



# WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF THE BLIND

Opportunity, Equality, Independence  
Founded 1935

## WCB NEWSLINE

Spring 2021 Edition

**“Any sufficiently advanced technology  
is indistinguishable from magic.”**

**— Sir Arthur C. Clarke**

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WCB is a 501(c)(3) organization, which means your generous contributions are tax deductible. To make a donation electronically, please send PayPal payments to [TreasurerWCB@gmail.com](mailto:TreasurerWCB@gmail.com). Checks made payable to Washington Council of the Blind may be mailed to the attention of our treasurer, Lisa George, at PO Box 675, Yakima, WA 98907-0675.

Visit our website for more information at <http://www.WCBinfo.org>, or call us toll-free at 800-255-1147.

## **Calling All Members**

**We will publish the next WCB Newsline in July and are anxious to read your quality content.**

**Please send all submissions by May 31.**

**Digital cartridges must also be returned to Audiobook Ministries by this date for re-use in the following issue.**

### **Publication Guidelines**

- All submissions will be edited for brevity and clarity.
- We reserve the right to publish or refuse submitted content, including author contact information, unless you explicitly tell us not to.
- All opinions expressed are those of the authors, not Washington Council of the Blind or WCB Newsline staff.
- We do not accept anonymous letters.
- Articles may be up to 1,000 words.
- Chapter updates may be up to 350 words.
- Please submit in Microsoft Word format when possible.
- Send all submissions to:

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# **President's Update**

by Julie Brannon  
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When you're reading this, we should have birds singing, warmer weather and a promise of new life that comes with spring. Whoever thought we'd be dealing with COVID-19 and all the ramifications that come with it a whole year after our initial shutdown. The good news is that WCB has continued to function and thrive during this strange (never before experienced in our lifetime) event.

## **A different landscape**

Due to the resignation of First Vice President Meka White in January, we did some juggling and adding at our February 6 board meeting. The board approved the following:

- Andy Arvidson moved from second vice president to first vice president to fill Meka's vacated position.
- Sheri Richardson moved from her board position to second vice president to fill Andy's vacated position.
- Kim Moberg, who had come out of nominating for the open board position, was asked to fill Sheri's vacated board position. This will be to complete the one year left in this position.

Thank you, Meka, for your service, and welcome Andy, Sheri, and Kim to your new positions.

## **Committee development**

The major thrust for committee development was completed by the beginning of January, with some changed footprints noted within committees:

1. Welcome to new committee chairs:
  - Aging: New chair Alco Canfield. Thank your former chair, Holly Kaczmarski.
  - Communications: New chair Gaylen Floy. Thank your former chair, Jeff Bishop.

- Convention: New chair Cathy Wilson. Thank your former chair, Cindy Hollis.
- Membership: New chair Linda Wilder. Thank your former chair, Meka White.

## 2. New Committees:

Fundraising: Chair Lisa George.

Outreach (changed from an ad hoc committee): Chair Andy Arvidson

Many committees have different and new members on them. This should be a great year ahead as committees forge ahead.

## **Membership**

Lisa George worked diligently to obtain, organize, categorize and all kinds of other “izes” to have our membership data ready to submit to ACB by the March 15 deadline. Thank you to chapter membership contacts, chapter treasurers, and particularly to Lisa for working to accomplish this momentous task.

## **ACB 2021 Leadership Conference**

Just as with our conventions this year, by ACB having its leadership and legislative event via a virtual platform, it allowed for many more people to attend. In fact, WCB made a great showing with 26 members registered for the event. Via the Governmental Affairs Committee, and Chair Sheri Richardson, five teams were developed to make contact with the 10 Washington districts, with the goal to have a meeting with them to share the three imperatives proposed from ACB. The team leaders included Denise Colley, Deb Cook Lewis, Lyn Koral, Frank Cuta and me, with Sheri Richardson making contact with our senators. Members from each district were asked to be part of the teams to provide for constituents within each district. Thank you all for the work on this important annual endeavor.

## **Spring leadership summit and board meeting**

The WCB board made a decision, with still uncertain times in the COVID-19 world, to not hold an in-person event in April. The leadership committee is providing monthly trainings for leadership participants, and we will hold our spring board meeting virtually.

Here's looking forward to continued momentum in 2021.

### **Letter from the Editors, A Compendium of Geek-ology and the Fantastical Dreamers Who Knew They Could**

Introduction:

The Washington Council of the Blind Newslines presents to you a highly scientific and technological experiment with magical results. The information you are about to read has led to many new and exciting discoveries, and we hope you will share it widely with others you feel would benefit from our findings. We also encourage you to reach out to the individual contributors by using the contact information provided with their projects, as many hours of effort were put into their research.

Purpose: To provide readers of this journal with an educational, informational, and entertaining experience.

Supplies Needed:

- Lab coats and plenty of protective gear
- An unlimited team of concept developers who submitted their ideas and experiences
- Some exciting committee reports and new initiatives
- Big dreams with people willing to test their theories
- Equal parts advocacy, accessibility, history, and some tea to drink for clarity and brevity
- Reading recommendations for appropriate research and verification
- Young and old perspectives for optimum results

- WCB Newslines podcast episodes for more insight into the experiments
- A sprinkle of secret ingredients
- 2% solution of magic, quantity restricted access only
- Approximately 50,000 lemons, or whatever you may have on hand
- A bottle of bubbles with wand, to blow while you read, because it's fun for you and your animals

Procedure: Mix all parts very intentionally, using great caution. For best results, throw in at least one last-minute mystery concoction.

Findings and Results: Readers must submit their findings to [TheWCBNewslines@gmail.com](mailto:TheWCBNewslines@gmail.com), including their favorite project, any comments or feedback for future consideration and modifications, by May 31. Expected results are favorable and potentially life-changing!

Your Mad Scientists,  
Heather Meares and Reginald George

## **It's Your Newslines... Just Say It!** **Compiled by Reginald George**

Here is your opportunity to speak out. You can express your most important thoughts, voice your valued opinions of our articles, inspire us with your grandest ideas, and share your honest concerns, so that we may continue to evolve our publication into the Newslines you can't wait to read. Thanks to everyone who voted in our Readers' Choice contest last month.

The Readers' Choice award winner of our winter issue is Andy Arvidson, for his article, "Do You Hear What I Hear?" Voting for your favorite article from spring will close May 31. We want you to know how much we appreciate you, our readers and authors. You are the wind beneath our wings that keeps us flying high

To vote, provide reader feedback, or to submit your much-needed content for our next issue, send an email to [TheWCBNewslines@gmail.com](mailto:TheWCBNewslines@gmail.com).



We have a new podcast called WCB Newsline Unleashed. Read the Podtastic Casts column for details on our latest exciting episodes. You can ask your phone or smart speaker to play it, or go to the direct feed at the following link: <https://wcb-newsline-unleashed.pinecast.co>

Opinions expressed here are those of the individuals, and not necessarily those of Newsline staff or WCB.

**From state WCB President Julie Brannon:**

Another multi-hour listening on a lazy Sunday afternoon, this time with a cup of green tea, proved to be a beyond enjoyable event for me. Thank you again, Newsline editors and members with article submissions, for another award-winning issue. Boy, the theme of music truly struck a universal chord among WCB members, with so many people writing heartfelt, descriptive articles about the meaning of music in their lives; again, another challenge to choose just one as my submission for Reader's Choice. With some deliberation, I am selecting "Do You Hear What I Hear?" by Andy Arvidson. So very auto-biographical, revealing true openness and a willingness to reveal his inner self.

**From Frank Cuta:**

I loved the many wonderful heartfelt stories, but Hayley's "Music Between Friends" was, for me, the clear standout winner for best article. Asking members about music in their lives really hit a chord. We might consider repeating this theme or something else on music for each winter issue.

**From Julie Harlow:**

I really cannot make up my mind between two articles, so I will list my reasons.

Andy brought us to music that we take for granted, and how we can find music in the natural world. It does not have to be drums, lyrics, or the others. There is such music in all the things he described. I forget these things as my hearing has become worse, and he was able to bring me back into the beautiful sounds surrounding us in the natural world again.

Hayley's article was pure, raw, and heartfelt. As a cancer survivor, I can only hope to have my friend with me, holding my hand, allowing music to bind us in that final moment. I cried at Hayley's honesty and vulnerability in this piece.

## FEATURES

### Cheshire Cat Interviews #12

#### Rebel With A Cause

by Heather Meares

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I thought this interview was going to be about a career as a machinist who happens to be blind, and in some ways it is, but it is really about a man with a plan who was willing to fight for his right to an education in the field of his choice. Bernie Vinther, a member of United Blind of Tri-Cities, is known for his jokes, but here is the story most of us don't know.

He said with a chuckle, "I was born during World War II, so I'm an old guy. My dad won me on a bad bet in Las Vegas, but that's another story. When I was a year old, we moved to Tacoma, Washington, and in 1986, to Eastern Washington. I have been here, in Kennewick, for 34 years. I grew up fully sighted, could drive and get speeding tickets as easily as anyone. I began to go blind in my thirties, due to diabetes. I could no longer do the job I had done for many years, which was working on industrial communications equipment, and included climbing radio towers. I was married at the time, and when the money stopped rolling in, I got the boot."

"I was a really good square dancer, I still am, and I met a really nice lady, Brenda, while square dancing. That was 38 years ago, and we're still together!"

**Heather:** "Do you still square dance?"

**Bernie:** "Yes, it has changed a lot over the past decade or two. There's not many younger people square dancing, and I prefer dancing fast with the

younger crowd, so we don't go very often anymore. Whole families used to go. It's a lot of fun and great exercise."

"In the house I grew up in, my mom had a huge old, square grand piano, built in 1863. It was just beautiful and had 96 keys instead of the usual 88. For some reason, she got interested in a Hammond organ and traded the piano off, replacing it with this church model organ, with two keyboards, and all the foot pedals, but it was complicated. She hired a guy, Lee Bryant, to teach her how to play it and wanted us to meet him. When he came to teach her, he blew my mind, because he was totally blind. Oh man, it brings tears to my eyes now. He had a guide dog, German shepherd, my favorite breed. It seemed like he knew so many things, no matter what subject you were talking about. One day we had a new faucet, the latest style with one handle, and the knob was loose. We couldn't find the screw to fix it. Lee said, 'Get me a pocket knife and a No. 2 Phillips screwdriver,' and he popped the cover off, and there was the screw. How did he know that?! He would put on concerts, playing organ and piano at the same time, with Christmas lights under the keyboard that would light up the keys in a dark room. He was an example to me. As a teenager, I started closing my eyes and working on my cars, saying to myself, if he can do that, why can't I? That prepared me for blindness that came decades later. If it wasn't for him, in my opinion, I wouldn't be of value to anybody, for anything. He showed me that I could do it."

"I had an uncle who was a mechanical engineer, that I inherited a drill press and a stationary belt sander from, which I started messing around with. And I realized I could make things. I bought a machine lathe for working on metal. I went over to the local college and they had a machinist two-year program. I eventually enrolled, but the school counselor didn't like this, and neither did her supervisor. They wanted me to have a nice computer job at a desk, or be a counselor. I filed a complaint and they were both moved to Olympia. The new counselor encouraged me to go for it. The right person can make such a difference in how things go."

Bernie's battle was far from over. He had an instructor who did not want to teach a blind student because the last one took all his spare time. Then he was forced by the college to have a safety person stand with him at the machine all the time. When the person didn't show up, they wouldn't let him

in the class, forcing him to sit outside for two hours waiting for his return ride. After three failed safety assistants in three months, Bernie decided to go to the media, pointing out to the newspaper and news stations that they were keeping a blind person out, violating ADA rules and regulations. He said, "I have the right to do this, and learn this, and be here. They won't let me in. What do you think? You watch, I'm going to get arrested, and go to school anyway."

He said, "I loved taking the bull by the horns. When the college heard about the media, they invited me to a meeting with a lawyer and about a dozen people, including the dean, assistant dean, head of the handicapped students' department, and a new instructor. I came in with a recorder and plopped it on the table, turned it on and said, 'I hope nobody minds, this is how I take notes.' Everyone was very cautious about what they said."

They tried again to talk him into a computer career, but he insisted on taking the machinist program. The attorney and the dean left for about 10 minutes, and when they returned, he got his way. He was given the ability to use machines he had been trained on without a safety person supervising him.

Bernie then said, "What they didn't know was that the tape was going around, but the tape recorder wouldn't record anything and I knew it."

He went on to say that this began to change attitudes in the upper echelons of the school, and because he did so well, he was able to turn it into a positive experience. There was a front-page story with photos in the newspaper. This was now a feather in their cap instead of a black eye for the college.

About 20 years ago, Bernie invented a device to take the place of a talking indicator, which was slow and cumbersome, to help center things on the machine. He still uses this device today. It uses tones that get higher the more off-center you get. He calls it a variance indicator, and now has orders for it and is working on getting it mass produced. He gets invited back to the college twice a year to demonstrate this instrument, and show how he does other things as a blind person.

He has been self-employed for about 20 years, and had a machine shop built for his needs 11 years ago, which is completely paid off.

He said, “I am extremely lucky that I had the courage and the approval to go ahead with this. Blindness has been a good thing for me. It gives me the challenge to see how much I can do, using my brain to figure it out. Blindness, and seeing the right role model, has made me who I am.”

**Heather:** “Do you have a joke you’d like to leave us with?”

**Bernie:** “I burned my fingertips making breakfast the other morning. It happened when I tried to read the bumps on the waffle iron.”

**Protecting Washington’s Wild Places  
is About More Than Their Beauty,  
by Tom Uniack  
tom@wawild.org**

We often think the sole reason we protect places like Mt. Rainier National Park, Mt. St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, or the Skagit Wild and Scenic River is because of their natural beauty, dramatic peaks or unique features. However, as someone who has worked in the local Washington conservation community for nearly two decades, we protect wild places for more than just how they look. We do it because we need them to survive. Now more than ever, environmental science makes that abundantly clear.

**Protecting the Wild Sky Wilderness**

To be clear, ancient forests and jagged peaks are a big part of why such areas get protected through years of grassroots advocacy and bringing together winning coalitions.

For example, the statewide conservation organization, Washington Wild, led a coalition of local conservation and recreation groups for nearly a decade to permanently protect wild rivers, old-growth forests, and towering peaks near Stevens Pass as the Wild Sky Wilderness from 2000-2008. At the

center of the 106,000-acre wilderness, the leaning double-peaked silhouette of Mt. Baring can be recognized clearly amidst the other Cascade peaks from as far as downtown Everett.

But the effort to create the Wild Sky Wilderness was driven by environmental science, as well. For example, the City of Everett and much of south Snohomish County rely on the Sultan River and the Spada Reservoir for access to clean and safe drinking water for hundreds of thousands of residents. A key focus of protecting the western portion of the Wild Sky Wilderness was to provide permanent protection for the municipal watershed downstream.

