The GCB DIGEST

This is a publication of the Georgia Council of the Blind

We are an affiliate of the American Council of the Blind

An organization promoting a hand up and not a handout

Fall 2020

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Table of Contents:

From Your Editor, by Amanda Wilson

GCB Presidential Message, by Alice Ritchhart

GCB Board Meeting Minutes, by Betsy Grenevitch

GCB Chapter News

Georgia Guide Dog Users News

GCB Community Phone Calls

GCB Update from Timothy Jones

GCB Update from Daniel Cline

GCB Member Profile: Jeff Stump

Neighborhood Safety for Guide Dogs, by Marj Schneider

Blind Lions of Georgia: More about Helen Keller and the Lions, by Mike Hall

GCB Scholarship

Georgia Council of the Blind Conference and Convention Overview

GCB Comments on the GCB Conference and Convention

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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 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, for her editing skills. I want 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 each member who sent articles and who made suggestions.

Note

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.

Note:

The GCB Digest is now on NFB Newsline and on Georgia Radio Reading Service, GARRS.

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GCB Presidential Message

 By Alice Ritchhart

Reflections of 2020

The holiday season is approaching as you are reading this issue of the GCB Digest. With that in mind I would like to reflect on what has been a challenging, and difficult year, but at the same time has provided us with many blessings, made us stronger as an organization and shown us how we are Personally resilient.

In January we were meeting in person to discuss important issues we needed to work on as an organization. We were planning our, in person, conference/ convention which was going to be held in May and would have the election that would provide changes in our board of directors.

We geared up to introduce legislation to seek a Commission for the Blind for our members and others in the state who were seeking to improve services that have been lacking from Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services. In the office of the Secretary of State, we advocated to make sure we would have an independent and private vote when elections came to the polls. Our affiliates were meeting in person and planning many activities which would allow individuals to socialize and share important information to assist our members to live as independently as possible. Then came March and our whole world was sent into a tailspin. The legislative session ended abruptly, vocational rehabilitation services were put on hold and school for everyone had to be conducted from home, which meant new challenges for our students, in addition, we could no longer hold our monthly meetings in person, so for us, that meant social isolation.

Would we just give up? No, that is not what our organization does. It took us a little bit of time to get our footing but once we did, we went back to work doing what we do best, and that is reaching out to our brothers and sisters and finding a way to persevere.

With the guidance of our national organization, the American Council of the Blind, we found a way to reconnect with one another and learned new ways to move forward with our mission. Once we learned our meetings could be conducted via way of conference calls, we began to socialize through the American Council of the Blind community calls, and even learned we could hold a virtual conference. Many of our Georgia state members stepped up to the plate and led us in state community calls and hosted monthly calls of various topics. Then, in a short period of time, we also held our own first virtual state conference. Considering it was a new experience for everyone, it was a great success! Now as we begin this holiday season, it is the time to reflect on what we must be thankful for and a time to count our blessings. So, I would like to take a few moments to do just that. I must start by saying I am thankful the legislative session came to a screeching halt. The Commission for the Blind bill was changed totally from what we had written and was not what would have improved services and yet, it looked like it was going to move through quickly. With that early end to the session, we had time to pull the bill and send it back for correction to the legislative council. I am thankful for the American Council of the blind, and all they have done to assist the state affiliates. It has engaged many of our members in Georgia to come out of their shells, and to become more active not only at the national level, but as well as here at home. It has been a blessing in that we have learned new ways to be able to interact and do our work without having to worry about how we would get around to do what was needed to carry on. There has also been a blessing, I think, in maybe letting our sighted peers to experience just a small taste of what life is like for us daily. Most important though is the actual concern and caring that is being demonstrated by each one of you in reaching out to one another. I hope and pray that 2021 is a better year in that we become free of this virus and the other ugliness in the country goes away. I ask you all to stay strong and safe during the holiday season and ask God to be with our friends who are struggling from the virus and other problems. As we move into 2021 know that there are still issues, we must be ready to tackle, and even though we may still not be able to be together in person we must be ready to act using our new arsenal of tools. The Commission is a must as Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation has decided to go to a selection of order in providing services to people with disabilities. We know that the voting issue was anything but private and independent for us, and so must be addressed. We must be ready to carry out our conference/ convention whether in person or virtually again we must figure out a way to hold elections and allow our membership to have a say in what we do as an organization .In closing I just want to say thank you to the Georgia Council of the Blind board of directors, the American Council of the Blind, and to each one of our members, because without you, there would not be a Georgia Council of the Blind. Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, and most of all I hope we have a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

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Georgia Council of the Blind Board Meeting Minutes

 By Betsy Grenevitch

Georgia Council of the Blind Board Meeting via the Phone

Saturday, April 18, 2020

Call to Order, Alice Ritchhart:

President Alice called the meeting to order at 10:05 PM.

Approval of Agenda:

A motion was made by Deborah Lovell and seconded by Marj Schneider to approve the meeting agenda. The motion carried.

Roll Call, Betsy Grenevitch:

Those present were: Alice Ritchhart, GCB President; Philip Jones, GCB First Vice-President; Jamaica Miller, GCB Second Vice-President; Betsy Grenevitch, GCB Secretary; Marsha Farrow, GCB Treasurer; Valerie Hester, GCB Member-at-Large Representative; Keith Morris, GCB Immediate Past President; Jerrie Toney, Athens Chapter; Deborah Lovell, Augusta Chapter; Cecily Nipper, Jr., East Georgia Chapter; Judy Presley, Greater Hall County Chapter; Sharon Nichols, Northwest Chapter; Tonia Clayton, Rome-Floyd Chapter; Marj Schneider, Savannah Chapter; Amanda Wilson, GCB Digest Editor; DJ McIntyre, Georgia Guide Dog Users; and Steve Longmire, Metro Atlanta Chapter. Guests: Rosetta Brown, East Georgia Chapter; Daniel Cline, scholarship recipient; and Darcy Bennett, scholarship recipient.

Invocation, Sharon Nichols:

Sharon gave the invocation.

Approval of Minutes, Betsy Grenevitch:

Deborah Lovell made a motion seconded by Marsha Farrow to approve the two different emergency board meeting minutes as they were emailed out. The motion carried. Deborah Lovell made a motion seconded by Jamaica Miller to approve the board meeting minutes from January 25 as they were mailed out and the motion carried.

Scholarship Recipients, Marj Schneider:

Marj introduced the Al and Cora Camp scholarship. She thanked her committee members who helped to choose the recipients for this year. The two winners chosen for this year were Darcy Bennett from Douglasville and Daniel Cline from Warner Robins.

The recipients were on the call and introduced themselves. Darcy Bennett: He is planning on attending Kennesaw State University as a business major. Daniel Cline: He is planning on attending Mercer University majoring in mechanical engineering. After obtaining that degree he is planning on attending the University of New Orleans to pursue a degree in naval architecture. Marj encouraged the recipients to be in contact with GCB letting us know how they are doing. Daniel told us that in 2023 there is going to be a clinical trial using gene therapy for retinitis pigmentosa. Marj asked him to send her the information so that we can get it on our website and out to our members.

President’s Report, Alice Ritchhart:

Alice and Cecily Nipper, Jr. attended the American Council of the Blind Legislative Seminar and Presidents’ Meeting in Washington, DC.

Alice is still receiving calls from people needing services and most of them are coming from the senior population. She refers them to Kay McGill who connects them with the person responsible for their area. Some seniors are wanting to know how to connect via the phone with others. Alice is connecting people to either their peer supporters in their area or with Vanesa Meadows who has a peer support group through GLASS. She also told us about the American Council of the Blind community events that are taking place daily. We were encouraged to let others know about these events and to encourage them to attend. The American Council of the Blind national conference and convention has been canceled and it will now be a virtual conference and convention. Word had gotten out that per a memo all blind and deaf services should not be going on virtually except for the older blind program. Alice spoke with Shawn Ryan and he told her that the memo had not been interpreted properly. It has possibly been interpreted that way because of what was in the stimulus bill concerning not having to provide services, but this was incorrect. Alice contacted Claire Stanley at the American Council of the Blind and she is obtaining documentation to show vocational rehab here in Georgia what services are to be provided. The Commission for the Blind bill died and did not make it to cross-over because of the virus. We were not happy with the current version of the bill, so this was good. Alice and Stephanie Scott-Nelson tried to explain to legislators what they want in the bill. The bill will come out again next year and start over in the process.

