

The ACB Braille Forum

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The American Council of the Blind strives to increase the independence, security, equality of opportunity, and to improve quality of life for all blind and visually impaired people.

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The American Council of the Blind (TM) is a membership organization made up of more than 70 state and special-interest affiliates. To join, contact the national office at the number listed above.

Those much-needed contributions, which are tax-deductible, can be sent to Attn: Treasurer, ACB, 6300 Shingle Creek Pkwy., Suite 195, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430. If you wish to remember a relative or friend, the national office has printed cards available for this purpose. Consider including a gift to ACB in your Last

Will and Testament. If your wishes are complex, call the national office.

To make a contribution to ACB via the Combined Federal Campaign, use this number: 11155.

For the latest in legislative and governmental news, call the "Washington Connection" toll-free at (800) 424-8666, 5 p.m. to midnight Eastern time, or read it online.

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To subscribe to "The Braille Forum" via e-mail, go to www.acb.org/mailman/listinfo/brailleforum-L.

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Contact Sharon Lovering in the ACB national office, 1-800-424-8666, or via e-mail, slovering@acb.org. Give her the information, and she'll take care of the changes for you.

Check out ACB Radio Mainstream to keep abreast of happenings in the blind community.

For news you can use, check out the new ACB Radio News and Information Service at acbradio.org.

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President's Message: Are You Getting Sleepy?
by Kim Charlson

Like so many people who are blind or visually impaired, you may be experiencing issues with your sleeping patterns that you don't understand — nights of sleeplessness, and days when you fight to stay awake. This may appear to you to be a sleep disorder, but it's actually Non-24.

Recently, in my role as ACB president, I had the privilege to submit a letter to the Food and Drug Administration in support of a new drug application under consideration for

tasimelteon. This drug is being proposed for the treatment of Non-24. Since this condition affects approximately 70 percent of people who are totally blind, that figure represents a large portion of ACB members. Most people facing this disorder have found that treatment options are extremely limited.

The most commonly suggested treatment is melatonin, which actually can cause additional physical problems for some individuals. Traditional sleep aids have generally proven ineffective to relieve the symptoms of Non-24 Disorder. Often, the symptoms of Non-24, including severe disturbances to sleep patterns, daytime sleepiness, memory loss, and fatigue, are attributed to other conditions and misdiagnosed completely. The sleep deprivation caused by Non-24 impacts the ability of many who are employed to maintain acceptable levels of productivity on the job. Students who are blind commonly complain of fatigue that adversely impacts their studies.

Many of our members who suffer from the consequences of Non-24 have been following the work of Vanda

Pharmaceuticals as they have researched, developed and tested tasimelteon. We in the blindness community are anxiously awaiting its availability on the market with great anticipation. We sincerely hope that our wait will not be in vain and that this drug will be approved by the FDA so that the thousands of people experiencing Non-24 can get their lives back on track.

Vanda Pharmaceuticals has been a wonderful partner to work with — they truly want to get the word out about Non-24 and ACB knows how to get the word out to people who are blind. Here's how you can both help to get the word out for Non-24, and raise some money for ACB at the same time. Even if you don't have sleep issues yourself, here's a great opportunity to help someone you know who does, and in the process, support ACB.

Vanda Pharmaceuticals has created the Non-24 Share More Campaign to raise awareness of Non-24-Hour Disorder and support the blindness community through the power of personal connections. Although Non-24 affects nearly 70 percent of people who are totally blind,

few people know about the condition. That's why it's important to learn about the symptoms of Non-24 and share the information with people you know. The Non-24 Share More Campaign is designed to raise awareness, help spread the word, and support the blindness community with a growing corporate donation.

More information for you: When you sign up, you'll stay up to date with the latest information, receive helpful tools, learn about resources, and be invited to special educational events. More support for the blindness community: Sign up today and Vanda Pharmaceuticals will make a \$24 donation that will benefit the American Council of the Blind and four other advocacy groups. Even better, every time you share the program with someone you know and they sign up, Vanda will make another \$24 donation, which will be shared equally among five advocacy groups:

- American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)**
- American Council of the Blind (ACB)**
- National Federation of the Blind (NFB)**
- Blinded Veterans Association (BVA)**

- **VisionServe Alliance**

By signing up, you generate a \$24 donation. By sharing, that donation continues to grow along with awareness of Non-24 as others sign up and share with people they know. It starts with you, so sign up and share now. Sign up by calling Vanda Pharmaceuticals toll-free at 1-855-856-2424 and simply mention the Non-24 Share More Campaign. Please help to spread the word and raise some important funding for ACB. For more information about Vanda Pharmaceuticals and Non-24 Disorder, call a health educator toll-free at 1-855-856-2424, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern. You can also visit www.non-24.com for additional resources.

**U.S. Department of Transportation Issues New
Accessibility Rules For Airlines and Airports by Melanie
Brunson**

In November 2013, the U.S. Department of Transportation issued new rules aimed at addressing some of the challenges people with disabilities face when they want to travel by air. Here are some of the highlights. First, the new rules give both U.S. and foreign airlines that do business in this country two years to make the pages of their web sites that contain core travel information and services accessible to people with disabilities. All of the pages on airline web sites must be made accessible within three years. In addition, beginning two years after this rule goes into effect, any new automated kiosks purchased by airlines and installed at U.S. airports for passengers to use to perform services such as printing boarding passes and baggage tags must be accessible to passengers with disabilities. Within 10 years, at least 25 percent of all kiosks at each airport location must be accessible. The rule also requires that airlines and airports provide a means for passengers who need to use accessible kiosks to clearly determine which kiosks are the accessible ones. Accessible kiosks must perform all of the functions that the inaccessible ones perform so that

passengers who have disabilities can have the same experience that other passengers have.

Finally, the new rules require that if an airline offers special discounts or promotions online, they must offer the same items to individuals who contact them in person or by telephone and indicate that they cannot use the airline's web site because of their disability. A few airlines whose tickets are sold by a small business that is independent of the airline itself are exempt from this requirement, but it applies to all other airlines that do business in this country and operate planes that seat more than 60 passengers. This portion of the rule is effective immediately.

These rules are the latest in a series of amendments implementing the Air Carrier Access Act. We appreciate the fact that the Department of Transportation has finally begun to address some of the challenges that people who have disabilities face before, during, and after air travel, but we are disappointed by the absence of urgency represented by the timelines associated with their

requirements. The timelines for provision of accessible kiosks in airports are especially unfortunate given the proliferation of such kiosks and the accompanying reduction in opportunities for passengers to receive assistance from airline personnel. Since airlines have been aware of the need for accessible kiosks for more than 10 years already, and virtually no progress has been made to address the issue, it seems that giving them 10 more years to do so is a bit unnecessary. The rules make it clear that technology currently exists which can be incorporated into the kiosks used in airports that will make them accessible to and independently usable by people with visual and other disabilities. We had hoped that there would therefore be more urgency behind the requirements that this technology be utilized to equalize the travel experience for passengers with disabilities.

If readers are interested in more information about these rules, it can be found online at www.dot.gov/briefing-room/new-dot-rules-make-flying-easier-passengers-disabilities.

As always, you can also contact the ACB national office with any questions, and we will try our best to answer them.

FCC Announces New Procedures for Informal Complaints about Communications Accessibility

The FCC released a Public Notice noting that Oct. 8, 2013 marked the third anniversary of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) and the start of new procedures for consumers to file requests for dispute assistance and informal complaints about the accessibility of the following technologies used for communication:

- Advanced communications services and equipment (such as cell phones, smart phones, computers, laptops, and tablets used for text messaging, e-mail, or instant messaging);**
- Internet web browsers built into mobile phones; and**
- Telecommunications services and equipment (such as telephones).**

An overview of the new communications accessibility informal complaint procedures is also available at www.fcc.gov/accessibility-complaints-255-716-718-action-options.

This information is also available through the FCC complaints system at www.fcc.gov/complaints by selecting "Access by People with Disabilities."

To learn more about the FCC's accessibility requirements for communications and video programming services and equipment, visit www.fcc.gov/accessibility-complaints-more.

