

In the center of the circle is a palm of an open right hand slender green leaf gracefully peach, originating from a short draped over the thumb. The peach warmth of the sun, with vibrant center of the peach, bold in black, accompanied by positioned directly below the three letters. Text reads A hand up not a hand out Georgia Council of the Blind Established in 1956



pencil drawing in gray tones. It is gently cradling a Georgia peach. A hangs down from the top of the brown stem on the left side and radiates warm hue colors like the orange and yellow tones. In the uppercase letters GCB stand out corresponding Braille dots

The GCB DIGEST

Published by the Georgia Council of the Blind
An affiliate of the American Council of the Blind,
Our organization promotes a hand-up, not a handout.
Winter 2025

GCB Officers for 2024-2026:

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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, or email address, or desire a change of format, please inform our GCB treasurer.

Thanks to the GCB Digest Committee who has made our GCB Digest such a considerable success, each member who sent articles, and those who made suggestions. I want to thank our President Cecily Laney Nipper, for her presidential message with information about momentous events, legislation, and projects.

Note: The GCB Digest is on NFB Newslines and on the Georgia Radio Reading Service, GARRS.

Connect with us on social media! To find it, search on Instagram for [gacounciloftheblind](#). That represents 'GA Council of the Blind' without spaces and in all lower-case letters. Also, on Facebook Georgia Council of the Blind

Attention:

ACB Braille Forum Cartridge Subscribers

More than half of our cartridge subscribers have not returned any of them in more than a year. If you are one of them, please note that we must receive the unreturned cartridges ASAP to enable us to send new ones. The cartridges are just like the books you borrow from your NLS library – they must be returned. Look through your homes, find the cartridges, flip over the cards on the mailing boxes, and put them out for the next mail pickup. The same applies for GCB cartridges.

GCB Presidential Message:

By Cecily Laney Nipper

As we stand at the threshold of a brand-new year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the journey we have traveled together and to share my hope for the road ahead.

The start of a new year is more than a date on the calendar—it's a fresh page, an invitation to dream bigger, and a reminder that each of us has the power to make a difference. Together, we've built a foundation of peer support and advocacy for people who are blind or partially sighted, and now we have the opportunity to reach even higher.

Remember, the work we do matters. It matters to those in the community who need our help and support, to each other, and to the future we are creating. During 2024, we advocated at Blind Day at the Capitol, we held our convention, and we reached people in our individual chapters and affiliates, and at the state level all year long. Several board meetings were held, at which we conducted our own affairs with the collective wisdom of decades. Resolutions were passed at our state convention, among them one to add "Established 1956" to our logo, reminding us of our shared history and reminding those in the community that we have stood resolute in our mission from then until now and into the future.

In 2024, we received a number of sponsorships and gifts. If this was you, thank you! The generosity of our donors is more than just a financial contribution - it is the embodiment of hope, trust, and shared purpose. It is this spirit of giving that fuels our drive to move forward with determination and passion, knowing that we are united in our mission to create meaningful impact. Each gift is a spark that ignites our commitment to achieving the vision of this great

organization. As we look back on our fundraising and financial successes, let's also commit to keeping our foundation strong as one of transparency and leadership in the field of advocacy organizations made up of blind people and sighted allies.

As we move forward, let us be guided by hope and united by our shared mission. Let's aim high and thrive in 2025!

GEORGIA COUNCIL OF THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Saturday, JULY 27, 2024

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by President Cecily Laney Nipper at 10:02 AM. She gave an update on Mike Hall, who had a stroke and is hospitalized. He has said a word or two and has communicated by squeezing your hand and mouthing words. There are encouraging signs. Dianne Roberts states he can have visitors. You do need to call his name and let him know you are there.

Invocation:

The Invocation was given by Sharon Nichols.

Roll Call:

Kathy Morris conducted the roll call. Those present were:

President, Cecily Laney Nipper; First Vice-President, Marj Schneider; second Vice-President, Judy Presley; Secretary, Kathy Morris; Assistant Secretary, Cecily Nipper, SR.; Treasurer, Marsha Farrow; Member at Large Representative, Betsy Grenevitch; Immediate Past President, no representation; Athens, Jerrie Toney; Augusta, Ron Worley; East Georgia, Phil Jones; Greater Hall, Dianne Roberts; Northwest, Sharon Nichols; Peach, Amanda Wilson; South Metro, Tiyah F. M. Longmire; Savannah, no representation; GCB Digest, no representation; GGDU, Deborah Lovell; Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss, Deborah McDonald; Web Master, Steve Longmire. Guests were Jamaica Miller, Sophia Curtis, Granger Ricks, Jerrie Ricks, Angela Zimmerman, DJ McIntyre. There are 16 in attendance and that is a quorum.

Approval of Agenda:

The agenda was presented. Phil Jones made a motion to approve the agenda as sent and was seconded by Marsha Farrow. No discussion was had and the motion passed.

President's Report:

Cecily Laney Nipper stated that she and Alice have been scheduling meetings with other disability groups toward accessible voting. They have met with Senator Harbin about services for blind people and that the Commission is needed. She has had calls from Seniors and people who need the old "home maker" option. Twenty-one people attended the National Convention in person from Georgia and we had 5 affiliate votes. They enjoyed Jacksonville. National Board of Directors – Cecily was elected for her first full term position. The next convention will be held July 4-11, 2025, in Dallas, Texas. Elections will be held at our convention this year. She has appointed a nominating committee. They will follow the voting as outlined in our constitution. Alice Ritchhart will be the chair and Jerrie Toney and Steve Longmire will be the remaining members of the committee.

Constitution Spotlight:

Betsy Grenevitch read Articles II and III.

Secretary's Report:

Kathy Morris said that April 20, 2024, board meeting minutes have been sent out by email. Deborah Lovell made a motion to accept the minutes and was seconded by Phil Jones. No additions or corrections were made. The minutes were approved. May 18, 2024, called board meeting minutes have been sent out by email. Deborah Lovell made a motion to accept the minutes and was seconded by Phil Jones. No additions or corrections were made. The minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report:

Marsha Farrow said that as of July 25, 2024, the balance in the main checking account is \$9,703.28. The total of all the designated funds is \$6,223.15. The general operating expenses are \$3,480.13. Marsha listed all the income and expenses that are associated with this account. The Athene Long Term Investment balance is currently \$21,587.84 and will mature on May 24, 2027. The Way Financial Investment as of June 30, 2024, is \$79,102.73. The total of all accounts is \$118,606.39. The report is being filed for audit.

Finance Committee:

Jerrie Toney said that the revenue and expense report was sent out. Ron Worley made a motion to accept the report and Deborah Lovell seconded it. No discussion was had. The motion passed. Steve Longmire stated that he discovered that transaction fees for PayPal were varying wildly. He proposed to set the fee at 2.99%, which is the fee for Stripe. Marj Schneider stated that the Braille embosser used by Betsy and DJ are having problems with it not giving consistent Braille through the whole page. The embosser is too old to be repaired. The option is to have another organization to produce all Braille documents. This would require a large lead time and would be in EUB Braille. There would also be financial commitment to purchasing this service. Marj Schneider made a motion that GCB withdraw funds from our Way Financial long-term investment account for the purchase of a Juliet 120 Braille embosser from HumanWare. I further move that when our Athene account investment matures in May of 2027, the \$4195.00 and other shipping and tax costs be repaid to the Way Financial account. Phil Jones stated that we need to go full speed ahead with it, seconding the motion. Cecily started with speaking about buying new Duxbury software and she heard the committee wanted Braille to be a continuing part of our resources. Marj stated timing is important as the price will go up \$500 in September. Motion was approved.

