved in doing research concerning what type of harness would be best for a service animal to wear and how the differences in a harness can affect the handler concerning falling and/or pain after using it. Betsy Grenevitch gave a report about the Ada committee at the Atlanta airport from the meeting held in March. Marj Schneider introduced us to the relieving harness. We will soon be planning our fall in-person meeting. We hope many of you will plan to attend that meeting. You do not have to be a guide dog user to be a member of GGDU. Please consider joining our affiliate. Dues are $15 annually for a full member. This also makes you a member of the national affiliate, Guide dog Users, Inc. and ACB. There is also the option of being an associate member.

The dues for this type of membership are $7 annually.

For more information about the Georgia guide Dog Users group please contact Betsy Grenevitch at, 678-862-3876 or via email at [blindangel61@gmail.com](mailto:blindangel61@gmail.com). You can visit their web site by going to:

[www.georgiaguidedogusers.org](http://www.georgiaguidedogusers.org).

\*\*\*\*\*In Memory of:

Harvey Wilson Roberts Jr., 73  
Harvey Wilson Roberts Jr. 73, of Flowery Branch passed away Sunday, May 26, 2019 at his residence. His funeral service was held at 11:00 am on Wednesday, May 29, 2019 in the chapel of Memorial Park South Funeral Home with Rev. Dave Chanell, Rev. Sam Parson, and Rev. Daniel Roberts officiating. His interment was at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church Cemetery, Tucker. The family received friends at the funeral home on Tuesday, May 28, 2019 from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm. Harvey Roberts was Born on September 2, 1945 in Norcross, Georgia. He was the son of the late Harvey Wilson and Edna Pearl Williams Roberts and was a plumber and owner of Roberts Plumbing Repair Service.  Mr. Roberts was a committed member of Christ Place Church for 26 years where he also served with the 1st Impressions Ministry.  
In addition to his parents, Mr. Roberts is preceded in death by his great-grandson  
Harvey W. Roberts, V, brothers, James Roberts, Dewey Roberts and sisters, Betty Turner, Opal Bowles. Harvey Roberts is survived by his wife, Diane Roberts of Flowery Branch; sons, Harvey W. Roberts, III (Diane) of Winder, Rodney Vergil Roberts (Susan) of Columbia, SC, Daryl Henry Roberts of Lilburn; 4 grandchildren, 1 great grandson; brother and sister in law, Larry Roberts and Judy Slone of Norcross; sisters Evelin Ransom of Auburn, Allene Strong of Auburn, Sharon Bailey (Ray) of Monroe, several nieces, nephews and other relatives.  
In lieu of flowers, the family request donation is made to Gideon International South Hall Camp.  
Memorial Park South Funeral Home, 4121 Falcon Parkway, Flowery Branch, Georgia  30542, was in charge of arrangements.  Send on-line condolences to [www.memorialparkfuneralhomes.com](http://www.memorialparkfuneralhomes.com).

\*\*\*\*\*Our Experience at the 2019 American Council of the Blind Conference and Convention

By: Cecily Nipper, Jr. and Cecily Nipper, Sr.

Flying into Rochester, New York for our first American Council of the Blind Conference and Convention, filled us with excitement. From the very first day we were overwhelmed by the sense of comradery that overflowed from the sheer numbers of people who were facing similar challenges, and who were eager to share their stories with us. Navigating the two hotels and the convention center provided plenty of shared opportunities for problem solving as well.

On Saturday we enjoyed a workshop by Peter Korn from Amazon, as he presented amazing new technology, such as a microwave operated by Alexa. Wow! From ACB Bingo night to the fabulous auction that lasted well into the night, we were inundated by the fun-filled activities that were available, balanced by numerous learning opportunities. The exhibit hall was among our favorite parts of Convention, given that there was so much to learn from Braille jewelry to guide dogs to the latest technologies in Zoom Text among others.