Links to the Public Notice

Word:

http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-13-2177A1.docx

PDF:

http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-13-2177A1.pdf

For individuals who don't have Internet access but wish to begin the complaint process, please call 1-800-424-8666 and ask to speak with Barbara LeMoine. She can assist in helping you file.

For additional information, please contact Rosaline Crawford at (202) 418-2075, or e-mail rosaline.crawford@fcc.gov.

— Eric Bridges

It's the Real Deal in Las Vegas!

by Janet Dickelman

It's a new year, and it's time to do some serious planning for our 2014 conference and convention ACB — the Real Deal in Las Vegas, Nev.

Think of all the deals, not just in the casino but in the exhibit hall and in all the information you can gather in one place from all the seminars, workshops and our

general sessions. ACB's 53rd annual conference and convention will be one of the best ever. Don't miss out on this incredible week of special activities, information, exhibits, fun and friendship. Make plans now to be at the Riviera Hotel and Casino July 11-19.

Career Development

Often people ask if there are activities that can help them in their careers. They want to know about information available on important issues, and how they can learn more about new adaptive technology. Here's a sampling of these outstanding opportunities; share them with your employer and explore the possibility of using at least part of your time in Las Vegas as professional development. Perhaps your employer will even assist with part of your expenses or give you a few days of professional development time.

Exhibits

Compare and contrast the latest products for blind and visually impaired people. Discover which video magnifier, scanner, braille display, notetaker or speech program best meets your needs or the needs of your students or clients. Examine an endless variety of products for work, school and daily living. Collect materials to take home to others in your office or organization. You will want to spend hours and hours browsing the exhibit hall; it opens on Saturday, July 12 at 1 p.m. and closes on Wednesday, July 16, at 1 p.m.

Workshops and Focus Groups

Every conference and convention features unique opportunities to learn new skills, as well as tips and techniques on a wide range of topics. Seminars on diabetes, employment issues, rehabilitation, transportation and access to off-the-shelf technology are some examples. Get instruction and tips on items such as i-devices, screen readers, braille notetakers, low vision products, and much more.

Programs and Discussions

Learn about audio description by attending ACB film night.

ACB general sessions (Sunday evening, Monday-Thursday 8:30 a.m.-noon, and all day Friday) address education, rehabilitation, employment, access, health-related issues and much more. The presentation by a talking book narrator and update on library services are always popular.

There are many other opportunities for career development at the 2014 ACB conference and convention. Please come and join us!

Reservation Details

Room rates at the Riviera are \$87 (single and double) plus \$10 per additional guest. Room taxes are currently 12 percent. Make telephone reservations by calling 1-800-634-6753 or online by visiting the ACB web site at

www.acb.org and following the 2014 conference and convention link.

Convention Contacts

Stay in touch by joining the ACB convention e-mail list. Send a blank e-mail to acbconvention-subscribe@acb.org.

2014 Exhibit Information

**Michael Smitherman, (601) 331-7740,
amduo@bellsouth.net**

2014 Advertising and Sponsorships

Margarine Beaman, (512) 921-1625, oleo50@hotmail.com

For any other convention-related questions, contact Janet Dickelman, convention chair, (651) 428-5059, or e-mail janet.dickelman@gmail.com.

Come To RSVA® Sagebrush BEP Training Conference

You are cordially invited to attend the 2014 Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America® (RSVA®) Sagebrush Business Enterprise Program Training Conference at the legendary Golden Nugget Hotel & Casino in downtown Las Vegas. Room rates start at only \$45 per night — match that at any other four-star facility! The conference dates are Feb. 10-14, 2014.

The theme for the 2014 training conference is "Let's Embrace Change — Change is the Steel We Can Forge to a New Future."

As usual, we will have a full program with sessions for SLA administrators and staff, a state committee chair session, and opportunities to visit with exhibitors and sponsors. Following is a list of topics, speakers and events we're planning:

- **"Welcome to Vegas!" reception**

- **"BEP Training — What's Working?"**
- **"User-Friendly Universal Access to Touch-Screen Technology"**
- **"Integrating Healthy Products"**
- **"Accessible Technology for Business Management"**
- **"Does the Future R-S Program Include Micro-Marts?"**
- **Luncheon keynote speaker: Blake Lindsay, Communications Manager at the Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind and Manager of Blazin' Blake Productions**
- **American Council of the Blind first vice president Jeff Thom provides updates on advocacy and events**
- **"How To Prevent an Unnecessary Audit"**
- **National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) presents Healthy Vending updates as well as national legislative updates**
- **"Can Franchising Work in BEP?"**
- **Presenting the SLA Administrators' Panel**
- **Military Dining Training and Multiple State Contracting**

Many new and exciting events are planned! We look forward to seeing you all there!

Be a winner at our slot tournament on Tuesday evening! A special Valentine outing for you and your "sweetheart" is being explored!

Additional special speakers and the full agenda will be available soon at www.rsva.biz.

You do not want to miss "The Fremont Street Experience!"

Note: The hotel reservations deadline is Jan. 4, 2014.

Room reservations must be made directly with the hotel. Phone 1-800-634-3454. Let them know you are with the RSVAR[®] Sagebrush Conference 2014. Special room rates are good from Saturday, Feb. 8th through Saturday, Feb. 15th. Please check out the hotel and its room reservation policy at www.goldennugget.com.

For more information, contact either Dan Sippl at (715) 839-8591, e-mail sippl@charter.net, or Terry Camardelle at (504) 328-6373, e-mail rsvaterry@juno.com.

Leadership Training Sessions for 2014

Are you an emerging leader, just beginning to explore ways to get involved in committees or participate on your local chapter board? Have you been involved in your local chapter, state or special-interest affiliate for a while, but need to learn some new leadership techniques, or fine-tune those you already have, so you can move to the next level? As you read this article, two regional training seminars and one national seminar are being planned for 2014.

The first regional seminar will be the Midwest leadership training seminar in St. Louis, Mo. Feb. 28-March 2. If you are interested in attending, please contact Jim Jirak, (402) 441-9566 or e-mail jjirak@inebraska.com, or Ray Campbell, (630) 258-0516 or e-mail ray1530@wowway.com, to learn more about it.

Can't make it to the Midwest seminar? Then check your schedule for March 21-23, the dates for the Crossroads regional training seminar in Louisville, Ky. It is sponsored

by the Kentucky Council of the Blind. If you are interested in attending it, the contact person is Carla Ruschival; call (502) 897-1472, or e-mail her, carla40206@gmail.com.

The national leadership training will be held in Las Vegas, Nev. on July 11. There will not be a selection process like we had in 2012 in Louisville. You will register for it on your convention pre-registration form. The cost will be \$75. If you plan to attend, make plans to arrive in Las Vegas on Thursday, July 10th. More information will be available on this seminar in the spring.

— Berl Colley

Highway to Success: Crossroads Leadership Conference

By Carla Ruschival

Get in the driver's seat and take the on-ramp to an outstanding weekend of leadership training. Plan now to attend the second annual Crossroads Leadership

Conference, March 21-23, 2014, in Louisville, Ky.

The first Crossroads received rave reviews from all who attended. The second Crossroads will be even more exciting and educational than the first.

Crossroads is a skills-based weekend designed with beginners and more advanced leaders in mind. Open to anyone who wishes to attend, Crossroads includes five interstates (general sessions), 16 side roads (classes) targeting specific skills, and two unique leadership activities. Create your own road map; choose the sessions that best fit your needs. Fill your fuel tank with fundraising ideas, free and inexpensive public relations and membership recruitment techniques, and new ways to energize your membership. Learn to run more effective meetings, make a great first impression, and be a better public speaker. Grab techniques to increase traffic to your web site, use social media to reach younger members, and recruit, screen and keep volunteers.

Pre-registration for Crossroads is only \$45 per person.

Your pre-registration fee covers Friday and Saturday lunch, all general sessions and classes, Friday and Saturday evening feasts (you even get seconds), and Friday and Saturday evening snacks.

Crossroads will be at the Best Western Plus Airport East/Expo Center, 1921 Bishop Lane, in Louisville. Room rates are \$79 a night plus tax; a hot breakfast is included with your room each day. Free wi-fi is available throughout the hotel, and the hotel shuttle will pick up guests at the airport, the MegaBus stop, and the Greyhound station at no charge.