Youth Gap Fund:

Ron Worley stated that nothing had come his way. He asked about an application. Cecily stated the Senior Fund application is robust and would work with just name changes.

Convention Committee:

They have been meeting faithfully. They discussed food at the last meeting. Prices looked comparable to other years. It will be held October 23-25, 2024, at the Atlanta Conyers Marriott with room rates at \$124 per night. ON, Wednesday there will be check-in and Bingo, and they are trying not to have anything else on that date due to those who are only able to come on

Thursday and Friday. Cecily states they are trying to get an exciting Exhibit Hall for everyone. Phil Jones stated due to timing, we should let the tour go for this year.

Legislative Committee:

DJ McIntyre said that the Georgia Vision Alliance is people from all distinct aspects. They met with Senator Davenport to tweak the language. They are bringing the BEP and GIB to the table. They are looking to get other states to bring people together to provide information concerning the Commission in their states. We are back to square one on accessible voting as they chose to go a different route.

Technology Committee:

Steve Longmire said that in a couple of weeks, it will be GCB Tech Talk time. Which will be held on the second Saturday of the month, with the next meeting on August 10, 2024, at 3:00 PM. People can send in topics. It will be a Zoom meeting. Another app released to the App Store – GCB Bible. The Android version will be out in the next couple of days. He is working on the app, changing PayPal transaction fees. Monday, July 29th is the Technology Meeting. Deborah Lovell asked if there is a Zoom link.

Georgia Guide Dog Users, GGDU:

Marj Schneider said that they will hold an informal meeting in August. They will send out information soon. They are doing a raffle fundraiser for general operating costs. It is a \$200 card for Chewy.com. The cost is \$5 for 1 and \$10 for 3. The drawing will be at the convention. They are looking for a speaker for the convention.

She was contacted by Stacy Orr in the Peach Chapter to provide a speaker to the Southern Dames of America Chattahoochee chapter. She will be going to speak with them.

GCB Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss:

Deborah Lovell said that Alice Ritchhart asked her to mention several things. At the April 1st meeting they spoke about Power of Attorneys and DNR's. After the banquet at the convention, they will be crowning the king and queen. You can vote for them by placing money in the three jars. The contestants are Zachary and Cecily Nipper; Tiyah and Steve Longmire; and Judy and Hoyal Presley. GCB AALV will also be sponsoring the Social Wednesday with light refreshments. If you have any questions reach out to Alice or anyone in AAVL. Phil stated that he attended a luncheon at the American Council of the Blind, ACB, National conference and it was about wills. It will be available as a podcast.

Membership and Public Relations Committee:

Cecily Laney Nipper appointed Tiffany Montalvo to be the temporary co-chair. Amanda Wilson stated we have 126 members. The book club is still meeting on the last Thursday of the month. They would like to continue the Prayer and Praise call if anyone wants to step up. Peach Talk will resume on the 3rd Thursday at 7:00. Cecily stated that someone asked what these calls have to do with membership. It provides outlets for members and to get new members. With the permission of Athens and East GA Chapter or Greater Hall, for someone who feel they are too far away to attend an in-person meeting, they may join one of these clubs that have either a Zoom or Facebook live meeting.

GCB Digest Report:

Amanda Wilson said that we are always meeting to get ideas and articles. They meet on Zoom to edit. Then it is read, Brailled, sent to printer for large print, and sent out by email. Cecily asked about how people responded to returning the audio cartridges. DJ states 8 out of 10 are returning their cartridges.

GCB Members At Large:

Betsy Grenevitch did not have a report.

Unfinished Business:

Marj said that there are no applications to the Senior Fund. There was to be outreach to publicize the existence of the fund. This could be a job where AAVL could help. Ron Worley also asked about how the word about the Youth Gap Fund is getting out. Several suggestions were the Multiple Choices, GARRS, Newline, GCB Website. Cecily proposed a joint committee meeting of the Senior Fund and Youth Gap Fund to discuss. Wording could be what comes out of this meeting.

New Business:

The time and place of the next board meeting. It will be a hybrid meeting at the Courtyard Atlanta Conyers Marriott and on Zoom on Friday, October 25, 2024.

Debbie McDonald asked if we could get a list of meetings that have Zoom meetings. Amanda states she has sent out a list of meetings, but it does not have a Zoom link. Cecily stated she will send links to Debbie.

Adjourn:

Phil Jones made a motion to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Debbie McDonald. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Morris, GCB Secretary

Georgia Council of the Blind Board Meeting Minutes
Friday, October 25, 2024
Courtyard Marriott Atlanta Conyers and hybrid on Zoom.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by President Cecily Laney Nipper at 2:36 PM.

Roll Call, Assistant Secretary, Cecily Nipper, Senior:

Officers and board members present were: President, Cecily Laney Nipper; First Vice President, Marj Schneider; Second Vice President, Judy Presley; Immediate Past President, Alice Ritchhart; Assistant Secretary, Cecily Nipper, Senior; Treasurer, Marsha Farrow; At-Large Representative, Betsy Grenevitch; Athens, Jerrie Toney; Augusta, Deborah Lovell, East Georgia, Phil Jones; GCB Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss, Debbie McDonald; Georgia Guide Dog Users, DJ McIntyre; Greater Hall, Dianne Roberts; Northwest, Sharon Nichols; Peach, Amanda Wilson; Savannah, no representation; South Metro, Steve Longmire. (Webmaster, Steve Longmire and Digest Editor, Amanda Wilson were present but as these are nonvoting positions and they are already representing chapters, they will not be listed again under their respective offices.) Guests present were Debbie Young, Angela Zimmerman, Debi Holcomb,

Carolyn Stegall, Keith Parmerter, Janet Parmerter, Elaine Paccione, Marlene Koncewicz, Jamaica Miller, Hoyal Presley, Zack Nipper, Gwendolyn Barron, Matt Montes, Rachael Sandlin, Tiffany Montalvo. A quorum was present.

After asking Cecily Nipper Senior and newly elected secretary Amanda Wilson, President Cecily Laney Nipper appointed Cecily Nipper Senior for another term of service as assistant secretary, a nonvoting board position created in 2021.

Swearing in of Officers:

All officers were present either in person or in the Zoom and they all swore the oath of office, read by DJ McIntyre.

Time and Place of the Next Board Meeting:

Marsha Farrow made a motion, seconded by Amanda Wilson to hold the next GCB board meeting on Saturday, January 18, 2025, at 10 AM on Zoom. There was no discussion, and the motion carried.

Other Business:

President Nipper issued a call for other business. Hearing none, she adjourned the meeting at 2:46 PM.

Respectfully Submitted, Cecily Nipper, Senior, Assistant Secretary

GCB Chapter News:

Athens Chapter:

For more information about the Athens Chapter please contact Jerrie Toney at (706) 461-1013 or via email at jerriemt2@gmail.com.

Augusta Chapter:

The Augusta chapter held our Christmas banquet at Carrabba's restaurant on December 12, 2024. We had 14 people at this event for a gift exchange and dinner. This is always a good time for our chapter. We are invited to set up a table for a couple of events over the next two months. A local blind center is hosting a GVRA presentation for local organizations that serve the blind and deaf-blind in our area. This is scheduled for January 30, 2025, at 12:00 PM until 3:00 PM. Our chapter is also scheduled to set up a table at the "Transition and Resource Fair" hosted by the Richmond County Schools. This is scheduled for March 27, 2025, at 5:00 PM. Our next meeting will be at a local restaurant in February.