Finance Report, Jerrie Toney:

Jerrie made the changes to the budget requested by Marj Schneider concerning the scholarship being a part of the budget. Marj wanted to know if we felt we were behind bringing in funds for this time of year. Alice said that we have not been doing any extra fund raising except for the funds received from the MMS program and Amazon Smiles. Alice asked Marj to let us know by January the amount of money the scholarship committee felt they would need for scholarships for that year. This would also include the funds for the legislative seminar. Alice explained that the first-timer funds were moved into the Al and Cora Camp Scholarship Fund account. DJ told us that we have had three transfers from Amazon Smiles and that we are receiving MMS funds quarterly. Marsha requested that as part of the report concerning the checks, which are put together monthly, that we also include what comes in from Amazon Smiles and the MMS program. This report is to be sent out to the board monthly.

Treasurer’s Report, Marsha Farrow:

GCB Main Checking Account #9530:

Our total balance is $6,600.51.

Included in this total is $3,299.11 for the Senior fund and $3,309.40 for the GCB operating fund.

On October 29, 2019, $742.30 was moved to this account.

We have recently served three seniors in the total amount of $482.18.

GCB Conference Account #9685:

Total in the Account: $1,050.40

Al and Cora Camp Scholarship Account #9557:

Total in the account: $3,872.70

Check #1014--$550.00—Cecily Nipper, JR.—Leadership Scholarship to attend The Washington Legislative Seminar and Presidents’ Meeting

GCB Money Market Account #0085379565:

This account was closed on October 29, 2019 and the funds were moved to the new GCB CD #6527 in the amount of $5,000.00.

This CD matures on October 27, 2020. We did not receive any interest in 2019.

GCB Long Term Investment #0855:

The total in this account is $18,678.53.

This investment will mature on March 20, 2021.

In 2019 we earned $364.37 in interest on this account.

Note: The total interest earned on this account since 2016 is $1,678.53.

Way Financial Investment:

As of December 31, 2019, the total in this account was $66,638.46.

Note: GCB has not received statements for 2020 in Word format and they have been requested.

All chapters have sent in their dues.

Jamaica made a motion to accept the treasurer’s report for audit and the motion was seconded by Phil. The motion carried.

A motion was made by Jerrie to accept the amended budget and the motion was seconded by Phil. The motion carried.

Conference and Convention, Cecily Nipper, Junior, and Steve Longmire:

The hotel where we were going to hold the conference and convention in May is willing to let us hold one there on November 6-7. The committee has discussed the strategy that they had already planned for the spring. The committee will reconvene later in the summer and continue their work on this event. Steve has already put the information about the upcoming conference and convention on our website.

Membership, Amanda Wilson:

We currently have 162 members. They are talking about having more phone calls like ACB is doing, but on the state level. Deborah Lovell and Judy Presley were asked to come up with a book to read for an upcoming book club. We could hold more than one book club so that different genres could be read. Tommy and Mary Woodyard want to host a trivia night.

Members-at-Large, Valerie Hester and Betsy Grenevitch:

The at-large members now have a monthly call on the third Monday of the month hosted by Betsy Grenevitch. The call takes place at 7:00 PM.

Technology, Steve Longmire:

The committee met on April 16, 2020. They had an AT instructor from the Signal Center on the call. He and Jerrie Toney talked about being AT instructors. Steve talked about his efforts at the Atlanta Library. Jamaica talked about her Wheels of Hope organization and the problems using the software they are currently using to match drivers with trips. Steve and Jerrie are trying to get in touch with the developers of the software to talk with them about how to make the software more accessible. They talked about having more technology calls for our membership. Steve has a prototype completed for the GCB app for the Android and IOS phones. He has submitted the Android version to Google Play but because of the current virus pandemic it is going to take more than seven days to get reviewed. He is ready to submit it to the IOS side. He received help from an IOS group to get the app ready for submission. He will let us know when these apps are accepted. Steve wants us to let him know about any topics we would like to see on the technology calls. Alice brought up the concern that we need to have our resolutions that have been passed put on our website. Betsy will send the ones she has to Jerrie to put on the site.

Legislative, Betsy Grenevitch:

Betsy talked about meeting with the ACLU concerning accessible voting. We would like to make the mail-in ballots accessible to us. ACLU is supposed to be setting up a meeting with us to talk about how they can help with this issue. We are trying to come up with a compromise so that we would be able to fill out the ballot online and then print it out and mail it.

GCB Digest, Amanda Wilson:

The large print and Braille edition were able to be sent out but not the recorded edition due to the virus pandemic. The audio version should be available for the next issue. Amanda reminded us that if those who receive the cartridge do not return it in time, they will not receive an issue until it is either returned or they pay for another cartridge. The GCB Digest is also now available on NFB Newsline and GARRS.

GGDU, Betsy Grenevitch:

GGDU will be having a phone meeting in May. There was a survey sent out concerning the Air Carrier Access Act trying to bring this act in line with the ADA concerning what animals can fly on airplanes. We are trying to get it passed that ESA animals are no longer permitted to board planes. There are some who are trying to make it mandatory that service dogs can only be so large. This could be a problem for some handlers. We do not have the results from the survey yet as the deadline to complete the survey was within the past couple of weeks.

Older Blind Program Fund, Marsha Farrow:

We do have some pending requests concerning funding for transportation to be able to go to an eye exam. Marsha will let these people know that once things open again, they will receive help with this need. She had not given the talking watch or the cane to those who requested these items because they will need training with these items. She feels that they will need in-person training and not virtual training that is being offered at this time.

Unfinished Business:

Legislative Seminar, Cecily Nipper, Jr.: Cecily thanked the board and GCB for the scholarship to be able to attend the Legislative Seminar and Presidents’ Meeting. They had two days of programming, one day of presidents’ meetings, and one day on Capitol Hill. This was her first opportunity to use her dog from GDF independently. They dropped off the legislative imperatives at every Georgia office at the Capitol. The imperatives this year were the Medicare low vision bill, funding for paratransit and Uber, and the Cogswell-Macy Act. The Cogswell-Macy Act is the bill that allows children who have other disabilities along with being visually impaired to be counted as visually impaired to allow more funds for the visually impaired population.

New Business:

Alice wanted to talk about doing support calls for those who might feel stressed because of what is going on in the Covid-19 pandemic. This call would be led by Marsha Farrow. A motion was made by Cecily that we develop community conference calls in GCB for points of interest. The motion was seconded by Tonia and the motion carried.

The Use of Zoom, Everyone:

Amanda made a motion seconded by Tonia that we investigate using Zoom for our community calls. During the discussion, Deborah wanted to make sure we would allow video as an option. Marj pointed out that the recordings are in the M4A format and that someone would need to know how to convert these files. Betsy brought up the concern of spending $180 a year on Zoom because of the lack of participation in calls. Marj agreed with Betsy. After the discussion was completed the motion carried.

Steal and Brag, Everyone:

Cecily reported that the East Georgia chapter met via the phone for their meeting this month. They had 16 present and it went well. At their meeting next month, they are planning on talking about the ACB and GCB community calls. This meeting will also take place over the phone as well. They were permitted to vote at their meeting if they had permission from their board to do so and that permission was granted. Tonia Clayton from the Rome Floyd County Chapter is having their upcoming meeting over the phone. Alice strongly suggested that chapters begin meeting on the phone during this time.

Constitution and Bylaws Changes, Alice Ritchhart:

We need to make some changes to our Constitution and Bylaws, so Alice is looking for people to work on this committee.

Next Meeting:

Alice requested that we hold our next board meeting in August. Deborah made a motion that we meet the first Saturday in August. Betsy seconded the motion and the motion carried. Deborah made a motion that we meet the first Saturday in August over the phone. Jamaica seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Adjourn:

We adjourned at 12:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted by

Betsy Grenevitch, Secretary

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Georgia Council of the Blind Board Meeting via the Phone

August 1, 2020

Call to Order, Alice Ritchhart:

President Alice called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM.

Invocation:

The invocation was given by Sharon Nichols.

Roll Call, Betsy Grenevitch:

Those present were: Alice Ritchhart, GCB President; Philip Jones, GCB First Vice-President; Jamaica Miller, GCB Second Vice-President; Betsy Grenevitch, GCB Secretary; Marsha Farrow, GCB Treasurer; Valerie Hester, GCB Member-at-Large Representative; Keith Morris, GCB Past President; Jerrie Toney, Athens Chapter; Deborah Lovell, Augusta Chapter; Patricia Ganger, Each Georgia Chapter; Judy Presley, Greater Hall County Chapter; Sharon Nichols, Northwest Chapter; Tonia Clayton, Rome-Floyd County Chapter; Marj Schneider, Savannah Chapter; Chris Baldridge, South Atlanta Chapter; Amanda Wilson, GCB Digest Editor; Steve Longmire, GCB Webmaster; and DJ McIntyre, GGDU. Guests: Cecily Nipper, Sr., Cecily Nipper, Jr., and Debbie McDonald.