“Leadership” is the best word to describe the business meetings where we were exposed to the amazing people who do the work of ACB. We had the privilege of personally meeting outgoing president, Kim Charleson, and cheering on the newly-elected president, Dan Spoone of Orlando, Florida. At Convention you are seated alphabetically by state, and we got to meet President Spoone since Florida is seated right before Georgia!

The opportunity we had to be at this Convention gave us the shared experience of meeting new friends, and getting to know old friends, which left us humbled and in awe. It definitely made us want to make plans to come back for more in 2020 for the Chicago convention.

My Experience at the American Council of the Blind

By Phil Jones

I had the privilege of attending another American Council of The Blind Convention. I say another because this was number 28 for me. This convention was held in Rochester New York. The vast majority of our convention activities usually take place in one building, but this year our activities took place in 3 different buildings because of the size of the hotels. This wasn’t much of a problem at all because we had some very wonderful volunteers who could, and did get us from point A to point B. Having the convention in 3 buildings was a good thing for me. I like to walk, so I got a lot of good exercise. Also I was able to test my Cochlear Implant Speech Processor in different settings. I was amazed and pleased at how well I was able to hear. I was able to pick up on so much information from the general sessions as well as the seminars and workshops that I attended. I had the pleasure of speaking at the ACB Sight and Sound Impaired Committee workshop. I shared about my Cochlear Implant Experience. As always, I spent some time in the Exhibit Hall. The coolest thing I saw this year was The Scrip-talk Medication Station which was developed by Envision America. I also attended a good Performing Arts Showcase this year. As always, the highlight of every E.C.B. Convention for me is the people: whether members, guests or volunteers. This year was no exception. It was great to see old friends and make new friends. The volunteers were among the best we’ve ever had. I could go on and on about my experience, but that would probably take up a whole edition of the Digest. So I’ll sum it up by saying that this year’s American Council of the Blind Convention was one of the best ever! I wish you could have all been them!

Our Experience at the American Council of the Blind

By Janet Parmerter

2014 was my first experience at the exciting National ACB convention. Now, for the past six years, the JW.org table in the exhibit hall has made spirituality accessible with Braille, large print, audio, and Notetaker and RTF files along with free Bible library thumb drives. Nevertheless, this year, so many attendees came to the table not only to receive free accessible Bible information, but to thank us for the numerous and friendly volunteers who tirelessly gave their time at state and National conventions.

November 2018, former President Kim Charlson and Carla Ruschival presented JW volunteers with a beautiful award for their outstanding volunteers. Sadly, with so many disasters throughout the United States, the self-sacrificing time of many volunteers has been taxed to the limit doing disaster relief help. Yet, for the Rochester convention they still managed to have volunteers work each day. In an interview with Dan Spoone, the current ACB President, he praised the Witnesses by saying, “The volunteers were absolutely fantastic!” Then added, “I met a lovely volunteer named Maria, who said she was with JW.org and planned to volunteer just a few hours on Thursday and Friday.” Dan continued, “I saw Maria from 8:00 in the morning to 11:00 at night that Thursday through the following Saturday.” They fell in love with us and we fell in love with Maria and her daughter.”

Janet Dickelman, the convention organizer told the Georgia Digest, the JW volunteers were the best ones she ever had and understood about the disaster relief, but hoped the volunteers could be there for 2020.