An intact watershed, one that has escaped the impacts of logging, mining and other development, acts as a natural filter. Snow or rain falls on mountain peaks or tree canopies before slowly melting. This provides a manageable flow of water, which is pulled downslope by gravity through a path of soil, rocks held together by tree roots, and vegetation that removes impurities and contaminants and ensures steady water flow, even in dry months. This results in less treatment of the water, reducing costs, and ensuring a safe and reliable water supply for fish, wildlife, local businesses, and residents.

## **The science-based Northwest Forest Plan**

Science can play a key role in protecting places. Take, for example, the Northwest Forest Plan, finalized in 1994 as a federal management plan for national forests in Washington, Oregon and California. The plan was responding to the scientific documentation that over the past century Washington state and other areas of the Pacific Northwest have lost up to 90% of old-growth forests due to unsustainable logging practices peaking in the 1980's.

Unlike most management plans, the Northwest Forest Plan was written by four forest scientists, including landscape ecologist Jerry Franklin from the University of Washington. It recognized the importance of older forests to specific species like the spotted owl and marbled murrelet, which depend on specific habitat features only developed in these ancient forests after hundreds of years. It also introduced the concept of ecosystem

management, recognizing the need to protect the entire ecosystem and habitat instead of managing primarily for timber production and focusing solely on efforts to recover specific species after they are already on the endangered species list. The resulting plan set forth to protect the remaining old-growth forests from logging and promote forestry techniques that would expedite and manage for future old-growth forest over the next century on 24 million acres of federal forest land.

## **Climate science as a guide toward conservation policy**

Much of the science we hear about today is sounding the alarm about climate change and global warming, brought on by human-caused increases in greenhouse gases resulting in warming temperatures around the world. Environmental science has recognized the important role that ancient forests have to play by storing and sequestering carbon. Logging these giant trees releases this carbon into the atmosphere, exacerbating the climate crisis. Protecting these old-growth forests ensures they will continue to keep carbon out of the atmosphere, mitigating the impacts of global warming. As a result, there is a renewed focus on protecting old-growth forests and managing younger forests to develop into older structurally complex forests more quickly.

Additionally, many of the impacts of climate change are uncertain. There is a strong focus on diversifying the types of habitats and landscapes that we are permanently protecting to make sure that the areas we protect moving forward in a warming climate will have a high resiliency to face whatever impacts materialize.

For example, prior to 2008 the vast majority of federally designated wilderness areas on national forest lands in Washington state were high elevation characterized by alpine peaks, ice and unforested areas. Since 2000, there has been a concerted effort in Washington state to seek wilderness protection (e.g., Wild Sky, Alpine Lakes Additions and Wild Olympics Wilderness proposals) for lower-elevation forests that include intact old-growth forests, salmon-spawning streams and other wildlife habitat. This diversification will provide a better defense against uncertain climate impacts on the larger landscape moving forward, much like a diversified stock portfolio will weather uncertain markets more adeptly.

## **Indigenous knowledge has an important role to play**

Environmental science is an important driver of what, how and when we protect our natural resources. Many of the local northwest tribes (e.g., the Upper Skagit, the Swinomish, the Tulalip, and the Snoqualmie) provide some of the best environmental science, particularly around salmon and orca whale recovery and habitat protection. However, these tribes also have a wealth of traditional knowledge that goes back thousands of years. They have been living on and with the rivers, forests and wildlife for thousands of years and have valuable knowledge of how these ecosystems have developed and adapted over time. More importantly, as sovereign nations these tribes have treaty rights to hunt and fish on this landscape, and their tribal lifeways are connected to the health of these lands and waters.

In closing, protected places like Olympic National Park's Hoh Rainforest, the Enchantment deep within the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, and the magnificent silhouette of Mt. Baker are incredibly beautiful and striking. However, they also represent some of the last remaining carbon-storing, old-growth forests, ecologically functioning wildlife habitat, and sacred cultural places for local tribes. They are protected not just for how they look but for what they mean to all of us and those who come after us.

*(Tom Uniack is the executive director of Washington Wild, a statewide conservation organization that has worked to protect Washington's wild lands and waters since 1979.)*

## **Learning to Cook with the Amazon Smart Oven**

**by Tristen Breitenfeldt**

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Cooking. This word has always conjured feelings of dread and futility in my mind. Well, it did at least until January of 2021. Prior to this year, my idea of meal prep entailed either microwaving a frozen TV dinner or reheating a serving of my mom's leftovers. Needless to say, I did not feel comfortable in the kitchen. Sure, I have received all of the standard Daily Living Skills training that most blind people get through school or blindness services. But, despite all of the instruction, I never felt comfortable applying those lessons in my own kitchen.



So, what changed this year? Enter the Amazon Smart Oven.

- Amazon Smart Oven, a Certified for Humans device – plus free Echo Dot included: \$249.99
- <https://tinyurl.com/6e9bndek>

Since receiving my Amazon Smart Oven as a Christmas gift, I decided to make a concrete New Year's resolution with measurable goals. I resolved to learn how to cook three dinner entrees in my smart oven, and to learn how to cook them well. Now, some of you might be thinking, "Why only three things? Why not more?" While others might be thinking, "Three things! Do frozen pizzas count?" No, frozen, prepared meals do not count. I chose three because it sounded like a reasonable number to begin with. Three is not so high to be overwhelming and unattainable; it is also a pretty good starting place for a novice chef.

Let me pause to explain what the Amazon Smart Oven actually is. Picture a large countertop microwave, approximately 24 inches wide, about 18 inches tall, and roughly 24 inches deep. On the front, it has a sturdy plastic handle on the door and a mostly flat display and control panel. The one tactile exception on the control panel is a small raised button that, when pressed, triggers your paired Alexa device.

You are probably saying, "It has a flat control panel. That's not accessible." And you would be semi-correct. Out of the box, this fancy gismo does not appear to be particularly accessible. But with one small accessory and a little setup, this oven transforms into the ultimate high-tech cooking buddy. First, you can purchase a tactile Braille overlay to put on the flat control panel, making it at least accessible by touch, if you know Braille. But the next part is what really makes the Amazon Smart Oven shine.

Remember that lone raised button on the control panel? When paired with a compatible Echo device, such as the Amazon Echo Dot, you can control your smart oven by voice, by saying phrases like "heat one cup of coffee," "defrost for 5 minutes," "preheat to 400 degrees," or even "air fry one cup of French fries." That's right, the Amazon Smart Oven can microwave, convection bake, air fry, and even auto-roast.

But, there are a few more little details I should tell you before we jump into my cooking adventures. In addition to the microwave-safe glass plate that rotates your food, the smart oven also comes with a meat thermometer, a tall cooking rack, a short cooking rack, and a special round metal pan. The thermometer is used for the auto-roast feature, say, when cooking a whole chicken. The short rack is what you put your food on when using the roasting mode, the tall rack is for convection baking and air frying, and the round pan is what you cook your food on in all but the microwave modes.

Now for the fun stuff. The first thing I learned to cook was homemade French fries. I found that regular russet potatoes work best. I also choose not to peel my potatoes. I learned two things from making fries multiple times. One is not to crowd the pan with potatoes, because if the pan is too full, the fries don't cook evenly. Second is that sweet potatoes take longer to cook.

The next thing I made was baked Parmesan ranch chicken. The first time I made this recipe, it was perfect. The chicken was moist and tender and the coating was slightly crispy. Unfortunately, the second and third times were just not as good as the first time. I think it has something to do with getting exactly the right thickness of chicken, so I'll keep trying.

Next, I made sheet pan fajitas. These came out amazing. The one suggestion I have is to ask your butcher to cut the meat into strips for you, because I spent a long time doing that part myself, when it only took the butcher about five minutes to do it. With this recipe, I also learned that it is important not to overcrowd the pan or it will take longer for the meat and veggies to cook.

The last thing I have learned to cook so far is baked scrambled eggs for a breakfast burrito. This is an easy and delicious recipe that I highly recommend. The one thing I discovered from this recipe is that the scrambled eggs do not come out as light and fluffy as they might if you cooked them in a pan on the stove, but since they are going straight into a tortilla for a breakfast burrito, they are perfect and easy.

One more thing I learned so far in my cooking adventures is that relying on my iPhone to read recipes with Voiceover while cooking is just not the best

idea. First, I had to wash my hands thoroughly after every step so I could wake my iPhone to hear the next steps. The second thing I learned is that it is not wise to have an iPhone sitting on the counter next to the area where you are cooking. Oops, I accidentally set a package of raw chicken down on top of my phone's screen. So, after thoroughly disinfecting my phone case, I started looking for another solution for reading recipes while cooking. Enter the Amazon Echo Dot. Recall that I needed to pair an Echo Dot with my smart oven in order to take advantage of issuing voice commands to the oven through Alexa. Well, I found a free Alexa skill called Recipe Speak which I now use to read my recipes while cooking. To use Recipe Speak on an Amazon Echo device, you need to set up an account at [recipesspeak.com](http://recipesspeak.com), upload a few recipes, enable the skill on your Echo device, and then issue the voice command "Alexa, open recipe speak." Then follow the voice prompts to launch a recipe and get cooking.

Finally, before I give you the recipes, I want to say that the Amazon Smart Oven has become my favorite go-to appliance in the kitchen. Using my Amazon Smart Oven, paired with my Echo Dot, is helping me to feel more confident cooking my own healthy and delicious meals. Even some in my family have tried my new recipes that I cooked and say they taste great. The important thing is that now that I can cook a bit, I have been getting much less food delivered with Uber Eats and Door Dash, and I have not bought a single frozen TV dinner. But, don't worry, I still have at least one more dinner recipe to learn well before achieving my New Year's resolution. I think I'm going to practice the recipes I have a bit more before deciding what else to make. Suggestions anyone? Now, on to the recipes.

## **Baked Scrambled Eggs for Breakfast Burrito**

(Makes one breakfast burrito)

### Ingredients

- 1 tsp. salted butter (softened)
- 2 eggs
- Cheese or veggies if desired.
- 1 flour tortilla (if making a breakfast burrito)
- 2 precooked, frozen sausage links

## Instructions

- Heat the oven to 400 degrees
- Coat the inside of a 10-ounce oven-safe ramekin with the butter
- Whisk together the eggs in a small bowl
- Add any veggies (if desired)
- Pour into the ramekin and bake for 15-18 minutes or until eggs are set.
- Heat tortilla in microwave for 15 seconds
- Heat sausage links in microwave for 45 seconds
- Slice sausage links into bite-size pieces
- Scoop eggs and sausage into tortilla
- Roll the tortilla into a burrito and enjoy

## **Air Fryer Fajitas**

(Makes 1-4 medium fajitas, depending how much meat and veggies you use.) Note: I used frozen mixed bell pepper strips from Walmart or Safeway.

## Ingredients

- Thin-sliced flank steak (cut in strips)
- 1-2 tbsp. fajita seasoning
- 1 package frozen bell pepper strips (or ½ red bell pepper and ½ yellow bell pepper, both seeded, cored, and sliced)
- 1 onion, peeled and sliced
- Sliced mushrooms (if desired)
- Olive oil cooking spray
- Flour tortillas

## Instructions

- Coat meat and veggies lightly with cooking spray
- Season meat and veggies with fajita seasoning
- Mix thoroughly
- Preheat air fryer to 400 degrees
- Spray the air fryer tray with cooking spray
- Arrange the seasoned meat and veggies on the air fryer tray, cooking in batches, if needed

- Place in the air fryer for 20 minutes. Toss halfway through cooking to ensure the meat is cooked evenly.
- Serve in warm tortillas.

## **Baked Parmesan Ranch Chicken**

### **Ingredients**

- 3 large boneless skinless chicken breasts
- ½ cup breadcrumbs
- 1/3 cup fresh Parmesan cheese
- 2 tbsp. dry ranch dressing seasoning
- ½ tbsp. liquid ranch dressing
- ¼ cup unsalted butter (melted)

### **Instructions**

- Preheat oven 375 degrees
- Slice the chicken breasts in half horizontally to create six filets
- In a bowl, combine ranch dressing, ranch seasoning, breadcrumbs, and Parmesan
- Dip chicken in butter, then roll in dry mixture, and lay on pan
- Bake 25-30 minutes.
- Reheat refrigerated leftover chicken in air fryer for 5 minutes

## **Homemade French Fries**

(Serves one or two people)

### **Ingredients**

- 1 or 2 russet potatoes (rinsed and dried)
- Olive oil cooking spray
- Johnny's seasoning (or, salt and pepper)

### **Instructions**

- Slice the potatoes lengthwise into ½-inch strips

- Spray the sliced potatoes with olive oil
- Sprinkle seasoning over potatoes
- Mix potatoes by hand to distribute the oil and seasoning
- Spray air fryer tray with olive oil
- Lay potato slices on tray (try to prevent potatoes from touching each other)
- Air fry at 400 degrees for 15-20 minutes, flipping the potatoes halfway through cooking
- Let cool 1 minute and enjoy

## **The Wonderful World of Tech and Me by Holly Turri**

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Although I don't believe in magic, I do love God, and He has always provided me with joy and excitement. Learning about and using science and technology is amazing and engrossing.

Among the many problems of today, the one that saddens me the most is the inability of government officials, and just plain old you and me, to dream big. Our country does best when we have an exciting, engrossing, and challenging event, or series of these, to follow. Landing men on the moon and bringing them safely back to earth was one such example. Thank goodness Elon Musk and his private company are beginning to light the fire of exploration again.

When I was a child, I wanted to be in the space program. Astronauts were cool, but what I really would have loved to do was work in Mission Control. It didn't make any difference that my math ability did not exist, and the stuff they used and did was extremely visual. Being the ground pilots of the spacecraft and working to save astronauts was my dream. Of course, back in the '60s and '70s, there was minimal to no technology for us blind folks. Plus, I had the small problem of being a woman, which back then was a big one. Today, with all the amazing things we have at our fingertips and in our

ears, someone in the next generation might make my dream come true. Any candidates, Washington Council of the Blind youth?

As with many other blind people, radio has always fascinated and amazed me. When I was young, I loved to listen to AM stations, which were far away from my small, boring home in suburban Washington, D.C. WBZ from Boston, WOR in New York City, and WBT in Charlotte kept me from getting my sleep quota.

Then, when I was nine or ten, I heard a guy on my dad's shortwave radio talking to another man in the Alaskan wilderness. What really fascinated me was that they could do this thing. I learned it was called ham radio. Anyone who was able to pass an exam would receive a license and have the privilege of actually talking to people all over the world. I thought, "Sign me up yesterday, please!!!" Filled with joy, I started maundering on about this to the parental units. What a shock it was to hear, "No way. That's what poorly adjusted blind people do. You are better than that. Besides, you are a girl. If a man finds out you like this stuff, you will never get married, and we won't have any grandchildren."