Approval of Agenda:

There were not any additions or changes. A motion was made by Marsha Farrow and seconded by Jamaica Miller to approve the agenda and the motion carried.

President’s Report, Alice Ritchhart:

The presidents of the ACB affiliates met with ACB President Dan Spoone and he told them that the number of attendees for the ACB virtual conference and convention who registered was around 1600. He also told them that at one point there were around 5500 listening to the conference and convention via ACB radio. ACB is trying to reach out more to the state and special interest affiliates. One of the ways they are trying to do this is through the community events. They have reached out to the membership chairs of each state asking them to reach out to people who attended the virtual conference and convention who are not currently members of a state affiliate. The state and special interest affiliate presidents have been meeting on a weekly basis. A presidents’ email list has now been formed. ACB President Spoone will be meeting with the presidents on a quarterly basis. Alice encouraged us to sign up for the community call list. You can contact Amanda and she can help you get signed up for this list. Alice also encouraged us to contact Claire Stanley at the ACB national office concerning any websites that we have difficulty accessing. A group has contacted ACB asking for a list of inaccessible websites. There are several states who have filed lawsuits concerning accessible voting. ACB has reached out to the Department of Justice concerning accessible and absentee voting. Betsy and Alice have been working on this issue here in Georgia but so far nothing has happened. We have been working with NFB and even started working with the ACLU, but nothing has happened with them either. Alice has filed a complaint on behalf of GCB about the absentee ballot and the inaccessibility problems with the new voting machine. She has given Claire Stanley our case number so that she can contact the Department of Justice concerning our state.

Teresa Brenner and another GCB member had problems accessing the voting machine because no one at the poll knew how to set up the machine for them. Teresa filed a complaint with her local board of elections and now has a case number. The Secretary of State’s office has contacted her and are looking into the situation.

We are still receiving calls concerning the older blind but are now receiving calls concerning students who are college age and younger. We had been trying to raise money to purchase a Braille writer for a student, but the Dillard’s have donated a Braille writer for her. This same student is looking for a braille transcriber to do her math books.

We are trying to get VR to follow through with what college students will need before their classes begin. One of our college students was denied services because he was going only part-time but once he and his mother advocated and got RSA involved, assistance was given to him. Shawn Ryan has now left as executive director of the Georgia Vocational Rehab Agency and the new executive director is Chris Wells. Alice and Marsha met with him and discussed their concerns about the students and mileage no longer being paid for to private contractors providing hands-on services. These instructors are now moving toward working for the school systems because they are still paying for mileage. They also told Mr. Wells that we are still going to pursue a Commission for the Blind.

They asked him to hold a town meeting where concerns could be expressed for the blind and deaf-blind communities in Georgia.

Deborah Lovell asked if the student’s TVI had been contacted and Marsha explained that she had spoken with her, but the student is now homeschooled and not enrolled in a public school. Alice said that they are planning on reaching out to the TVIs in Cobb County concerning the student.

Another question was asked concerning getting assistance to file a complaint regarding voting and Alice said that she or Betsy would be willing to assist anyone who needed assistance.

Secretary’s Minutes, Betsy Grenevitch:

Betsy asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the last board meeting as they were sent out. Keith Morris made the motion seconded by Jamaica Miller to approve the minutes as they were sent out and the motion carried.

Treasurer’s Report, Marsha Farrow:

We received $3800 from Senator Kelly Loeffler.

The amounts in our accounts are as follows: GCB main account: $8462.54; Senior account: $2291.43; Conference and Convention account: $1037.90; Al and Cora Camp fund: $1874.70; CD for $5000 which will mature on October 27, 2020; Long term Investment: $18,769.70 (the 2019 interest for this account was $364.37 and the total interest we have gained so far on this account is $1769.70) and this account matures in 2021; Way Financial: $58,599.38 in April, $60,143.53 in May, and $60,898.67 in June. A motion to file the treasurer’s report for audit was made by Jamaica Miller and seconded by Keith Morris. The motion carried. Marsha told us that we have filed our 501(c)(3) for this year using a company in her area whose owner is Lisa Hayes. Lisa reminded her that if we were ever audited that they would go back to the beginning of our organization. Because accounting programs are not accessible to the visually impaired community, Marsha is recommending that we find someone who can do the accounting for us. We have asked among our membership but have not found anyone who was willing to do this for us. Alice has found someone in Brunswick who is already familiar with 501(3)(3) organizations and the requirements they must meet. This person is willing to put as much information together as we can give her from the past and continue to enter information for us. Her name is Phyllis Waters. We would pay her $35 an hour. Our members will still do the work they are currently doing but she would keep up with filing all the necessary forms. Deborah Lovell made a motion seconded by Tonia Clayton that we hire Phyllis Waters to serve as our accountant for GCB. The motion carried. Marj Schneider encouraged board members to raise the funds to do the historical work on our accounts. Betsy thanked those who help keep the records straight and noted that this work will continue so that we can give the accountant the information that she will need.

Finance Report, Jerrie Toney:

Marsha and Steve are going to be checking with PayPal to see if GCB’s name can be put on our account. Jerrie made a motion seconded by Jamaica Miller that we use the $3800 given to us by Senator Kelly Loeffler to assist purchasing technology for students from kindergarten through the 12th grade and that a committee will be formed to come up with guidelines and policies. After some discussion, the motion carried.

Conference and Convention Committee, Cecily Nipper, Jr.:

We do not have a signed contract but just a verbal contract with the hotel for the first weekend in November. She told us that if the board approves to do a virtual conference and convention that ACB radio is willing to stream our event. Steve and Tiyah Longmire have spoken with Debbie Hazelton, the director of ACB radio, and have been told that she is willing to work with us to stream this event. Cecily made a motion that we hold a virtual conference and convention during the first weekend in November, November 6-7, and have ACB radio stream it for us. The motion was seconded by Patricia Ganger. A question was asked concerning voting and Marj explained that our constitution does not permit us to vote virtually. Alice told us that the constitution committee will be working on an amendment so that virtual voting can take place in the future. The current officers will remain in place until the membership is able to meet in person. Someone asked about the cost of a Zoom account and Alice said that it will cost $15 a month. She feels that more people would be involved in our community calls if they were held via Zoom. Zoom would be needed to hold a virtual conference and convention. Mary Woodyard and Cecily Nipper, Jr. already have experience hosting Zoom meetings. Betsy has also been doing some training with Zoom. DJ McIntyre has offered to do some training on Zoom before the virtual conference and convention. After a lengthy discussion, the motion passed.

Cecily Nipper, Jr. made a motion that GCB purchase a Zoom account for $15 a month that can be used for community events and conference and convention meetings or any other GCB business. Jamaica Miller seconded the motion and the motion carried. Alice told us that she may not be present at the virtual conference and convention because of a cruise that was rescheduled. Phil Jones will be running the event with the assistance of the board.

Membership Committee, Amanda Wilson:

We had 162 members but lost three due to death. We have recently gained one new member so now have 160 members.

Reminders of our community calls are being sent out weekly to InfoLinke, NFB Newsline, and GARRS. Betsy sends out daily reminders.

We have four potential new members coming to GCB. Some have heard about GCB through Infolink, NFB Newsline, Janet Dickelman, and from the ACB national office.

Technology Committee, Steve Longmire:

 They are trying to make sure that our GCB website is totally accessible and has up-to-date information on it. The technology community calls are held on the first Tuesday of the month at 8:00 PM.

Legislative Committee, Betsy Grenevitch:

The voting access issues have already been discussed and are being worked on. The Commission for the Blind bill will have to be reintroduced during the upcoming session because it was sent back to legal when our original definition had been changed.

Youth Awareness Committee, Cecily Nipper, Jr.:

Cecily attended a meeting about what other states are doing with organizations to get youth ready for their next steps. There seems to be overlap between what the schools and VR are doing for the students. The Youth Awareness committee will be meeting to prepare a session during the virtual conference and convention concerning this topic.

Older Blind Program, Marsha Farrow:

We have helped three people since our last board meeting spending a total of $367.02. We also help the older blind people get connected with services in their area.

Scholarship Committee, Marj Schneider:

We presented two academic scholarships for 2020 at our prior board meeting in April. We hope to hear from these recipients later in the fall with their updates being included in the GCB Digest. We have had a couple of inquiries concerning the 2021 scholarships. The form is being worked on and will be put on our website in late October. The committee is hoping to get word out to the various colleges and universities concerning our scholarships. Marj has asked Deborah Lovell to prepare a resource list for our scholarship recipients. The students do not seem to have the knowledge of what resources are available to them.