\*\*\*\*\*Georgia Lions Camp for the Blind update

By Ron Worley

As the acting Lions Camp for the Blind Program Director, I wanted to report on the 2019 summer season.  My goal this year was to accomplish three major tasks.  First, I wanted to know the camper’s opinions of past camps, what would they like to change and what are some events or ideas they would like to add to the camp in the future.  To do that, I set up a conference call and invited as many as possible, former campers, who previously attended camp more than once. For three months, there were about 15 regular campers who attended the call each month, before the 2019 camping season began.  This gave me a pretty good idea of what I could change, discontinue or add to the programs for 2019. Secondly, I wanted to create a safe; but, enjoyable camping experience.  I believe this was achieved by hiring a few of the counselors that have served at the camp before as well as, creating a pretty good training environment for the counselors that included appropriate blindness etiquette.  This meant that the counselors were exposed to the basic sighted guide techniques and cane skills.  This was to help them be aware of what to expect the campers to do and encourage appropriate cane use.  Most of all, they were trained to assist during every event with respect in mind for every camper and putting safety first. Thirdly, I wanted to bring modern activities to the camp that would expose campers to other events that they may not have otherwise had the pleasure.  The three activities that were a success were: tandem cycling, Summer Waves Water Park and Bowling with accessible rails.  The one event that was not able to be experienced was the hot air balloon rides.  This was due to the inappropriate weather at the times we had available.  This is definitely something that would have been a joy if we could have pulled it off. Overall, the Campers had a wonderful time and we made several new friends and deepened other relationships. The Lions were able to raise the money to purchase three tandem cycles including a recumbent bicycle.  This bike allows you to sit down on it like a wheelchair. The peddles are in the front of the bike. The rear peddles on this bike operate separate from the front petals. The person on the back does not have to peddle at all. Their feet were strapped in with Velcro straps so their feet wouldn’t come off the peddles.  This aloud campers with one leg or lack of strength in their legs to ride the tandems as well. At the Summer Waves water park, we developed a relationship with the owner himself, who let us get into the park an hour before they opened.  This let us ride all the rides with the assistance of the park staff.  They were wonderful and were a great help.  The park staff put together box lunches for the campers and our staff and delivered them to the pavilion the they reserved for us.  Normally, the pavilions are first-come, first-served.  The best thing of all was they only charged us for the campers and the staff got in free.  A thank you letter was sent to the park for their overwhelming support and graciousness. The bowling alley event was just as exciting.  We tried to give totally blind campers the opportunity to bowl with the assistance of a rail that guided them from the ball return, to the beginning of the lane.  They were instructed how to use a three or four step approach to deliver the ball.  This was new to most of them and they were more comfortable with just standing at the beginning of the lane and squaring up to the end of the rail.  Overall, it was a wonderful experience for everyone. Obviously, all of the activities on the campus itself were a favorite as well.  Campers had the choice of four different art projects based on their skill and interest.  They could choose from three foot rain sticks, fully functional paddle boats, scented soaps or country style birdfeeders.  Many were able to finish two of the three projects mainly because the rain kept us inside more than normal. The horse program was changed this year to include independent riding, wagon rides from miniature horses, and hands on experience with dressing the horses with necessary tack or equipment.  The even were giving the opportunity to give the horses a bath if they wanted too.  Hillary Cooler, her staff and horses, was a wonderful blessing in assisting with these changes. Canoeing, the rock wall, swimming and many adaptive games in the activity building were always a go too as well. Hopefully, this season will be a new standard to follow for years to come.

\*\*\*\*\*SUN, SAND, and SURF WITHOUT SIGHT!

By Janet Parmerter

For avid Rock and Roll fans, the city of ASBURY PARK New Jersey calls to mind the cool sound of South Side Johnny and Bruce Springsteen. Nevertheless, on August 21, 2016, ASBURY PARK was also remembered for an exciting and inspirational event. On that beautiful day, blind and low vision individuals safely experienced a unique challenge, surfing. That year was the first event called, “Surfing for Vision,” however, we seriously doubted that would be the last surfing event of its kind and it wasn’t. After hearing about the thrilling success of 20 blind and low vision surfers challenging the rough and tumbling waves of the Jersey shore, it made me reflect back on my own horrifying first time surfing. (By the way, my first time at surfing, also happened to be my last time.) So, in honor of that courageous group of surfers, I wrote this article to commend them for taking lessons first. Surfing for Vision owes a big thank you to the Neptune Lions Club, volunteers from the Christian Surfers, and the organization of Michael Benson called, “The Visual Experience Foundation.” Michael Benson, who also has Glaucoma, comments,

“I want to send a message to all visually impaired and blind ones not to be afraid; because there is life after blindness.” With a passion for life, Benson enthusiastically explains, “If any blind ones wish to experience surfing, sailing, a clam dig or ballooning in a hot air balloon, they can email me at [Michael@lovevision.org](mailto:Michael@lovevision.org) , and also get a taste of their event with this short video, <https://www.facebook.com/113588031233/posts/10156943561551234?s=15300076558v=e&sfns=mo>

So many volunteers shared in this inspiring event. Yet, without the daring, brave surfers from the age of eight to sixty-seven, that surfing event would not have been anything special. On the other hand, with many volunteers and 20 fearless surfers, the 2016 event was spectacular!

