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.

Summer 2019

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SHIP SHAPED or SHIP SHOCKED; there are none as blind as those who are at SEA!”

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From Your Editor, by Amanda Wilson

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

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Presidential Message

By Alice Ritchhart

I have always said that to be truly independent means one knows when they need to ask for help. I believe this is true whether you are sighted or blind, able bodied or disabled. Volunteers are a gift from God, and a lot of things could not be accomplished without their help. A prime example of how important it is to have volunteers is our 2019 GCB conference and convention held in Rutledge, Georgia, the first weekend in May. The conference would not have been such a success without the work of volunteers starting with our members who spent many hours planning and preparing for the event. No one in GCB is paid for their time when it comes to planning events such as our conference and convention. The other side of it is the conference and convention would not have been a success without the help of our sighted volunteers. They gave their time to help make sure everyone arrived where they needed to be, they helped serve food and helped with all the behind the scene things. So, first of all I want to take this time to thank each and every one who volunteered at our 2019 conference and convention. It truly was a success due to the endless and tiring work each GCB member and each of our sighted volunteers put into it. We do not recognize the work of our volunteers enough. There is one week a month in which the United States recognizes the work of volunteers and that is usually in April. I would propose that we should take time whenever possible to honor those who give of themselves so freely, and that includes each and every one of our members who volunteer as a valued member of GCB. Every time you attend a board meeting, every time you attend a local chapter meeting, or anytime you serve as a member of your church or Lion’s club you are giving of yourselves so that others may benefit who are blind or less fortunate. So again, I want to applaud you.

I do believe though with the way things are currently in Georgia concerning services for the blind and low vision that we as members of GCB need to do a little more to insure that those who are newly impacted with vision loss or who are young and lost in the mainstream school system get assistance in coping with the road blocks that face them. Therefore, I challenge each and every one of you to step up and give just a little bit more of your time and expertise to be sure that all individuals who are blind and low vision can become independent. Then in the future they too will give back to others. What can we do? Maybe mentor someone who is dealing with vision loss. It could be a senior, a student, or someone who wants to return to work. It might be attending an IEP with a student and their parents, or even talking with a parent to share your experiences so they can understand the full potential of their child. It might just be reaching out by the phone to talk and listen to an older person who is losing vision, or taking them out for coffee or a walk. It might be letting an individual who doesn’t believe they can now work due to vision loss shadow you on your job, or just sharing your work journey. It might mean getting with the legislative process to make a change. It doesn’t even have to be related to vision loss. Working with children or at a senior center, etc. where you share your talents to the community says a lot about what we are capable of. The possibilities are endless. If we as blind and low vision individuals want to survive and remain a part of all our communities, we must give of ourselves and step up, out of our comfort zone. This is just some food for thought, and Again thanks. Now, let’s get involved by doing some volunteer work.

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Georgia Vocational rehabilitation Agency

By Shirley Robinson and Denine Woodson

We want to thank members of the Georgia Council of the Blind for inviting the staff from Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Sensory Unit to speak at the January 19 Board Meeting held at Disability Link in Tucker Georgia.  Below is an overview of the information shared, as well as the contact information for the Georgia sensory unit staff working with individuals who are blind or visually impaired? On January 19th GVRA’s Director, Denine Woodson and Assistant Director of Blind Services, Shirley Robinson met with the GCB Board to discuss issues as they relate to services for the Blind and visually impaired.  Their goal is to enhance communication and strengthen relationships with the blind consumer groups in Georgia in an effort to improve services throughout Georgia, for blind and visually impaired consumers receiving services through the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency.

The following is a summary of the topics presented: Georgia Industries for the Blind, GIB; Vocational Rehabilitation, VR; Intake Process. The GIB call center, which is dedicated to completing intakes for individuals who are blind or low vision, is currently serving the South Quadrant to include individuals with blind or low vision, as well as individuals with physical disabilities, and anyone wanting to apply for services and are unable to travel to their local office.  Steps are being taken to expand to the West, East and Metro service areas.  Serving the entire state is not possible at this time, but the expansion of services is being worked on by the GIB and VR Sensory staff.  All of the agents employed at this call center are individuals with low vision, and understand challenges faced by persons who are blind or visually impaired.

  GIB call center number is (888) 226-3444. Statewide Training for Vocational Rehabilitation Staff Working with Clients Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired:

The Assistant Director for the Blind, Shirley Robinson, and the Coordinator for Blind Services, Paul Raymond, are providing statewide training available to all staff working with individuals who are blind or have low vision.  This training has been conducted over the past year through 7 Modules.  Topics include etiquette and myths about blindness, professionals in the field of blindness, how to interpret an eye report, understanding different visual impairments, how Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income is affected by employment for individuals who are legally blind and using appropriate assessments for individuals who are blind or have low vision.  The training also incorporates case management training and started with the referral process and goes through employment.  A repository will also be developed to provide new staff with the same training and will allow current staff to complete modules they may have missed.  Finally, this training has included local blind rehabilitation providers as part of the hands-on experience of understanding blind rehabilitation assessments and training.  This has also given staff the opportunity to meet providers in their service area.

Out of State Training:

In regard to the concern surrounding GA VR sending clients out of state for blind specific rehabilitation training, the following information was shared with the group.

World Services for the Blind: 12 GA clients were served in calendar year 2018.  11 on campus and 1 online. NFB Training Centers:

Blind Inc. 3 clients from GA in 2018, and finished giving services to one more individual who had started in 2017.

Louisiana Center for the Blind:

2 GA transition students during the summer of 2018. 4 GA VR clients in the program for adults. Alice Ritchhart asked why a client from Georgia was sent to World Services for the Blind only for Activities of Daily Living training.  The Director of Sensory Services, Demine Woodson and Shirley Robinson both responded that they were not familiar with this situation.  The group was told that clients sent to this program are sent their specifically for employment training.  This will be addressed at the Module 7 training where staff from WSB will be discussing their employment training programs. President Alice Ritchhart also asked why we were using a blind rehabilitation training provider from Tennessee, when we had Vision Rehabilitation Services providing services in West Georgia.  Shirley Robinson shared with the group that this provider was being utilized to provide services in the most Northern counties of West Georgia, and they were not providing services in Rome, where VRS was serving clients.  GCB member Deborah Lovell commented that the use of this provider may also be related to how soon clients in these outlying areas can be served. Employment:

Below are the employment numbers from the past 3 years shared with the group. Blind 147 were employed with an average wage of $13.73; Deaf/Blind 6 were employed with an average wage of $13.33; Other Visual Impairment 156 was employed with an average wage of $12.86. Total Employment was 309 with a Total Average Wage of $13.29; Older Blind Program or Project Independence. One of the GCB members presented a concern regarding a blind senior citizen receiving services in Georgia.  Denine Woodson shared information on the Older Blind Program, which is available to individuals who are 55 and older and are blind or have low vision needing independent living training.

Transition:

Shirley Robinson shared with the group the importance of educating our blind and low vision youth on blind rehabilitation professions.  There is a shortage of blind rehabilitation professionals across the country, and these are viable employment opportunities. The idea of GCB identifying blind rehabilitation professionals within their membership who could potentially provide transition services as GCB as the provider. Below is the contact information for Blind and Visually Impaired Sensory Unit Staff:

Denine Woodson, Director of Sensory Services, Office phone: 404-392-3239, Georgia Relay: 711, 1575 Highway 34 East, Newman GA 30265, Email: [Denine.Woodson@ablegeorgia.ga.gov](mailto:Denine.Woodson@ablegeorgia.ga.gov)

 Shirley Robinson, Assistant Director of Blind Services Vocational Rehabilitation, 200 Piedmont Avenue Southeast, West Tower, Suite 502A, Atlanta GA 30334, phone #: 404-783-3545, email: [Shirley.robinson@gvs.ga.gov](mailto:Shirley.robinson@gvs.ga.gov)

 Paul Raymond, Statewide Blind Services Coordinator, and Specialty Services, Phone #: 770-500-9160, Office: phone #: 478-757-4091, Georgia Relay: 711, 3586 Riverside Drive, Suite, Macon GA 30334, PO Box 7839, Macon GA 31210-7839, email: [Paul.Raymond@ablegeorgia.ga.gov](mailto:Paul.Raymond@ablegeorgia.ga.gov)

 Rebecca Cowan- Story, State Coordinator of Deafblind Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation, phone #: 404-783-4193, Office phone #: 706-295-6407, Georgia Relay: 711, 450 Riverside Parkway, Suite 200, Rome GA 30161, email: [Rebecca.Cowan-Story@ablegeorgia.ga.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Cowan-Story@ablegeorgia.gagov)

Kay McGill, Program Manager, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, Office phone #: 770-414-3006, Fax: 770-414-2613, Georgia Relay: 711, 2082 East Exchange Place, Suite 120, Tucker GA 30084, email: [kay.mcgill        @gvs.ga.gov](https://gvra-my.sharepoint.com/personal/shirley_robinson_ablegeorgia_ga_gov/Documents/My%20Documents/Sensory%20Unit/Special%20Meetings/January%2019%202019%20GCB%20Board%20Meeting/kay.mcgill%09@gvs.ga.gov)   <https://gvs.georgia.gov/project-independence>

It was a pleasure meeting with the GCB Board, and we look forward to working more closely with GCB to improve blind rehabilitation services in Georgia.