Transportation Committee, Phil Jones:

Phil will be hosting a transportation call on the second Tuesday in September. He would like for people to talk about transportation experiences in their areas.

GCB Digest, Amanda Wilson:

The GCB Digest has just recently been sent out. It is also available on NFB Newsline and will be read two different times on GARRS.

GGDU, Betsy Grenevitch:

GGDU held their virtual spring meeting on May 16 via the phone. Their guest speaker was Jenine Staney, who works for AIRA. They also talked about updating their website and the need to increase membership.

New Business:

There was not any new business.

Brag and Steal, everyone: Alice encouraged each chapter to hold their monthly meetings via the phone to keep in contact with their membership.

Marj shared that their chapter has been meeting by phone. They have been invited back to their meeting place when they are ready to return but they are not going back yet.

Marj wrote an article for \_Next \_Door—a social media outlet used by neighborhoods—concerning her dog being attacked in her neighborhood. She received a lot of positive responses to her article. She was given the name of a local reporter to contact about this problem and Marj sent her article to this reporter. The reporter contacted her and told her that soon, an article will be forthcoming in \_the \_Savannah \_Morning \_News.

Next Meeting:

Our next board meeting will be scheduled when we hold our virtual conference and convention.

Chapter Officers:

Alice reminded chapters to give the names of their new officers to Betsy and Amanda.

Adjourn:

We adjourned at 12:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted by

Betsy Grenevitch, Secretary

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GCB Chapter News

The Athens Chapter hosted two special guest speakers, Tiyah Longmire, and Steve Longmire, who shared information about the Zoom platform. Tiyah asked members and guests about their preferred devices such as Android phones or iPhones. Tiyah explained that people can use Zoom to address the difficulties of meeting people in-person due to coronavirus concerns. Tiyah shared the steps for loading the application. Users can go to the Apple Store or the website zoom.us to download the app. She explained, the user who is the host can start the meeting and invite people to join the call. Hosts can share the invitation by text, phone call, or email.

For the last chapter meeting of 2020, the Athens Chapter will meet over conference call in December. The Athens chapter meetings are held on the fourth Saturday from 10:30 AM until 12:00 pm. There is also a game night planned for the chapter, but the date and time will be determined. For more information about the Athens Chapter, please contact Jerrie Toney at 706-461-1013, or via email at jerriemt2@gmail.com.

The Augusta chapter meetings are held on the second Saturday, at the Friedman Branch Library, 1447 Jackson Road, Augusta, Georgia 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.

The East Georgia Chapter reported that we are still meeting via teleconference. Members check on each other and report how they are doing. In August, Patricia Ganger presented a program on voting for government offices and important issues. Her resource is the Georgia Secretary of State’s website. There is a specific page for voters with disabilities. I you have questions, call the office of the Secretary of State at 404-656-2871.

In September, Phil Jones introduced the speaker, Debbie Hazelton of ACB Radio. She spoke about the many ways to listen to ACV radio including Amazon Alexa, Windows Media player, android, or iOS apps, etc. If you have questions for Debbie, her contact info is:

dhazelton@acb.org. In October, we will be holding a Zoom conference call to prepare for GCB’s State convention in November. Lucas celebrated a birthday, recently. Happy Birthday, Lucas. The East Georgia chapter meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month from 10:00 AM, until 12:00 PM, at the Conyers Presbyterian Church, 911 North Main Street NE, in Conyers Georgia. For more information, please contact Patricia Ganger at 770-853-2040, or via email at Patricia.Ganger@outlook.com.

The Greater Hall County chapter reported that we had our first meeting by phone on the second Saturday in September.  Our guest speaker was Jeff Thom who is the ACB president of Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss.  Jeff discussed the importance of AAVVL and how they serve their members. If you have further questions for  Jeff, please contact him at 1-916-995-3967, or via email at jsthom@comcast.net. His web site is aavl-blind-seniors.org. We are looking forward to our October meeting with our very own Jeremy Adams as our guest speaker.  Jeremy has a degree in computer science and worked at the White County Court House for many years before his sight loss.  He was always involved with the voting machines and has knowledge about voting.  The November election is fast approaching, and we need to be prepared. The Greater Hall County Chapter is working hard to stay in touch with our members during this coronavirus. Members receive occasional phone calls and two-chapter newsletters have been sent out to help keep everyone connected. Our chapter has decided to suspend elections until 2021, with all officers keeping their current positions. At our next phone meeting on November 14th, Mike Martinson from Vision Enhancements will talk to us about his new products. The Hall Chapter was well represented at the annual GCB conference November 6 and 7. Vice President Judy Presley reported on our chapter and she gave out the state awards. Our own Jeremy Adams received the Rhoda Walker award. Jeremy taught himself braille and then read braille children's books to school children. We also heard the story of Timothy Jones, who wrote the story One Adventure Ending—Another Begins, found in the Winter 2019 GCB Digest, and provided an update in the fall 2019 GCB Digest. Everyone enjoyed the beautiful piano and organ music presented by Timothy. How did you enjoy the trivia games at the end of the conference? That fun was led by our own Mary and Tommy Woodyard. Our chapter continues to meet via conference call on the second Saturday of the month, beginning at 11:00 am. Please contact Diane Roberts at 770-932-1112, or via email at harveyroberts2@att.net.

Members at Large:

The member’s at large group meets on the phone on the third Monday at 7:00 pm. For more information about the members at large group, please contact Betsy Grenevitch at 678-862-3876, or via email at blindangel61@gmail.com.

The Northwest Chapter reported that at their September meeting that Fred McDade asked if we had any suggestions for making changes in GCB. Ron Burgess wanted to go back to the regular phone calls for the special call-in meetings instead of using Zoom. we discussed whether to continue to have meetings at the bank or return to the library. We decided to stay at the bank for now. We discussed what to do about giving awards for the GCB conference.  we decided to talk about it in October.  chapter dues    of 15dollars   will be due in October. We will discuss where to have our Christmas party at the October meeting. Angela asked if we wanted to bring a five-dollar gift as we did last year For a Christmas gift at the Christmas party. Everyone told about the things they had done last month.

For more information, please contact Fred McDade at 706-278-4084, or via email at nwgachaptergcb@gmail.com.

Rome Floyd County Chapter:

The Rome Floyd County chapter meetings are held on the third Tuesday at the Rome Floyd County Library, 205 Riverside Parkway, Rome, Georgia from 11:00 AM, until 1:00 PM. For more information, please contact Tonia Clayton, at 706-346-8940, or via email at toniaclayton@comcast.net.

Savannah Chapter:

The Savannah chapter meetings are held on the third Thursday at the conference room at J. C. Lewis Ford, 9505 Abercorn Street, Savannah, Georgia, from 6:00 PM until 7:30 PM. For more information, please contact Marj Schneider at 912-352-1415, or via email at marjschneider@bellsouth.net.

South Atlanta Chapter:

The South Atlanta chapter meetings are held on the second Thursday, at the Piccadilly Cafeteria, 2000 Crescent Center Blvd. in Tucker, Georgia, from 4:00 PM until 6:00 PM.

For more information, please contact Brent Reynolds, at 404-814-0768, or via email jbr53@samobile.net.

Georgia Guide Dog Users, GDDU News,

For more information about the Georgia Guide Dogs Users group, please contact Betsy Grenevitch, at 678-862-3876, or via email at blindangel61@gmail.com.

GCB Community Phone Calls

The Georgia Council of the Blind has started doing community phone calls. The phone number for all the GCB community phone calls is 1-605-562-0400, and the access code is 780-5751, followed by the pound sign. If you cannot get in, then use this alternative phone number. It is 1-717-275-8940 and the access code is 7805751, followed by the pound sign.

Here is the schedule for the GCB community phone calls.

Seeking the Sunshine discussion group:

Marsha Farrow will discuss any concerns about our local events. This call will be on the first Monday of every month at 7:00 PM.

Tech Talk:

Steve Longmire will discuss things related to assistive technology. This phone call will be on the first Tuesday of every month at 8:00 PM.

Traveling:

Alice Ritchhart will discuss all things associated with travelling. This phone call will be on the first Wednesday of every month at 7:30 PM.

Reading with Touch:

Betsy Grenevitch will discuss all things associated with Braille. This call will be on the second Monday of every month at 8:00 PM.

Arts and Crafts:

Cecily Nipper Junior will discuss many types of tactile arts and craft activities. This phone call will be on the third Tuesday of every month at 7:00 pm.

Game night:

Mary Woodyard will lead us in different types of trivia games. This phone call will be on the fourth Wednesday of every month at 7:00 pm.