The soon to be surfers, were given lessons on land, like how to stand on the board, then skilled volunteer surfers accompanied them into the water to “catch a wave.”

One daring young at heart surfer was 67 -year old Joe Ruffalo, from Bloomfield. This was Joe’s first opportunity to hang ten! Ok, so maybe he didn’t actually stand on the board and make his toes, hang ten, but he did, hang on, as his surfboard sent his horizontal body racing toward the sandy shore.

At the end of this article, is a link to the two-minute video of this memorable occasion, taken by Judy, Joe’s wife of 40 years. If you have never surfed before reading this, I hope the video and my below experience will help you appreciate how fun, well, how exciting, or maybe how, possibly dangerous? No, how, um, how, oh well how important lessons are. Just read the rest of this article, watch the video at the end and make up your own mind about surfing. Let me begin by saying, even for a fully sighted individual, the thought of balancing on a fiberglass board in a turbulent sea of swells and waves can be frightening. At the same time, it can be exhilarating to experience the sensational speed of the ride, along with the feeling of the wind against your body.

Anyway, that’s what I was told, but had never yet experienced. So, decades ago at the age of 19,feeling like I could do anything without lessons because I was young, determined and a passionate Beach Boy fan, I was drawn to the Jersey shore to experience my own personal, “Surfing’ Safari.”

Since it was mid-October, my brother and I were prepared for the chilly water with wet suits, but not for the post storm seas. From the moment I began paddling out, the ocean tossed my board and me around like two feathers in a hurricane. Every time I tried to get back up on the board, another wave crashed down, twirling me toward the bottom of the ocean. Exhausted and out of breath, I finally caught a wave, but again, was immediately turned upside down by a huge, diagonal, rogue wave which crashed down on top of my board and me. The powerful force propelled the surfboard vertical, ten feet straight up into the air, and simultaneously thrust my twisting body ten feet down below the surface of the water. After tumbling around I became disoriented and finally figured out which way was up. Just before completely running out of air, I reached the surface. The instant my head broke through the ocean, my skull violently contacted the fin of the now descending surfboard. With a burst of excruciating pain, and the power of that unfortunate connection, I was instantly thrust back under the sea. Again, wave after wave relentlessly barreled down over my fatigued body and kept me from filling my lungs with much needed air.

At the point in which my strength was almost gone, somehow, I was tossed toward a sand bar, stood up for a split second, took a slight breath, and instantly was thrown back under by the treacherous surf. This was repeated, for what seemed to be hours, but in reality, was only about five minutes.

At this point, my thoughts were crazy from the head wound, and my strength to fight the perilous surf was gone. Dazed and feeling like I was tumbling in a slow-motion dream, all of a sudden, my body scraped the sandy ocean floor and I rolled to-and-fro across the shoreline. The last wave shoved me onto the wet sandy beach, and I laid there immobile in a pool of salty foam.

Without the strength to stand, and covered in sand and blood, I’m sure I looked like a limp dead fish that had been washed ashore. Was I having fun yet? I think not!

Minutes later, I was still lying on the beach and remained motionless while my thoughts evaluated the entire situation. As the wild ocean continued to wash over my pain ridden body, the battered surfboard kept gently nudging my feet as if it were afraid to ask,

“Is this thing alive?”

While the sun warmed my frigid face, I kept my sand covered eye lids closed and remained still. A feeling of complete calm came over me, as my mind replayed over and over the frightening experience of what just happened. This was supposed to have been my fun filled surfing safari, but felt more like an African safari and I was the hunted animal which barely escaped.