Crossroads is open to all state and special-interest affiliates, local chapters, and individuals who wish to attend. Students and younger members are welcome. Affiliates may select people to attend, and individuals wishing to participate are also welcome. Crossroads is open to all.

To make reservations at the hotel, call (502) 456-4411; be sure to let them know that you are attending the

Crossroads Conference.

Pre-registration will open in late January. Request your pre-registration packet and get more information by calling the Kentucky Council of the Blind at (502) 895-4598, by e-mailing kcb@iglou.com, or by visiting the Kentucky Council of the Blind web site at www.kentucky-acb.org.

Crossroads is hosted by the Kentucky Council of the Blind. Members of the planning team are from Ohio, Tennessee, West Virginia, Georgia, Indiana, and Kentucky. Several state and special-interest affiliates and local chapters are represented, and anyone wishing to join our team is welcome. For more information on becoming part of our team, call (502) 895-4598.

Now start planning. Be sure to take the right turn and meet us at the Crossroads.

DKM Is Betting on You to Be A Leader in Vegas

by Allen J. Casey

The theories regarding the nature and character of leaders are legend. Leaders are born. Leaders are made. Leaders are visionaries. Leaders are risk takers. In fact, leaders are all of these and more. But, no matter the characterization, no matter the individual's respective abilities, the ultimate key to every leader's success is opportunity. The opening of the door to participate, to collaborate, to contribute enhances the odds of leadership success. ACB promotes opportunity through service on the board and a variety of committees as well as the recognition of two individuals each year as Durward K. McDaniel First-Timers.

In recognition of the life and work of ACB pioneer Durward McDaniel, ACB and the DKM First-Timer committee will recognize two future leaders as DKM First-Timers, one from east and one from west of the Mississippi River. The 2014 first-timers will be introduced during the opening

session of the national conference and convention in Las Vegas.

Eligible applicants must meet each of the following criteria:

- **Age 18 or older;**
- **Blind or visually impaired;**
- **Member in good standing of ACB;**
- **Never attended a previous national conference and convention.**

Additionally, the eligible applicant will submit two letters to the committee:

- **Personal narrative outlining the applicant's background, participation in and contributions to ACB and the respective affiliate and a statement of the importance of selection to the applicant's affiliate and community;**
- **Letter of recommendation from the president of the applicant's state or special-interest ACB affiliate.**

It is important that eligible applicants provide complete contact information including home address, telephone number and e-mail address. DKM First-Timers are expected to be active participants in convention sessions.

Application materials should be forwarded to Francine Patterson in the ACB national office, fpatterson@acb.org. The deadline for receipt of all materials is April 1. Questions should be addressed to DKM chair Allen Casey, mahatmaac@aol.com.

ACB Radio Now On Your Phone

At long last, there's now a new way to listen to ACB Radio that doesn't require you to use a computer.

All you need now is a telephone! That's right, we have joined a service which allows us to present all streams of ACB Radio to you by telephone. It's easy to use, and brings the great offerings of ACB Radio to your fingertips.

To listen to ACB Radio, dial (231) 460-1047. You will then be presented with a menu of choices. You can jump from stream to stream if you decide while listening that you want to hear another one of our channels.

From blindness-related programming on Mainstream to old-time radio treasures on Treasure Trove and lots of music and coverage of live events in between, it's all at your fingertips. Note: if you do not have free long distance, telephone charges may apply.

Please feel free to contact me at marlaina@acbradio.org with any questions or comments.

Happy listening, and we're glad more of you can now join us on ACB Radio, where your listening is our business!

— Marlaina Lieberg

Shopping for Health Care: Comparing Hospitals Can Help Consumers Make Good Decisions

by Ron Pollack

(Editor's Note: Ron Pollack is the executive director of Families USA, the national organization for health care consumers.)

Have you ever wondered about which hospitals in your community provide the best care? If you or a loved one needed elective surgery, like a knee replacement, how would you pick the right hospital? A new tool called Hospital Compare gives you easy access to important information about the quality of all the hospitals in your area that accept Medicare. This information can help you and your health care provider make an informed decision about the best hospital for your needs.

There are a lot of factors to consider when choosing a hospital. For starters, pick a hospital that accepts your health insurance (whether that's Medicare or another type of insurance). Consider hospitals that have the best track record in providing high-quality care or performing a

specific procedure. Hospital Compare has all of this information — and much more.

(This web site is not intended for use in emergencies — if you're already in an ambulance, for example. If you experience an emergency, always go to the nearest hospital.)

Q: Why is the quality of my hospital important?

A: Not all hospitals are the same — some provide better care than others. Hospitals that provide high-quality care ensure that patients get the right care at the right time and that patients' needs are met. Choosing a hospital that provides high-quality care can help keep you safe and avoid potential problems.

Q: How can Hospital Compare help me choose a hospital?

A: Hospital Compare collects up-to-date quality, safety, and patient satisfaction information for nearly every hospital in the country. You can use the web site to see

how the hospitals in your area compare to each other on many measures of quality, and you can see how those hospitals compare to state and national averages.

Q: What information can I find on Hospital Compare?

A: Hospital Compare provides information on a wide variety of quality issues. For example, you can find information on:

- patient ratings of their hospital experience**
- how often a hospital provides recommended care for patients with certain conditions, like people with pneumonia or people who've had a heart attack**
- the number of patients with Medicare who were treated for common conditions or received common procedures**

All of this information gives you a glimpse into the kind of care you might receive.

Q: How do I use Hospital Compare?

A: Using your computer, smart phone, or tablet, go to www.medicare.gov/hospitalcompare/search.html. If you don't have access to a computer, ask your health care provider for help.

Use the search function to find hospitals in your area by entering your address or zip code, and select up to three hospitals you'd like to compare. If you already know which hospital you're looking for, you can search by hospital name.

While you can't always predict when you'll need care, Hospital Compare can be an important tool to help you and your health care provider learn about your options and make the best decision for your health care needs.

Talk to your health care provider about how Hospital Compare can help you.

How to Get the Most from Your Vision Rehabilitation Experience, Part II: When Things Are Not Going Well by Doug Powell

In September, I wrote about the process of getting service from your Department of Rehabilitation Services. I stressed the importance of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). That's a very good place to start this discussion of when things are not going well.

The IPE Is Your Contract

Consider the IPE to be the contract between you and the Department of Rehab Services (whatever it is called in your state). You and your counselor have come to an understanding of:

- Your employment goals,**
- What services you will need to give you the skills to achieve your employment goals,**
- Any adaptive equipment needed, and teaching necessary to use that equipment,**
- All of the above is developed "consistent with [your] strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice, so that**

such individuals may prepare for and engage in gainful employment."

The plan you develop is meant to be individualized, so your input is necessary in making it meaningful. As well as letting your voice be heard about what you think will work and not work for you, you or someone with you should take notes at every step along the way, especially if there is an area of disagreement.

Client Assistance Program (CAP)

The Rehab Act mandates that every state have a Client Assistance Program (CAP) associated with their rehab services. You can request the help of a CAP representative at any point in a grievance/appeal process. They will help you understand the Rehab Act, and will help you make sure that the rehab services you are receiving conform to the law.

Review of IPE for Amendments at Least Yearly

The law mandates that you and your counselor meet at least yearly to review your progress through the steps in your IPE. If your employment goals change so that different services are needed, you should first request a meeting to amend your IPE. Then you can renegotiate what services are necessary to attain that employment goal.

Mediation

The grievance process up to and including mediation are considered "informal" steps. These steps may differ from state to state. In Virginia, if you cannot come to an agreement with your counselor about employment goals, services necessary, or how services are rendered, you should appeal first to the regional vocational rehabilitation manager and next to the deputy commissioner for services. Contact your local chapter or state affiliate of the ACB for information on how this works in your state. However, by federal law, if you still cannot agree, you can request a mediator. A meeting will be set up with you, any supporting advocate you request, a representative of the

department, and the mediator. You will present your case, the department will present theirs, and the mediator will try to help you come to an agreement with the department. Again, your case will be stronger if you have documented your previous attempts to get what you need to attain your employment goals.