GCB Book Club:

We are excited to announce that the Georgia Council of The Blind now has a book club. The book club meets monthly via the telephone on the fourth Thursday at 7:30 p.m. Judy Presley and Deborah Lovell co-host the book discussions. All books selected are available through GLASS and are available for download from BARD. We are always seeking suggestions for future books and encourage others to lead the book group.

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Update on Timothy Jones

I am sorry it has been so long since I have given you all an update, but life as a Graduate student is busy!  As some of you may know, I graduated from Mercer University last Spring (2019) with my Bachelor of Music (summa cum laude) and started work last Fall (2019) on my master’s degree in Piano Pedagogy at Georgia State University.  So far, it has been great!  Georgia State is very, very accommodating to the visually impaired, and they are up to date with the latest technology and services for the blind.  My teachers have been great too, extremely easy to work with. One of them has even offered to teach me how to tune pianos (for no charge) so I will, Lord willing, not only be able to work teaching Visually Impaired and sighted students to play the piano but can tune pianos as well! I am this semester doing my practicum, which is essentially student teaching.  I had originally lined up working with blind students at CVI, but then, COVID-19 came along and CVI closed all they are after school and summer programs, so, it was impossible to meet students at CVI. I tried to find some blind students online, but no luck there either. It is not impossible to teach piano virtually, but for beginners it is not practical as they need to be taught correct finger position etc. Yet, God has provided two young students in my own neighborhood, two little girls who live so close by, their parents are able to walk them to my house for lessons.  They are sighted, so I have had to be creative in working with their books and manipulative learning materials (a model of the grand music staff with all the notes, ledger lines, etc.), but so far, it has been great. I was also teaching a young blind middle school student to read music braille, but illness in her family, affecting her drivers who brought her to my house, together with COVID-19\_\_\_0 restrictions, have stopped those lessons for a while.  However, I am still virtually teaching her with online lessons in Assistive Technology, since her public school had given her, as extraordinary as it seems, little technological training and has not provided her any accessible hardware at all, not even a notetaker or laptop.  I helped her relatives find an inexpensive laptop and set it up, and have taught her to use JAWS, and gave her lessons in basic Word processing, working with email, and surfing the net.  Again--her school had taught her none of this.  Her parents also bought her an iPhone, and I instructed her on setting that up and using the many accessible features an iPhone has for the blind. So, my "toolbox" is becoming more outfitted with future work possibilities: teaching piano (and beginning organ) for sighted or blind students, teaching how to read music Braille, teaching Assistive Technology (from basic computer use to specialized programs), and (soon I hope) how to tune pianos. Depending on the student and their needs, some of these can be taught online or even via a phone call.  So, if anyone in the group or someone you know would like to partake of these opportunities, please have them contact me at timothy@byfaithnotbysight.net or call me at 770-212-0416.  Some recordings of my performances are on You Tube under Timothy Raymond Jones, and my website is <http://www.byfaithnotbysight.net>

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Update from 2020 GCB Scholarship Recipient, Daniel Cline

Editor's note: Daniel is in his freshman year at Mercer University in Macon.

I wanted to send you a message informing you as to how I am doing. College is going well for me and the scholarship you gifted to me has helped greatly. Thank you again for selecting me for the scholarship. Life in college is good and I am happy to be in college. It is good to be out of the house and on my own in a way, and classes are going well, with some difficulty in a couple of them with regards to learning the material, however, tutoring has massively helped with that.

I am currently living in the Plunket Residence Hall on the second floor. The room is smaller than I was expecting, but I am making it work. I have even got a fair bit of decorations in my room. I do have a roommate, though I do not see him much.

In terms of classes, I am currently taking Religion (Intro to New Testament), General Chemistry, Calculus 1, and Technical Communications (Intro to Professional Communication). All of these are going well, some minor difficulties in Calculus and Chemistry, though tutoring and SI (Supplemental Instruction) is helping me work through it.

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Member Profile: Jeff Stump

By: Cecily Nipper, Junior

At our recent GCB Conference and Convention, we had the privilege of hearing from assistant attorney general of Georgia, Jeffrey Stump. His story inspired all of us present for his banquet keynote. For those of you were unable to attend, part of his story is outlined in this article.

At the age of 19, Jeff was involved in a car accident that damaged both of his optic nerves, resulting in total blindness. Finding himself searching for what to do next, he attended a rehabilitation center for the blind in his home state of Virginia. The dream of a law degree inspired him to move forward. He attended the University of Virginia for his undergrad, then went on to law school, graduating in 1995. Audio and the help of readers were his means for going through school, but he has recently rediscovered braille and says, “You need every tool you can get.”

Jeff has a wife named Amy, two daughters, a retired guide dog named Xanto, and a current guide, Sadie, a golden retriever from the Seeing Eye. Working out, reading, and chess are some of his hobbies. He is an at large member of the Georgia Council of the Blind living in Dunwoody, Georgia. Since 2002, he has worked as a Georgia attorney general senior assistant. The successes that he has worked so hard for were a result of a positive attitude. This was what he shared with all of us during his inspirational keynote address at the banquet during convention.

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Neighborhood Safety for Guide Dogs

By Marj Schneider

Posted to Next Door, June 23, 2020

To my neighbors who are dog owners:

Please be more cognizant of the needs of people like me who depend on trained guide dogs for independent mobility. The Chatham County Animal Ordinance always requires that dogs be on leash or confined, not roaming, or running loose. A complaint about a loose dog can result in your having to pay a hefty fine.

On a regular basis, my husband and I walk throughout our neighborhood, as well as in adjacent neighborhoods. As usual, I was being guided by my Seeing Eye Dog. This week on Monday, while walking on Halsey Street headed for Johnston, my husband warned me a dog was loose. In seconds, the snarling dog reached us and began to attack my dog. While trying to maintain control of my dog and wanting to get away from the situation, I could barely keep my balance let alone get away from our attacker.

With all the yelling my husband and I did, fortunately, in this instance, the owner was nearby and heard us. She quickly came, grabbed her dog by the collar and pulled him away, getting snapped at as she did so. She left, offering no apology and luckily, this time, my dog was not injured. Imagine yourself in this situation, out of nowhere a dog is coming at you, you cannot see it, and you have no time to prepare for what could be an attack on your dog!

Guide dogs are far too often subjected to interference by being jumped or being attacked by loose or uncontrolled pet dogs. I have experienced this, to varying degrees, in the past 34 years with all my Seeing Eye Dogs, and certainly have with my current dog on a much too frequent basis. Though my dog is more distracted by other dogs than she should be, I try to stay always vigilant and take steps to control her behavior. Even a wandering friendly dog poses problem, making it more difficult for my dog to guide effectively. For me, that could turn into a very unsafe situation, because a severe attack can leave a guide dog not only injured physically, but fearful or overly aggressive towards other dogs, necessitating early retirement. That means the loss of a huge investment, both in the cost to the program where the dog was trained, and investment by the handler to bond with and adjust to a new dog. Having to retire a guide dog for such reasons is the last thing anyone wants to have to do!

As you and family members go about your daily lives with your pet dogs, please use that leash whenever the dog is out of the house or yard. Do not leave the leash inside or in the car, simply because your dog will only be out for a minute. Make sure you are fencing truly is effective for keeping your dog confined. Pay attention so your dog does not bolt out of the car or through the front door because it sees my dog passing by. If your dog does get loose because it sees my dog, go after it. Do not expect your dog to obediently come because you are calling it. In my experience with loose dogs, they never respond to being called. If a child in your family is responsible for taking care of the dog, make sure he or she can manage the dog and always knows the importance of its being on leash.

Remember that in our Savannah neighborhoods pedestrians are often walking in the street since we lack sidewalks in so many areas, making an encounter between two dogs that much more hazardous.

And while you may think your dog is friendly towards other dogs, that is often not the case when a dog thinks another dog is trespassing into its territory. Dogs communicate with one another in ways different from how they interact with people, and we often do not understand that communication. Remember, also, that my dog is at a disadvantage being confined by both a harness and leash and needing to stay focused on the work she was trained to do.

Of course, this is not only a concern for me. There are other guide dogs in Savannah and other neighbors out walking their pet dogs. We have great neighborhoods in Savannah, and though their walkability could be better, I ask you as a dog owner to take what I have said seriously and help make walking in our neighborhoods a safer, more enjoyable experience for all.