At that moment in my life, I realized although I knew the words to every Beach Boy song, from now on, I would attend all their concerts, be a surfer girl in name only, and stick to snow skiing.

As for Joe Ruffalo, he helped transform the dream of each, would be surfer, into a reality they will never forget. When I asked if he will do this next year, enthusiastically Joe responded, “Absolutely! That day was windy, and the waves were rough, but blind people have to come out of their comfort zone and try something different.” Then he added, “In fact the Mayor of Long Branch expressed interest in hosting the event.” That interest turned into a reality, because the past three years, Long Branch and its numerous life-guards have been hosting this surfing challenge. This year, on August 17th, 2019, over 150 people attended and about 50 blind and low vision surfers hit the waves.

Lifeguards and thirty surfers volunteered for water safety and family activities, like wave runner rides and surfing lessons. Takanassee Handshapes donated a free custom made surfboard for the raffle and Jersey Mike donated sandwiches for all the volunteers and participants like 31 year old Brian Mackey and twelve-year old Chloe, who have surfed all four years. Chloe’s mother, Amy Darlington, said she cannot say enough good things about the safety conscious volunteers and sincerely commented, “I hope more and more blind people take advantage of this fantastic, fun event.”

Joe Ruffalo’s ever present positive outlook sums up the whole idea,

“Blindness can be a tragedy, but, if you come up with a strategy, it’s only a physical nuisance.” Personally, I whole heartedly agree and couldn’t have said it better! With humor and his charismatic personality, Joe Ruffalo is a role model not only to those without sight, but also those with sight. In Joe’s straightforward manner, he explains,

“If people ask me, when did you lose your vision? I always respond, I never lost my vision, I just lost my sight!” That confident, positive attitude is a good example of who he is, and many blind individuals should emulate those feelings.

Consequently, all of you who have never surfed, click on the below 2-minute video link and as you listen to the wind and pounding surf challenge Joe Ruffalo, think of fearless Joe conquering the surf, or as he humorously admits, the surf may have actually conquered him.

Then again, he finally did ride in on the board, so, he did it, and we’re proud of Joe and his brave blind surfing buddies! Next summer, if you decide to try surfing for vision at the Jersey shore, here’s my free advice, first, take the surfing lessons! Then, get ready, surf’s up. To view the video go to <https://youtu.be/w1rOwnpABnQ>.

\*\*\*\*\*Update from Timothy Jones

Hi to all my friends at GCB!

It has been so long since I saw all of you that I hope you haven’t forgotten me, but I surely have not forgotten you! For all your help, over the years, I can’t thank all you wonderful folks enough at GCB! Some of you may have seen the recent news articles about me; those are as much as a shock to me as they may have been to you, because they totally came out of the blue. The local Community Improvement District was simply putting in a crosswalk, as in one of those “God-incidences”, the crosswalk happened to be just a couple of hundred feet from my house. We asked them if it could be made accessible for the blind, like the crosswalks are in downtown Atlanta near CVI, and they willingly agreed. Then we discovered that, of all things, the “opening day” of the crosswalk was going to be on my birthday. My mom jokingly mentioned this to them, and said they might want to get a picture of me standing next to the crosswalk sign, just for publicity of the CID and to show how responsive they have been to the needs of the disabled in their area.

Instead, they REALLY went all-out, invited the media from several papers and TV stations, invited local and county and even state officials and made it a big opening-day birthday party for me!

That has all led to other opportunities and interviews and I keep trying to use these opportunities to open the eyes of the general public about the needs and capabilities of blind individuals. The media keeps playing this up as if I’m a musical “prodigy”, or as if I’m some kind of genius for just doing what most blind people do every day, using the technology and training available to us, while negotiating a sighted world. I hope all this attention leads to greater awareness of the abilities and needs of the VI community and especially that it will bring glory to God. Literally, God has “opened up a pathway” that I hope will lead to future employment and other opportunities.