Well, as an adult I learned mom and dad suffered from the no imagination syndrome and were confused. When Jim and I joyfully told them that we were going to get married, my mom's big beef was not that he's blind, but that, "He's a ham. You'll stand by while he talks to other countries, and you won't know your neighbors." Mom, too bad, so sad. In 1984, I got my first license. Today, I still have one. We know all our neighbors here and in Maryland. I have a wonderful husband, a son, a daughter, and seven grandchildren. Nana booboo to you. Oh, and if it weren't for that dastardly hobby, moving out to Bellingham would have been a heck of a lot lonelier and much more challenging.

Weather is another interest I have. Learning about and tracking hurricanes really lights my fire. So, I couldn't do the math, but I got hired by the national weather service. Although my job had very little to do with forecasting, I was close by to folks like that and could listen and learn.

During the summer between 10th and 11th grade, I shadowed two different blind women for a week apiece. One worked in the Goddard Space Flight

Center in Greenbelt, Md. She encouraged me to write a story, which was published in their newsletter. During the second week, the woman who had to deal with me was a keypunch operator at the then-called National Bureau of Standards. One day, I had to visit the ladies. Thinking I was so very helpful, I turned off her keypunch machine to save electricity. That was what we did at home. Of course, you old guys know that I wiped out this poor woman's entire day's worth of work. Guess what. She made me redo it all. Oh boy howdy, for about five years, I was so scared of PCS. Then, at work we got terminals and I got an external speech synthesizer. It was called VERT. This puppy was the size of a microwave and sat on my desk to the right of the tube and keyboard. Well, I loved the thing. That was in 1981, and today I am a proud user of computers, iPhones, iPads, and anything else you can imagine.

Earlier this week while writing this article, I became very concerned and disturbed. Why didn't I tell my authority figures to go pound sand? Why didn't I grab the ring and run with it? So many of you would have. I was taught to believe that older people were smarter and knew best. Well, after a long walk with God, and my guide dog Pima, it hit me. If I had done those assertive things, I would have missed out on the breadth of experiences which I hold so closely and dearly.

So, you people of a certain age, don't look at your past with angst. Be thankful for the cards you were dealt. Who knows what could happen if you went back and changed history. Remember the butterfly effect.

The overarching themes in my life are science and technology. They have expanded our knowledge beyond our earth, have helped us learn more about our planet, and bring people of varying cultures and abilities together.

**Chronicles of a Happy Warrior #7**  
**The Magic of Words**  
by Mark Adreon  
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Hey, you, yes you, look at this piece of paper! Right here, this paper.



What do you see? Now, how about this other side, what do you see here?

Yes, both sides of this paper contain something called “print.”

This thing called print brings people adventure, despair, exciting dishes of food, instructions for building or tearing down. It speaks of love, anger, loss and hope, culture and history, and how to become a better person.

For you, my fine blind friend, it means nothing. It is beyond discovery or amazement. However, through magic, I can make it visible to you.

Come close, yes, step right up and I will amaze and mystify you. Put your hand on this paper and follow along as we set it down. Is this the original paper we have now set on the table?

Let me begin with some magic words: “Print you will reveal yourself to all, you will not exclude or discriminate, you will not hide your content, and you will become real.”

Now, as I take out the magic box, and wave my hands around the table, and stop above the paper and, yes, and then say the magic words, “Hocus pocus!” ...the paper begins to speak! Can you hear it? Do you hear the paper saying words?

The print is telling stories, sharing recipes or instructions, telling you of love or hate, pleading with you for money to support a cause. And what is this? You owe how much?

What kind of magic is this? Is this witchcraft? Are you the devil or a sinister lord from the underworld? You must be an enchanted wizard, with this magic at your fingertips. Yes, a masterful magician.

Everywhere I go, I ask people if they have heard or seen such magic. I ask them where they think this magic appeared. I am in a constant search of the origins of this magic.

Some have told me about dark recesses of the internet where one can find secrets to this magic. Others peddling in conspiracy theories say there are

ancient journals hidden in state agencies or secret clubs. Some refer to these ancient journals as catalogs.

Your magic has made the paper talk.

What a magician are you. This is so amazing and I must know what the trick is to this magic. There must be a trick that has taken years to create and make perfect.

I spend hours that turn into days as I travel the road of discovery to learn the talking paper magic. I explore ancient people's history, look around the world to find the meaning of the talking paper.

Then one day, by accident, I find a web site in the darkest places of the internet. I think this site has the answers I have been seeking. As I went deeper and deeper into the darkness, I began to hear magic words for a talking paper. From the sea, there are dolphins and sharks with JAWS. Apples that have voice and things called apps that are all-seeing with artificial intelligence.

I soon found that my journey was just beginning. I found the secret catalog journals that spoke of underground clans that had beliefs in a thing called "technology." This movement, per the secret journals, was spreading to every aspect of human life. I learned that many people were followers of this cult while others were afraid of how it might replace the human race.

The magic created by the followers of "technology" were fully embraced by many groups of people who, with the magic, could read books and paper, see colors, know what people look like, read money, talk in a foreign language, use smart handheld devices, write by talking and ask about anything in the universe.

Would this cult of "technology" consume me, make me a thing people call a "techie?" Would I lose my identity? Would I spend a lifetime of talking to smart speakers, asking for music, recipes and answers to social problems, dropping in from room to room, waking me up, putting me to sleep with sleep sounds as it gently turns all the lights out?

Would this become a life that needs no human contact to be empowered and fulfilled? Would I become dependent on this magic and enter into a conclave of users, addicted to the magic of “technology” and all the promises that the cult developers want you to embrace? Bringing it into every aspect of your life, not needing to engage with people ever again as the world is in your hand? You can escape to any adventure or path by using the magic on talking paper. It might slowly make you the servant of the magic. Not a person at all.

No, I don't think the magic will lead to a path of self-destruction. It can bring new worlds, new opportunities, the independence of work, the joy of reading or cooking or building or loving.

I must embrace the magic of the talking paper.

## **Breaking into Electronics**

**by Frank Cuta**

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I love the science and art of electronics. I think it has been an awesome profession. I believe that an adequate amount of brains, some motivation and hard work is sufficient to get a sighted person a good job in this field of engineering. However, if you are blind, having the grades and motivation may not be enough. In addition, you may need life to give you a little slack. I was very lucky in that, over the years, I had the benefit of several such breaks.

At 16, I had already set my sights on electronics as a profession. I had excellent math skills and an inquiring mind. Don't get me wrong, I never won any math awards or science fair prizes. I just liked to take apart old clocks and radios and reassemble them in my own creative ways. However, college was going to be a struggle for me financially. My family was very supportive, but we constantly struggled to make ends meet. My high school report card favored the second letter in the alphabet, and a scholarship seemed unlikely.

So, my first big break towards succeeding in my dream profession was being blown up in a dynamite accident. This happened on the side of a mountain above my home town just before my 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. I spent three months in the local hospital and three months in a hospital at the Mayo Clinic being put back together. When I was released from the clinic, I went back to school and graduated with my high school class. I was soon contacted by a counselor from the Department of Services for the Blind. I was amazed to learn that he wanted to pay my way through college. I did not even have to work very hard to convince him to let me try electronics. I have a feeling that electrical engineering closures do not come in handfuls, so you take them when you can get them.

When I attended Montana State University in the late sixties, we could not imagine having the great on-campus disability services that exist today. If I needed a reader, a note taker or a tutor, I had to find them, interview them and hire them myself. Eventually, it did become necessary for me to get tutoring in calculus, and I believe that hiring my own helpers was an extremely valuable experience. However, I do regret that my performance in my student labs was never really up to par. It's likely that having some kind of formal disability support probably would have helped turn around that situation.

My next big break was meeting Fred Blankenship. Fred was my first mentor. He was the electronics tech for the MSU physics department, and he designed and hand built all of the instruments used in the student labs. Fred was a technical wizard, but he was also very kind and wise. And one other thing: he had a physical disability. When I applied to be his assistant, he did not hesitate to give me a chance. I worked hard for Fred, and we became great friends. Over a period of years, I learned from him most of what I know about building and debugging electronics. This seriously augmented the book learning that I was getting in my engineering electronics classes.

Fast forward to graduation in 1974. Judy and I had been together two years, and as a lady engineer in the seventies, she had her pick of employers. Of course, it did not hurt that she also had an impressive academic record. I also had my engineering degree, but I did not receive a single job offer

that spring. One of the companies in Judy's mob of prospective employers was a research firm, Battelle Northwest Labs. The people we talked to at Battelle seemed a good fit for us, and it seemed possible that, in time, I might be able to convince them to give me a chance.

In July of 1974, we moved to Richland, and Judy went to work for the lab. Eventually, after three months of beating on their door, they offered to let me try starting with them as an electronics tech. Thanks to my work with Fred, I was well qualified for this work. After a few more years of experience and a new master's degree in electrical engineering and computer electronics, Battelle finally offered me an engineering position.

Working for the lab was a dream job – the kind of work that was constantly changing and full of challenges. My fellow employees were of the highest caliber, and I got along well with them and my managers. I looked forward to going to work each morning. I took pride in my job, and sometimes worked 60- to 70-hour weeks for no additional pay in order to ensure that my customers received my best efforts on a project.

At Battelle, if I needed a piece of special assistive tech, it was always mine for the asking. At first, I benefited from several of the first TV magnification systems. Then, as I lost more and more vision, I relied more on my Braille and on some of the first talking Apple and IBM computers. The last 90 minutes of each day I spent reviewing technical resources with a reader.

Research and development work is exciting. Over the years, I developed digital instrumentation for precise flow measurement, digital camera controls for glass melter modeling studies, a computer interface card for the histographic analysis of periodic waveforms, synthesized the phonetic voice for a Rubik's Cube-solving robot, researched machine vision for counterfeit money identification for the Secret Service, designed the power monitoring system for the deep-based MX missile, developed custom instrumentation for evaluating the effectiveness of a home hot water saver, designed a prototype audiometer that takes into consideration standing wave problems in the ear, investigated cheaper alternatives to conventional TV design, programmed data-collection systems for lung cancer research, developed a mathematical model for simulating the discharge characteristics of the

battery arrays used in electric vehicles, and studied cosmic ray proof electronic components for NASA.

Judy and I are now both retired, but we continue to be very interested in science and technology. I enjoy being a science fair judge for the seventh and eighth graders each year and have also helped administer the first Lego league robotic competition for the third and fourth graders.

## **LIFESTYLE**

**Book Chat Spring 2021**  
**by Alan Bentson, Readers' Advisor,**  
**Washington Talking Book and Braille Library**  
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Does size matter?

I love long books. Don't you? The plains of my reading life are dotted with the tall summits of big books that all seem like triumphs. I remember the first real Braille book I checked out, "Eddie and the Fire Engine," by Carolyn Haywood. It is available from BookShare.org. Compared to the picture books and primers I had been devouring, it seemed like a monstrous volume, and I thought I would never get done.

A year or so later when I was nine, the library gave me my first massive book on 33 1/3 RPM records – 20 of them, as a matter of fact. It was called "Legends of Paul Bunyan," by Harold Felton, and narrated by Robert Donley (it is unavailable in special media as far as I could tell), who is still one of my very favorite narrators 52 books later. I read that book over and over. I felt like the North Woods were more my world than my own house and yard.

Remember how nifty cassettes were when they first came out? Books of hundreds of pages could fit in one or two of those little green boxes. That was, of course, before we came to know cassettes as the mechanical nightmares they really were.

Remember getting to the climactic chapter of “Gone with the Wind,” or “Ben-Hur,” only to find your tape was broken, twisted or missing altogether?

Of course, it is a bit absurd to judge books on bulk alone. I read a funny article in Sports Illustrated many moons ago, asking how great artists would rate if we judged them by the same statistical measures we judge athletes by. Beethoven would be considered a minor composer as he only wrote nine symphonies as compared to the hundreds written by others, or Da Vinci would be considered second rate as his “Mona Lisa” did not cover nearly enough square feet of canvas to be thought of as worthwhile.

In fact, I am a little dubious about many long books. The word processor has led to a lot of overblown and self-indulgent writing if you ask me. I miss the science fiction or fantasy novels that created a whole world in a vivid little paperback, and the Westerns, thrillers and mysteries that compressed a whole lot of action into 200 pages or so. Not to mention all the series that go on and on with no character development or new ideas.

Nevertheless, when I look back on my list of books that were my favorites of past years, I see a relentless preference for big tomes that took up two weeks of bus rides or kept me engrossed all weekend when I should have been getting the laundry done.

For instance, last year’s favorite was “Outlander,” by Diana Gabaldon (DB#36535). I was impressed that she could write an absorbing romance between two people with no subplots or auxiliary love affairs for 650 pages. It did not hurt that Barbara Caruso did a good job with the Scotts accents.

Recently, I downloaded a 30-hour book onto my phone, between bus stops that were all of four blocks apart. I approached this book with some trepidation. It was “Nixon: The Education of a Politician,” by Stephen E. Ambrose, (DB#26109). If anyone had told me in my twenties when Watergate was happening that I would someday voluntarily pick up a 720-page book about Richard Nixon, I would have told them they were two tacos short of a combination plate. But Stephen Ambrose is a famous author and I thought it would be nice to start with something from earlier in his career than all those bestsellers. (Turned out I was wrong in my calculations; he was already a famous historian of at least 15 years standing when he wrote

this book.) And Ray Foushee was the narrator. He is a great narrator, but I associate him with fiction, and action-packed fiction at that. I do not think I had ever heard a non-fiction book from Ray. And ... well, it was a long book and I could not resist.

Turns out Ambrose is a good stylist, is clear and concise, and has a gift for explaining events like the Alger Hiss case and the Checkers speech that I had never understood before. The quotations from many sources were quite wonderful.

Ray, as it turns out, can read non-fiction fine. He does a great Nixon impression, and a very credible JFK, too. Maybe all that fiction gave him a facility for doing voices.

So, even though I do not care for Nixon any more than I ever did, this book joins many other long books in my current mountain range of triumphs.

Today, the commercial audio publishers who dominate the audio book world seem determined to cater to what they perceive as the shortened attention span of the public by satisfying our appetite for reading with little snacks, like podcasts, and book shots and many audible.com originals and little books that run an hour or so and are just articles or short stories. So come on fellow readers, go out and prove them wrong by getting some 20-hour books.

My manager at the library, Danielle Miller, turned me on to a thousand-page Russian novel called "The Eighth Life," which audible.com will have soon, and I already have my order in.