Fair Hearing

This is the first "formal" step in the grievance process. The state retains a pool of fair hearing officers to be called on when necessary. Although retained by the state, they are supposed to be fair and impartial. You can request a fair hearing after the informal steps have failed to render a satisfactory outcome. Again, you will meet, present your case, the department will present theirs, the hearing officer may ask you questions to clarify his or her understanding of the disagreement both at the meeting and after, and then the officer will render a decision.

Review of Fair Hearing

You can request that a review official of the governor of your state review the fair hearing. You would want to submit any further evidence, if available. This is a review, not another hearing, so there would be no meeting necessarily associated with this step.

Continuation of Services

During this whole grievance process, unless you want to stop receiving services, they are supposed to continue. Also, there are not supposed to be any reprisals by the department or its employees. If you feel that either of these provisions is being violated, they should be noted in your documentation and presented as evidence at informal and formal steps of the grievance process.

Civil Suit

Up to this point, the department has paid for all services, including a CAP representative for you. If you hire legal counsel, that is your expense. If you are still not satisfied,

you can file a civil suit, and go the formal judicial route to try to attain justice.

Your local ACB chapter, state affiliate, members of the rehabilitation issues task force, or national ACB office may be able to provide answers to your questions and help you through the process of attaining services and employment through your state department for rehabilitation services. Most of the time, department employees are as interested in your success as you are — they certainly are not in it for the money. So hopefully, you will be able to come to a compromise you both can agree to at an informal level. ACB has always championed the concept of "informed consent," where you are considered a partner in deciding what and how your services will be rendered. Sometimes there is a difference of opinion on the definition of "informed consent," so it may be necessary to keep asking questions about options available to you at different steps along the way. Good luck on preparing and finding employment!

Previous articles and other information on rehabilitation issues can be found on the rehab issues task force web page at acb.org/node/56. The article in the December ACB E-Forum was on the importance of the state rehabilitation council (SRC) in your advocacy efforts to get jobs for blind and visually impaired members and citizens in your state. If you have ideas for future articles, please let me know at doug.powell.oldjock@gmail.com or contact any other member of the task force: Sue Ammeter of Washington; Lucy Birbiglia from New Mexico; Paul Edwards of Florida; Sarah Presley of Washington, D.C.; Lori Scharff from New York; Pam Shaw of Pennsylvania; and our staff liaison, Melanie Brunson. And lastly, if you would like to share rehabilitation information, discuss how system changes will affect us, and help formulate advocacy strategies, please go to www.acb.org/mailman/listinfo/rehab-stakeholders and request to join our rehabilitation-stakeholders list.

Musings: Who Is King? by Paul Edwards

When I was growing up as a congenitally blind person, there were a number of received truths. At blind schools one of those was that the one-eyed man is king in the country of the blind. As young people we even used that phrase. At its heart, the idea was that kids who had some vision were accorded a special status by us. We saw them as privileged if we were totally blind. We thought they could do things we couldn't. They could certainly see things we couldn't. I think we also felt that they were better treated by the authorities than we were as well. I don't think we were jealous; it was just the way it was. We were content to accept our status and probably made some use of their vision when we could.

I have recently read a few books that paint a very different picture. I must tell you that this second notion of the relationship between people who are totally blind and those with partial vision is disturbing, at least to me. At the heart of this new reality is that people who lose some of their sight later in life see us congenitals who are total as very damaged goods.

They seem to see us as people who, from birth, study how to play the system and they see us as very odd, very manipulative and almost beneath their notice. In scene after scene, us totals are pictured with weird blindisms, multiple disabilities, and we seem to have very little resemblance to "normal" people. In one book, the author says he is frightened that others will see him as being anything like us.

I was shocked. I guess I have always considered myself to be a fairly normal sort of chap who, most days, can be taken out in public and can be expected to behave in a manner that is not likely to embarrass anybody. If I had just seen this attitude once, I would probably not be writing this article. However, in several books that I have found the time to read over the past year, there is a real line drawn between those of us who were born blind and those who go blind later. Clearly there are differences. People who grow up with good vision are often seen, by me anyway, as better adjusted than some of us congenitals are. They have often had jobs and have a

better sense of who they are and what they can do than we often do.

I absolutely do not buy the idea that a person who has some vision is a less well-adjusted blind person. I believe that people with some vision need to learn to use that vision as well as they can. I do not subscribe to the notion that every low-vision person needs to be forced to wear a blindfold as a part of his or her training. But I am shocked by the idea that many people who have some vision see those of us with none as better off than they are and somehow also as objectionable creatures who are something of an embarrassment.

I am writing this article because I think we need to face up to the notion that what we as blind people accept as reality may just be wishful thinking. I hope this article will spark some debate. This new notion of the relationship between partials and totals has caused me to think a lot about how we communicate. The statistics say that only 10 percent of those who are legally blind have no vision at all. That makes me a part of a very small minority among blind

people. I don't see myself as harboring prejudices against people with more vision than me. I don't see myself as a manipulator or as an embarrassment.

I think that there may well be room for dialogue. I think I was guilty of taking the relationship between people with no vision and people with some vision for granted. I think I accepted the received wisdom I grew up with as truth without discussing it a lot or even thinking much about it. I am absolutely convinced that the subject deserves our notice. ACB is an organization of people who are blind. Some of our members have a lot of vision. I have certainly heard some of those folks say that our organization pays more attention to the needs of people who have no vision than it does to the needs of people who have some sight.

So, members of ACB, what is true? Are we congenital totals an embarrassment? Who is king or queen? Is it the person who is partially sighted or is it the congenital who has learned how to play the system? What should we do about this issue, if it is one? I believe that, at the very least, this issue deserves more consideration! Maybe somebody who has some sight will write an article that

responds to mine and share how he or she feels about what I have said here! Maybe we should spend some time at our convention exploring how we "see" each other. Maybe, too, our organizational agenda may need to be reordered if we are not paying enough attention to the needs of people with low vision. I look forward to hearing more from anyone who wants to join this debate!

The Importance of Becoming Self-Aware by Jessie Rayl

Richard Bach states, "The mark of your ignorance is the depth of your belief in injustice and tragedy. What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly."

I am reminded in reading this quote of many experiences throughout my life — experiences which have been both filled with sadness and happiness, experiences which have shown great ignorance and great acceptance. These experiences have led me to become the person I am today.

They have led me into further study of the concept of micro-aggression and the importance of becoming self-aware.

Many years ago, as a young professional advocate working with people with developmental disabilities, I spent much time evaluating people and advocating for least restrictive environments to give them the most quality of life with their abilities and challenges in mind. My own disabilities were rarely, if ever, questioned or brought up in my direct work with these clients. I naively thought this would be the way my professional work always would be. I was ecstatic several years later when, working at another job, I was asked to become guardian of two, then later a third, person who was determined by the court to need such assistance. For the remainder of those people's lives, I would make all medical and financial decisions and essentially be the family they did not have. What an honor for a then-26-year-old woman. Again, not once did I hear the word "blind." I heard terms such as capable, responsible, compassionate, knowledgeable.

In another capacity as counselor, I stood in the court room. I was astounded as the attorney made comment after comment which demeaned and degraded me: How would you know what your client was doing ... you cannot see him/her? How can you possibly know what is in this file ... you cannot read it? How can you know what the client's affect is ... you cannot see? On and on this went, and no effort was made by the others in the court room, not even the judge, to stop it. Try as I might, I could not defend me or the client ... or so I thought. But apparently I did, because that attorney lost his case and was highly reprimanded later. I remember well leaving the courthouse, walking back with tears running down my face, walking into my office and closing the door. My supervisor, Jeff Chlebnikow, entered. I will never forget his words. "You are the expert. Never, ever, forget that. You are the professional. You know your client. You are the expert and you know better than anyone what it is that you can and cannot do."

Not all experiences have been quite so affirming. Micro-aggression is alive and well. So, what is micro-

aggression? It is the term ascribed to our biases and prejudices that each of us has, usually unconsciously or unknown to us, those we might deny. It is the thing that makes us say: I like that blind lady's dress. I like that African-American man's shirt. When we, needlessly, use the ethnic, religious, disability, or other cultural descriptor of another person, we are micro-aggressing. There is no reason for it. It is a habit, and a hurtful one. That habit is the one that will, ultimately, come rolling out of our mouths when we are angry or frustrated: That blind woman is incompetent. That blind woman is holding up the line. It is the habit that will cause us to exclude people who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), either subtly or outright. For example, talking to others without disabilities or racial differences and then including the person who is CLD. That habit is the one that allows us to make presumptuous and assuming statements about people who are CLD. And, as Bach so eloquently stated, your ignorance is the depth of your belief in injustice and tragedy.