The Augusta Chapter in-person meetings are held in the odd months on the second Saturday of the month at Walton Options which is located at 948 Walton Way, Augusta, Georgia from 10:00 AM until 12:00 PM. During the odd months, we meet at local restaurants.

For more information about The Augusta Chapter please contact Ron Worley at 706-726-9438, or via email at listeningacuity@gmail.com

East Georgia Chapter:

In November, the East Georgia Chapter decorated gingerbread men ornaments for a tree purchased for the Lights at Legion at Legion Field in Covington. In December, we held our annual holiday party. We ordered sandwiches from the local Sandwich Factory and several

members brought desserts. We welcomed special guests from a local children's choir, who sang some wonderful Christmas carols. Every year our chapter also collects children's toys for the Sheriff's Guardian Angel Program in Newton County. We had excellent participation and were able to donate a large collection. Our January meeting was held via Zoom due to the winter storm. Our program was Braille themed to honor Louis Braille and Braille Literacy Month.

Connect with us: Follow us on Facebook at East Georgia Chapter of the Georgia Council of the Blind; Instagram eastgachapter.

The East Georgia Chapter in-person meetings are held at the Conyers Presbyterian Church and via Zoom on the 2nd Saturday of every month at 10:00 AM.

For more information about the East Georgia Chapter, please contact Phil Jones at 770-713-3306, or via email at Brilman1952@gmail.com.

Greater Hall County Chapter:

Mike Hall Running Lanierland Amateur Radio Club

Mike Hall is the former Secretary of the Lanierland Amateur Radio Club (L.A.R.C.) a local group who have served the Hall County community for nearly 60 years.

Club President Tony Constabile recently spoke with Access WDUN about Hall's involvement in the club despite his battle with health issues.

"Mike has been the trustee of our repeater for many, many years. He also runs the L.A.R.C. Wednesday night net. He's also a past president, and up until he suffered the stroke, he was our secretary," Constabile said. "The amazing thing about Mike is he is visually impaired. He cannot see and he still is able to run the radio log, all the contacts and all the information that's needed for the net."

Constabile said Hall has not been able to run the net since his stroke, but he will run it on Christmas day at 8:30 p.m. as he recovers at the Oaks at Limestone Nursing Home in Gainesville.

"Mike has not been able to run the net or be very active since his stroke, but he is recovering, and we're going to set up a temporary station," Constabile said. "We are setting up a temporary station there, and Mike will run the net. It's going to be a surprise to the club members."

Hall is visually impaired but that does not stop him from dedicating time to L.A.R.C.

"He [Hall] has served the community for years. He worked for, I believe, the forestry department. He's worked for radio stations," Constabile said. "People that know Mike know he's an incredible individual and helps a lot with the visually impaired. We have a couple of other club members that are visually impaired, and Mike has helped them as well."

L.A.R.C. is one of the oldest amateur radio clubs in north Georgia. It assists amateur radio operators in obtaining their licenses.

"Amateur radio is a great hobby and it also serves the community in many capacities. A lot of times during emergency emergencies, we provide communication to help with first responders and law enforcement," Constabile said. "We also help connect family members, like when Helene hit, all the electric was out, all the phones were down, but the ham radio was still working, so we were able to help family members, and first responders find people and keep communication."

Constabile provided the frequency of the Christmas Day net for those wishing to tune in.

“Our repeater is 146.670, that's the frequency, you would need a radio that's capable of receiving that. A lot of people have, GMRS radios, Family Radio Service radios, anything with a VHF on it may be able to pick it up, but generally, its ham radios,” Constabile said. Constabile said they hope to record it, but it does not always work with their temporary station. To learn more about L.A.R.C and how to get involved visit their website.

<https://www.lanierlandarc.org>.

The Greater Hall Chapter meets the second Saturday of each month, from 10:30 AM to 12:00 PM at Smoky Springs Retirement Residences, 940 South Enota Drive, Gainesville, Georgia. The program portions of our meetings are live-streamed and can be viewed at any time along with other interesting content on our Facebook page entitled Greater Hall GCB. For more information, about the Greater Hall County Chapter contact Dianne Roberts at 770-932-1112, or via email at harveyroberts2@att.net

Northwest Georgia Chapter:

The Northwest Georgia Chapter meetings are held on the second Tuesday at the Bank of Lafayette community room which is located at 104 North Main Street in Lafayette, Georgia from 1:00 PM, until 3:00 PM.

For more information about the Northwest Chapter, please contact Sharon Nichols at 423-255-4551, or via email at sharonnichols347@icloud.com.

Peach Chapter:

The Peach Chapter meets on the third Thursday at 10:00 AM, on Zoom.

For more information about the Peach Chapter, please contact Amanda Wilson at 770-547-4700, or via email at moonrocks@bellsouth.net.

Savannah Chapter:

The Savannah Chapter meets by telephone conference call on the third Thursday at 7:30 PM.

For more information about The Savannah Chapter, please contact Marj Schneider at 912-352-1415, or via email at marjschneider@bellsouth.net.

South Metro Chapter:

The South Metro Chapter meetings are held at the Piccadilly Restaurant which is located at 2000 Crescent Center Blvd. in Tucker, Georgia, on the second Tuesday from 4:00 PM until 6:00 PM.

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

GCB Special Affiliate News:

Georgia Guide Dog Users:

For more information about The Georgia Guide Dog Users group, please contact Marj Schneider, at 912-352-1415 or via email at marjschneider@bellsouth.net.

Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss:

For more information, about The Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss special affiliate group please contact Alice Ritchhart at 912-996-4213, or via email at alice.ritchhart@comcast.net.

From the Membership and Public Relations Committee:

The Membership and Public Relations Committee holds an ACB community Zoom call which meets on the third Thursday from 7:00 PM until 8:00 PM.
We tell lots of funny stories on this call.

Spreading a Little Sunshine for GCB Members

Sunshine Committee

Committee Chairman: Stacey Orr

Committee Members: Debi Holcombe and Debbie McDonald

A new committee has been established for the 2025 year for GCB members in hopes members can receive a little note of encouragement from us. This committee's focus will be to send cards to members who have experienced a loss in their immediate family or are experiencing serious sickness. If your chapter has a member who needs a little sunshine due to the loss of a loved one or a serious illness or injury, please email staceyorr829@gmail.com or call (770) 853-3489 and our committee will be sure they receive a card from GCB. The duties of the Sunshine Committee are evolving, so if you have an idea that the Sunshine Committee should consider, please reach out to Committee Chair, Stacey Orr at the contact listed above.

GCB Community Phone Calls:

The Georgia Council of the Blind is holding community phone calls. The phone number for all the GCB community 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 the 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 GCB community phone calls:

Praise and Prayer:

Praise and Prayer is held on the first and third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM. It is currently hosted by members of GCB.

GCB Book Club:

Deborah Lovell and Judy Presley

Our GCB book club has read a variety of books including fiction, nonfiction, as well as biographies. Sometimes when you read a delightful book, you feel like you just must share it with others. This is what makes book clubs so much fun. That is why we encourage our members to suggest their favorite books and would love to have other book lovers out there to join us. We meet on the last Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM, on Zoom.