As far as school goes---you may know that I graduated this past May from Mercer University, Townsend School of Music. I have a Bachelor of Music degree (Organ Performance), summa cum laude, and also won the Excellence in Performance award from Townsend. I studied piano as well as organ during my years there, and so gave two senior recitals—one in Organ and one in Piano. Both of these are available on my channel on You Tube for anyone who’d like to listen—the link is <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCo1FjEsXMB8kbiJc87rLGQ> . If you do a search, please be sure to type in my full name, as there are many other “Timothy Jones’ on the net who are not me.

This summer, I spent time getting used to being home again and preparing for the fall entry into Georgia State. I’ve had to think long and hard about my next step. God closed several doors that I had planned to go through as far as Graduate studies after Mercer, like my long time plans to next attend Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina. In fact, I had already applied, been accepted and I was preparing to go up there to do an audition. At that time, the head of the Piano Department, who some of you may know, Dr. Peter Davis, called me and gave me the bad news that beginning in the Fall of 2019, Bob Jones was scrapping its ENTIRE Graduate music program. Many of the teachers I was looking forward to studying under had already left due to the impending closure of the program. Tom Grimble, Gina Sprunger, Dwayne Ream, Dan Kirsop, and others were gone.

October 2018, we learned of this sad situation. It was a huge shock both to me and to my mom when I broke the news to her. She told me she was too stunned to even feel sad about it—this was such a HUGE change it was like an earthquake and mom told me this was a clear sign; God was CLOSING that door and would open another one.

But, to find that “other” door God had in mind, took us a long while. At the time, I thought I’d have to change my intended Graduate major from the Piano Pedagogy I had planned on, because I could not find that course of study taught at another college. It took me a number of years to arrive at that choice. During my years at Mercer, I had refined my career-goals several times; at first, I had thought to make a career of being a concert artist in either organ or piano or both. I considered this because Mercer did not offer an undergraduate degree in Church Music, which was what I had really wanted. Bob Jones did offer that at the undergraduate level, but I couldn’t afford to go there, since BJU didn’t offer any scholarships I could use but Mercer did. Later at Mercer, I still planned to eventually prepare for employment as a church accompanist, but as I pursued my studies and became aware of the reality of how many churches now conduct their worship, I realized that the more “ritualized” church service of the past doesn’t exist in many churches today. Where the service does follow more of a ritual, it is usually in churches that are more theologically liberal in their beliefs than I would like, but many of the evangelical churches have dumped formal music and choirs altogether in favor of “praise bands” or other informal music. So I began to realize that, even without my visual impairment, finding a church musician post in the way I had envisioned it would be difficult if not impossible, and my inability to quickly “sight-read” music would be a problem in the more modern services that use praise-bands or do frequent cantatas. So I began re-thinking my entire career plan. God had gifted me with a talent for music—how could I use that for His glory, and in a way that would provide a sustainable living?

I remembered how very hard it was for our family, when I was young; to find the resources I needed to develop my musical skills. First, we had trouble finding a piano teacher willing to take on a blind student. Then we had trouble finding anyone to teach me to read music in Braille—something I must learn to do if I wanted to go to college as a music major. We checked with the APH list of Braille Music transcribers and the Atlanta Braille Volunteers group, and there were only three listed people in the entire state knowledgeable about the Braille music code, a woman who lived near Lake Hartwell close to the Georgia South Carolina border. She was retired from CVI but lived an hour south of Atlanta (Anne Simms, some of you may have known her), and our own Betsy Grenevitch. I began lessons with Betsy before she moved to Social Circle, but my lessons were interrupted for a time due to gas costs after she moved so far away. Finally, we were able to make the 2-hour round-trip drive to her house to complete my Braille music training, but that only introduced me to the “basics” of Braille music. I improved my skills by long-distance telephone lessons before I left for college with a retired GA Academy of the Blind teacher living in Macon, Mr. Tom Ridgeway, who worked with me over the phone to go through the Methodist Hymnal to deepen my music-reading skills.

It occurred to me, as I continued my studies, that there is a real need for those who are visually impaired to find both the teachers they need for music lessons themselves, and teachers who can instruct them in reading music using the Braille music code. I decided that I would like to try to fill this gap. Therefore, I began looking into Piano Pedagogy, which is the teaching of piano in private or studio situations (not in a public school setting, which would have been Music Education).