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Blind Lions of Georgia: More about Helen Keller and the Lions

By Mike Hall

Back in the summer issue of the GCB Digest, I wrote an article about Helen Keller and her relationship to Lions Clubs. It was an idea suggested to me by Marsha Farrow, who thought we should learn more about our history as people who are blind and as Lions. My last article detailed the formation of Lions Clubs International and concentrated on that memorable speech Helen Keller gave to the international association of Lions in 1925 at their convention in Cedar Point Ohio. That was the speech where Keller challenged the Lions to "constitute yourselves as knights of the blind in this crusade against darkness." What I want to do this time is to share some additional information I have learned about Helen Keller and the Lions. In reading Helen Keller's speech to the Lions, I had some questions about how Helen Keller got involved with the Lions and how she was invited to that international convention. My questions were answered in a most unique way. On our Blind Lions of Georgia conference call July 2nd, Lori Upchurch joined us on the phone from Baxley, Georgia. One of our members had heard her speak about Helen Keller on two or three occasions. What made the presentation so interesting is that Ms. Upchurch came to us as Helen Keller. She was so excited to be with us at our meeting and she wanted to tell how she became involved with the Lions. In 1921, the American Association for the Instruction of the Blind and the Association of the Blind at their individual conventions decided to form one foundation together, which became the American Foundation for the Blind. Moses McGill, whom Helen said was a very shy man, donated about $7 thousand dollars of the $10-thousand dollars needed to establish the foundation. He also became AFB's first president. McGill felt that the foundation should work to establish one system of braille that could be used globally, instead of the many different systems that were in use at the time. Helen Keller was interested in this project as well. It was then that Moses McGill asked Helen Keller and Teacher Annie Sullivan to fund raise for the foundation and for the Helen Keller endowment. Annie Sullivan, who was better at money than Helen, negotiated with McGill for a fund-raising campaign. Beginning in 1924 and continuing for the next three years, Helen and Teacher traveled across the country, speaking to 250-thousand people at 249 meetings in 123 cities. By the time they reached the west coast of California in 1925, Teacher’s health and eyesight were beginning to fail. Both she and Helen were physically exhausted. They loved the California climate so they asked McGill if the foundation would support them by paying their living expenses to stay in California and fund raise over the summer. However, the board decided to suspend fund raising until the autumn. Helen and Teacher were asked to return to the east by June 15th. Unfortunately, the two did not have the funds to make the trip. In the meantime, Lions were divided. They knew that they needed to decide if their money should go to help underprivileged children or to help the blind. The convention was organized in part to sway opinion toward work for the blind. Helen and Teacher were invited to come to Ohio where Helen would speak to the convention on June 30, 1925. In addition, Lions agreed to pay for their trip back east. But there was still an obstacle. When Helen went on stage to speak, the convention hall was a large hall, and the acoustics were terrible. The sound echoed off the walls. But God moved that day. When Helen began to speak, all three thousand Lions and Ohioans became incredibly quiet, so quiet that you could hear a pin drop. In the voice of Helen Keller, Ms. Upchurch described how the Lions "adopted us at that point and have never left our side."

 She talked about the millions of lives they have changed by supporting the blind. Continuing in Helen's voice, Ms. Upchurch said, "God closed a door and opened a window wide open." After the presentation, we asked Ms. Upchurch about Helen's Teacher, Annie Sullivan. Annie was the teacher Helen's family hired when Helen was 10 years old. It was Sullivan who used her controversial way of teaching to help Helen learn to communicate, dress, eat and all the basic skills. Helen always called Ms. Annie Teacher. Sullivan was always with Helen. After Sullivan married later in life, she still spent a lot of time with Helen Keller. Helen did have an assistant and secretary named Polly, but Teacher Annie Sullivan was always kept in the loop. Both Helen and Annie were very political, and they had their disagreements. But they always worked things out. Someone asked if Helen Keller ever married. She fell in love and was engaged, but her mother and grandmother did not approve of the engagement because they considered Helen handicapped. Her mother whisked Helen off on a train and she never saw her fiancé again. Lori Upchurch was always fascinated with Helen Keller. In the 6th grade, she read her story

and saw the Patty Duke movie. She admired Helen because she was a strong woman who inspired Lori to believe that she too could accomplish a great deal. For Helen, the places she went and the things she did, she never regarded blindness as a handicap. I hope you enjoyed this amazing trip into history. In closing, did you notice the name change? Recently, I learned that Georgia Blind Lions changed its name to Blind Lions of Georgia several years ago. I guess old habits die hard. For more information about the Blind Lions of Georgia or to get on one of our calls, contact Lion Marsha Farrow at706-859-2624, or via email at marshafarrow@windstream.net.

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GCB Scholarship

In 2021 the Georgia Council of the Blind will be awarding several academic scholarships of up to $1000 through the Al and Cora Camp Memorial Scholarship

Fund. Students who are blind, visually impaired, or sighted but financially dependent on legally blind parents, are eligible to apply. Applicants

must be pursuing a credential or degree in one of the following levels. A post-secondary education: vocational/technical school, college or university master’s, or a doctoral program at an accredited university.

Applications must be received by March 1, 2021. Download the Al and Cora Camp Scholarship Application from the Georgia Council of the Blind website:

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

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Georgia Council of the Blind Conference and Convention Overview

The Georgia Council of the Blind held its conference and convention on Friday, November 6, and Saturday, November 7, 2020. Our theme this year was GCB Community: Bridging the Gap.

The GCB conference and convention committee wishes to thank you for joining us for the 2020 Georgia Council of the Blind Conference and Convention! We are so glad you are here! It is our hope that this program will offer you the guidance you will need to join in on our exciting events on Zoom, Zoom Webinar, and ACB radio. Throughout 2020, this year’s conference and convention planning committee met regularly, working hard, and planning a two-day virtual event that we hope will be educational, enriching and fun for all of you. Please thank these people for the time and energy they have given to this very first virtual conference and convention:

Jennifer Bray, Marsha Farrow, Steve Longmire, Jamaica Miller, Cecily Nipper, Jr., Judy Presley, Alice Ritchhart, Marj Schneider, Jerrie Toney, and Amanda Wilson. Of course, many others deserve our appreciation, beginning with our presenters who gave their time and expertise while sharing their knowledge with all our members. We owe special thanks to our diamond sponsors, Vanda Pharmaceuticals, for helping to sponsor this convention. Thank you to all the ACB hosts who are volunteering their time to help us put on this virtual convention. We want to thank the entire ACB radio team, especially Tyson Ernst, Debbie Hazelton, and Rick Morin for giving their time to attend planning meetings, develop content, and stream this exciting event.

On Friday, November 6, 2020, we went on a virtual walk-through Zoo Atlanta. The Atlanta: Zoo 2 Your educational video series introduced some of the various encounters offered at the zoo. We took a virtual tour of the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center in Montana. This tour came straight from Yellowstone. The Discovery Center is an AZA accredited Not-for-Profit, wildlife park and educational facility offering visitors to Yellowstone a chance to uniquely experience the world of grizzly bears and gray wolves. All the animals at the Center are unable to survive in the wild and serve as ambassadors for their wild counterparts. We heard from Jack Lewis, Fred McDade, Timothy Jones, and Nancy Jones. We heard from all the GCB chapter presidents and representatives who spoke about their chapters, and maybe you will find a chapter near you. Next, we held our annual GCB banquet with Cecily Nipper Junior as our master of ceremonies, and the GCB President, Alice Ritchhart, gave her welcome speech to open our convention. Judy Presley, the chairperson of the awards committee, read the criteria and the recommendations then presented the GCB service awards to the following members. Jeremy Adams received the Rhoda Walker service award, Rodrick Parker received the Walter McDonald service award, and D J McIntyre received the June Willis Guiding Eyes service award. The East Georgia chapter gave Cecily Nipper Junior and tiffany Montalvo a presidential appreciation award. The Rome Floyd County Chapter gave Debbie Young a presidential appreciation award. Alice Ritchhart gave Patti Smith and Cecily Nipper, Junior a Presidential Diamond award. Next, we heard from our keynote speaker, Jeffrey Stump, the Assistant Attorney General for Georgia since 1995, a University of Virginia graduate and a three-time Seeing Eye graduate. Then we enjoyed presentations of the GCB state and local affiliate awards. Finally, after the banquet, Jamaica Miller took charge of the night Cap which was, a Zoom event where the community gathered, and each person shared with everyone else their favorite part about the day’s events

On Saturday, November 7, 2020, we heard from our exhibitors as each of them gave a brief presentation. The contact information for each exhibitor is listed below.