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Member Profile:

Patricia Cox Ganger

By, Cecily Nipper, Junior

This article is to introduce you to the new president of the East Georgia Chapter, Patricia Cox Ganger. She is a 29-year-old wife and mother, associated with the East Georgia Chapter of GCB for most of her life. In fact, she was only 6 or 7 when her family began attending chapter meetings. She was born with several eye conditions such as optic nerve coloboma, retinal coloboma, strabismus and nystagmus. When Patricia was in the fourth grade, she also had a retinal detachment. Depending on lighting conditions and how tired she is, Patricia has one functioning eye that sees at about 20/200-20/400, while her other eye is prosthetic.

After meeting her husband, Arthur Ganger, in middle school, they dated for 11 years before getting married on May 23rd, 2015. Just after their third anniversary, their daughter, Ada Ruth Ganger was born, on May 25th, 2018, and now, their home is complete with a cat named Thomas and a turtle named Yoshi.

At Berry College in Rome, GA, Patricia did her undergrad where she majored in Psychology and minored in Sociology. Then, she went on to earn a master’s degree from Florida State University, in Curriculum and Instruction for students who are blind and visually impaired. Later, she taught at Arlington Public Schools from 2015-2018 and lived in Northern Virginia just outside Washington, D.C. during that time. Patricia and her family recently moved back to Georgia! Starting in August, she will be working at Parkview High School, her Alma Mater, as a teacher of the visually impaired while living in Snellville. When asked about the challenges of being a visually impaired mom, Patricia had this to say:

“There are things I worried about and still worry about, but Ada is an awesome baby and we are doing great! My favorite resource for parenting is <https://blindmotherhood.com>.”

Shortly after she and Arthur determined they would be moving back to Georgia, in October 2018, Patricia was elected as president of the East Georgia Chapter of the GCB. Patricia’s biggest goals for her time as president are to raise awareness of issues facing people with visual impairments and to engage younger members.

“Being visually impaired is a part of who I am,” Patricia said. “It always has been and always will be. It is at the heart of my career and my volunteer service. I have no idea who I would be without it but at the same time, it is not the only thing that makes up who I am. I can think of myself in the context of being a teacher, being Jewish, or being a wife and mom but they are all just parts of who I am. Being visually impaired is just like that to me, part of me.”

In conclusion, I would like to thank Patricia for agreeing to be interviewed. We at the East Georgia Chapter look forward to serving alongside her in the years ahead.

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Georgia council of the Blind Chapter News

Athens:

Athens:

The Athens chapter reported at our March meeting that Jonathan Perry explained how to use the ARIA glasses. At our April meeting, we heard from a representative from the NFB Newsline program. We are planning a picnic for some time in September. The Athens chapter meetings are held at MULTIPLE Choices at 145 Barrington Drive in Athens, Georgia on the fourth Saturday, from 10:30 am until 12:00 pm. For more information, please contact Jerrie Toney at 706-461-1013, or via email atjerriemt2@gmail.com.

The Augusta chapter reported that in January the ADA Coordinator from the office of Augusta Compliance updated us on Augusta’s efforts relating to the ADA and ways we could assist and advocate for our needs. In, February Kay, McGill updated us on the Older Blind Program.  In April, we hosted a technology social for the blind veterans at the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center.  4 members attended the state convention in May.  Ronald Worley received the Loving Cup from our chapter.  In June we are planning a chapter social/dinner. We are planning to host a technology event every quarter.  The technology committee is hard at work planning the next one. The Augusta chapter meetings are held at the Friedman Branch Library, which is located at 1447 Jackson Road, in Augusta, Georgia, on the second Saturday from 10:00 pm until 12:00 pm. For more information, please contact Deborah Lovell at 706-72-4054, or via email at [lovell.d2000@gmail.com](mailto:lovell.d2000@gmail.com).

East Georgia Chapter:

The East Georgia Chapter reported that in February, Lilianna Hanley spoke to us about the Bible ministry and legacy she carries on. She distributes sermons and studies to Blind people globally. Lilianna has a lending library. She also offers counseling via telephone. Her father was a minister and along with her mother this wonderful Bible ministry was established. In March, Rosetta Brown spoke to us about herbal medicine; you have an herbal garden in your kitchen cabinet. The trees and flowers in your backyard contain medicinal herbal properties to enable the body to function better. Rosetta touched on Ayurveda, Chinese, and Western herbs. She passed around samples of herbs and essential oils to be examined and smelled. The samples were labeled in print and Braille. She brought herbal books, and provided contact information for local herbalists and Natural Spa soap companies. A recorded message was played of John Birthtime of Logos Nutritionals.com which told about his Birtsteimer Wellness Protocol. His products were displayed. Thanks for all that assisted: Elsie for brailing, Cecily, Ann, And Brenda. In April, Ann Wheeler spoke to us about the “The Education of Little Tree by Forest Carter whose real name was Acer Earl Carter. Ann read this book earlier in life and reread it for a book report for her book club. The theme of the book selection was down memory lane. This book was listed on The New York Times Best Sellers List as Fiction and then Non-fiction because of the controversy surrounding the author. She held us spellbound as the story of Little Tree unfolded. Vicariously, we were transported into Little Tree’s world. This is a good book for children and adults. You can get it from NLS and is still in print. Ann encouraged us to be storytellers. It can be interesting and fun. We welcome Lucas as an Associate Member to the chapter. Also, Lucas is the second Person to receive assistance through “The Brandy Jones Memorial Fund”. Patricia ganger presented him with a new Laptop Computer, JAWS, and a Microsoft Office Key. This enables Lucas to utilize His school training at home. Lucas recently won the Regional Braille Challenge at the Georgia Academy for The Blind IN Macon, Georgia. The Braille Challenge is a Braille test. The test is divided into 3 parts; Spelling, proofreading, and Reading comprehension. Lucas scored highest of the 6 other children in his group. He was awarded a Certificate of Participation, crowned first place winner, and given a gift card. Congratulations, Lucas. He moves on towards the National Braille Challenge and Participating in the Sophomore Braille Challenge next year at the Georgia Academy for the Blind. He is a 10-year-old fourth grade student at South Salem Elementary School in Covington, GA. Lucas loves to go fishing. His dream is to become an Air and Heating Technician and is already becoming an expert in that area. We will follow the progress of Lucas and keep the Digest updated. Era Jarrard Joined East Georgia Chapter. She is the Sister of Brandy Jones, continuing to carry on the Legacy and benevolence of Brandy L. Jones. Era is an entrepreneur and CEO in her own right. She supported Brandy in Stars, Inc. as President and designed and founded BEJ, Inc. to further support and supply Stars. Her Love and total devotion continues to honor her Beloved sister, Brandel Lene Jones. Era has provided Brandy’s Bio and Story of Amy to be shared with this year’s convention attendees. Make it a point to meet her at the convention. It will be a rewarding experience you will cherish. On March 2, 2019, Rita Harris received an award for New Voices in Leadership, which was presented by District Governor Dede Demarks and Lions Club International Director Tom Gordon at the District 18-I Lions Convention. Rita Harris received The New Voices in Leadership Award. Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta International Airport Concourse F has a wall featuring graphic art of Rita Harris and her guide dog Madden. The wall also features a poem entitled, Journey to Light, written by Rita Harris, that poem is printed on plaques and is also in braille. The East Georgia chapter meetings are held at the Covington First United Methodist Church which is located at 1113 Conyers Street in Covington, Georgia. Their meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month from 10:00 AM until 12:00 pm. For more information, please contact Patricia Ganger at or via email a t 770-853-2040, or via email at [Patricia.Ganger@outlook.com](mailto:Patricia.Ganger@outlook.com).