GCB In Memory of:

Aaron Luke McIntyre

October 2, 2023 - November 6, 2024

Aaron Luke McIntyre, born October 2, 2023, in Loganville, GA. Aaron was born with congenital heart defects. He had open heart surgery on November 22, 2023. Aaron contracted bacterial meningitis November 29, 2023. He was diagnosed with seizures and Hydrocephalus from the meningitis. Aaron fought hard each day and soon came home on January 23, 2024. Aaron spent most of the year learning to be a normal baby. He went to speech/feed therapy, Occupational therapy and Physical Therapy on a weekly basis starting in May. He battled through two more hospitalizations for Respiratory viruses in April and one in August. In October, Aaron celebrated

his first birthday. On October 31, 2024, Aaron was sent to the hospital in preparation for his second open heart surgery. November 4th. Aaron underwent a Cath lab exploration procedure in preparation for his heart surgery. However, Aaron became extremely sick and went into cardiac arrest on November 6th.

His immediate family were able to come to the hospital and see him one last time. His siblings were able to make lasting memories down the road. He was able to be in his Daddy's arms with his mother sitting nearby as his heart stopped. Aaron will always be remembered as a strong little man. His strawberry blond hair gave him strength to overcome all the health challenges he had ahead. He was known for his sass and smiles. Aaron was loved by all who knew him. His siblings loved to bring him toys and watch him shake his head "NO" in response to their questions. His little life, though short, can be described as filled to the brim with adventures.

Aaron was preceded in death by Great Grandparents: Ludmila Carlson, Loren Carlson, George Grenevitch, Ruth Grenevitch, Great Aunts: Lunda Phillips, Lori McIntyre, Aunt: Michelle McIntyre. Survived by Great Grandparents: Wayne McIntyre, Brenda Addison, Great Aunts and Uncles: Angie Addison, Ann Grenevitch, Glen Grenevitch, Greg Grenevitch, Grandparents: Betsy Grenevitch, Larry Grenevitch, Chrissy McIntyre, Wayne McIntyre, Lisa Whetzel, Aunts and Uncles: Paul Grenevitch, Joshua Grenevitch, Michelle Grenevitch, Kristi Roberston (Emily Drewery), Alex Whetzel; Cousin: Aiza Grenevitch; Parents: Drew and Danielle McIntyre; Siblings: Rachel and Daniel McIntyre and many other extended family.

Mary Dorothy Davis

In memory of Mary Dorothy Davis, September 15, 1931, through October 5, 2024. Mary Dorothy (Arnold, Parish) Davis passed away peacefully on Saturday, October 5, 2024, at the age of 93 in her home surrounded by family. She was born on September 15, 1931, in Lexington, GA to the late Joseph Samuel Arnold and Clarice Lee Arnold Lankford. Dot was preceded in death by her son, Douglas Parish, son in law, Donald Colborn, sister, Rachel Morris and brother, Bennie Lankford.

Dot moved to the Covington area when she was around 17 years of age from Union Point/Crawfordville. She moved here to work for Exie and Otis Parish at their restaurant called "Mom's Place" which was located where the John Deere building now stands.

There she met Leon Parish whom she married. Together they had four children. From there she worked her way to opening her own place called "Dot's Diner" in Conyers; famously known for its super burger.

Dot was a member of The First Wesleyan Church in Covington for many years where she held multiple positions. But her love was for her girls' Primary Class that she taught for many years. She poured her heart into those young ladies. Dot had a beautiful voice and sung in the choir.

Dot was survived by her loving family. Son, Thomas Parish, daughters, Barbara (Herb) Ruecksties and Belinda Colborn. Grandchildren, Leigh Arnold, Misty (Chris) Burton, Brandy Adams, Mindy Greene (Chris) and Shane (Leila) Parish, eight great-grandchildren and four great-great-grandchildren, and multiple nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Timothy "Tim" Daniel Spencer, Debbie McDonald's life partner

Timothy "Tim" Daniel Spencer, Debbie McDonald's life partner, died on Saturday, November 9, 2024, at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital. Graveside services were held on Wednesday, November 13, 2024, at 3:00 PM, at Liberty Hill Baptist Church Cemetery.

Teresa M. Watkins-Gaston

Teresa M. Watkins-Gaston entered rest on October 23, 2024.

Celebration of Life Services for Teresa M. Watkins-Gaston were held on Saturday, November 9, 2024, at 1:00 PM, at Shoal Creek Baptist Church, 99 M.L.K Jr. Boulevard, Locust Grove, Georgia 30248. Public viewing was held on Friday, November 8, 2024, from 5:00 PM, until 7:00 PM at Watkins Funeral Home McDonough Chapel, 96 S. Zack Hinton Parkway, McDonough, Georgia 30253. Interment was held at Rose Garden Cemetery, 718 Iris Lake Road, McDonough, Georgia 30252.

Richard Bagley

Richard A. Bagley, age 92 and most recently of Cleveland, GA, took his final journey to Heaven on the morning of Friday, October 11, 2024.

Richard was born on January 27, 1932, in Forsyth County, Georgia to parents Lois Green Bagley and Cuthbert C. Bagley, and was the youngest of their four children.

Richard graduated from Henry Grady High School in Atlanta and afterwards, he served in the active reserve of the US Marine Corps for seven years. He also earned an associate degree from the Southern Institute of Technology.

But one of the best days of his life was when he met “the prettiest girl in the world” when she walked into Green’s drugstore across the street from Georgia Baptist Hospital in Atlanta, GA. That day, he met a young nurse named Edwena Wells from Guyton, GA. They married on June 26, 1954, and had three daughters. Richard enjoyed a career in building construction, contracting, estimation and drafting until macular degeneration took his vision in 1994; however, he did not let his blindness stop him from learning and teaching others about visual impairment and how to live with it.

Richard is preceded in death by his beautiful wife Edwena Wells Bagley, who died nine days before their 62nd wedding anniversary. He is survived by a brother, Calvin C. Bagley of Tampa FL and by his three daughters: Melanie A. Bagley, Susan B. Hamilton (Glenn), and Laurie D. Bagley; five grandchildren: James R. Cheatham (Jenelle), W. Craig Cheatham (Halley), Elizabeth H. Hulsey (Chase), Kevin A. Cheatham and Benjamin W. Hamilton (Jorden), nine great-grandchildren and many beloved nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Richard was a member of First Baptist Church of Gainesville, GA, A Celebration of Life service was held on Saturday, December 7, 2024, at 11:00 AM, in the Chapel of First Baptist Church of Gainesville.

Remembering Jan Elders

April 25, 1945 - December 8, 2024

By Marj Schneider

It is always sad when a member of our GCB family passes on, but it is also important to honor and remember that person’s life. That is why I’m writing now about Jan Elders, a long-time member of the Savannah Council of the Blind who died in early December 2024. Since most Digest readers won’t have known Jan, I want to share what I’ve learned and what I remember about her.

Jan was not originally from the Savannah area. She grew up in Atlanta, attending North Fulton High School, where she likely graduated in 1963. She went on to Georgia State University to study nursing and she became a diabetes nurse educator. Coming of age during the civil rights

movement of the 1960s must surely have been a major influence on Jan's passion for fighting racism and her left-leaning political views, views she shared with her husband Ted. They were married for over 40 years and always struck me as a very like-minded couple who were devoted to one another.

In 1998, Ted retired early from his law practice and Jan retired from nursing and they moved from Coniers to a newly constructed house on Tybee Island, a community located 20 miles from Savannah. By this time Jan was gradually losing vision and had to rely on Ted from then on for transportation to town for meetings and other events. Tybee wasn't served by Chatham Area Transit, either by regular bus service or reliably with paratransit.