You kids and teens can join in on the search for larger portions, too, thanks to Harry Potter and The Hunger Games, and their many imitators.

Okay, off my soapbox now, size does not really matter all that much. Just go out and get your spring reading lined up, now that technology makes books so much easier to get hold of.



## Questions

### A poem by Christmas Frahm

While being in the forest fair, I was in the mind to meditate  
and think of things to contemplate.

So first came birdsong loud and clear,  
the notes coming quick and melodious to my ear.  
But they did not stick like finger pricks,  
they went plick and plick away.

I needed something more substantiating, to take notice of this day.  
So i took a seat and rested against a mossy bolder's bass.  
And while there i learned of humbleness and grace,  
and a tininess of place  
for me in the world of me-ness, or lack thereof.  
Some would call it ego death,  
some would call it abundant love.

The feasts are laden,  
and tables set with food aplenty, waiting for one to arrive,  
all derived from the act of staring at a speckled rock,  
which i had been sitting on.

This rock was bedecked with moss, and seemed to have a face  
i could not seem to place?  
It seemed to have the wisdom of all rocks into one,  
saying, "Erode, erase, renew, replace,  
love, peace, and justice for everyone."

Then the scene seemed to morph for me,  
to that of a speckled rock with moss bedecked upon its surface,  
with nary a face to be found upon its groundworks.  
I frowned in concentration,  
wondering where the ink blot had fled or had led,  
questioning and being happy in my continual seeking.  
I smiled and kept on my journey,  
knowing i would always keep the questions burning brightly in my chest,

knowing to divest in the quest for questions is the worst sort of test.

I would seek and be perpetually piqued by interest and by imagination,  
to be fired up about creation,  
for it is Holy every day made new, a gift for me and you.  
Be part and be parcel of it, unwrapped alongside you.

## **The Benefits of Tea – Part One**

© 2021 by Leonore H. Dvorkin

<https://www.leonoredvorkin.com/>

(Note: The original version of this article was published in March 2007 in a Denver print magazine called Community News. That magazine no longer exists. The article has been altered and expanded for this appearance.)

I've taught exercise classes, mainly weight training, for 45 years. I'll turn 75 in May of this year, and my husband is now 77, but weight training is still our favorite form of exercise. However, every health-conscious person knows that both regular exercise and good nutrition are important for good health. So, over the years, I've researched and written about many types of foods, beverages, and supplements, as well as exercise.

Because my British-born husband and I have long been avid tea drinkers, it seemed natural for me, back in 2007, to start my long series of health-related articles with a couple on the impressive benefits of tea.

First of all, I need to stress that this article and the one that will follow it are about the benefits of real teas: black, green, white, and oolong (or wu-long) teas. So-called herbal teas, or tisanes, such as peppermint or chamomile, while delicious and often beneficial in their own right, are not really teas. Herbal teas have gained enormous popularity in the last few decades, and I enjoy many varieties myself. However, after having researched the benefits of genuine teas, I'm now finding myself reaching for those much more often.

All types of teas contain polyphenols, which give them their impressive antioxidant properties. Teas actually contain more antioxidants than some fruits and vegetables.

Among the many benefits of tea are a possible lowering of the risk of cancer, some protection against rheumatoid arthritis, an increase in bone density, protection against heart disease and stroke, the lowering of bad (LDL) cholesterol, blood pressure control, protection against tooth decay and dental plaque, a possible anti-diabetes effect, a boosting of the immune system, protection against a wide range of allergens (pollen, pet dander, and dust), a lowering of stress hormone levels, a lessening of the chances of cognitive impairment as one ages, and an increase in the metabolic rate. This last benefit makes tea, especially the green and oolong (wu-long) varieties, potentially useful for weight loss.

Be sure to drink your tea freshly brewed, using either a teabag or loose tea. Bottled and powdered varieties are far less effective and healthful. Brewed loose tea has the highest levels of antioxidants, and decaffeinated tea is only slightly less healthful.

Black tea, such as orange pekoe, has long been the most familiar type here in America, as well as in Europe. If you like black tea but have never drunk anything other than an inexpensive brand such as Lipton, you owe it to yourself to try some finer, more flavorful varieties.

There used to be a charming British tea shop near us here in southwest Denver called The House of Windsor. Sadly, it closed its doors several years ago, but while it was in business, it served wonderful meat pies, soups, salads, and the most delicious scones we have ever eaten. The tea that they served in their capacious pots, which were always nestled in colorful tea cozies, was PG Tips, a popular British blend of Assam, Ceylon, and Kenyan tea. Ty-Phoo is another excellent British brand of black tea, and Barry's Tea, Gold Blend, is Irish. You can buy many such quality teas both loose and in tea bags. All the brands I mentioned above can be purchased online at quite reasonable prices.

To brew loose tea, use a metal tea ball immersed in a teapot full of very hot water or an ordinary drip coffeepot. We get excellent results from a Mr. Coffee coffeepot that we reserve for the brewing of tea, using the special strong setting and a standard paper filter. If you are new to this method of preparing tea, you will need to experiment to find how much loose tea to use

for each full pot of tea, but you may be pleasantly surprised by how little loose tea is required for even a hearty brew.

We have also found that Asian supermarkets sell a vast array of teas at remarkably low prices. If you are lucky enough to have such a market in your area, enjoy browsing, then experiment to find your favorite brands and blends of tea. We love pu-erh tea, a fermented black tea from Yunnan province in southwestern China. In our opinion, its distinctive flavor makes it ideal for an afternoon pick-me-up, and it needs no sweetener. We order our loose-leaf pu-erh tea from a company called Davidson's Organics Teas, but there are numerous brands out there to choose from.

We also enjoy the black teas produced by Twining's. Their English Breakfast and Irish Breakfast blends are both robust and good. For a real caffeine kick along with the health benefits of black tea, try Awake by TAZO.

While the special benefits of white, green, and oolong teas have received a lot of press, black tea has its own virtues. It seems to be the best at lowering stress hormones. It may also be the best at killing or suppressing cavity-causing bacteria. And drinking black tea can even help prevent sunburn.

Some studies have suggested that you should not put milk in black tea because that reduces its health benefits in various ways. However, the evidence is mixed. Some recent online information I read says that the reduction of health benefits is minimal if the tea is brewed long and strong, and some sites recommend reduced-fat (2%) milk for the ideal mixture. We use organic low-fat (1%) milk, but that is personal preference. I also enjoy adding a little Silk brand Oat Yeah oat milk, their "craveably creamy" variety, as I find that it adds both an interesting, subtle flavor and a nice mouth feel to our British or Irish-blend black teas. We purchase both types of milk at Costco.

You may like your hot black tea strong or mild, with milk or without, with lemon and honey, or absolutely plain. However you drink it, enjoy it, knowing that you're doing your body good. If you need to avoid dairy, and you do not care for any of the current alternatives to real milk, you can always drink the above-mentioned pu-erh tea or green, white, or oolong tea, all of which are usually drunk without milk.

I'll write about those last three types of tea in Part Two of my series of articles on teas and herbal brews.

## **Your Amazing Itty Bitty Guide for Adult 20/20 Vision Loss by Gloria Riley**

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Something big is coming soon. It may be small, but it's packed with gems for those new to the blind community.

Modern technology has opened many windows for information on this subject. Yet sadly, too many people remain uninformed of the various practical skills available to ease everyday-living challenges.

In this Itty Bitty Guidebook, you will find solutions to help fulfill specific needs, provide incentives, and beneficial resources that will shape your future.

Check out the 15 Vision Topics for Lifestyle Modifications. Share the information with family, friends, and caregivers (professional and non-professional).

Together, we can encourage all the visually challenged to take advantage of attainable tools and technology for a better future.

Here is a sneak peek of topics to look forward to reading about in the upcoming book, as well as in a new recurring Newsline column.

- Adjusting to Low Vision
- Simple Home Modifications
- Organize Kitchen and Bathrooms
- Avoid Household Hazards
- Simple Marking and Labeling Systems
- Personal Wardrobe
- Getting Around – Mobility Aids
- Recreation – Stay Active
- Caregivers-Family-Friends – How You Can Help

- Technology – Amazing Modern Miracles
- Resources – Websites, Email Addresses, Phone Numbers
- Local Groups – Let's Talk
- State Groups – Expand Your Experience
- National Groups – Make a Difference
- Fill the Communications Gap
- Self-Help Groups vs. Professional Counseling
- Reach Out to Advocate – Pass Your Knowledge Forward

The book will be available soon on Amazon and at Barnes & Noble.

Format: Kindle and print

My goal is to have these 6x7-inch booklets available to eye specialists around the country, and to have the books available for fundraising projects. I will donate my share of any profits to the group using my Itty Bitty book.

I'm constructing a page on Facebook to hold a Zoom or Podcast under the name Shadow Light Café -- coffee and conversation for people newly diagnosed with visual impairments. Hopefully, this will develop into a peer group for mutual support.

## **Surrounded by Gifts**

**by Alco Canfield**

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I have lived in this house about a month. I can't believe the many gifts I have received and am still receiving.

Although I am only eight blocks from my previous apartment, I am on a street with virtually no traffic. Before, when I opened my window, I heard nothing but traffic and an occasional bird strong enough to make itself heard above the din. Now, I hear many in the quiet.

The street I lived on had apartment buildings everywhere, with driveways leading up to them. I occasionally found myself walking in the street, unaware that I had walked beyond the driveway.

Here, if I walk one block north, I can walk west for a mile. I found out that I can't walk west on S. 42nd because the next crossing west leads you to a dirt desert with no edges and nothing to go by. Now, I know I need to walk north one block, and six blocks from here I need to cross north, so I can have a sidewalk.

The house has a two-car attached garage. Maybe when self-driving vehicles are the norm, I can store my vehicles there. But for now, it holds all kinds of things: cat food, cat litter, a freezer, snow shovel, deicer, etc.

The old apartment was quite soundproof, and I could only know it was raining when I heard it on the bathroom window. Now, I hear it everywhere. I can also hear the wind and it's glorious.

If someone had told me that I would buy a house a year after arriving, I would not have believed it. Life is full of surprises, and I never cease to be amazed by them.

When you open the eyes of your awareness, it is astonishing what gifts you can experience and behold.

## **Making Sense of Our Senses**

**by Chris Coulter**

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Throughout my life, I have been aware of an interesting belief that many people have about blindness. For years (or possibly even centuries), people have had the idea that we who are blind are given more finely-tuned senses than people who are sighted. Most of us find ourselves either arguing against this idea, or we believe that we should have very keen senses, but have never experienced anything but normal hearing, touch, smell and taste, as well as absolute pitch or some other phenomena that most people don't possess. For a long time, I laughed at the idea of having radar ears, or the ability to walk from one place to another without getting lost because we can (supposedly) hear the difference between one tree and another, or that we could sense the world around us by effectively making our ears do the work of a sighted person's vision.

As I've learned over the years why people believe that our senses are keener than most, I've come to an understanding of why people who don't know much about blindness would come up with this idea. Let me hasten to say that I still believe that any sharper senses that I might have are usually quite separate from my blindness. After all, there are sighted people who have absolute pitch and there are sighted people who have trained their ears to hear when they are in situations where their survival depends on their hearing.

The first time I realized how important the five senses we hear about every day could be turned up or down happened as I was talking to one of my sisters who had just given birth to a baby. She marveled at the fact that when her baby cried it was possible for my sister to tell if the baby needed a diaper change, or to be fed, or any number of unique signals that sent the messages of need to her mother. My sister was sighted, and her ears had been tuned to a different level of sensitivity with the birth of her child.

I received an interesting piece of understanding from learning about the way sounds can be turned up or down by focusing on the sound a person wants or needs to hear. Tom Sullivan, the author of the well-known book and movie "If You Could See What I Hear," wrote a less-well-known book entitled "Seeing Lessons." He began that book by talking about how both blind and sighted people can benefit by focusing on different sounds in any given place, and turning the sound of, say, a bird in a tree some distance away from him, and turning down nearer sounds to listen more effectively to that one bird in a tree located further away. This use of senses feels a little like meditation, but as in the case of my sister and my newborn little niece, there isn't usually time to sit still for long moments to "see with your ears."

The above example can, to greater or lesser degrees, be applied to our other senses. Every place, whether it's a house or a forest, is filled with a mixture of smells. When we eat food or drink beverages, we find that what we are eating contains many different flavors. Think wine tasting. Think chili cook-off.

I have even heard sighted people discussing the resemblances among many family members. I have also heard conversations in which differences in color are not just blue or gray or yellow or green. We learn that there are



many shades of blue, and that green comes in shades with just about as many color names as blue has.

Some of you may well ask, "Why should I care? I'm blind. Colors don't mean anything to me."

I have never had vision of any kind, but I find a wealth of poetry and true understanding in knowing the different subtleties in all senses. Senses range from blaring car horns to the tiniest shift in the feel of the air on my skin that tells me it'll probably be changing from sunshine to rain in the next few hours. Focused sensory perception isn't far away from anyone, blind or sighted. I plan to enjoy the many ways that I perceive the world for as long as I live.

**What's on Your Plate?**  
**Concoctions for Healthier Eating**  
**by Hayley Agers**  
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Spring is here, and this means longer days, more time outdoors, new growth, and a fresh start. It has been a difficult fall and winter, not only because of our hearts feeling heavy, but for many of us, me included, it may have meant some extra pounds creeping around.

I make healthy food choices. Some days this is easier than others. I find that if I'm not practicing gratitude and being present, it is more difficult to make healthy choices, as I know I'm eating to fill a void or emotional hurt.

Know your body, notice how you feel when you eat certain foods. Do some leave you feeling heavy and bloated, tired or energetic? Does your headache seem to keep returning after certain foods, or does that bellyache nag at you all afternoon?

The more you become aware of what foods leave you feeling a certain way in order to meet some of your healthy living goals, the easier it will become to say no to the stuff that leaves you feeling yucky. Ask yourself before that next bite, will eating this make me feel guilty later? Will eating this help me

get one step closer to my weight-loss goals? Will eating this nourish my body and help me find the energy to get through the day? Will this make me feel full so that I'm not tempted to eat something unhealthy?

Eating healthy does not need to be difficult. In the spirit of this quarter's Newsline, I wanted to share some of my favorite from-scratch, healthy food concoctions. Enjoy.

### **Homemade Nut Milk**

- 2/3 cup raw almonds, soaked in water overnight, drained and rinsed
- 4 cups water
- Dash of salt

Soak the almonds in water overnight. In the morning, drain and rinse the almonds. Soaking the almonds overnight makes them more digestible. Put the rinsed almonds in a blender with 1 cup of the water and blend until smooth. Add in the remaining 3 cups of water and salt and blend again until smooth and foamy. Strain the milk through a fine sieve or a nut milk bag. If you want a sweeter milk, you can add 1 pitted medjool date during the blending process. You can also add half of a fresh vanilla bean at this time if you want it flavored.