Greater Hall:

The Greater Hall County Chapter reported that we kicked off 2019 with some special speakers.  In January, our guests were Dr. Robert Powers, Dr. Greg Kavalo and physical therapy students Erin, Tommy and Mitchel from the University of North Georgia’s Department of Physical Therapy.  They are conducting research into blindness and its effect on one’s walking gait, which also affects the cardiovascular system.  They are also studying the impact of guide dog use on the musuloskeletal system.  February’s speakers were Asha Hagood and Vanessa Meadows of the GLASS library.  They shared great information on the library’s services and devices for the blind.  They mentioned many new classes and clubs operating through GLASS.  Vanessa mentioned that the library is currently housed on the Georgia State University campus while renovations are being done at the main library.  In March, our speaker was Dr. Stephanie Vanderveldt, a retinal specialist with Georgia Retina.  Dr. Vanderveldt focused on Age-related Macular Degeneration, or AMD.  She explained the two types of AMD, wet and dry, in a very unique and unforgettable way.  She gave the analogy that the retina is similar to a concrete driveway.  Dry AMD is like cracks appearing across the driveway.  The cracks decrease vision.  Wet AMD involves leaky blood vessels that are similar in nature to weeds growing through the cracks in the driveway.  The current treatment for wet AMD includes shots in the eye to diminish the leaky blood vessels, which Dr. Vanderveldt said is likened to weed killer on weeds.  Dr. Vanderveldt said researchers are currently working on possible treatments that could potentially heal the dry degeneration of the retina or, in her words, “seal the cracks in the driveway.”  Our April meeting focused on transportation options for the blind and visually impaired.  We had a panel discussion with representatives of different modes of transportation.  Our panel guests included members Mike Hall and Bob McGarry along with Ms. Dana Chapman of ITN Lanier and Mr. Jeff Wimpy of Hall Area Transit.  We discussed negotiating price, accommodating accessible equipment, and accessing available services.  It was a very informative meeting and equipped attendees to advocate for rides in their communities. We welcomed new member, Ms. Ginger Workman, in February.  In March, we welcomed new members, Kenneth and Dinah Smith, and Ms. Geneva Ellwell. The Greater Hall County chapter meetings are held at the Smokey Springs Retirement Residence at 940 South Enota Drive in Gainesville, Georgia, on the second Saturday from 10:00 am until 12:00 pm. For more information, please contact Diane Roberts at 770-932-1112, or via email at [harveyroberts2@att.net](mailto:harveyroberts2@att.net).

North Central:

The North Central Georgia Chapter of the Blind reported that we have a new meeting day and now a permanent meeting location! NCGC is now meeting on the last Thursday of the month from 11:00 AM until 1:00 PM at the Jasper United Methodist Church, Room 106. We are so excited about our new location. At our last meeting, we welcomed three new people to our group; enjoyed refreshments donated by the local Bojangles and discussed some ideas for upcoming fundraisers. The majority of the meeting was dedicated to Scott Rumery, who discussed assistive technology for the iPhone user and the different apps that can be used. He demonstrated how to use Seeing A I and Aira. At our next meeting, we will be welcoming Nancy Parkins-Bashizi from VRS who will be speaking about the services available at her organization. The North Central Georgia Chapter meetings are held at the Jasper United Methodist church which is located at 85 West Church St in Jasper, Georgia, on the fourth Thursday from 11:00 until 1:00 pm. For more information, please contact Bronwyn Rumery at 706-669-2115 or via email at [northcentral.ga.chapter@gmail.com](mailto:northcentral.ga.chapter@gmail.com).

Northwest chapter:

The Northwest chapter reported that in January, we discussed revising the bylaws for our chapter. We stated that Sharon Nichols and Ron Burgess are having surgery. In February, we had Lacey Wilson from the chamber of commerce to come and speak to us about the visitor center, walker rocks, small business training, QuickBooks, and leadership program. We discussed community events in local area of which we can set up a table and promote our chapter. IN March, we had Matt Henderson to come and speak to us about working with the blind; he has 72 clients in 16 counties and spoke about working with the signal center. In addition, he works with vocational evaluations to put you in a job based on your limitations. Signal center camp this year will be on the third week of June for ages 14-18, and the third week in July for ages 19-22. Marsha farrow talked about the conference coming up and also Lions camp in Waycross. Pagiel Griffith spoke of his experience last year while attending Lion’s camp that. Marsha Farrow spoke about insurance for GCB through Philadelphia insurance, which each chapter would pay partial payment for the coverage. Fred McDade asked Pagiel to tell the group of his many talents, which include, the violin, singing songs on various subjects and gives all his credit and talent to God. John and Bethany Leigh are planning a baseball trip to Rome with Fred McDade, a former professional baseball player. Our entire chapter is welcomed to attend. Bethany Leigh will be setting a table up at Lafayette chamber of conference luncheon on March 26, 2019, to help get the word out about our group among some city officials. In April, we discussed the city of Lafayette luncheon which was attended by John Leigh, Bethany Leigh, Pagiel Griffith, and Sharon Nichols. We had a table set up with Pagiel Griffith and Sharon Nichols showing people many gadgets that are used for the blind. There was much interest and input from those attending. Bethany spoke to the group during lunch sharing the group's purpose and focus. We had a wonderful time and were able to get the awareness of our chapter out to the city of Lafayette, Georgia. We are planning on taking our group to a baseball game on Memorial Day. The Northwest chapter meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month at the Lafayette-Walker County Public Library, which is located at 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).

Rome Floyd:

The Rome Floyd County chapter reported that in January, we discussed the activities that went on at the Sloppy Floyd state park back in December. We are planning on taking another trip to the Sloppy Floyd state park there later this year. In February, Sharla Glass spoke to us about Scrip talk Station and medication safety via phone. Scrip talk Station is a Med Label Reader Program. In March, Tonia Clayton, President; shared about her trip to Washington DC for the ACB Legislative and President’s Meeting. Her trip was sponsored by GCB Al and Cora Camp Leadership Scholarship. Onia Clayton shared details of the upcoming GCB conference Convention. Evan Barnard updated everyone on his latest travels and Nature for All Project.

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

Savannah:

The Savannah chapter meetings are held at the conference room at J. C. Lewis Ford, which is located at 9505 Abercorn Street, Savannah, Georgia. Their meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month at 6:00 pm. For more information, please contact Marj Schneider at 912-352-1415, or via email at [marjschneider@bellsouth.net](mailto:marjschneider@bellsouth.net).

South Atlanta:

The South Atlanta Chapter meetings are held at the Piccadilly Cafeteria, which is located at 2000 Crescent Center Boulevard in Tucker, Georgia on the third Thursday from 4:00 until 6:00 pm. For more information, please contact Brent Reynolds at 404-814-0768, or via email at [jbr53@samobile.net](mailto:jbr53@samobile.net).

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Georgia Guide Dog Users, GDDU News:

By Betsy Grenevitch

In conjunction with the Georgia council of the Blind conference and convention we had a meeting for Georgia Guide dog Users on Thursday, May 2, 2019. Besides conducting our business, we had two presentations. One was Marj Schneider, who spoke with us about the relieving harness. This is a harness that is used to help make pick-up a lot easier since it is collected in a bag. Our second speaker was Dr. Sue Ann Kalish, an associate professor of physical therapy at the University of North Georgia. She spoke to us about the findings of their ongoing research concerning the styles of the harnesses used by guide dog handlers and how these affect the risk of falling for the visually impaired individual. She also spoke about how some users of these harnesses are experiencing joint and/or shoulder pain .Due to her finals schedule she ended up not being able to come in person but would like to come in person at a future meeting. If you are interested in joining Georgia Guide Dog Users the dues is $15 annually and can be sent to our treasurer, Alice Ritchhart.

Her address is 125 Willow Pond Way Brunswick, GA 31525. If you have any questions please call Betsy Grenevitch, President, at 678-862-3876. You do not have to have a guide dog to be a member. All are welcome. For more information, 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)

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In Memory of:

Loretta McDonough, Thompson, 71, of Chesterfield, went to be with the Lord on Monday, December 17, 2018. She was preceded in death by her parents, George and Helen McDonough. She is survived by her husband of 20 years, Eugene C. Thompson Jr.; her children, David Carter (Donna), Daniel Carter, Carrie Luck (Chris), Donna Will, Allison Enochs and Eugene Thompson III; two grandchildren, Jessica Carter and Wesley Carter; and two sisters, Dixie Smith and Pat Blackwell. Loretta was a faithful servant of the Lord and a member of Hope Point Church in Chesterfield for over 30 years. She served on many church committees and carried out missionary work in Germany and Africa. She was also active in the Thrive Moms ministry. The family will receive friends at 6 to 8 pm, on Friday, December 21, 2018, at Blileys-Chippenham, 6900 Hull Street Rd. Her funeral was held at 11:30 am, on Saturday, December 22, at Hope Point Church, 10500 Newbys Bridge Road, in Chesterfield, Virginia 23832. Interment followed in Dale Memorial Park.

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GCB In Memory of: May 2018 –May 2019

Donna C. Culver wife of Robert Culver passed away on Monday, June 4, 2018.

Richard Robinson, Shirley Robinson’s husband passed away on Sunday, July 12, 2018.

Virginia Doane from the Greater Hall County chapter passed away on Wednesday, August 1, 2018.

Louise Elizabeth (Westbrook McGowan, Greater Hall County chapter passed away on Friday, August 3, 2018.

Martha Underwood Harrison Craig, Rome Floyd County chapter passed away on Monday, September 10, 2018.

Stella Carol Cone passed away on Thursday, September 13, 2018.

Paula Ball Newkirk from the Greater Hall County chapter passed away on Saturday, December 1, 2018.

Nebuchadnezzar Houston passed away on Saturday, December 8, 2018.

Loretta McDonough, Thompson passed away on Monday, December 17, 2018.