Before I even moved to Savannah there were two attempts to start a GCB chapter in the area, following decades of there being no chapter here at all. The first try was in 1999 when Alice Ritchhart lived for a time in Savannah. She, Jack Lewis, and a few others started holding meetings that Jan came to. Alice remembers when she and a small contingent, including Jan, traveled to Washington D.C. to lobby our members of Congress. They walked everywhere and though it was a tiring trip, Jan was an enthusiastic participant, even though she was new to the issues facing the blind community and had not accepted that she might continue to lose vision. When Alice moved from Savannah to Brunswick in 2001 the group lost its momentum and didn't continue meeting.

By 2003, Jan was a student at the Savannah Association for the Blind where she met others, including Brian Leighton, who was the first president of what became the Savannah Council of the Blind. Jack came to the center to meet with students and make a pitch for them to get involved with GCB. They also heard from McArthur Jarrett inviting them to join the NFB. Brian and several others chose GCB and Kim Harrison says that Brian told her Jan was the second member to join. The group also included Pam Oglesby, Michael Anthony, and then Teresa Brenner. I sought out the chapter in 2004 after moving to Savannah the prior year, while Kim Harrison and others became members later as they learned about the organization.

Pam Oglesby notes it was the nucleus of students at the center that made it possible for the chapter to take hold. Pam had never been around anyone else blind or low vision. Throughout her life she had been finding her own ways of doing things. At the association, she learned from her fellow students, as well as the instructors.

She recalls that being around people who were diabetic was also a new experience and that one day she greeted a fellow student who didn't respond, and Jan knew there was something wrong. The student was experiencing an episode of severe hypoglycemia, and it was Jan who took charge, getting him what he needed and calling 911. Pam was so impressed that Jan knew what to do, while this was all new for Pam.

In those early years of the chapter, under Brian's passionate though inexperienced leadership, issues emerged that required members to attend meetings, lots of meetings, to draw attention to problems faced by blind and low vision Savannahians and make our voices heard. There were advisory committees with Chatham Area Transit. There were committees with the Metropolitan Planning Commission. The city council and traffic department were there. There was the need to hire someone to head ADA enforcement for the county. There were White Cane Day events

to plan. Jan went to as many of the various committee meetings as she could, though living out on Tybee limited how many she was able to attend. Alice remembers Jan making the trip to Atlanta more than once with her to GCB's Blind Day at the Capitol. She was always willing to speak up and to advocate.

When I first met Jan in 2004 I remember her telling me about her role as a cofounder of Parent University in Savannah, an initiative that offers classes for parents in underprivileged communities to be the first teachers of their preschool children. That program still exists today and has spread to other cities. Jan was also a dedicated member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Savannah and was involved over the years in church projects. On Tybee Island, she was part of Martin Luther King Day commemorations, and she worked locally on Barack Obama's run for president in 2008. I'm sure Jan was involved in other activities that I'm not even aware of.

As committed as Jan was to Our GCB chapter, she fought the idea of being blind. She and Ted made frequent trips to Atlanta for Jan to receive corneal transplants, none of which were successful. Each time she experienced a loss of more vision, which sometimes did later return, she was very upset. She would lack confidence and was frightened. She had the good sense to use a white cane, at least some of the time, but she continued doing other things the same as anyone with full vision. I became impatient and wanted Jan to learn from the examples of others in our chapter who adapted and carried on with their lives even with vision loss, without wanting pity. I couldn't understand why she never could accept that for some of us blindness was a part of our identity that we didn't fear or need to change and even valued.

As long as I knew Jan she had various health problems, and in more recent years, though she continued attending chapter meetings, she developed hearing loss, making it difficult for her to follow what was going on. She would agree to take on a task but then forget she had agreed to do something. These issues became even more pronounced during the pandemic when we were no longer meeting in person. She rarely called in to our Savannah Council phone meetings.

Her husband Ted's death in May of 2022 was a real blow for Jan. She was lost for a time, and though she had a friend staying with her, she now was faced with figuring out transportation to get anywhere and so much else. That August several of us went out for lunch with Jan to a Tybee restaurant and we were all aware of how much she was struggling. That was the last time I saw her.

It became difficult to reach Jan by phone or by text message, though we kept trying. It was clear that her cognitive and hearing challenges meant that we were losing touch with Jan. We learned that kidney disease forced her to go on dialysis, possibly sometime in 2022. It seemed by this time that there were caregivers helping Jan, but I wondered, with all these challenges, how many of Jan's friends or fellow church members were even still in contact with Jan or visiting her.

It was through Facebook posts in November of 2024 on Jan's page that it seemed she had passed away. I was unable to learn more then, but a friend of Jan's called me on December 9 to fill me in. Jan was in a lot of pain from her complicated health problems, and she had chosen to

stop dialysis, which meant toxins would build up in her body and she would have only weeks to live. Hospice got involved and she wanted to die at home, to be with her beloved dogs. Knowing that she would die soon, I hope Jan was at peace. I understand that caregivers were with her at the end.

What I've been able to write here is only a little of Jan's story and the perspective and any inaccuracies are mine. I had hoped to hear from others who had known her, but there was no obituary, no funeral, no event celebrating her life, so what I've learned and remembered will have to suffice. Over the years I often felt frustrated with Jan for a variety of reasons, but she deserves to be honored and remembered for all she did and tried to do to make the world a better place. She deserves to be remembered and honored for her participation for two decades in the Savannah Council of the Blind.

Unlocking Accessibility: A Guide by Sophia Curtis

How to use Braille on your iPhone

Using Braille on an iPhone is made accessible through VoiceOver, which supports Braille displays or the option with an on-screen Braille display. Here's how you can set it up and effectively use Braille:

1. Enable VoiceOver

VoiceOver is necessary to use Braille features on an iPhone.

- Open Settings, then select Accessibility, and choose VoiceOver.
- Turn VoiceOver ON.

2. Pair Your Braille Display

- Ensure your Braille display is compatible with iOS.
- Enable Bluetooth on your iPhone by opening Settings, selecting Bluetooth, and turning it ON.
- Activate pairing mode on your Braille display (refer to the device's manual for instructions).
- Open Settings, navigate to Accessibility, select VoiceOver, and choose Braille.
- Your iPhone will search for available Braille displays. Tap on your display's name to pair it.

3. Customize Braille Settings

Once paired, you can adjust the following settings by opening Settings, selecting Accessibility, navigating to VoiceOver, and choosing Braille:

- Braille Output: Select either 6-dot or 8-dot Braille.
- Input Mode: Choose between contracted or uncontracted Braille.
- Auto advance: Adjust the speed at which pages scroll automatically.
- Braille Commands: Customize key combinations for navigation and actions.

4. Use Braille for Navigation

- Use the keys on the Braille display to navigate your iPhone, type, and read.
- Braille output on the display mirrors the text spoken by VoiceOver.
- Input text directly using the Braille display's keyboard.

5. On-Screen Braille Keyboard (Optional)

If you don't have a physical Braille display, you can use the on-screen Braille keyboard:

- Open Settings, navigate to Accessibility, choose VoiceOver, then select Braille, and enable Braille Screen Input.
- Activate Braille Screen Input using the Rotor (a VoiceOver feature).
- The screen will function as a Braille input device, allowing you to tap the dots on-screen.

6. VoiceOver Commands for Braille

- Learn VoiceOver gestures that work alongside Braille, like swiping or tapping for navigation.
- Braille-specific commands can also be customized in Settings.