I love to use this for my morning cereal, when cooking oatmeal, in my smoothies, and just as a warm drink to have before bed. I enjoy adding a little cinnamon and cardamom to mine. This will keep in the refrigerator for up to one week if stored in a glass mason jar with a lid.

### **Basic Vinaigrette**

Makes about 1 cup

- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil or oil of your choice
- ¼ cup vinegar of your choice or lemon juice
- ½ tsp. Salt
- 1/8 to ¼ tsp. black pepper
- 1 minced shallot, or garlic clove
- ½ to 1 tsp. Dijon mustard

Measure all ingredients into a bowl, blender, or jar with lid. Whisk, blend, or shake well in the jar, until all ingredients are thoroughly combined. Taste the vinaigrette and season accordingly. If you like a sweeter vinaigrette, you can add a little honey. If you like an herbaceous vinaigrette, you may want to add 1 to 2 tbsp. of fresh minced herbs.

Tip: Dip a lettuce or spinach leaf into the dressing to try it. This will give you a better idea of how you like it.

Store in the refrigerator for 4 to 5 days. Be sure to shake well before each use.

### **Pure Vanilla Essence**

- 5 vanilla beans
- 1 cup high-quality bourbon or vodka

Split the vanilla beans lengthwise with a sharp knife. Then cut into 2- to 3-inch pieces, being sure they can be fully submerged in your chosen container. Add the beans to a clean, glass jar and pour in the bourbon or vodka. Seal the jar and store in a cool, dark place for one month, shaking the jar every few days. For a more intense flavor, allow it to sit for a longer period of time. If you want to strain out the vanilla seeds, use a funnel and coffee filter when transferring to the final bottle you will store it in. A dark amber bottle will protect the integrity of the essence. Stored in a cool, dark place, this will last for up to one year.

Homemade vanilla is not as strong as store bought, so you may need to use a little extra in your recipe.

### **Smokey Hummus**

- 2 cans garbanzo beans, drained, but save the liquid
- 1 cup reserved liquid from the beans
- 3 tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. liquid smoke
- ¼ cup tahini

- 2 tsp. garlic powder
- 2 tsp. paprika (if you use smoked paprika, omit the liquid smoke)
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1 tsp. salt, optional

Combine all ingredients in Vitamix or high-speed blender. Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 1 week.

### **Fruit Dip**

- 1 8-oz. package of 1/3 less fat or fat free cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- ¾ cup brown sugar
- 1 tbsp. vanilla extract
- Chopped pecans or walnuts, optional

Combine all ingredients, except nuts, in a bowl and mix until smooth. Stir in the nuts, if using. Transfer to a covered storage container and store in the fridge. Enjoy with strawberries, sliced apples, grapes and more. I realize this one has a good amount of sugar, but life is all about eating in moderation. I wanted to give you something that would hit that spot when craving something sweet.

## **SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, and ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

### **Technically Speaking**

**by Frank Cuta**

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It can be very challenging to try and independently do science without sight. However, there are a few really awesome accessible instruments, tech toys and resources that you can find on the web.

One great resource is Independent Science. They offer a newsletter, a conference and a summer camp for the budding scientist who is blind.

Their principle product is the Sci-Voice Talking LabQuest data logger from Independent Science: 866-862-9665.

Data loggers make it possible to continuously monitor lab parameters such as weight, motion, flow, pH, and temperature. This instrument will record up to four channels simultaneously and then allow you to scroll through the resulting stored data. It also includes a built-in talking periodic table of the elements.

Many people know about the indispensable talking scientific calculators available from the American Printing House for the Blind. But a less-known resource is the work they have done making snap circuits accessible. Snap circuits do just that. They provide you with the basic electronic circuit elements you need to build hundreds of projects, and the pieces just snap together. APH has labeled all the parts in the Snap Circuits Junior kit in Braille and added Braille and large-print instructions. They sell it for \$130. For another \$75, you can also interface your circuitry projects with your computer. See more on [www.tech.aph.org](http://www.tech.aph.org).

One of my favorite Snap Circuits projects that goes beyond the basic experimentation available from the APH kit is the SC-12 FM radio. If you like the tech look, the resulting radio looks like something that was built in a research lab, and it is totally accessible. You can find it on Amazon for \$40, and you can assemble it in a half an hour with the recorded audible instructions that I can send you.

A basic multimeter is an indispensable instrument designed to measure voltage, current, and resistance in circuits. The original talking digital multimeter sold by Radio Shack is no longer available, but another talking meter is currently available from Marlin P Jones Industrial Electronics: 800-652-6733. [www.mpja.com](http://www.mpja.com). It is their model 35042 at \$40. Not only does this serve as a great battery tester, but it has talking ranges for all the common parameters including voltage, current, resistance, frequency, and capacitance. It also supports transistor test, diode test and AC wall current sniffer functions.

One of the most innovative and inexpensive tools created in the past 20 years has been the Braille caliper from National Braille Press. Developed by

MIT, it has jaws that will clamp around most small items. Using Braille dots that pop up and down for a display, it resolves sizes down to one sixteenth of an inch. Cost is only \$20. [www.nbp.org/](http://www.nbp.org/), 617-266-6160.

One of my favorite tech educational toys is the magnetic geodesic construction set from Scientifics Direct. This kit lets you construct 3D objects like an icosahedron (20 triangular sides), using short magnetic rods for the edges, and magnetic balls for the vertices. The kit also includes plastic sides for figures that are not self-supporting, such as a cube or dodecahedron. Pro-I Magnetics Kit \$89. Scientifics direct, 800-818-4955.

**Don't Try This at Home,  
Reggie Tackles Science  
by Reginald George  
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I remember not so long ago standing in my shower with a big grin on my face and my brand-new Bluetooth BlueWave headset around my neck. The first time I started to wonder if this was such a good idea was when the speakers gave an extremely loud crackle and the sound went away. This headset has a plastic band that sits on your shoulders and can change from playing through the earbuds to two little speakers right on top, with the flip of a switch. They are unique and sound great for those times when you want to listen to a book without something in your ears.

The manufacturer claims IPX 7 waterproofing certification. In theory, this is the same as my other shower speakers, so they should be able to withstand direct spray without being damaged, or so I told myself that fateful morning. The original goal of this ill-begotten experiment was to be able to read books and listen to NPR in the shower without disturbing my wife. Oh, the road to good intentions. I stood there in shock holding it in my hand, not quite knowing what to do. I quickly turned it off. The headset was shaped somewhat like a boomerang, and it made such a satisfying sound as it left my hand and flew serenely through the air to land with a plop right in the bathroom sink.

Believe it or not, they still work. Part of the issue may have been the flowing water interfering with the Bluetooth antenna reception from my phone across the room, but it was still a very bad idea.

Why do manufacturers have to lie, though, I wondered to myself. As I continued to enjoy my shower, I started to think about all the times in my life when curiosity almost killed me along with the proverbial cat. I get called Curious George for a reason, and I am sure my 9X9 lives have long since expired.

I remember being five years old and playing with the telephone, calling random people to hear what the phone would do. Hearing them say hello, I became afraid and hung up.

When my mom thought I was being way too quiet and discovered me in this heinous act of disobedience, they said to me, “What are you doing, Reggie? Are you making prank phone calls?” Thinking that since I could not see them, they couldn’t possibly know what I was doing. I, of course, said no, while plastering a saintly, innocent smile on my cherubic face. That was the first spanking I remember receiving for lying.

Or let’s talk about the time, not to long ago, I decided to put a ball-shaped speaker with a huge suction cup on my forehead so I could keep my hands free as I worked around the house. I thought this was a great plan until I went to remove it a half hour later. This thing weighed about a pound; I am not kidding. When we finally pulled it off, I looked like I had been kissed by a giant frog. I had a big, round hickey on my forehead for weeks.

These are the stories I hoped to never tell, so please don’t tell anyone.

In another ill-conceived encounter between water and electronics, I jumped into the swimming pool with AirPods in my ears because I had heard that they were very water resistant. As I sunk deeper and they almost floated out of my ears, in fear, I wrapped my hands around my head and waited to pop up. I might drown, but I was not about to let go of those AirPods. They also still work perfectly.

The first time I became aware of my deep interest in how electronics worked was in my first-grade class at Kansas State School for the Blind. My teacher was trying to record the class reciting some poems on an old reel-to-reel tape deck. The microphone kept creating horrible static and I somehow knew that the cord must be bad. Suddenly, I realized that the microphone and headphones had the same type of plug. I wondered what would happen if I switched them. I did not say a word, fearing for my life if I broke them. I plugged the microphone into the headphone jack, and sound came out. I felt a warm glow as I realized that microphones were just little speakers. I became excited. What would happen if we tried flipping things around and using the headphones as a microphone? When it worked, my teacher was quite surprised. I got a hug, and the show was able to go on.

As a child, I always gravitated toward music and musicians. I remember I would tiptoe out of that same classroom to listen to a particular high school student preparing for her recital by playing the lovely old pipe organ in the auditorium. She sounded amazing. Those old wooden floors would vibrate and put me into a trance. They would find me standing quietly next to her at the front of the room, hypnotized. She did not even know I was there. This happened multiple times. Now, when we meet up at alumni reunions, we can laugh about it together.

All of us, at one time or another, have likely taken things apart when we shouldn't, or in desperation, plugged in the wrong power adapter into a device and smelled smoke as we kissed it goodbye.

As I learned more, I did more. My dad bought me an electronic project kit and spent hours putting the instructions on tape for me and Brailleing the entire board with numbers so I could build things independently. I learned how radios worked. I made a small radio station. I figured out that you could tune one radio against another and pick up hidden signals that no one even knew were there, behind the squeals of interference.

I found a wonderful Braille book from the fifties in our library on electronic principals with simple experiments, and I stayed up late nights reading it.

At 12, my good friend Kevin and I, with my dad's help, got our amateur radio licenses. I learned Morse code, and I learned the importance of matching



the right length of antenna to the frequency you were transmitting on. You could fry a radio if you weren't careful. When you had it right, you could hear faraway stations from all over the world more clearly, and they could often hear you.

One day, on the last day of school in our dorm, I had been playing around with making an electric magnet. It worked by winding wire around a metal rod and plugging it into a battery, which created a magnetic field that you could use to pick things up. This was quite fun, until I decided it might be even more powerful if I stuck the wires directly into the electrical outlet on the wall. As you might imagine, this was way too much current and voltage for the wire I used. I was lucky I did not get electrocuted. The magnet started to melt, and the entire dorm smelled like smoke and rubber for days. I yanked it from the wall and threw it. It was a good thing I was going home before they figured out what happened.

What about you, dear readers? Do you have stories about experiments gone awry? Send them to [TheWCBNewsline@gmail.com](mailto:TheWCBNewsline@gmail.com) so we can share them in the next issue. Those stupid warnings in instruction manuals about not going to sleep under your blow dryer, or throwing your radio in the bathtub, are included to discourage people like me. No judgement here. Knowledge and progress will only happen if you are willing to say, "What if?"

**Technology My Love**  
**by Debby Clark**  
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Talk about a great way to sharpen one's wits. Every time I add a new technology unit to my life and learn how to use it, my brain gets a rejuvenate jolt. The latest being my iPhone. The range and scope of what this little unit can do is truly incredible.

My daughter gifted me with my first Echo device, or Lady A, or Alexa, whatever you choose to call her. The uses seem to be endless. Learning them has also been a challenge in a good way for my brain.

I have had some wonderful trainer/teachers to help me along the way. It has taken an iPhone village to help me through the ups and sometimes downs of the learning process.

I cannot forget my trusty desktop computer where I write, download books and read my emails. This brings to mind my trusty little Victor Reader Stream. I have a multitude of books, recordings, Bibles, and music on this, my almost favorite bit of technology. I am so blessed and thankful for all of my gadgets that usually help to make my life so much richer and level the playing field for me in a sighted world.

My children grew up with clocks that talk, instead of hands that move. I used to go to their classrooms to show and tell my low-tech guide dog and the higher-tech gadgets, like my color identifier and talking watch.

One of my favorite pastimes has always been to research things. For a season, I was not able to do this. Now, with the acquisition of my Echo devices and iPhone, there is no limit to the research I can do. I love having word definitions and Bible verses that are so easy to access, not to mention all of the shopping opportunities. I am so grateful and so very blessed to live where and when I do.

## **Aquaponics: A Waste Management Experiment** **by Heather Meares** hdmeares@gmail.com

Week 1: July 5-11

The first week of this project was spent doing lots of planning. Before the actual project could be started, I needed to devise a protective fencing to keep things safe from curious puppies. This needed to be very sturdy and low cost. I chose to construct a fence out of 16 pallets, found on a city lot, which were free. They were arranged with T-posts, in the shape of an octagon. One pallet was used as a gate, which can be locked.

Inside the fenced area, two clawfoot tubs, a 1920s pedestal sink, and a pink toilet were arranged in a rectangular shape, the sink and toilet at the top two

corners, and the tubs side-by-side in the bottom corners. The left tub was raised up on three levels of brick to make it higher than the second tub for gravity purposes. The second tub was raised on one layer of brick so that water would have room to drain underneath the tub. I also found a strawberry pot in my yard that I wanted to turn into a fountain feature for the fish tub, which I placed on an old ice cream chair in the tub. The chair supports the pot and allows water to trickle out of different areas, instead of one single stream out of the pipe, which makes a very nice sound.

All of the fixtures and brick were things I already had in my yard, so the cost for these items was \$0.

Week 2: July 12-18

During the second week, supplies were purchased. The items I chose were:

- 6 bags of red lava rock
- 20 feet of 1/2-inch tubing and appropriate fittings
- 160 gallon pump
- 3 plugs for drains in sink and tubs
- 2 strainers
- 4 funnels
- Silicone adhesive

The total cost was \$104.

Next, a system had to be created to connect all the fixtures in order to determine how the water would flow, using gravity and the pump. There was a lot of trial and error during this process, which took about two weeks. Many adjustments and changes had to be made to the design. Ultimately, part of the 1/2-inch tubing had to be replaced with 3/4-inch PVC pipe to keep the water flowing at the right pressure and speed, and the adhesive had to be changed to an epoxy putty, which seemed to hold things together more effectively than the silicone. A second, stronger, 290-gallon pump was also purchased as a back-up in case the first one was not strong enough, or in case two might be needed. After several trials, it was determined that the

original pump was the best choice. The stronger pump actually was too much and caused the sink to overflow before it could drain into the fish tub.

Week 3: July 19-25

The third week was full of fine-tuning water flow, sealing leaks, and preparing the plant tub.