Vanda Pharmaceuticals. Vicki Preddy, MSN RN – Nurse Educator, Southeast, Vicki.preddy@vandapharma.com, Cell: 202-578-9060, 2200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW Suite 300. Washington, DC 20037, [www.non24.com](http://www.non24.com)

Georgia Library for Accessible Services (GLASS). 55 Park Place, NE, Suite 300, Atlanta, GA 30303. Phone: 404-657-1452, or 1-800-248-6701, Fax: 404-657-1459. Website: [www.georgialibraries.org/glass](http://www.georgialibraries.org/glass), Email: glass@georgialibraries.org, Hours of operation: Mon – Fri 8am to 5pm

Georgia Radio Reading Service Inc. (GARRS). 260 14th Street, NW, Atlanta, GA 30318. Phone: 1-800-672-6173. [www.garrs.org](http://www.garrs.org)

Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind. Phone: 1-631-930-9055. Email: consumerservices@guidedog.org, 371 E Jericho Turnpike, Smithtown NY, 11787, [www.guidedog.org](http://www.guidedog.org)

Guide Light Dog Products, KaeAnn Rausch. Phone: 1-781-286-1696. Email: guidelightdogs@gmail.com

Guide Lights and Gadgets Inc., Barry Scheur. Phone: 1-617-969-7500.Email: bscheur@scheur.com

Kustom Canes, James Boehm. Phone: (901) 483-1515 Email: kustomcane@gmail.com, kustomcane.com,

Learning Ally, Abigail Shaw. Email: afshaw@learningally.org

Newsreel Magazine, Kate Sniderman. Email: kate@newsreelmag.org

Pampered Chef, Teresa Fleenor. Phone: 1-812-614-8716. Email: teeann5000@comcast.net

Visual Enhancements, Mike Martenson. PO Box 49734, Athens, GA 30604-0734, Phone: 706-208-9391 Ext. 3, Fax: 1-706-546-1671.

Email: mike@visualenhancements.com, web site: visualenhancements.com

Following the exhibitors describing their company, Alice Ritchhart called to order our annual membership business meeting, we said the Pledge of Allegiance and sang God Bless America led by Betsy Grenevitch. Then, from the Northwest Chapter, the invocation was given by Sharon Nichols who said a short prayer.

Due to the COVID pandemic we held our annual GCB membership meeting via Zoom. Per our Constitution, since it was not an in-person meeting, we were unable to vote on anything, yet there were some great discussions and updates. We were led in the Pledge of Allegiance by Dexter Durrante, Betsy Grenevitch led us in the song ‘God Bless America’ and Sharon Nichols gave the invocation. Since Roderick Parker was not in attendance when we gave out the awards earlier in the conference and convention, at this meeting, he was given the Ronald McDonald award and thanked GCB for this recognition. The next two items discussed were the minutes and the report from the secretary and treasurer, respectively. Kay McGill gave an update on the older blind program and explained the program is funded and how Georgia is the tenth in the nation in the amount we receive from the federal government. Alice Ritchhart presented her president’s report and told us they have been working on two issues this past year, the commission for the blind and accessible voting. Now, she added, we have a bookkeeper who is doing a great job to get our records in order and this year, the bookkeeper filed the report necessary to present to the office of the Secretary of State. Alice spoke about the community calls GCB is having each week. In addition, she informed us Senator Kelly Loeffler has donated $3800 to GCB and that these funds will be used for technology for K-12 visually impaired students. Our last topic informed us that Vanda Pharmaceuticals sponsored our virtual conference and convention with a donation of $1,000.

Kay McGill Bio:

Kay McGill, Project Independence Manager, graduated from the University of Kentucky (UK) with a bachelor’s degree (cum laude) in Psychology and a master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. As a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and Certified Public Manager, Kay has been with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) her entire career.

Working as a Rehabilitation Counselor, facility and field supervisor, Employment Manager, Special Populations Coordinator for the Blind, Deaf, and Deaf-Blind, State Coordinator for the Blind and the Older Blind Program Manager sums up her prestigious career.

Adding to that, Kay has received awards from the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind, Vocational Rehabilitation, the National Federation of the Blind of Georgia, Georgia Council of the Blind, the Business Enterprise Program, Helen Keller National Center, as well as the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Although Kay retired from Vocational Rehabilitation December 1, 2006, she was rehired in 2010 to work with the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) as the GVRA Older Blind Program Manager, Project Independence: Georgia Vision Program for Adults Age 55 and Over.

Having been married for 30 years to her husband Dick, they are the aunt and uncle of Anderson and his triplet siblings Marshall, Harper, and Elena. Always interested in sports, she was an avid University of Kentucky basketball fan and her athletic collegiate venture was being on the UK Fencing Team.

For more information about Kay McGill, please contact her at 404-299-8638, or via email at kay1949@comcast.net.

During the convention, we had two breakout sessions, one about a youth outreach program and the other discussed opportunities for seniors. The Youth Outreach Committee Program included an informative program on advocacy for high school students as they transition to higher education. This would help with work training, employment with the goal to give students and parents what they need to know for a successful transition, what should be in an IEP transition plan, and what services VR could provide during high school years. Each speaker shared a brief presentation followed by questions and answers. Speakers included Stephanie Woods, Jeff Allen, Shirley Robinson, Mary Woodyard, and Thomas Woodyard.

Stephanie Woods, MS CRC Counselor, Georgia Client Assistance Program (CAPS), 123 N. McDonough St, Decatur, GA 30030, Phone: 404-273-1715, Fax: 404-373-4110. The Georgia Client Assistance Program assists persons with disabilities who are seeking and/or receiving vocational rehabilitation services by: advising consumers of their rights; solving communication problems; teaching consumers how to make requests; referring consumers to other agencies where helpful; negotiating for consumers; mediating disputes; advocating for consumers with VR; presenting requests to VR; and obtaining legal representation when determined appropriate. Their goal is to work in International Alternative Dispute Resolution.

Jeff Allen, Assistant Director of Blind Services for Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation. Jeff received his Master of Science Degree in Counseling and Psychology with a concentration in Vocational Rehabilitation from Troy University in 2010.

Beginning his career in rehabilitation at Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation, he started as a counseling intern and worked part time as a Social Service Technician in the dormitory. Over the past nine years he served in several different roles within GVRA with most of those roles being in transitions services. Those positions include Transition Counselor, covering Hall County Schools, Statewide Coordinator for Transition Services, Career Pathways Specialist under the E3 Grant, Policy & Appeals Advisor, and Jeff now serves as the Assistant Director.

Shirley M. Robinson, MS CRC, Assistant Director of Blind Services Vocational Rehabilitation. Shirley Robinson has served within the blindness community for 20+ years.  After earning her master’s degree from Georgia State University and CRC in 1997, she began her career as a vocational Specialist with the Atlanta Center for the visually impaired. This led to her present affiliation with the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency and vocational rehabilitation program where she served as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. In 2008, she completed the Vision Specialist Certification PROGRAM THROUGH Mississippi State University's Graduate Studies program. Then in April 2009, Ms. Robinson was promoted to the position of Rehabilitation Unit Manager for the Metro Blindness Services Unit.   In September 2016, Ms. Robinson was promoted to Service Area Manager overseeing the DeKalb and Rockdale County Areas.  Most recently, in October of 2017, she was promoted to her current position as Assistant Director of Blind Services.

Aside from work with GVRA, Ms. Robinson serves as Board Director At Large of the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind.  She also serves as a Board Member of the National Rehabilitation Professionals Division of the National Federation of the Blind.  Ms. Robinson also sits on the advisory boards with    Tools for Life and the Audible Universal Information Access Service.   Her passion is assisting the Georgia blind community and developing methods for improving the lives of individuals with disabilities.

From the University of Central Florida, Mary Woodyard received her B.B.B. in Marketing with a minor in Advertising and worked in the technology industry. Prior to becoming a parent to Thomas ‘Tommy’ Joseph Woodyard, Mary combined her technology experience with new information gained from attending multiple sessions of both Assistive Technology Industry Associations (ATIA) and the American Council of the Blind Conventions. All this helped Tommy utilize many low vision devices through both primary and secondary school. Mary and her husband Hal own a small business and she has volunteered for the last ten years as a technical producer at Browns Bridge Community Church in the Elementary Environment, Upstreet.

Over the past 24 years, Mary has volunteered in various school positions from Treasurer to PTA Vice President of several Forsyth County Schools. Along with that, she has volunteered with the Georgia Council of the Blind and the Council of Citizens with Low Vision. At the Macon School for the Blind, Mary served two years as the Parent Representative on the Smokey Powell Center for Assistive Technology Board. In addition, she has completed Audio Description classes from the American Council of the Blind’s Audio Description Institute. For more information about Mary woodyard, please contact her at 770-639-7092, or via email at marrywoodyard@comcast.net.