Rhyme and Reason

By Sophia Curtis

Braille

Louis Braille was a man who lived life Blind,
He left his name and legacy behind.
Creating a system, dots on a page,
Skill for blind people to read and engage.

As my fingertips flow over each line,
Words and their meanings connect and align.
With every word, a new journey begins,
Now a world unfolds where discovery wins.

As the dots guide me through stories untold,
Each raised symbol a new treasure to hold.
In the silence, my thoughts begin to sing,
A language of hope that freedom will bring.

Through books and through Braille, my world expands,
Unlocking the power with my own hands.
No longer trapped in a world without light,
The dots guide my way, shining ever bright.

Louis Braille's gift, now timeless and true,
Bridge to the world, where dreams can come through.
In silence, I see, I learn, and I grow,
With Braille in my hands, the words always flow.

Gaming by Touch: How Braille Versions of the Classics are Changing the Game

By Cecily Laney Nipper

Thinking of Braille in my life, I look back over the past two weeks for examples. My experience is that of a low vision person, who uses Braille in combination with large print and tactile methods. In the kitchen and laundry room, you'll find bump dots, but when it comes to some of my favorite pass times, like playing games with my family around the table at the holidays,

Braille is king. There is no substitute for Braille in the Scrabble board, where only I can score the words because the Braille on our Scrabble set obscures the print, a fact I find quite amusing because the tables are turned. For Monopoly, Braille tells me how much to collect from the Community Chest for winning the beauty contest. Purchasing a set of six decks of Braille cards was an investment that led me to start Brailleing my own decks of cards with a full-page slate and stylus, and now I can play canasta with up to four other people with ease.

Lastly, I'll share an anecdote about my history with Braille dominoes. A number of years ago, I wanted to start playing dominoes again as I had when fully sighted, and although I attempted to use tactile recognition for the dots, this proved laborious, and I found myself straining my remaining vision trying to see the dots instead. Not ideal! Looking online, I found dominoes up to double six, but the game I wanted to play called for double twelves. For those of you not familiar with dominoes, a set of double twelves contains 144 dominoes, while double sixes contain only half that many, limiting the complexity of the game. "I'll make my own!" I thought. And I did. With a roll of clear labeling tape and a Tape Queen slate made to hold and cut label paper, I Brailled the flat side of the dominoes so that I could read them face-down and not reveal my hand while reading. They were glorious! Exactly what I needed!

Immediately, I took them over to my cousin's house to play. Well, a week went by of us playing, then two, and it seemed she was getting better and better. Later, I found out she had researched the Braille alphabet and learned enough about the numbers to draw out the tiles she needed to win by reading the Braille in the draw pile visually. I marveled at her cleverness and switched to a different game. A decade later, I still play with those dominos, perhaps choosing more scrupulous opponents.

Not only does using Braille for leisure activities like games allow me to be included in quality time with my family, but it also challenges my mind and helps to take away the fear of being excluded that sometimes creeps in when I have to do things differently. Next time I see you, let's sit down for a hand of cards because with Braille, all are welcome at the game table.

GCB Conference and Convention Overview
October 23 through 25, 2024 in Conyers, Georgia
Staying the Course Since 1956!

Welcome to Conyers, Georgia! All invaluable members, without whom this convention would not be a reality, are as follows: Marsha Farrow, Betsy Grenevitch, Phil Jones, Steve Longmire, Deborah Lovell, Jamaica Miller, Cecily Laney Nipper, Janet Parmeter, Judy Presley, Alice Ritchhart, Wendy Simone, Jerrie Toney, and Amanda Wilson. I would also like to give special recognition to Betsy Grenevitch, DJ McIntyre, and Zack Nipper for their printing assistance in producing Braille and large print items for this convention, as well as Amanda Wilson for producing the print/Braille meal tickets, and Tiffany Montalvo for helping to edit this program.

Sponsor Recognition:

Diamond sponsors: Dr. Myra Shivers, Vanda Pharmaceuticals, and Miller Family Foundation.
Georgia Council of the Blind Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss Activities Sponsor: Benson Food Services.

Gold Sponsors: Kay McGill and The Nippers

Silver Sponsors: Marsha Farrow and Debbie Young

Bronze Sponsors: Stacey Orr, Debbie McDonald, and Marj Schneider.

Wednesday, October 23, 2024, registration was held so that everyone could gather to pick up their welcome bags and meal tickets. Throughout the afternoon, we had some casual time to visit and play accessible games while we enjoyed the fun and conversation.

People could stop by the Peach Chapter table where they held a fundraising event and offered a variety of wonderful items to choose from in the 'Member's Favorite Recipes Cookbook'. In large print, enjoy delicious dishes with helpful cooking tips and tricks. Large Print "Keep You Busy" Book: Find inspiration, entertainment, and challenges with stories, quotes, and games. Do not miss out! Your support will make a significant impact on the Peach Chapter.

That night the GCB Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss (AAVL) sponsored bingo night. This annual event was enjoyed by young and old, and from the great city of Loganville, everyone was entertained by Phil Jones, our world-famous bingo caller! Snacks and prizes added to this enjoyable evening of GCB association.

Thursday, October 24, 2024, we enjoyed breakfast which included coffee, juice, and breakfast sandwiches. Everyone hung out together and had good coffee and conversations.

The exhibitor's spotlight was informative and educational. Each exhibitor was given three minutes to share about their organization or business and what they had at their table.

Next, two Constitution and Bylaw Amendments were read, followed by the nominating committee report.

We had a technology session. Steve Longmire introduced himself, the Tech Team, and the purpose of the Tech Time session. Ron Worley discussed Eleven Labs App. Next, Janet Parmerter discussed Alexa and the Victor Stream Reader. Followed by Marj Schneider who presented the Blind Shell Phone. Lastly, Alice Ritchhart guided us in an exploration of the Meta Glasses. A question and answer session followed the event.

Next, there was time to visit the exhibitor tables.

Vanda Pharmaceuticals (Diamond Sponsor) Vicki Preddy, Email:

Vicki.preddy@vandapharma.com, Phone: 202-578-9060

Georgia Lions Camp, Inc., Casey Carver, Email: director@glcb.org, Phone: 814.506.2027

Georgia Radio Reading Service, GARRS, Brittany McLemore, Phone: 800.672.6173, website: www.garrs.org;

GVS, Grenier Howell, Phone: 844.367.4872, web site: <https://gvs.georgia.gov>

JW.org, Daniel Ortiz, Email: bortizdaniel@gmail.com, Phone: 470-406-8733

Loganville Legacy Lions

Multiple Choices Center for Independent Living, Garrick Scott, Executive Director, Phone: 706.850.4025, website: <https://multiplechoices.us>

NFB Newslines, Dorothy Griffin.

At noon, we had boxed lunches from Chick-fil-A, and we found comfortable seating in the Bistro room in preparation of the exciting breakout sessions, we also had time to visit the exhibitors, who remained at their tables until 4:00 PM.

The GCB Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss (GCB AAVL) had Vicki Preddy as their speaker. Then they held their business meeting, along with elections and more.