I remember well a meeting wherein staff members were gathered together in a room that clients generally spent time in. A client walked in, likely assuming there was a party. As staff ordered and commanded her to leave, she stood there confused and bewildered. Why should she have to leave her room? My colleague and dear friend quietly, professionally and gently walked over to her and walked with her from the room, explaining to her that we were having a meeting and she could return after it was over.

The butterfly can only soar if the caterpillar thrives. Each of us must be the cocoon for that thriving of one another. Becoming self-aware is the start. Omit cultural descriptive from your thoughts and statements unless they are needed (e.g., for identification, education or your own self-enrichment). Do not allow others to undermine you with their insertions and help them become self-aware when they do. Ask yourself: what is the purpose of using the cultural descriptor? Can I achieve the same purpose without the cultural descriptor? If that purpose is to put down, blame, degrade or demean, there is no value to the

purpose. Otherwise, know we are all equal and must soar together.

Jury Awards Blind War Vet \$160,000 for Discrimination by Credit Union

Jury finds NuVision Credit Union denied disabled vet loan because he did not have a driver's license

Huntington Beach, Calif., Oct. 25, 2013 — A federal jury awarded Army Sgt. Major Jesse Acosta \$160,000 in a legal victory finding that Huntington Beach-based NuVision Credit Union violated the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Unruh Act by denying Jesse Acosta a loan because he could not produce a valid driver's license. In 2006, Sgt. Major Acosta was blinded and suffered severe Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) while serving in Iraq.

The jury found that NuVision discriminated against Acosta when it refused to fund a \$20,000 loan that had been

approved but not funded when NuVision found out he was blind at the signing of the loan documents. Acosta received a phone call from the bank informing him, "You didn't tell us you were blind, that's a problem." "I told them it was wrong to cancel my approved loan because I was blind; I felt humiliated and very angry," stated Acosta, who advocates on behalf of veterans and wants his win to help others fight disability discrimination.

The jury found that the ADA prohibited NuVision from requiring a blind person to produce a driver's license to qualify for a loan, without a legitimate business interest. Instead of modifying the discriminatory policy, NuVision required Acosta to look for a co-borrower with a driver's license, and submit a new loan application.

"The \$160,000 damages included exemplary damages because it was intentional discrimination," explained civil rights attorney Patricia Barbosa.

Acosta sought legal help following his experience as he battled depression, anger and severe episodes of PTSD

that caused him great physical and mental anguish, as he relived the helplessness he felt in dealing with NuVision's denial of his loan. "It was never about the money," Acosta said, "it was to make sure NuVision never treated another disabled person like they treated me."

Attorney Patricia Barbosa, the founder of Barbosa Group, who has more than 20 years of experience enforcing civil rights, said, "I'm very happy that the jury vindicated Mr. Acosta, and will end NuVision's discrimination. Their policy — that blind customers must have valid driver's licenses — is reminiscent of past bank practices requiring women have their husbands co-sign a loan, because women could not be trusted with business decisions. The ADA became the law of the land 23 years ago. It is long past time for NuVision and other businesses to recognize that persons with disabilities are entitled to full and equal access to all aspects of our society."

**The Mini Seika: More Than Just A Braille
Display by Paul Edwards**

A mere three years ago, acquiring a braille display was an extremely expensive proposition. Most of us who relied on our own funds just had to gaze longingly at braille displays and wish. Until 2009, braille displays were primarily used as terminals that would allow folks to read and write on their computers using braille instead of speech. In the last few years everything has changed and, in the future, it is likely that they will change more!

Now there is a substantially more compelling reason to buy a braille display. This is because iOS products such as the iPhone, iPad and iPod allow us to "pair" our devices so that we can read and write using braille. It is certainly possible to use the on-screen keyboards on i-products, and there are a number of apps that have emerged that make that process easier. With newer i-devices you can use Siri, the built-in assistant, to write notes or send texts, among many other things. However, none of these approaches comes close to the convenience of being able to use a braille display with its own keyboard to interact with your i-device. Once you

have made the Bluetooth connection, you can communicate faster than your sighted peers using your braille keyboard and can write in grade 2 braille as well. With the arrival of iOS 7, the newest version of the operating system for i-devices, you are not required to be quite as careful how you write it. In earlier incarnations of i-devices, you have to write whole words pretty quickly or they will suddenly become what the braille contraction they represent is. For instance, if I wrote the letter "P" as the first letter of my first name, Paul, and got distracted for a moment, it would suddenly become the word "people."

With iOS 7 you can turn automatic braille translation off and your speed is not so important. You will only see your translated word when you press the space bar or when you use the space bar with dots 4 and 5 to ask your device to translate. This is a huge step forward, particularly for new braille readers or children who may not be quite as fast as us old hands are.

I should also say that the process of "pairing" can be a little tricky. You have to instruct your i-device and your

braille display to find each other using Bluetooth, which involves entering a code at least on your i-device. You have to be able to do this quickly, and some people find this difficult to do. The good news is that once you are "paired," your i-device and your braille display will remember each other and establishing the connection between the two is effortless.

The second thing that has happened is that the price of braille displays has come way down and braille display makers have recognized that creating small, very portable braille displays that we can carry with us to use with our i-devices is a burgeoning market. So there is now a whole range of options out there that allow us to talk to our i-devices. At the very bottom end, there are just keyboards. You can get a small Bluetooth qwerty keyboard for well under \$100 and a braille keyboard for \$200 or so. These will allow you to write on your i-device and let you use the large print or the speech on your i-device for reading. And, much more significant, braille displays that used to cost an arm and a leg and an arm now only cost a single limb.

The least expensive is just over \$1,000 and there are at least five displays that can be bought for less than \$2,000.

If you already have a notetaker such as the Braille Sense or the Braille Note or the Braille Plus 18, you can use those devices to "pair." However, they are much more expensive than simple braille displays. Most of the braille displays are just that. They can act as Bluetooth or USB displays and can be used with your i-device and with your computer. They let you write and read between the two devices, and that is all they do. There are two braille displays that do more. One is the Braille Edge from HIMS, but it costs around \$3,500. The other is the device I am going to review in this article. It is called the Mini Seika. It is available from Perkins Products and you can explore its characteristics at www.perkinsproducts.org.

The Mini has 16 braille cells, pairs beautifully with i-devices and includes drivers that allow it to work either via Bluetooth or USB as a braille terminal with your computer. It has a dongle, which is a little device that allows you to

connect to your computer without cables using Bluetooth. This is very handy.

What distinguishes the Mini from other braille displays in its price range is that it is more than just a braille display. It comes with a micro-SD card already in the machine and a USB thumb drive that can be attached. It includes a rudimentary note-taking program, a calculator and a clock. This means that you can use the Mini to take notes on its own and can store books directly on its card or on a thumb drive which you can read on the machine on its own. The device, with shipping, is likely to cost under \$1,700.

Essentially, then, you have many of the advantages of much more expensive notetakers at the same price as most of the competitive braille displays which do not include these extra features. In fairness, I should say that you can use any number of programs on your i-device to read. BARD Mobile, the Bookshare app and other commercial applications will let you use all of these inexpensive braille displays to read. You can also use

"notes" or a whole range of apps to write and store information using your i-device. However, for me at least, having a really portable braille display that lets me take notes and read books independently of other devices is a big deal.

The device is about six inches long, four inches from front to back and about an inch thick. It weighs next to nothing (7/10 of a pound according to its manual). It arrives with a leather case and a strap that allows you to hang the Mini around your neck. If you put the device flat on a desk oriented correctly, furthest away from you are eight braille keys. Some people find them small, though for me, they have been relatively easy to get used to using. Moving toward you, you come to 16 cursor keys that allow you to move to the corresponding braille cell. Next closest is the braille display itself, which is very readable. At each end of the display is a button that allows you to move backward or forward by display. Finally, closest to you, are, from left to right, a joystick, two smallish controls either of which act as a space bar, and another joystick. The joysticks are interesting in that they allow you to do different things

depending on whether you are "paired" or not. I would personally have liked to be able to use the joysticks themselves instead of the buttons to move back and forth by displays, but you can't do that! You can use them to move up and down through menu items or lists, though, and this works well. I have spoken to several people who find the location and size of the space bars an issue. I freely admit that it is very different from other braille displays. You really do have to use your thumb for these controls and, since most of the commands are chords which require you to press the space bar with another character, this may be an issue for you.