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The Parly Post

By Rodrick Parker

Motions you should know

Main motion:

Brings business before the assembly; permitted only when no other motion is pending; request for information; allows a member to ask a question relevant to business (but not procedure).

Amend:

Allows modification to another motion by adding, deleting, replacing words

Parliamentary inquiry:

Allows a member to ask a procedural question.

Division of the Assembly:

Demands a rising (but not counted) vote after a voice vote.

Rescind or amend something previously adopted.

Strikes or modifies motion adopted at prior meeting

Point of order

Calls attention to an error in procedure

Commit or Refer

Allows a matter to be sent to a committee to consider and report back

Previous question

Ends debate immediately and proceeds to vote

Appeal

Takes decision from chair and gives to assembly

Call for the order of the day

Alerts Chair to return meeting to agreed agenda

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News from the GCB Scholarship Committee

By Marj Schneider

In January the scholarship committee met and awarded two leadership Scholarships to GCB members Tonia Clayton and Teresa Brenner to attend The American Council of the Blind Washington Seminar held in February. Both Teresa and Tonia participated in training sessions held as part of the seminar and visited their congressional representatives. We can look forward to a Digest article from each of them about their experiences in DC. In February the scholarship committee began receiving applications from high school and college students applying for the Al and Cora Camp Memorial Scholarship, and after reviewing material they submitted, the committee chose four students to receive scholarships of $1000 each for the coming school year. All of the applicants had impressive applications and the committee conducted a phone interview with each applicant as well. We are pleased to be able to award these scholarships to students who are so goal-driven in their plans for college and beyond. We hope the recipients will be able to attend the awards dinner at our upcoming GCB Conference and Convention in May, but if not, you will have the opportunity to meet them through articles they will be writing for a future issue of the GCB Digest. As committee chair, I want to take this opportunity to thank those GCB members who have been serving on the scholarship committee with me: Dr. Philip Dillard, Deborah Lovell, Jamaica Miller, Granger Ricks and Tom Ridgeway. I look forward to continuing working with this great committee in the future.

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American Council of the Blind 2019 Legislative Seminar

By Tonia Clayton

On the week of February 24 – 27, I attended the 2019 American Council of the Blind Legislative Seminar which was assembled at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Alexandria Virginia. During the seminar, I heard speeches about three Imperatives that would be brought to the United States government of senators and house of representative. I was engulfed ay speeches from Cisco, General Motors and the Federal Commu8nication Committee (FCC) during this seminar. On February 26, we went to the federal capital to talk to our senators and House of Representatives about the three Imperatives that we wanted them to be concerned about for the blind. Below is a short description of these issues: Securing Independence for Medicare Beneficiaries

For a decade now, Medicare has refused to cover the cost of low-vision aids, due to an eyeglasses exclusion that prohibits the purchase of any durable medical good with a lens. While the regulatory exclusion was seen as cost saving by not covering eyeglasses, it has had negative impact on those who, through the use of special low-vision aids, could significantly increase their independence in the home. ACB believes that simple adaptive low-vision aids can have a significant impact on an individual’s ability to remain independent in the home. Such personal independence can have long-lasting effects toward aging in place, rather than have to pursue costlier institutional or assisted living care. ACB calls on Congress to re-introduce the Medicare Demonstration of Coverage of Low Vision Devices Act, which would measure the various costs and benefits of removing the Medicare eyeglass exclusion. This bipartisan legislation is a smart approach toward finding workable solutions that help seniors age in place and pushing Forward with the Development of Autonomous Vehicles, we are now at an exciting technological place when it comes to transportation. The potential for the use of autonomous vehicles for people who are blind is closer than ever. Such vehicles are already being tested in multiple cities. However, it is critical that these cars remain fully accessible, and that individuals who have the most to gain through such technology are not forgotten.

In the 116th Congress, blindness organizations and the auto industry supported legislation that would establish working groups to focus on accessibility and prevent discrimination in operating such vehicles based on disability. ACB calls on the 116th Congress to move forward with similar legislation that will continue to drive this technology forward. Procuring Accessible Durable Medical Equipment

Advancements in health technology have resulted in a watershed of durable medical equipment (DME) that monitors vital health activity and conditions such as diabetes, which is one of the leading causes of blindness in the United States. However, a failure by the DME industry to make devices accessible has raised serious health concerns by those living with such conditions that are blind and visually impaired. For instance, DME such as glucometers have notoriously been a challenge for diabetics who are blind. This can all change through the development of accessible DME interfaces like smartphone apps and other devices capable of using nanotechnology that can incorporate simple accessibility solutions. Congress can play a role in assuring that such DME technology adheres to the latest software technology standards such as Section 508 of the Rehab Act and that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) provide assurances that accessible DME devices make their way into the hands of individuals who are blind and visually impaired. ACB has begun to write draft language for legislation to ensure that all DME is made accessible for people who are blind or visually impaired. The law would push manufacturers to make the devices accessible at the time of purchase, instead of users having to find ways to make them usable. ACB urges the 116th Congress to explore new law to make DME accessible for all Americans.

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American Council of the Blind 2019 Legislative Seminar

By Teresa Brenner

In February, I was honored to receive a scholarship from GCB to attend the American Council of the Blind Legislative Seminar in Alexandria, Virginia. The culmination of the Seminar was a trip to our Nation’s Capital in Washington, DC. It was a  wonderful experience that I  would encourage someone who has never been, and who is interested  in the Legislative workings of the American Council of the Blind, who wants to learn more about how to help their Local, State, and National organizations further legislative ventures. If so, then this journey is one to explore next year. The meeting I attended was the Legislative Seminar on Monday. At the meeting we heard from a number of persons about the three () imperatives that ACB is working on this year. The imperatives are Autonomous Vehicle legislation, Accessible Durable Medical Equipment and Low Vision Aid Exclusion. Last year, blind organizations and the automobile industry began exploring ideas to make sure legislation was made aware the needed to be certain the blind community was not excluded in utilizing autonomous vehicles. The need to be sure these vehicles are accessible for us to use as well as our sighted peers. ACB is continuing to push forward with the plan to introduce legislation to make sure this comes to fruition.

Imperative number two: was durable medical equipment or DAME.  As technology continues to widen our access to the world, there have been many durable medical equipment devices introduced that  monitor health activity and conditions, such as diabetes which has become one of the leading causes of blindness in the United States . However, a failure on the part of the DME industry to make devices accessible has raised serious health concerns by those living with such conditions that are blind and visually impaired. For instance, devices such as glucometers have notoriously been a challenge for diabetics who are blind. This can all change through the development of accessible DME interfaces like smartphone apps and other devices capable of using nanotechnology that can incorporate simple accessibility solutions. Congress can play a role in ensuring that such technology adheres to the latest software technology standards, such as Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, and that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) provide assurances that accessible DME devices make their way into the hands of individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

Imperative number three: was Low Vision Aid Exclusion. In November of 2008, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) introduced a regulation that has had a detrimental impact on the lives of countless individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The intention of the change was meant to cover the exclusion of eyeglasses from coverage, but has ballooned to include video magnifiers, cuts, and other devices that would be helpful for blind or visually impaired persons. The Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies (DMEPOS) Competitive Acquisition Rule contains a provision entitled “Low Vision Aid Exclusion” which states that all devices, “irrespective of their size, form, or technological features that use one or more lens to aid vision or provide magnification of images for impaired vision” are excluded from Medicare coverage based on the statutory “eyeglass” exclusion. This directly affects the ability of a visually impaired senior or person with visual disability from living independently, being able to take care of their business and possibly interfering with their desire to continue living in their home and living a full and productive life on their own. If you are interested in learning more and possibly attending this informative meeting, I strongly urge you to make your application as soon as the information is mentioned by the Georgia Council of the Blind. Be aware, be involved and make a difference.

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Georgia Council of the Blind Conference and Convention Overview

The Georgia Council of the Blind Conference and Convention was held from Thursday, May 2, 2019, through Saturday, May 4, 2019. The GCB conference and convention was held in Madison /Rutledge Georgia. ON, Thursday May 2, 2019, GCB members met in the hospitality Room at the Days Inn hotel to mingle before checking in to their hotel rooms.

There was a Georgia Guide Dog Users Meeting at the church in Rutledge, Georgia.

Many GCB members went to register. They received their bags of goodies and their badges.

After this we attended the welcome reception where Timothy Jones provided musical entertainment for us. Timothy Jones has been a member of GCB since the age of 10, and credits the support he has received from GCB for much of his academic success in high school and college. He will graduate (summa cum laude) from Mercer University in Macon in May 2019 with a bachelor’s degree in Music Performance, having studied organ under Dr. Jack Mitchener and piano under Dr. Ian Altman. He is a recipient of the Excellence in Performance Award from the Townsend School of Music at Mercer. He has also received many regional and national awards. Timothy has worked since 2017 as full-time Organist and Assistant Pianist at Gilead Baptist Church in Macon, playing for both Sunday services and Wednesday evenings. He also gives local performances upon request. Timothy’s future plans include Graduate Studies at Georgia State University for a Master’s degree in Piano Pedagogy. He will also be studying piano tuning with a GUS professor, as well as honing his Assistive Technology skills. He hopes to pursue a multi-pronged career teaching piano and Braille Music to visually impaired students, working as an AT Support Technician, and giving piano or organ performances. After the reception, the East Georgia Chapter hosted many rounds of bingo games for us.