The Georgia Guide Dog Users, GGDU, welcomed Jenine Stanley of Aira who joined us on Zoom, following the San Francisco Uber and Lyft rally protest, which she attended and covered for Aira. At the business meeting, the long-awaited drawing for the \$200 Chewy gift card was held. The evening ended with the GCB banquet which had delicious food from Cracker Barrel. We heard from the new Lion's Camp Director, Casey Carver, who shared her guiding values of inclusivity, empowerment, connection, and community. Casey Carver embodies a deep passion for empowering individuals with disabilities, a mission that springs from subjective experiences, from two decades of dedicated service at PA Lions Camp, where she swiftly climbed to the role of Camp Director. Now, as the Director of Georgia Lions Camp, Casey is poised for an exciting new chapter. Guided by unwavering integrity, boundless compassion, and a commitment to empowerment, she is determined to lead by example and cultivate an inclusive and adventurous camp environment that fosters independence, meaningful friendships, and a profound appreciation for nature. Beyond her professional endeavors, Casey cherishes quality time with her husband, son, bonus daughter, two dogs, and two cats. Exploring the great outdoors with family and friends, she finds joy in camping and kayaking.

Many may have heard we had a senior prom, with the theme of Viva Las Vegas, with the special guest and appearance by Elvis Presley. The dress was casual; however, we encouraged people to wear an outfit that would be from the 50's, the 60's, or the 70's, since that was the age group of our seniors. It wasn't mandatory, but at the prom, a prize was given to the best dressed. To vote for the King and Queen of the prom, there were three cans to put in a dollar vote. The proceeds from the contest for the king and queen were donated to the GCB General fund. It was certainly a fun night, as Elvis sang to one after another of the women.

On Friday, we held our annual GCB membership business meeting where we listened to the minutes from last year's business meeting. We held our elections. We elected the following officers: Cecily Laney Nipper as GCB President; Marj Schneider as GCB First Vice-President; Judy Presley as GCB Second Vice-President; Amanda Wilson as GCB Secretary; Cecily Nipper, Senior as GCB Assistant Secretary; Marsha Farrow as GCB Treasurer; and Deborah McDonald as GCB Member at Large Representative. We voted on amendments to our constitution and bylaws.

Next, we held our annual GCB awards luncheon where we recognized special people in the form of chapter and state awards. Our luncheon speaker was Dr. Brittany McLemore, the new executive director of the Georgia Radio Reading Service. With a background in nonprofit development and collaborating directly with individuals with various disabilities, Dr. McLemore has a Doctorate Degree in Organizational Learning and Leadership from Wilmington University, and undergraduate degrees in Human Services and Behavioral Science from both Wilmington University and the University of Hartford. Dr. McLemore is a proud Brooklyn, NY native, and currently resides in Atlanta, GA.

Cecily Laney Nipper, GCB President gave her Presidential Diamond Awards to Wendy Monns and Marj Schneider. The Walter R. McDonald Service Award was presented to Mike Hall. The June Willis Guiding Eyes Service Award was presented to Debbie Young. The Rhoda Walker/Ann Sims Service Award was presented to Phillip Jones. GCB Lifetime Awards were presented to Phil Jones, Judy Presley, Betsy Grenevitch, and Keith Morris. Presidential

Certificate of Appreciation Award was presented to Tiffany Montalvo from the East Georgia Chapter. The Chapter Loving Cup was presented to Linda Williams from the East Georgia Chapter.

Next, we listened to the Do Not Fall program provided by Matt Montes from the Health Force. Matt Montes is a registered nurse with 10 years of experience in the healthcare field. As the Director of Clinical Services at Health Force of Georgia, he oversees all clinical operations, ensuring patients receive the highest quality care. Inspired by his own experience as a visually impaired individual, Matt understood the importance of maximizing independence through adaptation and accommodation. He also volunteered with the National Organization of Albinism and Hypopigmentation, continuing his commitment to helping others.

Finally, we held our closing Board meeting to swear in officers for the 2025-2026 term. We conducted any closing business and voted on the time and place of the next board meeting.

Last year we voted to change our constitution to make it easier to collect and turn in dues from members closer to the end of the year.

However, we neglected one paragraph of the constitution and one in the bylaws that also needed to be altered to be congruent with what was changed last year. We will vote on those changes this year.

The GCB constitution committee also recommended a change to the requirement that proposed amendments to our governing documents be submitted to the committee two months in advance of voting at the business meeting.

The committee recommended that the deadline be set at one month in advance of voting by the membership but with no change to how far in advance the membership should be informed about proposed amendments.



GCB members at banquet night sitting at tables adorned with "Viva Las Vegas" decorations and balloons.

Constitution and Bylaws Changes

Several changes to our constitution and bylaws were adopted at the business meeting as follows. Last year we voted to change our constitution to make it easier to collect and turn in dues from members closer to the end of the year, and another section of the bylaws needed to

be amended to be congruent to comply with this. In the constitution, Article V, Section 5, and in the bylaws under duties of treasurer, the dates were changed for dues to be assessed in November and collected by December 31. These changes were adopted.

The GCB constitution committee also recommended a change to the requirement that proposed amendments to our governing documents be submitted to the committee two months in advance of voting at the business meeting, changing it to one month in advance, and this change was adopted in the constitution in Article XIII and in the bylaws in Article VIII.

Georgia Council of The Blind Annual Membership Meeting Minutes

Saturday, November 4, 2023

Color Guard:

The presentation of the colors was given by the Civil Air Patrol. The audio description was given by Michelle Grenevitch.

In Memoriam – Donald Linnartz, Timothy Barrett, John M. Simms, Karen Hughes, Annette Rhinehart Saffles, Laverne Smith King, Roger Glenn Keeney, Barbara Graham, Andrew Pregonzer, Rev. Matthew McGowan, Geraldine Epps, Barbara (Bobby) Brooks, and Louise Hall.

Invocation:

The invitation was given by Sharon Nichols.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by President Cecily Laney Nipper at 9:22 AM.

Roll Call:

The roll call was given by Kathy Morris, GCB Secretary.

Members present were: Cecily Laney Nipper, Judy Presley, Hoyal Presley, Betsy Grenevitch, Gwendolyn Barron, Chris Holbrook, Wendy Simone, Amanda Wilson, Debbie Young, Keith Morris, Deborah Lovell, Todd Turansky, Ron Worley, Tiyah FM Longmire, Steve Longmire, Phil Jones, Jennifer Bray, Jamaica Miller, Jerrie Toney, Davion Rice, Teresa Watson, Claudette Williams, Sharon Nichols, Vanessa Meadows, Angela Zimmerman, Vickie Preddy, Jeanette Sickel, Elaise Day, Janet Parmeter, Keith Parmeter, Tiffany Montalvo, Zack Nipper, John Hester, Valerie Hester, Michelle Grenevitch. Attendees on Zoom are Dianne Roberts, Mike Hall, Grainger Ricks, David Hoffman, DJ McIntyre, and Anne McQuade.

Constitutional Reading:

The first reading of the constitutional amendment was done by Tiffany Montalvo. The amendment concerning changing the date of when dues and membership lists are to be submitted from November 15th to December 31st.

Diamond Sponsor, Vicki Preddy:

Vanda Pharmaceuticals, Vicki Preddy. She discussed non-24 disorder and stated that those who had questions or concerns could contact her at 202-578-9060.

Agenda:

The agenda was reviewed. Deborah Lovell made a motion to accept the agenda, and Phil Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed and the agenda was accepted.

President's Report – Cecily Laney Nipper

Cecily Laney Nipper thanked several people for all they have done for this convention. Thanks were given to the convention committee and host committee, Augusta Chapter. Thank you to Michelle and Gwendolyn and the volunteers that were coordinated by Ron Worley.