The strawberry pot fountain was working, but I was not happy with the low pressure. It needed to flow faster in order to create the right amount of oxygen and splash noises, so I decided to increase the holes in the sink and strawberry pot fountain to increase the amount of water going through this particular part. There was still some leftover 3/4-inch PVC, which worked perfectly. This created a much better fountain and also kept the sink from overflowing.

The toilet was originally supposed to be part of the system, housing the pump in the tank and connecting to the sink, and from the plant tub. This proved to be too difficult, so I decided to use it as a control planter instead.

In the plant tub, there is a thick layer of lava rock, about 5 inches deep. The key for this tub is to keep the water level low, just barely above the rocks, so that the plants can rest on the rocks and absorb water as needed. Water flows in the upper left hole, where the cold dial would normally be. This water is coming from the fish tub, which has the nutrients from the waste the fish have produced for the plants to absorb. The pump is in the bottom of this tub, and has a tube attached to it that pushes the water from the plant tub to the pollinator sink area. Oxygen from the plants goes with this water and makes its way back to the fish, which need the oxygen. The plants are planted in reusable Walmart bags, which are known to be great for drainage and allow for really healthy root growth vs. in a plastic container. The bags are arranged in a metal shelving rack to provide support but still allow the water to flow where it needs to go. The idea is that the plants only suck up the amount of water they need, therefore creating a self-watering system as well as a natural nutrient source from the fish. The plants I chose were:

- 3 Thai basil starts, about 3 inches tall
- 1 wooly thyme in 4-inch pot, no branching

- 2 Heirloom cherry tomatoes, very scraggly condition, about 8 inches tall
- 1 wild strawberry, no runners, 2 inches tall
- 1 lemon balm, 4 inches tall
- 1 pineapple mint, 5 inches tall
- 12 seeds of okra planted in one bag

In the control bag, I planted one Thai basil and one wooly thyme, exactly the same as the ones in the tub. In the toilet bowl, there is a layer of lava rock and water that is not from the system.

Week 4: July 26 – Aug. 1

The next step was to add the fish to the first tub. This tub has about 50 gallons of water, and 2 inches of lava rock, which will help filter and send the nutrients to the plant tub. Water enters the tub from the sink, and flows through a strawberry pot that has been turned upside down to allow the water to exit through many different points. This oxygenates the water for the fish, some of which is provided by the plants.

I chose goldfish because they are very hardy and create lots of waste matter quickly. Four are Shubunkin goldfish that have multi-colored, calico markings, and one is a Comet goldfish, a more traditional style. The water in this tub had been there for about a week in order to adjust to the temperature and allow chlorine to dissipate. Before the fish were added, I tested the water for ammonia, nitrate, nitrite, and pH level, which was 7.0, perfect. All tests came out exactly where they needed to be, so the fish were released from their bags and into their new home. The bags had been floated for about an hour to adjust them to the water temperature, 65 degrees, allowing for an easier transition. I chose to cover the fish tub with a wire screen to protect them from natural predators.

Week 5: Aug. 2-8

Even after the fish were added, I continued to experience some unexpected leaks in the system. Parts had to be removed and replaced with more efficient ones, and a new spray sealant was used where epoxy had

previously been used and was leaking. A grommet had to be replaced in the sink, as well. Water had to be drained out of the fish tub to a certain level during these renovations, which concerned me greatly. Surprisingly, the fish did not even seem to notice. They adjusted to the water level with no problems at all. This took about five days total. Once the water was refilled, everything seemed to be working properly again.

## Week 6: Aug. 9-13

The final step was to create a pollinator watering feature out of the sink. Pollinators, just like other wildlife, need water to drink, and are often neglected. To make the water accessible to them, they need rocks, marbles, or other similar items to stand on in shallow water, so they can drink and not drown. I have several of these stations around my yard for this purpose. For this particular one, I chose a crystal bowl with a pedestal stand to set in the sink. I filled it with black, polished pebbles, and on top of these I added some blue and green crystals, which bring the level almost to the top of the bowl. The crystals reflect the light and water quite nicely. The water flows from the faucet directly into the bowl, overflows down into the sink, and into the strawberry pot. I have already had several bees and butterflies using this hydrator, and have even had some small birds bathing in it, as well. I installed a wide variety of pollinator-attracting plants around the entire area to encourage them to visit this little oasis, and they are, indeed, finding it. Several varieties of bees, butterflies, and dragonflies have been spotted taking advantage of the gifts being provided. The plants I chose were:

- Several lavender varieties
- 1 weigela with pink blossoms,
- 2 dinner plate hibiscus shrubs, magenta and white
- 2 milkweed plants, pink blossoms
- 1 hyssop, golden
- 1 scabiosa, blue
- 1 baby's breath, white
- 1 cardinal flower, red
- 1 dianthus, red
- 1 Shasta daisy, gold
- 3 yarrow, gold and peach

## Final Summary

This project has incorporated multiple different sustainable concepts, but I have also added a couple of other features to complete the area that are not directly part of the project but assist with the overall goal and maintenance. Around the edges of the fencing, I have added a potting table made out of an old antique door on two sawhorses. There are two garbage cans holding compost and potting soil, and a shelving unit to assist me with maintaining the plants and fish supplies. There is also a seating area with table and chairs for enjoyment of the water features, wildlife, and scents of the blooming flowers.

As for the sustainable components I incorporated, they are as follows:

1. Aquaponics - the shared water system transferring nutrients and oxygen between fish and plants.
2. Self-watering, reusable shopping bags used as planters.
3. Pollinator hydrating station, made with crystal bowl, pebbles and crystals in sink.
4. Planting a pollinator garden surrounding the project so that pollinators can take advantage of the water and enjoy the habitat.
5. Mulch used in garden was made from fallen branches in my yard.
6. I have also been using water from this system to water other plants in the garden area.
7. Most of the large materials were repurposed fixtures. These items include the sink, toilet, two bath tubs, ice cream chair, strawberry pot, clay pot used in fish tub for habitat, wire shelving in plant tub, pallets used for fencing, potting table and shelving unit.

Overall, this has been an amazing journey for me. When I started this project, I knew nothing about how to make an aquaponics system, and it certainly expanded every day. The biggest challenge has not actually been

the fish or the plants. It has been keeping everything running correctly, not leaking, or getting clogged up. I love the fact that I have helped create a wonderful environment for the pollinators, plants, fish and other wildlife to enjoy as much as I do.

I also added something to stimulate all the senses: herbs for taste and scent, waterfalls for sound, different textures like wooly thyme for touch, and many visual effects, including a wide variety of color and shape choices in the flowers.

The Thai basil and the wooly thyme in the control did not flourish as well as the ones in the water with the fish nutrients. The Thai basil only reached 4 inches, compared to the 7 inches of the one in the tub. The wooly thyme was measured at 3 inches, and the tub version was 6 1/2 inches. The control used the same potting soil, was planted in the same type of bag and was using a self-watering method. The only variable was that it was in regular water.

I am listing the beginning and final measurements of the plants in the tub to show the growth.

- Thai basil – starting height 3 inches, final height 7 inches
- Wooly thyme – in 4-inch pot, no branching at start, now has lots of length, about 6 1/2 inches
- Heirloom cherry tomatoes – very scraggly condition at start, 8 inches, now has new and healthy growth, final height 16 inches
- Wild strawberry – no runners, 2 inches at start, now 3 1/2 inches high, and has 2 runners
- Lemon balm – 4 inches at start, now 8 inches
- Pineapple mint – 5 inches at start, now very full and 19 inches
- 12 seeds of okra planted in one bag, 7 survived and are now 5 1/2 inches

I even let one of my chickens come visit. She enjoyed the plethora of insects and even found herself a worm. She approves.



To listen to a quick, fun, and informative tour of the experiment narrated by Heather, you may visit the following link.

<https://tinyurl.com/3r3xye7a>

## **Technology that's Indistinguishable from Magic**

**by Andy Arvidson**

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I was looking at a link Judy Brown sent, titled "Blind People Tell Us Which Questions Annoy Them the Most." It was very entertaining and led me to another YouTube link called "Blind, not Broken," a TEDx Talk by Annie Brady. This would not have happened without technology. Judy could not have sent me the link. If she had, how would I be able to read it, open it, and experience the totality of what was shared in this wonderful clip?

The clip that I watched of Annie Brady, which was filmed in 2019, mentions that only 28 percent of blind adults have full-time employment. What would sighted Americans do if there were only 28 percent of them with full-time employment? Sadly, with the pandemic, this is probably not far from the truth. But what would America do about it? There would be outrage beyond recognition. We are so blessed that we have been given the technology to allow us to do what we are able to do in this era.

One thing that really troubles me with technology is that, with the education of blind children, the learning of Braille kind of went by the wayside. Without Braille, how do our youth learn proper spelling and grammar, along with sentence structure? If our young people are not learning proper spelling, grammar and sentence structure, how will they be able to prepare a resume that will make it anyplace besides the round file? If I were hiring and looked at a resume that had bad spelling, etc., I probably would not invite them in for an interview. So, does technology help if they do not know that there are people who can teach them how to navigate the career industry?

Thanks to the Zoom meeting platform and Smart Phones, we were able to hold our chapter meeting without having to venture out into the snowstorm. Colette and I had three other members at our meeting who are not willing to log onto our Zoom call by themselves, and joined the meeting through our

cellphones. That is quite magical if you ask me. A few years ago, we would not have known how to achieve this.

A couple of weeks ago, I was talking to the chair of a board of trustees who said to me, "I can see and you can't, so I can do lots of things you cannot."

My response to him was, "What can you do that I cannot, besides drive?"

He said, "I can pick up a paper and see what is on it."

"So can I, with my phone," I said.

"Well, that takes technology," he said.

I replied, "Yes, it does, but I probably read faster than you."

After that, he invited me to talk at one of his upcoming trustee meetings, and he attended a Zoom meeting conducted by me and hosted by Danette Dixon. I made sure that those on the Zoom call were aware that our host, who was letting me know who had their hand up, was totally blind.

I later talked to him about driving and let him know that, according to the autonomous automobile industry, we might be able to drive within this decade. He, of course, was blown away.

Technology! Where is it going to take us, and how fast is it going to get there? A magical journey for sure. I love telling people, when I am flying and sitting on a Boeing 737, "Do you know that 7,000 pieces of this plane were made by blind people?" Of course, they make plane parts for Airbus, as well. Could this happen without technology?

Today, it's all about apps on our phones, devices, and computers. Need to do something? There's an app for that. A few years ago, I refused to be on Facebook. I changed my mind and am thankful for it. Keeping track of my 13 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren is a lot easier now that this magic of technology is with us. Apps like Seeing AI are getting better at describing pictures, and Be My Eyes and AIRA sure come in handy when I need their help looking at pictures, or navigating the world. My career

teaching martial arts would have been put on hold during the pandemic if it hadn't been for the magic of Zoom. I get to teach and learn through a new process. Learning is magic.

## HISTORY

### **The Time Machine**

**by Larry Johnson**

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(Larry is a new contributor to the Newslines. He writes: "This article is the transcribed text of a recent episode from my weekly video series called 'Here's How I See It.' My channel is at <https://tinyurl.com/y2srhtjp>. I was born in Chicago, spent 17 years in Mexico City and now live in San Antonio. I've written several books, did radio and television in the U.S. and Mexico for about 23 years, retired from the telephone company after 21 years and currently write a monthly column for our local newspaper, plus do a lot of advocacy work on behalf of people with disabilities. That's kind of me in a nutshell.")

Imagine you're walking through the woods one day and you come across a magic time machine. You are given the choice to travel back 30 years in time or forward 30 years. Which would you choose? Not long ago, I was in a group session with 12 other seniors where this question was asked. All 12 said they would want to go back in time and fix mistakes they felt they'd made. They had regrets about things they'd said or did and those they failed to say or do.

No one was interested in jumping ahead into the future. No one except me. I'd love to know what the world will be like in 30 years, what new technology we'll be playing with, what we will learn about Mars or other planets. I am a curious person, so I am always asking questions and excited to learn new things.

As far as I am concerned, what happened in the past is spilled milk, and there's no need crying over it. Yes, of course I've made mistakes, and plenty of them. But I'm pretty content how my life has turned out.

There was a radio program many years ago on CBS called "What Would Have Happened If...?" The idea was to consider how history might have been dramatically changed if a certain event had not happened. What would have happened if the British had won the war against the United States? Well, we'd all be singing "God Save The Queen." Or, if the Aztecs had kicked Cortez out of Mexico, and the French had gone in and captured Moctezuma, maybe we'd be eating crepes instead of tortillas.

I accept what is. I don't like or agree with all that has happened, and I believe that we should address the injustices that we have inherited. But I think it's better for us to do this now, in the present, using our new awareness and understanding.

It would be nice to peek into the future, to see how the world will become. Will it be kinder, more peaceful, more just? I hope so. But the reality is that the future is in our hands. What we do now here in the present will shape the future of the world for us, and for those who come after us. So, I think I will walk away from that time machine and, instead, go next door to help my neighbor.

**History Quiz**  
**by Carl Jarvis**  
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**Question:** Who was the blind Seattle attorney who helped found the American Council of the Blind?

**Answer:** Arnold Sadler, a past president of the Washington State Association of the Blind, helped found the American Council of the Blind, as well as the American Blind Lawyers Association. Sadler was also instrumental in opening up new fields of employment for the blind.

In 1962, Sadler founded the Northwest Foundation for the Blind, which provided scholarships, no-interest loans, personal aid and other needed services for the blind.

Sadler lived his entire life in Seattle's Rainier Valley. He graduated from the University of Washington's law school in 1940 and was admitted to the bar in 1941.

Sadler devoted his life to furthering opportunities for the blind in the community, as well as involving himself in many technological innovations that improved the lives of blind people.

While throwing rocks at beer bottles when he was 4, Sadler's eyes were injured when broken glass flew into them. By the time he was 14, he was totally blind.

Sadler made the news when he decided to make a point. Disturbed by the number of hunting accidents involving hunters with poor eyesight, Sadler went to the hardware store and applied for a hunting license. He left the store in possession of his very own hunting license, accompanied by his guide dog. Sadler was totally blind. To the best of our knowledge, Sadler never fired a single shot.

Sadler was also a central figure in the establishment of the Rainier Lion's Insight Center, serving on the center's board for many years. The center took up the second floor of a building on the corner of Rainier Avenue South and South Ferdinand Street. The Insight Center provided housing for up to 17 students attending the Orientation and Training Center. Replacing the two boarding houses previously used by the OTC, the dorm provided a family-style service for more than 21 years, demonstrating a strong partnership between public and private sectors.

Sadler found himself disagreeing with many of the positions held by the NFB's administration. When ACB was formed, Sadler left NFB and became a member-at-large with ACB.

**Here is a multi-part quiz question:**

Part one: In 1935, what events led up to the blind people organizing existing local guilds into a statewide organization?