ON, Friday May 3, 2019, we started off our GCB conference and convention with our Opening Ceremony. During the Opening Ceremony, we were welcomed to the conference and to the Madison/Rutledge area Then, we had an opportunity to meet our exhibitors. They included the following, I tours; Angel Eyes Fitness and Nutrition; Georgia Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/I Can Connect; Georgia Radio Reading Service, GARRS; Georgia Guide Dog Users; Georgia Library for assistive state wide services, GLASS; Innervisions Neuromuscular Center; JW.org; Learning Ally; Magic Touch Jewelry; Multiple Choices (Flyers); Sunbright Web Designs and More (Flyers); Vispero (Freedom Scientific); VISTAS Center (Flyers) and Visual Enhancements. After that, we enjoyed our boxed lunch.

Ray Campbell, ACB Board Secretary was our Keynote Speaker. Ray is completing his final term as Secretary of the American Council of the Blind (ACB), having first been elected to that position in 2013. In total, Ray has served on the ACB Board of Directors since 2006. He chaired ACB’s Constitution and Bylaws Committee for six years, served on ACB’s Resolutions Committee and served as the inaugural Chair of what is now ACB’s Special Education Task Force. Ray has served as both Treasurer and President of the Illinois Council of the Blind and in several other positions. Ray is a well-known and respected Transportation advocate, having played an instrumental role in founding Ride DuPage, a 24/7 transportation service which has operated in DuPage County, Illinois since 2004. He served six years as DuPage County’s representative on the Metro Commuter Rail Citizens Advisory Board, and currently is Vice Chair of the Pace Suburban Bus Suburban ADA Advisory Committee. Ray works full time as Senior Accessibility Analyst for United Airlines, playing a central role in bringing accessibility to all parts of United including its website, airport kiosks and mobile app. Ray enjoys spending time with family, listening to older country music and listening to spectator sports, especially the Chicago Cubs, Green Bay Packers and College basketball March Madness. He and Karyn make their home in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

Many of the GCB members went on the tour of the Madison Cultural Center. The Madison/Morgan County Cultural Center houses several permanent collections: a history exhibit, a restored c. 1895 classroom, a permanent installation of period furniture dating from 1850, and arts and crafts gallery. The afternoon session consisted of different speakers that talked about being deaf blind. These speakers include Zelma Murray, Karyn Campbell, Dana Tarter and Rebecca Cowan-Story.

Zelma Murray states, “I began my career at the Georgia Department of Human Resources where I worked 20 + years as the Deaf and Blind Services Coordinator. I am a certified teacher in the areas of Intellectually Disability, Deaf Hard of Hearing, and Visual Impairment and am also a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. I served in both Putnam and Baldwin Counties as an itinerant TVI and O&M specialist for 8 years. In 2011, I accepted a position as an Outreach Specialist for the Smokey Powell Center at the Georgia Academy for the Blind. I have since become the State-Wide Vision Coordinator for the Georgia Department of Education.”

Karin Campbell told us, “I graduated from college in May 1984 with a BA degree in Political Science. I have been happily married for 21 years as of August 2018. While we do not have any children, we do have 6 nieces and nephews. At a small state agency which serves Deaf-Blind children, I work as a receptionist, a job I have held for 27.5 years as of this March. I enjoy football and baseball. As you may know, the Deafblind community is very diverse. This is because the range of combined loss. It can go from some usable vision and hearing to no usable hearing or vision and anything in between. I have a mild to moderate hearing loss and am considered blind, having almost no usable vision. My vision consists of light perception and objects up close with no detail. Wearing hearing aids, I communicate exclusively using speech and am involved in the Deaf/Blind community having served on the American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB) board from July 2008 to April 2014. I also have served on the ACB Sight AND Sound Impaired (SASI) Committee since 2000, becoming this Committee’s Program chairperson in 2004 and Chairperson of the committee itself in August 2009. It is a role I still serve in, until now. In addition, I have served on a couple of different Task Forces to explore the creation of a Support service Provider (SSP) program in the state of Illinois. One of these was run through the Chicago Lighthouse for People who are blind or Visually Impaired (CLH) and one was run through the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission (IDHHC). The CLH effort went from about 2002 through about 2011 and the IDHHC effort went from September 2012 thru May 2015. The final report from the latter effort should have been out in late 2015 but as with anything in Illinois, politics got in the way of this release. I have also helped the Illinois Council of the Blind (ICB) on issues of reasonable accommodation for those with a combined vision and hearing concern. Our greatest achievement in this area was the 2006 award given to a student at our adult training facility. I am currently participating in the Open Hands Open Access (OHOA) intervener modules through the National Consortium on deaf Blindness (NCDB) under the Illinois cohort. This is an opportunity for me to learn more about the community in order to improve my advocacy efforts and completed the first four modules in 2016.”

Rebecca Cowan-Story resides in the tiny metropolis of Adairsville, Georgia. Since 2011, Rebecca has worked as the State Coordinator of Deaf Blind Services for the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. Her professional journey began as an American Sign Language Interpreter for the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia after completing her interpreter training program in 1998 at Floyd College in Rome, GA. She went on to become a high school vocational instructor with the Jobs for Georgia Graduates program at the Georgia School for the Deaf, later serving as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the deaf before obtaining her current position. She still does not know what she wants to be when she grows up, but every job she has had in her life has been working with people that have hearing loss, and she has not lived a day on earth without people who are deaf in her life. Rebecca is currently serving as the secretary of the Georgia Association of the Deaf Blind. She is active with Georgia Blind Sports and Northwest Georgia Council for the Blind, and various other organizations, but gains most of her wisdom and insight for serving others at Pleasant Valley North Baptist Church as a follower of Christ. Rebecca graduated from the University of Kentucky with her Master’s in Rehabilitation and earned an additional graduate certificate in Deaf Blind Rehabilitation from Northern Illinois University. She is the proud mom of Luke (15), Mark (10) and Maggie (10), and proud human of two felines, Habankah and Hershe. Throughout her career, the lack of service equity for people that are Deaf Blind has fueled her insistence on raising the bar within the state of Georgia. Being selected to serve on the core team of the Deaf Blind Interpreting national training grant and working to ensure that national services are taken to the next level gives her heart joy. Big PT Squeezes.

Dana Tarter, a teacher for students with multiple disabilities, at the Georgia School for the Deaf in Cave Spring, Georgia, brings over 20 years of classroom expertise to her students. After graduating from Shorter College with a bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts, Mrs. Tarter pursued her master’s degree in Special Education with an emphasis in Emotional Behavioral Disorders at Jacksonville State University. As a lifelong learner she has since completed her Early Intervention Infants, Toddlers, and Family Counseling Certificate from Gallaudet University, and added a Teacher of the Visually Impaired endorsement to her list of accomplishments. She contributes her success to the many students that have been her teachers throughout the years, each one leaving a lifelong impact. She loves being an educator. She says her students teach her far more than she has ever taught them. That evening, we held our annual GCB Awards Banquet. Dr. Dede demarks; Lions District I Governor was not able to attend our banquet. Alice Ritchhart, our GCB president gave out three Presidential Diamond awards to Betsy Grenevitch, DJ McIntyre, and Cecily Nipper Junior. The Georgia Council of the Blind gave a plaque of appreciation to the Philadelphia Baptist Church and we gave a plaque of appreciation to the Days Inn. Judy Presley the chairperson of the awards committee gave out our service and chapter awards. The following members received service and chapter awards Judy Presley was given the Rhoda Walker Service Award. Wanda Vandiver was given the June Willis Guiding Eyes Service award. Linda Williams from the East Georgia Chapter was given a presidential certificate of appreciation. Cecily Nipper Junior from the East Georgia chapter was given a loving cup. Bethany and John Leigh from the Northwest chapter were given a loving cup. Ron Worley from the Augusta chapter was given a loving cup. Marj Schneider, the chairperson of the GCB scholarship awards committee presented the following students their GCB scholarship. Makayla Bouchea is graduating this spring from South Effingham High school in Guyton, Georgia. She will be attending East Georgia State College and then Georgia Southern University, majoring in business Administration, with the goal of working in human resources. McClain Hermes will be graduating this spring from Gwinnett Online High School and attending Loyola University in Maryland. McClain is a Paralympic champion swimmer and she will be working with a coach at Loyola as she continues to pursue winning medals in the next Paralympics and studying communication in college. Madeline Smith will be a senior next year at Georgia Southern University, where she is studying psychology and child development. She plans on continuing her studies to the Ph.D. level while she gains experience in helping others, working in her chosen field. Tommy Woodyard, who is known to many of us in GCB, is continuing his studies at the University of Georgia, majoring in international affairs. He hopes to attend law school at UGA as well, to pursue helping others through the law. During the next school year, each of our scholarship winners will be contributing an article to the Digest, giving all of us the opportunity to hear about their activities as they continue on the path to achieving their educational goals. After the banquet, we held our live Auction. It was delightfully fun, and we raised lots of money for GCB. Then, we ended the night with our annual game Night. Tommy and Mary Woodyard led the game event and gave us some yummy prize snacks.