Since last year, we have gone through a legislative cycle and pushed toward some objectives. This year, Cecily stated that many members had participated in the fundraiser. The money

raised will more than cover the short fall in the main account. Cecily stated that she continues to get calls from people who are looking for information/resources that are available. Cecily encouraged the membership to support the efforts of the GCB Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss, who would be giving their report later.

Cecily stated that at our conference and at our Digest Braille is provided for members. The Digest is getting strong. She encouraged members to stay involved and pull together.

Secretary's Report – Kathy Morris

Minutes from November 12, 2022, the Annual Membership Business Meeting was read. A motion was made by Marsha Farrow and seconded by Alice Ritchhart to accept the minutes as read. The minutes were approved.

Treasure's Report – Marsha Farrow

Main checking account - \$11,940.38 Designated funds within main account –

Legal advocacy - \$1,000.00

Youth GAP Fund - \$1,217.98

Senior Support Fund - \$3,600.60

Total of designated funds - \$5,818.58

General operating funds - \$6,121.80, which includes the cow patty fundraiser.

Scholarship Fund - \$166.35

First Timer's Fund - \$66.35

Debbie Young Donation- \$100.00

Conference Account - \$7,243.81

Conference Lodging/Travel - \$1,000.00

Vanda Pharmaceutical Conference Support - \$1,000.00

Dr. Myra Shivers Fund - \$2,000.00

Long Term Investment - \$21,012.12

Way Financial as of 09/30/2023 - \$71,590.70

Deborah Lovell asked for the total of all accounts.

Deborah Lovell made a motion to file the report for audit and was seconded by Marj Schneider.

The motion was approved.

Finance Committee – Jerrie Toney

The committee met 10/26/23. They discussed Duxbury Braille production software. GCB has two software upgrades behind. We have been asked to buy the updates. The price is \$450.00. This software will be useful for any future embosser. Money has been allotted in the office and discretionary funds and from President's travel.

Jamaica Miller made a motion to purchase updates, and Phil Jones seconded the motion.

Discussion was had concerning the length of time the update will be good. It was last updated 3 years ago. After some more discussion, the motion carried.

The cow patty raffle brought in \$2,210.00, with \$644.06 in expenses for a profit of \$1,565.94.

The budget report was sent out to everyone. Phil Jones made a motion to accept the budget as read. The motion was seconded by Ron Worley. The budget was accepted.

The second reading of constitutional amendments by Tiffany Montalvo.

Marj Schneider stated the committee proposed the change as it has been difficult to collect from membership by November 15th. She made the motion to accept changes to Article IV B and Article X. Since the motion came out of committee, no second was needed. After the vote was conducted, the results of constitution voting adopted the amendment unanimously.

Legislative update – Alice Ritchhart

The committee has already met and is getting ready for the 2024 session. Alice has met with scholarship winners, Madeline and Jill from Statesboro to assist with advocacy efforts. Braille and Commission bills will be dropped again by Senator Davenport. The main talking point is VR said they do not know how to serve us all. We will join NFB for Blind Day at the Capitol. We will get the final details out to the membership.

Nationally – Electronic absentee voting. A vote of the state legislature would be required for electronic absentee voting to be possible in Georgia. Last year we made a resolution to consider legal action for this accessible absentee ballot effort. Disability rights advocates assisted other states in obtaining this. We have spoken to them and are waiting to hear from them.

Cecily spoke to Georgia Advocacy. The goal is for those organizations who serve other disabilities to join in potential legal action, which may be paid for by legal aid.

The Older Americans Act will be coming up for realignment in 2024 for services for seniors. It does not include blindness, low-vision or deaf blind as is. We will be asking them to amend the law to include blindness, low vision, and deaf-blindness as severe health issues.

Resolutions – Alice Ritchhart

Resolution #1 – Older Americans Act. Amend to recognize seniors with blindness and low vision and deaf blind and include them. Resolution passed.

Resolution #2 – It was withdrawn by the committee.

Resolution #3 – Thank you to the volunteers for all their assistance. Resolution passed.

Special Interest Affiliate Updates

Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss – Alice Ritchhart

The affiliate voted to join at the National level and dues went up to \$20.

GGDU – Marj Schneider

The affiliate met yesterday and had a guest from Richmond County Deputies concerning tracking and working dogs. They will have a raffle with Chewy. They are always a resource for any guide dog user in Georgia.

President Cecily Nipper called for any unfinished business and new business. None came forth.

Affiliate and Committee brag and steal

Technology Committee – Steve Longmire

They meet once a month. Check out the GCB app on IOS and Android. They gave a shout out to several first timers from Atlanta.

AAVL – Alice Ritchhart

They brought 4 people to the conference with scholarships.

GCB Braille projects – Phil Jones

The Braille writing program will be today at 2:00.

Betsy Grenevitch received the prestigious Melvin Jones award from the Loganville Legacy Lions.

Ron Worley – The Augusta Chapter has 10 members.

Zack Nipper made an announcement to please come by the Pass It on Table where items are available for free.

DJ McIntyre shared that she had baby Aaron on October 2nd.

Adjourn:

The Meeting adjourned at 11:33 AM.

Respectfully submitted by

Kathy Morris, GCB Secretary

Looking for Encouragement?

National Church Conference for the Blind

By Marsha Farrow

In August 2024 I really needed time to renew my faith in view of so much turmoil in our own country and in so many places throughout the world. I longed to find that inner peace that truly passes understanding. I am happy to announce that I found such a place filled with so many gentle and kind people. I experienced a very uplifting week of worship, music, Bible study, and lots of tasty food and fellowship. For the first time, I attended the National Church Conference of the Blind, commonly referred to as NCCB, in Little Rock, Arkansas. For several years, my sweet friend from Hawaii, Cynthia

Hirakawa, an NCCB Board Member, had invited me during our visits at the American Council of the Blind Conference. She never failed to remind me to take part in the NCCB annual conference held in August of each year. During the NCCB Conference, I enjoyed tours, talent show, worship, and met so many loving friends who, like me, are students of the Bible and followers of Christ. The Fox in Socks Party featuring the book by Dr. Seuss brought laughter and wonderful memories were made. We also recorded an opening for the internet show "The World and Everything In IT" and our recording played during the opening of a recent show.

One of so many highlights of the week was meeting so many new friends. One of which is Mr. Duncan Holmes, who is a professional pianist and vocalist. He is the current President of NCCB from Fredericksburg, Texas. He joined NCCB in 2019. He developed Retinopathy of Prematurity due to elevated levels of oxygen in the incubator because of being born three months early. President Holmes and his late wife Sharon first attended NCCB in 2016 and were hooked!

President Holmes proudly shared the rich history of NCCB and the many states that have hosted the NCCB Conference.

In 1953 the NCCB Conference was held for the first time in Memphis, TN and there were twenty-two people from fifteen states in attendance. In 1955 in Louisville, KY there were OVER 100 gathered. Then in August of 1956, NCCB met in Fort Worth, TX and selected the name National Church Conference of the Blind, and developed the Constitution. In 1961 NCCB was incorporated in Kansas as a Non-profit, non-denominational tax-exempt organization.

Do you need encouragement from friendly and kind individuals in these troublesome times? Please consider adding the 2025 NCCB Conference to be held in Philadelphia, PA from August 9-15. This is a wonderful way to refresh and renew your body, mind, and soul!

For more information about National Church Conference of the Blind (NCCB), please contact President Duncan Holmes via email: Duncan Holmes duncanholmes46@gmail.com

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