When Bob Jones dropped their program, I started checking with other colleges. However, few of them still offer Piano Pedagogy, and the ones that do offer it on the bachelor’s degree (undergraduate) level would not accept my Undergraduate work at Mercer and just let me take the piano teaching courses I needed. They wanted me to start all over and obtain a second bachelor’s degree from their institution, something I had neither the time nor the money to do.

I was beginning to wonder if I just needed to forget further college training and try to launch out on my own, doing private gigs, occasional church music and trying to put out the word for students to teach. About this time, in November 2018, my mom made a spur-of-the-moment decision to go to the Greek Orthodox Festival in Atlanta. My grandmother invited my mom to go and while there, in the gift shop, a woman working recognized my mom and after speaking, they realized each remembered one another from when they both attended Mercer together. Mom was in the education program and this woman in the MUSIC EDUCATION program!

She told my mother Georgia State University had a very excellent music program, INCLUDING Piano Pedagogy as a Graduate-level program! During Christmas break I rushed to apply, and everything fell together like clockwork. The timing worked out perfectly for my applications, audition, and meetings with staff and disability services. Before I knew it, I was accepted, registered and have already worked out accommodations with most of my professors! When God opens a door, things move REALLY fast!

So that’s where I am today, about to enter Georgia State for two years of study obtaining a Graduate degree in Piano Pedagogy. Already, I am working with my former piano teacher, Miss Patti Bennett, teaching blind students in her studio to read music Braille. The publicity I am getting because of the crosswalk will, I hope, open even more new “pathways” for the future.

My motto since my teen years has been that we walk “by faith not by sight.” God has never failed me in that leading and I trust and am excited about seeing what new future paths He has to lead me on.

\*\*\*\*\*Update from Thomas Woodyard

Let me thank everyone from the Georgia Council of the Blind, for supporting me this year, and past years, with my college Scholarship. At the Spring State Convention when I received the scholarship, it enabled me to purchase LSAT study material and helped pay for my classes this spring. I truly appreciate both the financial and uplifting emotional support that GCB provides me. My Spring Semester ended on a high note. I took Public Budgeting which taught me Excel skills. Another spring class was Peace Studies which the whole world needs right now. I have decided to focus on mediation in my law career. Introduction to Logic was my third class, which hopefully helped me on the July LSAT and my final class was a fun and enjoyable elective, Mythology. All summer I studied for the LSAT which I have completed for the most part. Unfortunately, there were huge accommodation issues with the writing portion, so that part is being rescheduled for September 6th. After taking the LSAT on July 15th and July 16th, my parents and I visited Florida State University’s College of Law and met with their Disability Department and their Admissions staff. After completing a month long program there, my freshman semester in June, it was good to return and see everyone. The next week we visited Alabama’s College of Law and met with their Office of Disability Support and Admissions staff. It was very impressive. The first week of August I returned to the University of Georgia. Here, I am quite familiar with everything and comfortable, so I met with the Disability Resource Center’s Housing Liaison to explore housing options at UGA. They were very helpful and felt they could help me stay on campus close to the law school if I am accepted into Law School there. Normal Graduate housing at UGA is 3 or 4 miles away. This way, I could walk to the UGA College of Law if I am accepted. Next I met with my Freshman Odyssey Prelaw Learning Community Professor who is a writing Professor at UGA’s College of Law. She helped me brainstorm personal statements, diversity statements, resumes, and application schedules. I have enjoyed my relationship with this professor as she was my first faculty contact on campus, so it was good to see her again. In September, I can begin applying but, it is nerve wracking yet exciting and I’m elated to start Fall Semester. This is my final undergraduate year and I will be taking Program Evaluation, Civil War History, Medieval History and Introduction to Nonprofits. Over my four years at UGA, I have worked very closely with Learning Ally, as a Nonprofit. My mom and I are both speaking to Learning Ally volunteers in August in a Webinar about Reading Conventions, so I am excited to learn more about Non Profits. For my Non-Profits Class, I will be interviewing Stacie Court, the Learning Ally Director and I am evaluating Medicaid for my Program Evaluation Class. In the spring, I am hoping to graduate with a BA from the UGA School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA) a minor in History and a minor in Public Policy and Management. I have already earned a Certificate of Global Excellence from the Office of International Education and am currently trying to earn a Global Studies Certificate from SPIA. I am currently researching Internship Opportunities for next summer. I hope to see you all soon, update you in person and hope to have a great year this year with the Hall County Chapter of the Georgia Council of the Blind. Thank you again for your scholarship! Go Dawgs!