Part two: Can we compare today's economic events with what we know about the mid-1930s?

**Answer and discussion:**

Nothing happens in a vacuum. By 1935, the nation was nearly six years into its worst depression ever. Blind people who had organized guilds in several of Washington's cities prior to 1900, in order to provide mutual support, found local resources becoming scarce. The comparative prosperous times prior to the stock market crash of 1929 came to an end. The blind, most of whom had not shared in any prosperity, many of whom were barely making a living by crafting and selling handmade items, were left with little or no income. Local churches that had provided meals and volunteer assistance to blind people were no longer able to cover the growing needs. Below is a section from "A Brief History of the Organized Blind Movement in Washington State."

"By the 1920s, blind people in Washington state were convinced that the only way that they could gain recognition of, and assistance for, their special needs, was to join together in local groups. Local guilds and organizations were formed; some were by the blind themselves, while others were headed by sighted caregivers. Since the blind were small in numbers, groups were originally formed in major population centers like Spokane, Vancouver, Everett and Seattle.

"But by the middle of the 1930s, as the Great Depression showed no signs of lessening and local city and county resources became scarce, it was apparent that blind people would need to turn to state and federal governments for any support for such services as special library services, operation and maintenance of the state school for the blind, and a raise in the public assistance (Aid to the Blind).

"In 1935, the Washington State Association of the Blind was formed with three chapters, Seattle, Spokane and Tacoma. The Washington State Association of the Blind quickly grew larger with the addition of new groups in Everett Bremerton and Yakima."

How many services are available to blind people today that did not exist prior to the blind organizing at the state level?

While we have moved ahead in the area of technology, and while these advances have made access much easier, nonetheless, the bigger barrier might be one of attitudes. Or is it also a physical barrier? Does the lack of eyesight make interaction too awkward for many people?

Perhaps it's a combination of many little factors. Some of these factors are within our control, but some are outside of our control.

During the years that I directed the OTC, we took students out of their comfort zone, the classrooms at the center and the dorm sanctuary, and set up situations where students had to confront the impact, or lack thereof, of their blindness. We believed that part of the rehabilitation process was learning how to interact with the world as it is. Since we cannot control every situation we find ourselves in, how do we proceed in order to make our needs and wants known and respected?

What services or opportunities should WCB advocate for today?

Our Washington Council of the Blind has established itself as a leader among state chapters in American Council of the Blind. This leadership is not happenstance. While our organizational roots go back to 1935, it did not appear out of a vacuum. Emerging from the depths of our nation's darkest depression, blind men and women in our state rose to the challenge of bettering life for all blind people.

Whether members of the state organization or not, WCB owes our existence to the farsighted dreams and efforts of our early pioneers.

**Question:** Who was Robert Irwin?

**Answer:** (From an article by Dean and Naomi Tuttle) "Robert Irwin (1883-1951) was born in Iowa. When he was five years old, he became blind as a result of an eye inflammation. He attended and graduated from a "School for Defective Youth," which was later renamed the Washington State School for the Blind. After graduating from the University of Washington, he

attended graduate school at Harvard University where he received an M.A. in 1907 and stayed for two more years to concentrate on the education and welfare of the blind, as well as on government and history.

“Robert Irwin began his career in 1910 as supervisor of the classes for the blind in the Cleveland Public Schools, where he also organized classes for partially-seeing children in 1913. Assisted by Dr. Goddard in 1914, he was the first to adapt Binet intelligence tests so that they ‘might be used more appropriately with the blind.’

“In 1923, Robert Irwin was called to New York to become the director of research and education of the American Foundation for the Blind.

“During this time, he developed an efficient interpoint Braille printing machine, which reduced the bulk and cost of Braille books by about 40 percent.

“Another significant contribution was to bring Edison’s idea to fruition by using 33 rpm long-playing records, long before they became commercially accepted, as Talking Books, and by promoting a nationwide system of library services to supply them to the blind in the United States.

“During Robert Irwin’s tenure as executive director of AFB from 1929 to 1949, he built it into one of the most important agencies in work for the blind.

“An early concern of his was the achievement of better international cooperation on behalf of all the blind in the world. To promote this cause, he organized the World Conference on Work for the Blind, which met in New York in 1931. In 1946, Irwin’s interest in international work for the blind resulted in organizing the American Foundation for Overseas Blind, later renamed Helen Keller International.

“His legislative efforts led to the program of Aid to the Needy Blind under Title X of the Social Security Act and a bill allowing the blind an additional exemption on their federal income tax. He was instrumental in the passage of three laws that became a great stimulus to the employment of the blind: the Barden-La Follette Act, the Randolph-Sheppard Act, and the Wagner-



O'Day Act. When World War II required special provisions for war-blinded, he wrote and secured the passage of the bill recognized as 'a bill of rights for blinded veterans.'

"Many honors have been bestowed on Robert Irwin: president of AAWB for four years, named Alumnus Summa Laude Dignatus by the University of Washington, made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor by the French government, and awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Western Reserve University in Cleveland in recognition of his local, national, and international service in behalf of the blind."

## **ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATION**

**Zooming to 'The Hill'**  
**by Sheri Richardson**  
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Early each year, a small number of WCB members, usually no more than four, make their way to our nation's Capital to attend a legislative conference held by ACB, followed by a quick trip to "the Hill" to visit with a small number (usually 2 or 3) of our congressional representatives. From my perspective, many of us know or understand little about this rather mysterious process, other than the information the participants are willing to share upon their return, and the expense item that shows up in the WCB budget each year. I have often thought about joining in on this annual pilgrimage, but I must rather shamefully admit it always happens during my ski season. Somehow, lobbying, even in our prestigious Congress, never seemed like quite as much fun as playing in the mountains. Now, seriously, there are many valid reasons that most of us are not able to participate in this annual event, no matter how much we might want to do so.

As we have heard so many times before, this year was different. It was actually a great improvement in many ways. ACB still held their legislative seminar, but now the knowledge and information they shared is available to all of us to listen to and absorb in our own way and time. Furthermore, presenters could Zoom in from anywhere, which allowed ACB to include a

variety of our own leaders, as well as many from other organizations, government, and industry. The topics were also interesting and educational and covered a wide spectrum. This format even allowed breakout sessions, which means I either had to listen out of each ear to different presentations or I can now hear what I missed via podcast. Some of my personally favorite discussions included a panel of four major airline leaders regarding the recent changes to traveling with a service dog, and a panel of voting officials from four states discussing various approaches to accessible voting. The political outlook discussion for the current Congress also piqued the interest of this political junky.

Before the legislative conference even got under way, we were all invited to listen in on the president's meeting. This day-long session was crammed full of exciting new plans and challenges for ACB, like mentoring with diversity and inclusion in mind, effective fundraising for ACB and its affiliates, as well as updates from the ACB community, the National Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, and still others. They did not forget the past, either. There was a beautiful tribute to Charlie Crawford in whose memory the conference was dedicated. On a personal note, I got to know and love Charlie as a fellow Seeing Eye graduate because we were in not one, but two, classes together. Charlie never stopped learning, caring and advocating for the blind community and is a great role model for me.

Perhaps the most inspiring session was the "fireside chat." Hosted by ACB President Dan Spoone, this was a fun and informative discussion that included leaders from several blindness organizations. Not only was there a great discussion of the impact of the pandemic on the blind community, which really highlighted the importance of "community," there was also a great deal of personal sharing by all the leaders. I hope this discussion will encourage the blind community as a whole to collaborate even more going forward. In fact, I think my most important takeaway from attending both the president's meeting and the ACB legislative conference was the forward-thinking attitude of our ACB and WCB leadership, which greatly inspires me to keep learning and keep working for greater independence and inclusion for blind and visually-impaired people. You can hear any or all of the sessions via podcast at <http://acb-events.pinecast.co/>.

After three days of rich programming, the best was yet to come. It was time for ACB members throughout the country to reach out to their Congressional reps and advocate for the three imperatives selected by ACB for 2021:

1. Secure Independence for Seniors and Medicare Beneficiaries
2. Disability Access to Transportation Act
3. Exercise and Fitness for All Act

More information about these three important legislative imperatives can be found at [2021 ACB Legislative Imperatives | American Council of the Blind](#).

So WCB got busy. We formed teams of three or four people, many of whom had no prior experience with Congressional meetings, but all team leaders had prior experience. Each team contacted a representative from their district and held a meeting to discuss all three imperatives, virtually of course. So instead of three or four people visiting with three or four Congressional offices, we were able to converse with six representatives and both senators. Hopefully, we will have future appointments with two more representatives. I participated in three meetings, one with my own rep and also with both senators. In most cases, we were speaking with staff assistants, although Rep. Schrier did join in for part of the meeting. I believe all the participants would agree with me that these calls, while somewhat stressful, were enjoyable and empowering. For me, the experience reinforced the importance for us all to actively participate in our democracy and to make our voices heard.

While I do not have a crystal ball, I suspect there will be more opportunities for us to meet with our state and federal representatives through virtual means even after we are allowed to visit in person once again. While virtual visits may have some disadvantages, I believe the advantage of greater participation by more citizens is significant. Whichever way ACB and its affiliates carry out this annual ritual in 2022, I strongly encourage you to participate in as much of it as possible. In the meantime, your representatives are waiting to hear from you, whether they know it or not.

# **The Kids Are Alright**

## **Youth Speak #2, Technology That Changed My Life by Lucash Uniack**

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Hi everyone. I hope you enjoyed my first column. In this Newsline, we are focusing on science and technology. Now more than ever, technological advances play a huge role in our lives as we all struggle to make our way through the global pandemic.

There are times when having a vision disability can be exhausting. I had one of those moments earlier this year, struggling to secure the accommodations I need at school, related to my nystagmus. The heaviness of that feeling is challenging, like a great weight, making it hard to move forward. However, it helps me to remember that a teenage boy 50 years ago with the same visual disability was in a much more difficult position. One of the major benefits that I, and those of us living today, have is technology. We can receive assistance from technological advances, such as speech-recognition software, readers, apps, phones, and so many other devices.

For me, there is one piece of technology that changed my life. As a first-grader, I was referred for the first time to the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL). I loved picture books as a toddler, but as I got older, I couldn't see regular-sized print. I started to dislike reading, and had a lot of trouble during reading time at school. Through WTBBL and the amazing staff there who welcomed me, I got my first digital player. Suddenly, a whole world of books opened up to me. I could pick from what seemed like endless titles, and could download books like the Harry Potter book series (which I read seven times), and be transported to another world. It was so fun to discover the fantasy genre, and to be introduced to characters like Percy Jackson. That one piece of technology alone, the digital player, has brought access to countless audio cassettes and digital audio books to me and to so many other people. In just the time I have been

a WTBBB patron, we have moved from digital cartridges to downloadable books on demand. Without WTBBB, I know I would not be the voracious reader I am today. I even participated in my elementary school's global reading challenge in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, something that seemed unthinkable when I was a struggling first-grader. I now read many books each year, and have what I know will be a lifelong love for reading.

One of the many things I love about digital books is listening to the voices of the narrators. Sometimes the actual authors read their books out loud. I know WTBBB has its own team of volunteers who do this job, and have special recording studios and technology on-site for this purpose. I am so grateful to all the people who volunteer to be recorded, bringing these books to life. I have since become a committed volunteer at WTBBB, served as the founding president of the Teen Advisory Board, and am working to complete an art installation for the patrons at the downtown library as part of my Boy Scout eagle project. I will write about this project in a future column. It feels good to give back to Danielle Miller, Erin Grothe, and others at the library who made such a profound difference in my life.

I have never forgotten what that one piece of technology has meant to me. What is the one piece of technology that has meant the most to you? Write and let me know.

Please write to me and tell me what you think about this column, and recommend topics for future ones. I look forward to hearing from you. Take care.

### **Washington Youth Social Club: A Call for Youth, Facilitated by Youth**

This was the name chosen by the youth who attended our first two calls. The call is hosted by Washington State Department of Services for the Blind, the Washington Council of the Blind Families Committee, and the Everett Lions Club. However, it is facilitated by committee member Bob Cavanaugh, and a couple of our youth members, Angel and Arianna.

The call takes place the third Sunday of each month at 6:30 p.m. This is a call only for blind or visually-impaired youth, and we'd love to spread the word. If anyone would like more information or would like to participate, reach out to Colette Arvidson at 360-391-5880.

The link for the call is a secure link, and will only be provided to those who have informed us they will be present.

So what are you waiting for? Be sure to hop on the next call and make some new connections.

## **So You Want to be the First Blind Astronaut**

**by Frank Cuta**

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When I was young, the Apollo program was in full swing and I dreamed of being the first blind person to travel into space. We were tremendously excited by the progress of the Apollo lunar missions, and it seemed inevitable that we would soon have a permanent inhabited base on the moon. Then someone slammed on the brakes.

Now, 50 years later, the dream is fully restored. NASA is pushing forward its plans to have an occupied base on the moon by 2024. It is time to watch as our children's children join the space corps and blast off into space.

Luckily, for both this generation's budding blind space cadets and for us ancient armchair astronauts, a few really great accessible space-related resources are currently available. The biggest, most exciting one is Space Camp.

Space Camp was originally an intensive summer camp experience reserved for sighted children. Their facility in Huntsville is awesome in that it lets the cadets train on actual astronaut training simulators that have been cast off by NASA.

When they first opened Space Camp to adults about 30 years ago, my application was accepted. Then, when they learned that I was blind, it was

summarily rejected. I immediately took this problem to my senator, and he worked with the senator from Alabama to get this poor decision reversed. In 1989, I became the first blind cadet to attend Space Camp, and I had a ball.

These days, there is a special program at Space Camp for young persons who are blind. It is no less expensive than other summer camps, but you can count on both your local Lions Club and your local WCB chapter to help you out if you have a financial need.

If you can't wait and have a craving for some space-related paraphernalia, their online store is open for business 24/7. They have pages and pages of branded water bottles, T-shirts, flight suits, and even an operational Saturn missile.

The Washington Talking Book and Braille Library has many space-travel-related materials for loan. I recommend reading "The Martian," "Shoot for the Moon," and "Apollo 13."

The library can also loan you space and astronomical science books from a series called "Touch the Stars." This awesome series of Braille books includes wonderful tactile overlays for the graphics. In "Touch the Stars," there is a tactile depiction of the waxing and waning moon. Another graphic lets you feel how the relative sizes and positions of the sun and moon results in a solar eclipse, and another one shows you how to use the big dipper to find the North Star. I feel that "Touch the Stars" is the most science concept-oriented of the set. The other books in this series, "Touch the Sun," "Touch the Universe" and "Touch the Invisible Sky," feature Braille text and tactile overlays of actual astronomical photography. The last photo in both "Touch the Stars" and "Touch the Universe" is an image of the amazing Hubble Deep Field. Some of these books are still available for purchase. See [www.youcandoastronomy.com](http://www.youcandoastronomy.com)

Last, you can do a little accessible home-brew astronomy on your iPhone. Try the apps "night sky" and "astreos." Ask Siri to search the web for NASA TV for hours and hours of space-flight coverage.