Overall, I have found the unit performs well. I don't think I would use it to write the great American novel but, for quick notes and interacting with i-devices, it's great! There are a few anomalies that I should point out. The clock works just fine, but reading it may not seem intuitive. The time includes the letters h, m and s before the hours, minutes and seconds. There is supposed to be a feature that allows you to read text files in braille. That feature is not ready for prime time and needs work. (I should say

that I am operating with build 1.14 and, if there is an upgrade, some of what I am reporting may not be current.)

I have found the interface very easy to learn. The manual, as is true with many newer products from overseas, does not exactly have the most readable English but it is, virtually always, comprehensible. It is on the machine and on a CD that comes with the unit which also has drivers for various screen readers. It can also be downloaded from Perkins, by the way, so you can explore exactly how it works before you buy. I have not found that 16 cells is a problem. I have used 18 or 20 cells on braille displays in the past rather than 32 or 40 because I prefer a device with a small footprint.

The Mini claims a battery life of 10 hours and indicates that substantial use of the USB or Bluetooth features may limit this. I find the claim very conservative. I have never had a problem using the Mini all day, even when paired most of the time.

Overall, I think the Mini has a lot of things going for it. I certainly encourage folks to explore it. There was a time when I would not have expected to be able to get a braille display, let alone a rudimentary notetaker with braille for anything like this low price. I have found the folks at Perkins Products very easy to deal with and am absolutely satisfied that I made a good decision when I decided to buy the Mini earlier this year. Perhaps this review will encourage other braille display manufacturers to consider including more than just standard braille display elements on their less expensive models.

I hope Seika will continue to add functionality to its device as well. For me the Seika represents wonderful value for money and a clear indication that we have the right to expect more from displays in this price range than pure braille displays.

I feel impelled to make one last point. There is currently work being done to test a range of options that would allow for the creation of different and substantially cheaper braille display options. The approach taken by the

Seika and all its competitors has remained the same for the last two decades. There is some evidence to suggest that, in the future, this cheap braille effort will bear fruit. I have no idea when this is likely to happen, but I think it is fair to say that we are not likely to see actual products for sale for a couple of years. I am convinced that anybody who actually is a confirmed braille user can revolutionize the way they use their i-devices. Essentially with any braille display, you will suddenly have access to most of what you can get from a notetaker. Don't let your timidity hold you back! For me, despite the shortcomings I have mentioned, the Mini Seika is by far the best option out there among inexpensive displays. Do you agree?

Traveling Blind by Teddie-Joy Remhild

What could a blind person glean out of traveling the world? How does a blind person travel alone and how does one know what they are viewing? As a blind person, what do you actually get out of going on a cruise?

These are frequently asked questions of me, as I fearlessly traverse my way around my neighborhood and my state and the world. People ask how and why and my response is "There is a way" and "Why not?"

Most of us are, at birth, blessed with five senses and they are all useful in learning, visualizing and understanding about our environment and its inhabitants. Because I lost my vision as a young adult, I am also lucky enough to have visual memory. That is, I can envision something described to me by reliving my visual memory.

Recently, I traveled on a 12-day cruise of Scandinavia and eastern Europe. I traveled with a group of 34 blind people, some with partial vision and some totally blind. They are all experienced travelers with as much innate curiosity about the world we live in as any normally sighted person. Some traveled with their guide dogs and some with only their white canes. I travel with a white cane which provides me with important information about the surface upon which I am walking.

We traveled through four time zones and seven countries, including Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Berlin, Germany, St. Petersburg, Russia and Tallin, Estonia. I was on a tour at every port, learning about that country, its natives, its government and its culture. Helsinki was a beautiful city by the sea, similar to San Francisco in setting, cultural advancement and education. St. Petersburg, Russia was Russia's version of a cosmopolitan European city on the Baltic Sea. Their great art museum, the Hermitage, contains a collection of art second only in the world to that of the Louvre. I had my picture taken in front of Matisse's "The Dance," one of my favorites.

It was all a magical experience and we all found a way, so why not?

MVA (Missing the Visual Arts) by Alice Jane-Marie Massa

Prelude

**Okay, I am looking back just this once.
I am writing this down just this one time.
Then, I am back in the presence of present,
with frills of the future on my cuffs.**

**I am going only once to the confessional.
In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Creative
Spirit.**

**I miss the visual arts.
I miss creating the visual arts
of painting, photography,
and especially — perhaps what I was best at —
calligraphy.**

**If I were to stop, to think, to dwell
on how I miss these three visual arts —
my day would be spent:
I would not be well.**

Part 1. Painting

When I die,
someone will find,
midst my belongings,
three saved canvas boards,
wrapped in wax paper.
One is a clown with a speckled purple background.
The second is "Soft Spring,"
and the third is "Medi-Ochre Autumn."
With those mystical tubes of acrylic paints,
palette, and brushes —
I, on that winsome stage,
once hoped for the height of creativity.

Part 2. Photography

Yes, yes, I still take a few photos;
but not like before.
On the wall above my bed
is my saved, framed photography.
Our light golden wheat field against the emerald green of
our woods
is forever capped by a clear, azure Hoosier sky.

The rushing creek holds momentarily still
on that Colorado Rocky Mountain.
Of all the photos I took in Mexico,
I framed the one of white-washed houses
with red-tiled roofs —
the scene which I could not see
until I looked closely at the developed slide,
far away from the Land of the Aztecas.
On my bookcase is my favorite photo
Of Chico, my buff-colored spaniel —
in muted tones, in front of a window of our family room.
I loved my SLR camera —
even at the end, when I took
only black-and-white photos
so that I could somewhat see
this higher-contrast photography.

Part 3. Calligraphy

On a birthday envelope,
I may still try a little calligraphy.
But, how I do miss

**the old-fashioned fountain pen,
the felt-tipped calligraphy pen,
the calligraphy markers that were double- or triple-
pointed!**

**I miss the ruffles and flourishes of pen on paper
or sturdy, colorful posterboard.**

**The swirls and curls of this special lettering
always lifted my artistic soul.**

MVA. MVA.

Gray Coda

Now, my paint brushes are my knitting needles.

**My tubes of acrylic paints
are the balls of textured yarns.**

My palette is

**spotted with green nouns, pale blue pronouns,
red verbs, magenta adverbs,
pink adjectives, coral conjunctions,
gray prepositions, and bright orange interjections.**

Instead of photographs,

**I snap paragraphs.
Instead of calligraphy,
I fashion braille dots
and command my computer to speak —
with all attributes on.
My canvas is the braille paper
or the talking computer screen.**

**I am content to live this stage of my life
with the many layers of gray curtains closed
as I paint — with magical words —
poems, memoirs, essays, and stories
of my diffused and different life.**

How to Create an Attention-Grabbing Brochure by Gaylen Floy

**When brainstorming the content for your brochure, keep
this one question in mind: "Why should the reader care?"
Taking the viewpoint of the reader will help you craft your
message around a list of benefits the reader will gain from**

what your ACB affiliate or chapter provides. People do not want to join your organization or participate in your activities; they want the benefits to be gained. With this in mind, here are the keys to creating a powerful, effective brochure.

Plan for Maximum Impact

In the business world and among non-profits, the tri-fold brochure is making a comeback. For many of our ACB affiliates and chapters, a brochure is the only marketing tool used other than a web site. For maximum impact, you must determine your purpose. Ideally, what action would you like the reader to take? How will your photos support your message? How will your brochure grab and sustain attention? How will this brochure stand out from other brochures and marketing materials with which it might compete, like in an exhibit area among competing booths?

Think about the Order of Information

With the front and back panel visible without opening the brochure, use the front panel to grab ATTENTION! Use the back panel for your logo and contact information.