ON, Saturday May 4, 2019, we held our GCB annual membership business meeting and received updates from different committees. Betsy Grenevitch read the business minutes from last year.

Georgia Council of the Blind Annual Business Meeting Minutes Ramada Inn, Gainesville, Georgia

Saturday, May 5, 2018,

The meeting was called to order at 8:36 AM by First Vice-President, Phil Jones in the absence of President Keith Morris.

In Memory Of: Cecily Nipper: Cecily Nipper read the list of those who passed away since our last annual business meeting.

Evelyn Rudy was born on October 7, 1925 and passed away on October 6, 2017. Brandy Ricketts Jones was born on April 1, 1949, and passed away on Thursday, November 23, 2017. Jim Parham, age 71, was born on August 8, 1946 and passed away on Sunday, November 19, 2017. Virginia Harris of Bainbridge, Georgia, passed away on Tuesday, November 21, 2017. Gerald Hancock of Athens, Georgia, passed away in November of 2017. Lincoln Marshall Ritchhart, Alice Ritchhart's nephew, passed away on April 4, 2018. Ann Sims was born on August 31, 1938, and passed away on April 16, 2018. Anne Dilley was born on April 15, 1959, and passed away on February 8, 2018. After Cecily Nipper read the list of those we were remembering, Fred McDade led us in a song. Thank You, Keith Morris: President Keith Morris thanked the hotel for having us again this year. Kathy Morris read a "Thank You" card from John Sims.

Roll Call: Those present were: President, Keith Morris; First Vice-President, Phil Jones; 2nd Vice-President, Fred McDade; Secretary, Betsy Grenevitch; Treasurer, Marsha Farrow; Athens, Jerrie Toney; Augusta, Kathy Morris; East Georgia, Cecily Nipper; Hall County, Roy Carder; Northwest, Charles Stubblefield; Rome, Tonia Clayton; Savannah, Marj

Schneider; South Metro, Lisa Jones; GGDU, DJ McIntyre; Member-at-Large Representative, Alice Ritchhart; Parliamentarian, Roderick Parker; Webmaster, Steve Longmire; and Digest Editor, Amanda Wilson. Guests and members present were Lilianna Hanley, Cecily Nipper Sr., Rosetta Brown, Chester Thrash, Tiyah Fowlkes Mansah, Ernest Bowles-Dean, Jamaica Miller, Evan Bradford, Robin Oliver, Debbie Young, Lana Carter, and Valerie Hester.

Approval of Minutes, Betsy Grenevitch: The minutes were read by Danielle McIntyre due to them not being prepared in Braille and large print to be provided in advance to members. Betsy Grenevitch made a motion and it was seconded by Fred McDade that the minutes be approved as read. The motion was approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report, Marsha Farrow: As of last week, in the main checking account we had $9743.90 of which dis4981.35 of this amount is for the Older Blind Fund that we have talked about in the past. The actual amount for the GCB general expenses is dis4762.55. We paid ACB for 180 members and three life members. Our total sent to ACB was $885 for this year's dues. We have two more members since that amount was sent in. GCB Conference Account: $2791.41. In March 2018, we received a donation from the Lions District Governors of $996. Some of this was for 2017 and the rest was for the 2018 conference and convention. We had an electronic deposit for $19.83, $302.50 raised for assisting someone to the conference and convention this year, and a debit of $81.85 for the roses for Ann Sims. We did not assist anyone coming to the conference and convention this year, so that money is still in the account. Also, and Cora Camp Scholarship Account: dis4388.28. This money comes to us from the Way Financial investment, for the most part. We had $615.95 that came in as donations and interest for this account. GCB Money Market: $5741.43. We received $.14 interest. Evan Barnard Account: $901.52. This account does not mature until May 9, 2018. Long Term Investment: $17,953.47. Our year to date interest total is $89.37. The total interest we have earned since we invested this money a little over four years ago is $953.47. Way Financial Investment: December, $65,471.37; January, $65,585.81; February, $65,471.37; and March, $65,714.50. Interest from this account is going to the scholarship fund.

Older Blind Fund: This fund is for blind people over 55 years old. We assisted a group of campers who were going to the Lions Camp in December. We also helped a lady get a color identifier for $101.95. Jamaica Miller donated in memory of Brandy Jones. Jerrie Toney told us that we have had a couple of deposits which make our balance for this fund at $5,130 and some odd cents. The report will be filed for audit.

President's Report, Keith Morris: President Morris said that some committees have been changed and that some should have been changed. He thanked everyone who helped him while he was president.

Convention Report, Judy Presley: She did not have a report concerning the conference and convention. We were told that GCB raised $288 from the bluegrass concert that was held on May 4. Alice Ritchhart suggested that convention reports be added to the GCB Digest. She made a motion which was seconded by Cecily Nipper that beginning with the GCB 2018 conference and convention that the report is sent to the GCB Digest editor to be put in the Digest that goes out after the conference and convention. The motion was approved unanimously.

GCB Digest, Amanda Wilson: The GCB Digest goes out via email. 30 people receive large print, cassette, Braille, and/or CD versions. We are planning on moving to digital cartridge soon. Marj Schneider thanked Amanda for the reminders that she has been sending out concerning writing articles for The Digest. Marj suggested putting Digest deadlines in each issue. Fred McDade thanked Amanda for sending him information in a format which he could read.

Finance, Jerrie Toney: the finance committee went over the budget and it has been emailed out.

Fundraising, Valerie Hester: There is nothing to report as fundraising is being done at the local level.

GGDU, Betsy Grenevitch: Betsy has been attending the ADA meetings at the airport.

Legislative, Betsy Grenevitch: We are still working on the legislation concerning fake service animals. A senator has required meetings concerning this Bill and Betsy will try to find out which senator is heading up these meetings.

Membership, Amanda Wilson: We have 180 members, which includes three life members. All chapters are very active having meetings once a month. The new chapter has 5-10 members. Roderick Parker asked how many new members we had joined this past year. There have been at least ten new members, not counting the new chapter, that have joined in 2018.

Resolutions, Alice Ritchhart: Debbie Young read the resolution for the hotel. Alice made a motion that on behalf of the resolutions committee that the resolution be passed. The motion was seconded by Chester Thrash and it passed unanimously. Michelle Grenevitch read the resolution for the volunteers. Alice made a motion and it was seconded by Lisa Jones to pass this resolution. The motion passed unanimously.

Technology, Steve Longmire: Some updates have been made to the website. You are now able to fill out registration forms electronically for the conference and convention. The Amazon Smile account is set up as Georgia Council of the Blind being an organization in the list. Steve will find out how much money is in that account. The link to Amazon Smile is not yet on the website. He hopes to complete this in the next week. There was some discussion about a question coming up when you first go on the GCB site and having to answer it before you can access other pages of the site. Steve is going to try and figure out if this might be a browser issue. There was some discussion concerning the colors that are being used on the site making it difficult for sighted people to read the content. Steve is going to set up the site so people can change the colors used when reading the text. Marj Schneider asked for help making Facebook pages accessible for her chapter members to post. Michelle Grenevitch will help her with this project. Tiyah Fowlkes Mansah explained that not everything purchased on Amazon qualifies under the Amazon Smile program.

Transportation, Alice Ritchhart: There was not a report.

Scholarship: There was not a report.

New Business

The New Chapter: Marsha Farrow has received the check and the roster for the new chapter. She had asked the officers to contact President Keith Morris, but they had not contacted him.

Recess, President Keith Morris: President Keith Morris called for a 20-minute recess while someone tried to reach Bronwyn Rumer via the phone concerning the new chapter. She was not able to talk at this time. We resumed the meeting at 10:25 AM.

The New Sound system: Keith Morris thanked Alice Ritchhart for the new sound system.

Installation of the new chapter: After much discussion, Marsha Farrow made a motion that we accept the charter as they have six members and have paid their money. She has copies of everything. At the next board meeting we would have more of a ceremonial acceptance and have the chapter members attend that board meeting. She asked Roderick Parker for assistance in wording the motion since it was long. Roderick suggested that the president had indicated that he would postpone the vote until the next board meeting. We needed to decide whether the decision of the president be sustained or overruled. Alice Ritchhart suggested that the motion be: "I move that we go ahead and proceed with the voting for the new North Central Chapter into the GCB organization." Robin Oliver seconded the motion and it carried.