\*\*\*\*\*Parley Post

By Rodrick Parker

Role of a Parliamentarian

A Parliamentarian is skilled in rules of order and the proper procedures for the conduct of meetings of deliberative assemblies. Many are parliamentarians for nonprofit organizations. Some of the ways a parliamentarian can assist organizations include:

Convention Parliamentarian

Bylaws Consultant

Bylaws Amendment or Revision Author

Advisor to the Officers and Board of Directors

Expert Witness

Professional Presiding Officer

Trainer in Parliamentary Procedure

Presiding Officer Trainer

Election Supervisor

Planning Meeting Strategist

Script Writer

Meeting and Convention Planning

\*\*\*\*\*Summer Camp at Sloppy Floyd Park

The Trion Lions Club was selected this spring to receive a $1,500 Operation Round-Up grant to be used for the club's Summer Lion's Camp sponsorship.  All grants provided by Operation Round-Up are made possible by the generosity of NGEMC's membership. We are grateful to all the members who participate by rounding up their power bills to the nearest dollar (each) month, “Lions Club President, Jan Morris said. On August 13-15, we met again for our second camp here in Chattooga County.  Camps for folks who are visually impaired are rare and this is the second in our county.  Twelve adult campers with severe vision loss and four volunteers experienced a wonderful time at James H. Floyd State Park.  Three of the campers are Guide Dog Handlers and the dogs also enjoyed the park.  The Lions Club provided transportation to and from the camp. The Trion Lions Club utilized the grant money in renting three cabins, purchasing groceries for five meals, and renting the paddle boats.  Tortaco Mexican Restaurant fed the camper’s lunch one day and Pizza Hut donated pizzas one night.  Campers enjoyed watermelon and making homemade ice cream using an old fashioned hand crank freezer. State Park rangers, Luke Daniels and Treyton Coffman, assisted campers in several activities like paddle boats, fishing and more. The campers enjoyed playing games with sighted volunteers who put on blindfolds to make the games even.  One of the campers was an experienced entertainer and singer.  Luke gave an overview of the camp for campers that had never been there before.  Campers were transported from Ellijay, Dalton, Acworth, Cartersville, Rome, Lafayette, Trion, Ringgold and Summerville. We hope to have future camps and hope the next one we can rent all four cabins, some of the campsites and hope to include some individuals who are deaf-blind. The Trion Lions Club engages in feeding the hungry, diabetes awareness, disaster relief, vision screening, eyeglass recycling, hearing programs, environmental programs, childhood cancer, just to name a few of our activities. The Trion Lions Club welcomes new members.  Get involved.  Serve in your own way.  Choose projects that are important to you.  It's your town.  Make it better. Some people live an entire lifetime wondering if they've made a difference in the world. LIONS don't face that problem. For more information about becoming a member, contact Jan Morris 706-346-7249 or Ann Brown 706-734-3280.

\*\*\*\*\*Braille calendars

If you wish to have a free Braille calendar, send your contact information to the following address.

Please give them your name, mailing address and your email address and they will send you a Braille calendar.

Lutheran Braille Workers

PO Box 5000

Yucaipa, CA 92399

Toll-free 1-800-925-6092

Email address: [lbw@lbwinc.org](mailto:lbw@lbwinc.org)

Web address: [www.lbwinc.org](http://www.lbwinc.org)