The next thing a person is most likely to see when opening your brochure is the inner flap. Use this space to tease the viewer into continuing to the inside panels. Do not use it for critical or detailed information.

Finally, there is the inner spread. This is where you can break out of the tiny, three-column routine.

Go for impact with action photos that bleed off the edge. It is not enough to tell sighted people that we can live full, independent lives; we have to show them with powerful action photos. Have any of your members recently graduated from college? Get a photo of them in gown tossing their cap in the air. Have any of your members recently participated in a sport or activity? Get a photo of them zip lining down a canyon, cross-country skiing, or swinging a baseball bat.

Craft Effective Headlines and Text

Headlines are the most powerful weapon in a designer's toolbox. Keep headlines conversational.

Use the present tense, active voice.

Your copy must answer who, what, when, where, why, and how. Keep the text focused and minimal. Be clear and get to your point fast. Sighted people generally flip through a brochure, so your content has to be designed to work as a quick scan that will make your key points at a glance.

Consider Working with a Trustworthy Designer and Photographer

Don't skimp on quality. A strong photo will draw the reader into the headline. The attractiveness of the entire brochure determines whether people will pick it up or toss it. A good graphic designer and photographer can transform your message into a cohesive, memorable one with color and impact.

The best way to find a designer or photographer is by word of mouth. Ask a trusted business source.

You may hear a designer refer to "the effective use of white space." This means not cramming your brochure full of tiny text. Instead, make your images and headlines stand out for maximum "at a glance" effectiveness.

Conclusion

Ask tough questions before printing. If this brochure was sitting in a rack full of brochures, would it stand out? Do the images change the perception of what it means to be blind? Do the headlines, text, and photos work together to get your point across? Is there too much information for a quick scan? Is the tone inviting or a bit dry? Use high quality, heavier weight paper stock to help reinforce a good impression. Seek to project a strong, positive image!

PR Committee Seeks Your Successes

Has your affiliate or chapter conducted a particularly successful event, such as a membership drive, outreach activity or fundraiser, or perhaps a webinar or seminar? If so, the PR committee wants to know about it.

We invite affiliates and chapters to submit a description of some type of successfully conducted event carried out by your affiliate or chapter. We especially encourage the kinds of events that involved the general public and contributed to public education about blindness, as well as raised funds to support your organization. Did your organization participate in a parade, or a fair, or create a video to help educate the public or conduct some kind of fundraiser, like a trivia night event or a chili supper or musical concert or some other type of special event?

If so, ACB's PR Committee is inviting you to submit a description of your event to be considered for special recognition in a session during the 2014 national conference & convention in Las Vegas. Your submission should be no more than 300 words. If the PR committee

needs more information or detail, we will request it. Your submission should include such information as:

- 1. The name of your organization**
- 2. What is the full contact information for the person or people we can contact if we need more information?**
- 3. What type of event was it?**
- 4. Describe the event.**
- 5. What was the target audience(s)?**
- 6. When and where did the event take place?**
- 7. What were your reasons or goals for conducting the event?**
- 8. To what extent were your goals achieved?**
- 9. How many of your organization's members assisted and/or participated in conducting your event?**

We will carefully evaluate each submission and select the most outstanding, the most impressive, and the most unique for special recognition during the 2014 ACB national conference and convention in Las Vegas.

For more information, or to submit your event for consideration, contact Ann Chiappetta, PR affiliate

**recognition committee chair, by e-mail,
dungarees@optonline.net, or call (914) 393-6605.**

Are You Interested in Marketing and Public Relations That Can Help Your Affiliate or Chapter?

The PR Committee has established a new ACB e-mail list. It is pr-issues@acb.org. We invite discussions, questions, ideas, and suggestions that relate to marketing and public relations. If you have an event coming up and you want ideas for promoting it, let us know by posting it to the pr-issues@acb.org e-mail list. If you found an interesting approach for marketing an event or your affiliate or chapter, let us know on the pr-issues@acb.org e-mail list.

To subscribe, go to www.acb.org/mailman/listinfo/pr-issues and fill out the subscription form. See you on the list!

— Ron Milliman, chairman, public relations committee

Affiliate News

Happy New Year from ACB Diabetics in Action

Happy New Year to you all! It is a new beginning and we hope you all will really think about ACB Diabetics in Action.

There is still time to join us; dues are only \$10 per year. If you have not renewed your dues yet, please get them in as soon as possible. Send your dues to Alice Ritchhart, 139 Altama Connector, Suite 188, Brunswick, GA 31525 and make checks or money orders payable to ACBDA. Give us your full name, address, phone number, e-mail, and let us know whether you are fully sighted, legally blind, totally blind, or visually impaired, and how you would like to receive the DIA newsletter (e-mail, large print, braille or cassette).

We are working hard to build our organization into one of the biggest and best affiliates in ACB.

We hope everyone who joined us on our conference call in December had a good time and learned a lot. We hope you all will be back in January; bring a friend, too. The conference calls are held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 9 p.m. Eastern (6 p.m. Pacific). The call-in number is (712) 432-3675; follow the instructions to room 0. We always look forward to hearing from all of you.

Enjoy this month and look forward to February with Valentine's Day.

The next time we talk with you, it will be Valentine's Day. If you are planning to send candy to a diabetic, why not buy something healthy or give them something more suitable for a diabetic?

One of us will talk with you next month. Stay safe and especially healthy until the next time.

News from FIA

Have you ever performed in Friends-in-Art's Showcase of the Performing Arts? Mike Gravitt has converted cassettes from 1994 to 1997 and CDs from 1998 through 2009, including a "Best of the Showcase" CD from pre-1998, to digital format. Visit <https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/10364198/Peter%20Aitschul%20-%20FIA%20Showcase%20Performances.zip> to get the file(s) you'd like.

If you have cassettes prior to 1994, Mike would be glad to convert them. Contact Mike via e-mail, mgravitt2@gmail.com.

Here and There edited by Sharon Strzalkowski

The announcement of products and services in this column does not represent an endorsement by the American Council of the Blind, its officers, or staff. Listings are free of charge for the benefit of our readers. "The ACB Braille Forum" cannot be held responsible for the reliability of the products and services mentioned. To

submit items for this column, send a message to slovering@acb.org, or phone the national office at 1-800-424-8666, and leave a message in Sharon Lovering's mailbox. Information must be received at least two months ahead of publication date.

Social Security Benefits Increase for 2014

Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for nearly 63 million Americans will increase 1.5 percent in 2014, according to the Social Security Administration. The 1.5 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits that more than 57 million Social Security beneficiaries receive in January 2014. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries will begin on Dec. 31, 2013.

The Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) amount for blind people for 2014 is \$1,800, up from 2013's \$1,760, according to the Social Security Administration's web site.

Some other changes that take effect in January of each year are based on the increase in average wages. Based on that increase, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) will increase to \$117,000 from \$113,700. Of the estimated 165 million workers who will pay Social Security taxes in 2014, about 10 million will pay higher taxes as a result of the increase in the taxable maximum.

Information about Medicare changes for 2014 is available at www.Medicare.gov.

The Social Security Act provides for how the COLA is calculated. To read more, please visit www.socialsecurity.gov/cola.

FCC Adopts New Rules

The Federal Communications Commission has now adopted rules that will enable people who are blind or visually impaired to have easier access to digital video programming on a wide range of electronic devices. The rules will also enable consumers who are deaf or hard of

hearing to activate closed captioning on their devices with greater ease.

This action represents the final major step in the FCC's implementation of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA), enacted in 2010 to bring people with disabilities access to the modern and innovative communications technologies of the 21st century. The CVAA is the most significant accessibility legislation since the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result of the FCC's implementation of the CVAA, more than 50 million Americans will have greater access to advanced communications.

Devices covered under the rules adopted today include navigation devices — devices used to access cable or satellite services, such as set-top boxes and TiVos — as well as other devices used to receive or play back digital video, ranging from televisions and computers to tablets and smart phones. All covered devices are required to provide on-screen text menus and guides that are audibly

accessible, as well as a mechanism that is comparable to a button, key or icon for activating certain accessibility features, such as closed captioning. Devices other than navigation devices are also required to make their other built-in functions accessible.