The Location of the 2019 Conference and convention: DJ McIntyre made a motion that the At-Large members, East Georgia and Athens chapters work collectively to have a conference and convention in the Monroe or Covington area in 2019. Lilianna Hanley seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Tribute to Ann Sims, Marj Schneider: Marj Schneider gave a tribute to Ann Sims. She also wanted to collect donations to give to The Seeing Eye in Ann's name. The deadline for the collection will be on May 20, 2018.

Announcements

Marj Schneider suggested that we have the rest of the announcements during elections. She told us that her chapter is growing. She invited us to attend a conference call on May 10 at 6:00 PM. Their speaker will be Mel Scott, a blind entrepreneur who has a business called Blind Alive that develops fitness programs.

Elections, Deborah Lovell: Judy Presley and Cecily Nipper were on the elections committee with her. The slate of officers that they presented was: President, Alice Ritchhart; First Vice-President, Phil Jones; 2nd Vice-President, Ronald Worley; Secretary, Betsy Grenevitch; treasurer, Marsha Farrow; and Member-at-Large Representative, Valerie Hester.

President: Rosetta Brown nominated Phil Jones as president, and he accepted the nomination. After the ballots were counted Alice Ritchhart was elected as president.

First Vice-President: Deborah Lovell recommended that we elect Phil Jones as First Vice-President by acclamation. Phil Jones was elected as first Vice-President.

2nd vice-President: Jamaica Miller was nominated from the floor. After the ballots were counted Jamaica Miller was elected as 2nd Vice-President.

Secretary: It was recommended by Deborah Lovell that Betsy Grenevitch be elected secretary by acclamation. Betsy Grenevitch was elected as secretary. Treasurer: Deborah Lovell recommended that Marsha Farrow be elected by acclamation. Marsha Farrow was elected treasurer. Member-at-Large Representative: Deborah Lovell recommended that we elect Valerie Hester by acclamation. Valerie Hester was elected as the at-large representative.

More announcements

Betsy Grenevitch thanked the conference and convention committee and her girls for their hard work during the conference and convention.

The Brandy Jones Memorial Fund, Cecily Nipper: Era Gerard donated a Focus 14 Braille display for a raffle that will be drawn in June. The tickets are $5 each.

Marsha Farrow thanked Debbie Young for her assistance at the conference and convention.

Adjourned: We adjourned at 11:33 AM.

The business meeting minutes were approved by all. After this we broke up to go to three different sessions.

Cecily Nipper with lots of volunteers took the children to the gym where they had lunch consisting of pizza, garlic bread and the always popular, “Dirt dessert" which is crushed cookies with gummy worms. They participated in a tomato gardening activity provided by avid home gardener, Marj Schneider. Each child went home with their own tomato plant. They played a bean bag toss game where they earned prizes, card and board games and enjoyed playing in the bouncy house.

As for the teenagers, Marsha Farrow with lots of volunteers took them for activities and they had a pizza lunch. Then, from Hal Simpson representing Georgia Blind Sports, they learned about fitness and sports.

Hal Simpson was born in Greenville, South Carolina but raised in Sandy Springs, GA. Hal graduated in 1975 from The Citadel. He started Kingsfield Properties, a residential construction business in 1983. Hal married Linda Johnson Simpson from Dallas, Texas. They have two children: Lindsay Simpson and son Matt in law school at UVA. Hal helped organize goalball in Atlanta in 2003, coaching both youth and adult teams. He has coached the Atlanta Force a goalball team. In 2011, Hal founded Georgia Blind Sports Association. He has received two awards “Triumph of the Human Spirit Award” and “Helping Hand.”

Alice Ritchhart led the senior program where they had a boxed lunch with chicken sandwiches, fruit, chips, cookie and drinks. Ray Campbell, Steve Longmire, Jerrie Toney, and Sharon Nichols talked about different types of technology which could assist people with visual impairments to be more independent. Elizabeth Head talked about fall prevention.

Elizabeth Head, MPH: She is the Program Coordinator for the Georgia Department of Public Health states that her area of expertise is aging and injury prevention. She earned her master’s degree in Public Health from Georgia State University and has worked in public health for fourteen years. As a program coordinator at the Georgia Department of Public Health’s Injury Prevention program, Elizabeth coordinates the GOHS funded Older Driver Safety Program which focuses on education, engineering, EMS, evaluation, and policy aspects of older driver safety and mobility for professionals and older adults. She has worked with national, state, and local partners on a variety of injury topics including fire prevention, drowning prevention and fall prevention. Elizabeth spends her free time enjoying quality time with her family. Kay McGill gave us an update on Project Independence. It is a program for seniors who are blind and over the age of fifty-five. This program is provided across the state of Georgia. Kay McGill: With a bachelor’s degree (cum laude) in Psychology and master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, Kay graduated from the University of Kentucky (UK). Being a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and Certified Public Manager, she has been with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) her entire career serving in numerous roles and receiving various awards during this time. After retirement, she was asked to return to the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) to serve as the GVRA Older Blind Program Manager – Project Independence: Georgia Vision Program for Adults Age 55 and over and continues in this role to this day.

We ended our GCB conference and convention by having our GCB Quarterly Board of Directors Meeting.

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Georgia Blind Lions: It’s all about community.

By Mike Hall

It was one of those monthly, 8:00 P.M. Conference calls held by Georgia Blind Lions. We were discussing how to provide support to a blind gentleman who was assisting the Georgia Lions Camp with its website. Then it happened! Lion Marsha Farrow asked how we could encourage Lions clubs to invite more people who are blind to join their clubs and become active Lions.

That question caused me to think about what we, as people who are blind, can do as Lions. Then, I started thinking about what we can do as members of GCB. Finally, I began to consider what we can do as members of our local community. In this article, I want to focus on how we can involve ourselves in the local community. When I was a teen, I would sometimes question where I fit in. My brother and many of my friends could see, drive cars, play football and other things that I couldn't do. But I found I could listen and be part of the conversation. Through listening, I could learn what's important about a car or driving, I could appreciate the big football plays, or the bad calls made by officials. In the seventh grade, it was through listening that I was able to inform my science teacher of the first heart transplant. I heard it on the radio. In today's world, we need more people who have time just to listen and pay attention to the other person. Could your GCB chapter, your church or neighbors use a good listener? Another thing I found that I could do as a teen is to work the phone. I found myself making calls, taking messages for my family and sometimes being the walking telephone book. Your GCB may have a calling committee to alert members of meetings and to contact those who are sick. One Blind Lion uses the phone and his business contacts to sell brooms for his local Lions Club. Many communities have programs where volunteers call seniors on a daily basis to make sure they are ok. You have probably figured out that I grew up in a time when we didn't have computers, the internet or email. In a way, I was the technical guy in the community. A couple of friends formed a little rock band. I was not proficient enough in music at that time to join them, but they did bring me along since I had a reel to reel tape recorder that could be used to record their sessions. Many blind folks now days are quite tech savvy. If you are one of those folks, your GCB chapter or local Lions club could possibly use your assistance with their web site, Facebook page, bulletin or the next issue of the GCB Digest. Just reading the digest shows me that we have gifted writers in GCB. Probably one of the best things we can do is to share our experience and knowledge. Growing up as a blind person, I have something to share about using braille, walking with a cane and adapting to a world where most of the folks around me can see. I am also learning quite a bit from folks who are just losing their sight. If we share these experiences with GCB, Lions Clubs and other community groups, that kind of giving could be the best service we can offer. While this article was supposed to be about the Georgia Blind Lions, I believe that conference call challenge to bring more blind people into Lionism provided a lot for all of us to think about in our own personal lives. In closing, I would like to point out that a number of blind people who are Lions have translated their talents and skills to become leaders in the Lions organization. A few blind lions in Georgia have served as club president. One gentleman is currently a zone chair. A zone is a small group of Lions clubs. Another blind lion is district representative and state chair for Leader Dogs for the blind. Blind Lions have chaired membership drives, served as district liaison for the Georgia Lions Lighthouse, headed programs that assist with eyeglasses and campaigns to support the Georgia Lions Camp in Waycross. I don't know if he is a Lion, but GCB's own Ron Worley has been recently hired as program director at the camp. What is your talent or skill? Why not consider how you can use it to make your community a better place. For more information about Georgia Blind Lions, contact Lion Marsha Farrow at marshafarrow@windstream.net.

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SHIP SHAPED or SHIP SHOCKED; there are none as blind as those who are at SEA!”

By Janet Di Nola Parmerter

For independent blind people and those with low vision, using a white cane has numerous advantages. However, before being trained to use mine, I experienced many tragic yet humorous situations which I called, “Comical sagas of my fear of white canes.”

Thankfully, I smartened up enough to realize I needed proper mobility training, and now, I always use the white cane, or my proverbial, “white knight in shining armor!” Nevertheless, the introduction to a humorous article I wrote some years ago, called, “There Are Two Sides to Every Ski Button story”, explains my past reasons for not wanting to use a white cane. In the next issue of GCB Digest, you can look forward to reading a reprint of that published article. But, in the past, after finally agreeing to mobility training, incredibly, or perhaps I should say stupidly, I still refused to use the cane. Thus, over and over again, when my caring and persistent friend Kim saw me, she repeatedly asked, “Janet, where is your cane?” Kim had not been intentionally trying to shame me, but her continuous question virtually embarrassed me into realizing how foolish I had been acting.