Thomas ‘Tommy’ Joseph Woodyard received his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Georgia (UGA) School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA). In May of 2020, he began majoring in International Affairs, minoring in Public Policy and Management, and earned a SPIA Global Certificate. Tommy is currently a 1L J. D. Candidate at Stetson University College of Law. During his primary and secondary education Tommy utilized many low vision devices including video magnifiers, accessible scientific and graphing calculators, magnifying microscopes and computers using screen readers and voice dictation. Graduating with honors from South Forsyth High School in Forsyth County, Tommy was named the ‘War Eagle of the Year’ in A. P. US History and earned pathways in Social Studies and Literature. While at UGA, Tommy became an Ambassador for the UGA Disability Resource Center’s Speaker Bureau. This enabled Tommy to meet with faculty and staff to give input regarding accessibility issues on campus. Speaking out as a ‘Safety Dawg’ Ambassador, Tommy was on a panel with UGA’s Emergency Preparedness Department which allowed him to give a disability access perspective to campus emergency preparedness. Combining both these positions, Tommy was able to speak to a representative from each campus building as a student Ambassador and effect several disability accesses changes.

While in school, Tommy used his early advocacy efforts to access higher education curriculum, then, in college, he continued these ideas regarding improving disability access. These important values have indeed shaped his legal career ambitions regarding his pursuit for a career in Alternative Dispute Resolution. For more information about tommy Woodyard please contact him at 770-733-2412, or via email at thomas.woodyard25@uga.edu.

The other program was about opportunities for seniors. This program featured free or low-cost continuing education opportunities for seniors. Wendy Mons with magnifiers.com talked about ways for the blind and visually impaired to access technology. Marc Arneson with Hadley School for the Blind talked about the many free accessible courses that Hadley offers. Carly Wehner from Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia joined us to share how the 62 and over program allows eligible seniors to enroll and audit classes for free.

Wendy Mons - Magnifiers.com, 6595 Roswell Road, NE, #224, Atlanta, GA 30328, (The above address is a mailing address only, not a store front); Email: wmons@magnifiers.com, website: [www.magnifers.com](http://www.magnifers.com/), Phone: 1-800-541-7903, Fax: 770-926-7883.

Mission Statement: Through professional guidance, Magnifiers.com is committed to helping its visually impaired customers locate, acquire, and use the most current and innovative services, resources, and tools available to enable them to retain and/or regain their independence.

Marc Arneson, Director of Community for Hadley School for the Blind, 700 Elm Street, Winnetka, IL 60093, Phone: 1-847-784-2775, Web site address: [u,](http://www.hadley.edu/) email: Marc@hadley.edu

Marc has dedicated his entire career to serving others in the non-profit sector. Upon earning his BA in Psychology, Marc spent the next eight years working in the state child welfare system. This included conducting diagnostic assessments and therapeutic crisis interventions, as well as teaching behavioral management strategies to at-risk youth, their teachers, and families. For the next 15 years, Marc worked in the field of infant adoption and conducted intake interviews and training sessions. At the same time, he facilitated support groups, managed a mentor-match program, and tracked organizational performance data to identify opportunities for better client service. His current position at Hadley is in brand development and community engagement.

Building organizational understanding and connections, Mark plays a key role in making sure Hadley continues to improve in their services to those with vision loss --- helping them thrive at home, work and in their communities.

The Special Interest Affiliate Showcase featured representatives from several American Council of the Blind SP affiliates. These special interest affiliates provide a forum for like-minded people to share their struggles and keep up to date on recent happenings. Panelists include Tyson Ernst of the Visually Impaired Veterans of America, Zelda Gephardt represented the Council of Citizens with Low Vision, Jeff Thom with the Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss, and Steven Salas ACB Next Generation.

Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss: Jeff Thom

Jeff Thom grew up in the San Francisco Bay area and graduated with a degree in political science from Willamette University in 1975. After that, he earned his law degree from Stanford in 1978 and worked one year as a disability rights attorney. Until 2010, Mr. Thom was employed with the California Office of Legislative Counsel and supervised the drafting of laws relating to health and human services, including aging-related statutes. For more than 40 years, Mr. Thom has been active in advocacy for persons who are blind or have low vision. He is a past president and current Governmental Affairs Director of the California Council of the Blind (CCB), former first vice president and current board member of the American Council of the Blind (ACB), and a board member of various blindness organizations. He is currently president of the Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss, the affiliate of ACB that advocates on senior issues, and is president of the board of directors of California Disability Rights. His life is happily shared with his wife, children, and grandchildren.

Council of Citizens with Low Vision: Zelda Gebhard

Zelda Gebhard lives in Edgeley, North Dakota.   Stargardt's Disease has been responsible for her current vision loss, but she was fully sighted for most of her life. Currently, she is legally blind and learned about the Council of Citizens with Low Vision International by attending their programing at ACB Conventions.

In 2015, she became a member, was elected as a Board Director in 2016, and currently serves as the First Vice President and Chair of the Membership Committee in CCLVI. She has also served on the Convention Planning, Public Relations and Youth Outreach and Support Committees.  In her state affiliate, Zelda has been the Editor, Vice President and is finishing her second term as president.  Her roles in ACB include being on the DKM and Auction Committees and the ACB Board of Publications.

Visually Impaired Veterans of America: Tyson Ernst

VIVA membership helps keep veterans informed of changes in the law and policy of the Veterans Administration (VA). These changes can lead to improvements in benefits for veterans with disabilities that are either service-connected or non-service-connected. VIVA publishes a newsletter several times a year. Contact Tyson Ernst, Acting President at 661-317-6143 or via email at Tyson.ernst.818@gmail.com.

ACB Next Generation

Get Connected with ACB Next Generation

There is a new place in ACB for members under 40. ACB Next Generation has hosted successful conference calls with around 35 participants per call.

Topics discussed on our calls include our goals and expectations for the organization, how we plan to stay in contact with everyone, and our plans for future conventions. We invite all members under the age of 40 to join us, and we welcome your support if you no longer fit into this age group. We meet on the second Monday of each month at 8:30 p.m. Eastern time, 5:30 p.m. Pacific. Dial (669) 900-6833 and enter code 3572595193 followed by the pound key. Or join the call through the Zoom Cloud app, downloadable from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.

Subscribe to our email list by sending a blank email to ACBNextGeneration+subscribe@groups.io. For more information, contact Amanda Selm at (502) 750-1774 or by email at alsmoot87@gmail.com.

Teams were made for a friendly game of virtual trivia, with Mary and Tommy Woodyard, which was followed by the board meeting. Finally, the 2020 GCB conference and convention successfully conclude with a lot of hard work, wonderful information, and many thanks from all the members.

Vanda Pharmaceuticals Available:

Our Diamond sponsor, Vanda Pharmaceuticals, was available for individual consultation with anyone who wants to call in on the GCB conference call line. Vicky Preddy will be present on that line to share more information about Non-24. Call: 605-562-0400, access code 7805751#.

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GCB Comments on the GCB conference and Convention

Jamaica Miller commented that she thought that the GCB conference and convention was an incredibly fun conference. She really enjoyed doing the door prizes and enjoyed having the conference be on Zoom.

Phil Jones commented that though this year’s Gcb Convention was virtual, it was still exciting, informative, and thrilling!  And even though we were not in person the technology made me feel that we were all together!  He really enjoyed the tours.  The interviews were fantastic.  The banquet speaker was very inspiring.  Even though he did not win a door prize, he sure liked the way they were presented.  The exhibitor’s presentations and the special interest affiliate showcase and the Seniors Program were super!  The hard work of the Convention Committee and others paid off!  Thank you all so much!  And a big thank you also goes out to ACB Radio for helping bring it all together.

Debbie Young commented that she really enjoyed the GCB conference and convention. She said that she liked the zoo tour. She Really enjoyed the speech given by Jeff Stump. She was really touched that the Rome Floyd County Chapter gave her a presidential appreciation award and stated that she is ready to go back to work helping us in person next year.

Janet Parmerter said she was overly impressed with the way everyone came together and embraced the virtual Zoom platform. Yes, it was new for everyone attending, but it was ever more frightening for those running the convention. Are there any little virtual blue hands raised, or how do I lower them? Am I muted or unmuted? Can you hear me or not? Is the screen share showing the Pampered Chef or not? is it blank? am I there or not? Did we hear the door prize number? Are all the speakers ready to unmute or are they even here?

Yet, through all the ups and downs, no matter what assignment anyone had, everyone rose to the challenge and took it seriously. Even with a few quirks and pitfalls, all attendees had a wonderful time and made the best of things with patience, laughter, and a good attitude. Kudos to all!

The End