Pacific Rim Conference

The 30th annual Pacific Rim Conference will be held May 19 & 20, 2014 at the Hawaii Convention Center in Honolulu. The theme for the conference is Learn from Yesterday, Live for Today, Envision Tomorrow. And the conference needs your proposals! This year's conference will be featuring many new topic areas focusing on visual impairments such as Accessible Worlds, Going Deeper with Diversity, etc. Conference planners are looking for your creative ideas to build the just, sustainable and inclusive future we all want! The deadline for proposals is Jan. 31. For more information, visit www.pacrim.hawaii.edu, e-mail prinfo@hawaii.edu or call (808) 956-7539.

Want to Win a CCTV?

Enhanced Vision is holding its annual winter giveaway.

Would you like to win a Merlin HD 24" CCTV valued at \$2,995? Visit www.enhancedvision.com, or call toll-free 1-888-811-3161 and use promo code 2511 before March 21.

Please note that this offer is valid to residents of the United States only, and cannot be combined with any other offer.

More Cell Phone Access

Code Factory recently announced that its Mobile Accessibility suite of apps will support Microsoft's Windows Phone 8. Mobile Accessibility for Windows Phone 8 will be offered free of charge in the Windows Phone Store. Blind and visually impaired users will be able to access and enjoy their devices within a suite of accessible apps for the most common wireless tasks. Along with basic functionality of calling and contacts management, users will have access to e-mails, web

browsing and messaging. For more information, visit www.codefactory.es.

Introducing AbleRoad

AbleRoad recently launched its web site and app that allows people with disabilities and medical conditions and their families and caregivers to review any public space or business.

The company has worked with Yelp, so users can see both the Yelp and AbleRoad ratings for a business on the same screen, with up to 200 results per search. The app allows users to add ratings and upload photos while on location and rate them for many factors relating to ease of access. It also supports badge ranking of reviewers, and has voice-over capabilities for people who are blind or low vision. Users can leave detailed reviews for others to read, too.

The AbleRoad app is available as a free download for both iOS and Android devices at Apple's App Store and Google Play. For more information, visit www.ableroad.com.

Science Sense Tours

New York's Museum of Natural History offers Science Sense tours to visitors who are blind or partially sighted. Specially trained tour guides highlight specific themes and exhibition halls, engaging participants through extensive verbal descriptions and touchable objects. Science Sense tours are available to individuals or groups, and are free with museum admission. Space is limited; advance registration is required. Programs may be subject to change. For additional information, or to register for a Science Sense tour, call (212) 313-7565 or e-mail accessibility@amnh.org.

Wednesday, Jan. 15, 2:30 p.m.: Northwest Coast Indians. The Hall of Northwest Coast Indians highlights the traditional cultures of the native peoples of North

America's northwest shores from Washington State to southern Alaska.

Sunday, Feb. 9, 10 a.m.: Vertebrate Origins. Explore the story of the burgeoning of vertebrates through the oceans and onto land in the Hall of Vertebrate Origins.

Wednesday, March 12, 2:30 p.m.: Biodiversity. Discover the wide range and variety of life on Earth, and learn how every species is interconnected, how they evolved, what purpose they serve, and why their preservation is necessary for maintaining our environment in the Hall of Biodiversity.

Saturday, April 12th, 2:30 p.m.: Meteorites. Discover the origin of the universe and our solar system in the Arthur Ross Hall of Meteorites, which includes the largest meteorite on display in any museum in the world.

Comcast Accessibility

Comcast recently created a dedicated accessibility customer support team and opened an accessibility product and development lab. These two key initiatives are examples of Comcast's commitment to meet the needs of customers with disabilities.

Closed captioning, video description, accessible billing services and operating web and mobile interfaces with screen-reader software are especially important for people with disabilities. Now, customers can contact a dedicated support team of 22 agents specially trained on all things related to Comcast accessibility in the new Comcast Accessibility Center of Excellence for help with these and other general support issues.

To reach the accessibility center, dial 1-855-270-0379 seven days a week between the hours of 9 a.m. and 10 p.m. Eastern. Customers can also contact an Accessibility Center of Excellence representative via chat, <https://www.comcastsupport.com/ChatEntry/Default.aspx?Trouble.Accessibility%7Cform>.

Braille Awards & Signs

Rick Hume is a blind entrepreneur who owns an awards recognition company in Kalamazoo, Mich. The R.L. Hume Award Company sells promotional items, engravable gifts for all occasions, trophies and award plaques. The store can customize award plaques and ADA building signs with braille. The selection of brailleable items can be reviewed at www.award-1.com/Awards/Plaques/BraillePlqs.shtml, or www.braille-plaques.com. For more information, call the store at (269) 344-2307.

Illinois Tollway Call Center Open!

On Nov. 5th, the new Illinois Tollway Call Center, being managed by the Lighthouse, opened for business. It provides a variety of employment opportunities for individuals who are blind, visually impaired and otherwise disabled. It also enables the Tollway to make it easier for a growing number of I-PASS customers to get personalized, one-on-one assistance whenever they need help with their accounts.

Tweeting Blind and Other Books Available

National Braille Press recently released "Tweeting Blind" by Jonathan Mosen. The book is available in braille, eBraille (BRF), and DAISY, and tells you how to get on Twitter and what to do with it — regardless of what device or platform you are using. It also explains social norms, terminology, and expected behavior. There's more to tweeting than you know! For more information, visit www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/TWEET.html.

The 2014 Dr. Seuss calendar (in print and braille together) is also available. It includes 12 scenes and quotes from Dr. Seuss' books. The calendar, which is 12" x 12", features the Cat in the Hat, a Fox in Sox, Yertle the Turtle, the Grinch, and eight more well-loved scenes from Dr. Seuss's imagination. The braille is on clear plastic labels that go over the print pages. The calendar also features a bonus — a sheet of 60 full-color stickers of Dr. Seuss' characters to mark birthdays, appointments, and other important

**days. For more information, visit
www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/2014SEUSS.html**

**And "That's Not My Elephant!" is now available in print-and-braille touch-and-feel. It allows babies through preschoolers to touch and feel different elephants' ears, feet, and tails. For information on this book, see
www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/BB-ELEPHANT.html.**

**For more information on any of these items, contact NBP,
88 St. Stephen Street, Boston, MA 02115-4302; call toll-free
1-800-548-7323.**

Project Starfish

Project Starfish America aims to offer a new type of opportunity: a socio-economic platform for talented individuals who are blind or disabled seeking to learn, be productive, make money, raise awareness and be employable. Participants in Project Starfish work virtually from home via phone, Internet, and Skype, and can be based anywhere in the United States.

Project Starfish is looking for consultants with a strong educational background, having some business skills and/or willing to learn new things. The company prefers that applicants be savvy in the areas of communications, technology, and social media. If you are ambitious and are willing to prove and improve your capability, Project Starfish is right for you!

For more information, contact Project Starfish via e-mail, star@projectstarfishusa.org, or phone (508) 395-6379.

High Tech Swap Shop

For Sale:

Approximately 200 classic rock albums from Spencer Davis Group to Steely Dan, and approximately 100-200 cassette tapes with braille titles. Albums have braille on the upper left side. Will include a double cassette player. Asking \$100 for albums, \$100 for the cassettes. Contact Robert Ziegler at (763) 537-8000 most days and evenings.

For Sale or Trade:

Four braille displays, all in excellent condition. Prices include shipping to Canada and the U.S. They all come with AC adapters. Will entertain offers to trade for a BrailleNote Apex or Braille Sense U2 having a QWERTY or Perkins keyboard. One is a Braille Edge 40, about eight months old, and used very little. Includes a carrying case from Executive Products Inc. Asking \$1,800. One is an Alva BC640 with carrying case. Asking \$1,575. There's also an Alva Satellite 44, along with the foam pads for a keyboard to rest on. Asking \$475. And one's a PowerBraille 81. Asking \$250. I accept PayPal payments, money orders, cashier's checks, and will accept non-certified checks, which must clear before I will ship. Contact Dave Van Der Molen at dvm975@gmail.com or (519) 669-1456.

For Sale:

Eclipse 74E003 desktop video magnifier. Has a 15" color high-resolution LCD flat panel. Asking \$1,500. Contact Alice at sunshinecrespo1@aol.com.

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