Unfortunately, with this issue, it took a few bad experiences to fully convince me to constantly use my cane. Why? Because I kept thinking, “That didn’t happen just because I didn’t have a cane. Next time, I’ll do that better and it will work out.” At that time, I didn’t know the saying, “Only a fool does the same thing over and over and expects a different outcome.” From youth, my Italian grandparents always told me, “Hai una Testa Dura!” Which literally translates into, “You have a hard head!” More or less that idiomatic phrase means someone is a very determined, tenacious, and yes, stubborn person. Not that having a “hard head” is limited to Italians, but I know one stubborn Italian from New Jersey, who, after he slid off a roof onto his head, boasted with pride, “The sidewalk cracked, but not my head!” Speaking of roofs, a prior article I wrote after falling through one, was initially titled, “Determination to bathe.” Fittingly, THAT article summed up my strong-minded persistent and perhaps a tad stubborn personality. With three plaster casts on both legs and one arm, against the doctor’s advice and with my determination to bathe, I tried to invent new ways to wash, while TRYING to keep all three casts dry. Humph! Maybe I really am a “Testa Dura!” (For sure, Doctor Hammerschlag, my brilliant and comical orthopedic surgeon thought so.)

In any case, some Italians would say being a test dura makes us strong and others would say it makes us stubborn. Yet, looking back on the humorous situations in my life, I can testify from experience, sometimes it simply makes us look dumb. If Doctor Hammerschlag were asked for a second opinion, I’m sure he would agree with that diagnosis. Wisely, the fact that now, I do not go anywhere without my trusty white night, the cane, proves I finally learned from my mistakes. However, before I learned that lesson, the following “Ship shaped or ship shocked” situation occurred. No matter what reason people do, or do not do things, at this juncture in life, I was still resisting my white cane. Consequently, while Keith and I were on our two-week European honeymoon, my cane issues created another uncomfortable, yet humorous situation. Was it the fear of looking vulnerable? Was it a matter of vanity, or just plain stupidity? Whatever I was thinking at the time, I still had trepidation about using a white cane. In 2000, my new husband and I left romantic Venice via an Italian cruise liner, on our way to the gorgeous Greek islands. That first moonlit night on deck, with the speed of the ship and the cool June breeze it was a bit chilly. Keith, my ever-considerate husband, offered to return to the cabin and bring me back a woolen shawl to wrap around my thin summer evening gown. Yes, he is definitely sweet and considerate, but, since I also wanted to change into more comfortable dancing shoes, I suggested he wait for me on deck. After a quick shoe switch, I touched up my make-up, dabbed on more French perfume, reapplied my ruby red lipstick, and took off to dance the night away with my new hubby. When I returned to the deck, I found Keith with folded arms leaning on the ship rail. In deep thought, he was pensively staring out to sea. Deviously, I snuck up behind him, slipped my arm past his bent elbow, laid my head on his shoulder and in a sultry voice said, “SO, what do you want to do now?” Gently, in a warm tender manner, he slid his hand over mine and slowly whispered, “I not know, what YOU want do?” Hearing this deep voice with a foreign accent, I immediately jerked my hand and arm away from him, whipped up my head toward his face, and stared up at the grin of a wide-eyed smiling stranger. In a second, with a blood curdling scream, simultaneously I pulled my body away from him as though I had been struck by an electric shock. The scream was SO LOUD; people thought someone fell into the Adriatic Sea. While people rushed to look overboard, I pulled away from this shocked stranger and yelled, “You’re not my husband! You’re not my husband!” With a wide smirk, he stroked my arm and in broken English snickered, “No, I not husband!” With my red embarrassed face, and visibly flustered, I backed away from him with arms wildly flailing side to side like a woman who was ready to be bad, but just repented and changed her mind. In between the ums and ohs, I stammered, “I’m sorry, um, I’m so sorry! I’m on my, um, honeymoon, and I thought you were my husband! I’m sorry, um, I’m married, and I mean I just got married! Oh, REALLY, I’m so sorry! Um, oh my, what I am trying to say is this is my honeymoon and, umm, anyway, ciao!” In a split second I whirled around and fled like Cinderella when the clock struck midnight. Embarrassed and annoyed at myself, I left muttering under my breath, “If I only had my white cane there would be nothing to explain! Without a word, Mister X would have immediately understood the entire awkward situation, and I would not have been stammering like a babbling idiot! Still angry with myself, I thought, “What is wrong with me, if I only used my cane everything would have been fine.” Frantically looking side to side, I nervously tightened my shawl wondering if Keith had seen me snuggle up to this, wanna be more than friendly, foreigner. What a relief when I found Keith on the other side of the ship, facing the opposite direction, oblivious to everything including my screams. Drink in hand; he was peacefully sitting at a table and thinking, as he later admitted, of absolutely nothing at all. Keith was ready to relax and enjoy the quiet music and evening ambiance, so we slid two lounge chairs together and stretched out. Well, at least I tried to relax, but, since that was the first evening of a seven-day cruise, my thoughts caused me some apprehension about the possibility of facing Mister X aboard ship. In my mind I rationalized, “Why should I worry, I have no idea what he even looks like.” Consoling myself I reasoned, really, I’ll never see Mister X again. I won’t see him, because I literally CAN’T see him!” Further analyzing the situation, I thought, “The best part is, he doesn’t know I can’t see, so perhaps he will think I am flippantly ignoring him and never approach me at all. Within a few minutes, I talked myself into a calm state of serenity. Feeling a bit more at ease, I sat back on the deck lounge chair and from a fluted glass, sipped a refreshing Prosecco and Peach Bellini. Seconds later, my anxiety waned, and I totally convinced myself to be unconcerned about the earlier, “shocking ship shenanigans.” Putting our lounge chairs into reclined positions, we silently gazed up at the stars and held hands like two school children. With Vivaldi playing in the background, and a second Bellini, it proved to be a stunning end to a disconcerting beginning. Soon, I relaxed, closed my eyes and enjoyed the cool sea air fanning across my cheeks. As much as I tried to control my thoughts, slowly, they drifted back to the humiliating event earlier in the evening. Over and over, my confused stammering comments raced around my mind. As the words played and replayed, “You’re not my husband, I just got married, and I’m on my honeymoon.” “You’re not my husband!” “You’re not my husband!” You’re not my husband, kept screaming through my brain.

All these uncontrolled thoughts put me into the overpriced expensive Italian shoes of Mister X. Now, what was he thinking? What could he have possibly thought of me? What could he have…oh no!

Immediately, I opened my eyes, sat up, and came to the realization of what he probably imagined. Oh, I’m sure of it, oh yes, I’m sure that is exactly what he thought! Once again, I dreaded the thought of running into that forlorn foreigner. Oh yes, he knew I just got married, and yes, he knew I was on my honeymoon, and yes he probably felt very sorry for, what he undoubtedly thought was that “pitiful drunk American, still on a bender because she doesn’t even know who she married and what her new husband looks like!”

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Thoughts from our Readers:

Amanda H. rote, “I thought the article to take out or Not to Take Out” in the winter 2019 Digest, was very funny. It was true and relatable for me, not only as a Deaf/Blind person, but within family life in general. That family reminds me of my 84-year-old grandma. Here are two of her ha-ha moments. My grandma had been a beautician and is very, very vain. While on vacation we were at a restaurant and she yelled, “Do you see that kid’s hair? It’s so weird, who does that?” Oh my, the guy had a Mohawk and we were all mortified by my grandmother’s comment! Another time, while celebrating my brother’s military graduation, we all went out to eat. She bluntly told me, “That dress makes you look pregnant and fat!” I thought, “How rude of my grandmother to say this?” Feeling humiliated, as I grew up, for a long time I thought I was fat. When I was young, I was 85 pounds in high school and to this day weigh less than 110 pounds, so, at no point in my life should my grandmother have thought me fat. Actually, she always thought she was fat so possibly grandma transferred her abhorrence to fat on me. Though I felt saddened by that, because we were family, and she’s elderly, most of the time I gave grandma a pass. So, sometimes I still feel hurt on the inside of my, not fat, body. Though I am sure, many of us can relate with some of your elderly family’s comments. We just have to love them anyways!”

Janet comments on, “Georgia Blind Lions: It’s all about community, by Mike Hall. As the assistant editor I have the privilege of reading all the articles before the Digest is emailed to everyone. Therefore, I would like to immediately comment on the well- written article by Mike Hall. His valid comment about the listening ability of blind individuals having so much to offer was right on point. Our listening skills may be one of our greatest advantages over the sighted community and we should, and could use it to benefit sighted individuals. It would be good for everyone to give some serious thought to his admirable ideas.