# BRAIN FOOD

## Noteworthy Blogs

### My Journey to Learn More about Science and Technology

by Beth Greenberg

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As I was starting my article about science and technology, I began with my inbox of emails. I found my newsletter from WeWalk, an inexpensive cane with built-in technology and mobile apps to detect objects above the ground – <https://wewalk.io/en/>

In the newsletter, they discussed science fiction and blindness. Sci-fi has many depictions of blindness, from Star Trek to Matrix. There is a gentleman, Peter White, who explores this in a BBC video episode you can listen to at <https://tinyurl.com/h8axy2kb>. Peter discusses his life as a blind reporter for the BBC. There is a great story about how he got away from his handlers and rode a slide down from the Great Wall of China.

I also saved an article about the Consumer Electronics Show, which was held virtually this year. There were a lot of cool items, but I only found a couple that mentioned accessible products. The Samsung QLED and Neo QLED televisions have accessibility features for people who are blind or low vision, and deaf or hard of hearing. The color of the menu can be inverted. Its “See Color” option helps those who are colorblind see colors on the TV, and its “Learn Remote Control” feature verbally tells you what each button on the remote is. It also uses artificial intelligence to read sign language for commands.

The other item was the GoodMaps Explore app, which helps us navigate by providing detailed direction information through a combination of text and voice commands. You can hold up your phone and it will tell you about what businesses, streets, etc., are around you. They are even working on indoor navigation. American Printing House for the Blind helped develop this app.



Here is the link to the post discussing all of these products, with links to further information: <https://tinyurl.com/akupjdrz>

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) has two science programs for kids and teens. The first is called NFB STEM2U. STEM stands for science technology engineering and math. It appears they have not posted anything new for the STEM program, which they did virtually in fall 2020, in 15 states. The kids are from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through 12th grade.

Right now, they are planning a National Federation of the Blind Engineering Quotient (NFB EQ) week-long program this summer in Minneapolis, MN. You need to be a blind or visually-impaired youth, in grades 9-12 to participate. In the NFB EQ, the youth learn new ways to use engineering techniques, like tactile drawing and woodshop. <https://tinyurl.com/3y24d247>

If anyone has information on the American Council of the Blind's efforts in this area, write us and we will post it in our next issue.

When I Googled science and blind, I got back to [www.blindnewworld.org/blog](http://www.blindnewworld.org/blog). There is so much good content here it's impossible to cover it all. One article, in particular, caught my interest. It was a post from Dr. Mona Minkra entitled "Breaking Down Barriers to Become a Blind Scientist."

Breaking Down Barriers to Become a Blind Scientist - BlindNewWorld

In the blog, she tells her story of becoming blind at the age of 7, pushing on in spite of the naysayers, and following her dream to become a scientist. Dr. Minkra is now a professor at Northwestern in bio-engineering. She loves to travel, and has a YouTube channel, "Planes, Trains, and Canes." <https://tinyurl.com/w2dprs3m>. Dr. Minkra shares videos of her adventures in traveling. Her blog post was very inspirational.

I then found an article from January 2015 on the American Foundation for the Blind blog site entitled, "Science is Golden: An Interview with Four Scientists Who are Visually Impaired." <https://www.afb.org/aw/6/1/14656>

They interviewed Peter Torpey, a research scientist at Xerox, Amy Bower, an oceanographer from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution on Cape Cod, Judy Summers-Gate, a chemist with the Food and Drug Administration, and David Mehringer, a research scientist at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications for University of Illinois. The article tells how they lost their sight, what they use to do their jobs, their education journey to prepare for their careers, how co-workers treat them, and advice to the readers. I enjoyed the article; it was long but informative.

I am always inspired by technology. It is ever-changing. We just need to stay on the radar of manufacturers to make sure they are including accessibility and universal design in the products they develop.

Without technology, we would not have so many new possibilities. These scientists are finding new ways to help ourselves, our environment, and even help technology become more inclusive. The circle of life at its finest.

**Podtastic Casts**  
**“When Life Gives You Lemons, Make Batteries!”**  
**by Reginald George**  
reggeorge@gmail.com

Like them or not, podcasts these days are an important source of free information. That’s why we cover them here. Unlike radio or television, podcasts are almost free for anyone to produce. You can find everything from quality music and audio dramas, to deep dives into news, politics, learning a language, or any interest you never had the time or money to investigate. Podcasts have been around for almost 20 years now, and many of us are still lost about how to find and use them. They give anyone who wants it a voice. You don’t need a lot of money or special knowledge to learn to create them and disseminate your point of view, and they last forever. No license required.

They do require a little more of us, as listeners, than radio or television. We must be active consumers and seek them out, or at least be willing to ask our smartphones or speakers to play them by name for us.

Today, I will share with you one of the most entertaining, bite-sized science podcasts out there, as well as what WCB Newsline is up to with our own content.

“Play podcast shortwave.” This is the command you can give your phone or smart speaker to hear a 10-minute daily podcast from NPR that takes science topics and breaks them down to their basic concepts in a way you might not have experienced in school. They say they cover new discoveries, everyday mysteries, and the science behind the headlines with creativity and a little humor. But they do not shy away from difficult topics, as I found out today. Some random subjects of recent episodes include: the rise of the 17-year cicadas, the future quantum, our pandemic future, purple urchins don’t die, facial recognition and law enforcement, racism and disease, magnets, and glacier mice. The more I listen, the more I like it. It’s quite clever, and humor creeps in.

In a recent episode, I learned about a traveling researcher who was going to schools and teaching kids how to make batteries with lemons and potatoes. She says middle school kids would get really into the process and hook up maybe 20 lemons, three cups of lemon juice, an apple, multiple lightbulbs, pennies and nails, and buzzers buzzing. It is one thing to read about experiments in a book, and quite another to perform them with your friends. They say it would take 50,000 lemons to power an iPhone 11 Max for a day.

I learn new things every time I listen. The show does a great job of highlighting cultural biases and encouraging science as a career.

As I write this, I am listening to an episode I did not expect to hear on how to best help people having suicidal thoughts and feelings.

The 24-hour National Suicide Lifeline is 800-273-8255. Over a million people attempted suicide in 2019. The host’s mom is a suicide survivor, and we all likely have been close at some point in our lives. There is something called the Columbia Protocol that helps a layperson determine the seriousness of the immediate risk. They gave concrete steps to get someone through a crisis and how to intervene without scaring the person away. They also directed people to the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

NPR has several other great science podcasts including Science Friday, but you can discover those for yourself.

WCB Newsline Unleashed is our own new effort in podcasting. We have assembled a great team to help you tell the stories that we all want to hear. If you have a story you want to tell, write us at [TheWCBNewsline@gmail.com](mailto:TheWCBNewsline@gmail.com), and we will do our best to help.

We are already reaching a worldwide audience, and this is only going to grow. The episodes I discuss here are being finalized, but by the time you read this, they should be available at the link below. Subscribe to the WCB-L discussion list for the latest information.

WCB Newsline Unleashed was created with the full support and encouragement of the American Council of the Blind. We are now a growing part of the newly created ACB Media Network. This month, we have three new episodes for you.

The first is Frank Cuta's introduction and demonstration of an escape room he created. You get to hear how a team of WCB members solve puzzles to unlock a virtual door and leave this imaginary room by working together.

Next, we have yours truly, building an FM radio from a Snap Circuits kit, with my only assistance coming from a recording of Frank. Do you know how hard it is to argue with someone who isn't there, just a disembodied voice? It was fun, though.

Lastly, Heather Meares and I sit down for a fantastic meal, tour, and interview with the managers of a Spanish winery in Walla Walla called Valdemar Estates. You can find them and watch their accessible videos at <https://www.valdemarestates.net>. They are working hard to become the most accessible winery in the world for people with disabilities.

Many thanks to our initial podcast production team of Zack Hertz, Heather Meares, Chris Coulter and myself, for getting this venture off the ground so quickly. The direct link to our podcast feed can be found here: <https://wcb-newsline-unleashed.pinecast.co>

# **AGENCY UPDATES**

## **Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) Happenings by Michael MacKillop**

Hello to you all, WCB membership, and happy Lunar Year! I understand this new Year of the Ox represents a year of slow, steady and dedicated work towards success. I think that is a kind of year I can live with, knowing that moving out of the pandemic will take slow and steady effort, but we will get there. I hope, in the meantime, everybody is staying safe, healthy and happy.

The theme of this newsletter is the magic of technology. As I sit here writing to you, I am struck by the magic of time. It is late February now, but you will be reading this in April. With the world so rapidly in flux, will what I have to report still be relevant in a mere few weeks? Nevertheless, here is what I know in this moment.

It feels that we at DSB are entering a new COVID-19 transition phase. We are in process of requesting approval to expand services for adaptive technology specialists, rehabilitation teachers, and orientation and mobility specialists – so that those DSB staff can provide the full scope of their AT and adaptive skills of blindness services. I hope that, by the time you are reading this, we have been able to re-engage in providing those services that require in-person and face-to-face interaction.

Still, any expansion of in-person services won't mean we can immediately return to operations as they were in 2019. Despite more people getting vaccines, we will still require safety protocols of facial coverings, sanitization, maximizing social distancing, and minimizing activities in an enclosed space – as is practical. The DSB office doors will be open on an appointment-only basis for the foreseeable future. We will likely still wait until COVID-19 transmission numbers are much lower before bringing OTC students into the King County area. But, things are shifting in the right direction.

I know you know already, but in case one person has missed it, the Washington State School for the Blind has collaborated with the Department of Health to launch a new Blind COVID Access Line, email, and website, developed with a DOH CARES Act funding grant.

- Blind COVID Access Line: 360-947-3330
- Email: [blindcovid@wssb.wa.gov](mailto:blindcovid@wssb.wa.gov)
- <https://www.blindcovid.com/>

A last note on COVID is to acknowledge that it has had an impact on state and agency program budgets. One of the most challenged programs in the past year has been the Business Enterprise Program, where customer base and revenues were shut off virtually overnight for the facility owners. Federal relief programs have been utilized by many BEP owners, and rent-abatement for sites has been a priority issue for the agency, but there is much damage after a year of slowdown or shutdown. The future of BEP will require a creative fresh model of operations to meet the expected increase in post-COVID work-from-home situations.

The Legislature is in session, and will await the state's mid-March fiscal forecast to determine funding of state programs such as DSB. There are concerns there may be some funding cuts for the agency. The IL Program was not targeted for cuts in the governor's budget submitted in December, and we await the Senate and House budget proposals in March.

The agency has been following a legislative bill that impacts the disability community and has been making steady-but-sure progress throughout February. Senate Bill 5284 calls for the end to sub-minimum wage employment for individuals with a disability among all entities in Washington state. Public testimony called the bill an important civil rights bill for people with disabilities.

And, congratulations to DSB employee and WCB member Reginald George on his official Senate hearing and appointment as a member of the Washington State School for the Blind Board of Trustees, formalizing a role he has held since 2018.

I am taking faith in the image of the Year of the Ox, one steady step at a time to plow the fields in order to reap a harvest later on in the year. I hope you are all making the progress you need, and I trust we will meet up in person again down the road. Take good care, all.

## **Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB) Update, by Scott McCallum, superintendent**

It has been a rollercoaster of a year at WSSB, both from an emotional standpoint and with our ability to provide the important educational services our students need and deserve. The ups and downs of the school year have felt extreme at times; however, our seatbelts have been securely fastened and we continue to hold on tight. In September and October as COVID numbers showed some decline, we began welcoming students back to campus. We began by targeting individual student assessments, specific IEP services, and bringing back students whom we had determined were furthest away from educational justice. By November, we were able to welcome our first small group of residential students back to campus, again choosing students based on specific access needs and those benefiting least from our efforts to provide an entirely remote education.

At this point, most WSSB students had been attending classes through Zoom and Google Classroom since last March when the governor required schools to pivot to a remote-education model. At WSSB, we have received significant and appropriate support from the state to make sure all students had access to the appropriate access technology and the internet. However, some students live in areas where wireless internet signal access left everyone wanting. Every week, WSSB staff sent home boxes of educational materials to students, as well as food supplies to students most in need. COVID positivity rates began increasing in November, as did our concerns about our ability to maintain safety for students and staff after the Thanksgiving break. Heeding the advice of local and state health officials, WSSB made the difficult decision to pivot back to remote-education services only from Thanksgiving until after the New Year.

As predicted, the winter holidays led to a significant rise in positive cases locally and across the nation. We were able to stick to our plan and again

welcome a small group of students back to campus in mid-January. Behind the scenes, WSSB administration advocated for campus staff to be considered for early access to the vaccine. We attempted to justify our request by pointing out the residential nature of our programs. We were partially successful and by early February, targeted staff members were identified and provided written justification to begin making vaccination appointments. As you might expect, this included our nurses, residential life counselors, custodians, emergency transportation drivers, and staff who are assigned to provide one-on-one support to specific students. Ultimately, most on-campus education staff were able to receive priority approval to get vaccinated. Due to limited supply, making an appointment was an entirely different challenge.

It was at about this same time that WSSB launched Blind Covid, a project supported through the Washington Department of Health to provide blind and low-vision Washingtonians with accessible information and resources related to the COVID-19 pandemic. You may have heard about our efforts, which include a website ([www.blindcovid.com](http://www.blindcovid.com)), an access line (360-947-3330), and an email address ([blindcovid@wssb.wa.gov](mailto:blindcovid@wssb.wa.gov)). The website is a place where we are posting verified accessible resources related to the pandemic, such as testing and vaccine information, statistics, and other resources such as a podcast, a video about social-distancing strategies for people who are blind or low vision, and more. We conducted several focus groups with blind and low-vision Washingtonians to inform our efforts. Please email or call us if you have ideas, information, or to request assistance related to the pandemic.

March marked the return of all education staff back to campus, as well as more students for in-person services. As of this writing, we have a little over 60% of our students back on campus and receiving an increased level of in-person support from teachers and staff. By April, we plan to welcome every student back to campus and provide 100% of their courses in the classroom with their teachers. WSSB campus is a much more vibrant and exciting place to be when students and staff are here. We are extremely excited for returning to some semblance of normalcy, even if it requires mask wearing, daily health checks, weekly COVID testing, and other minor adjustments to the way we operate.



During a walk around campus last week, I was thrilled to hear students laughing, talking, and reconnecting with one another. I stumbled upon a joyous moment in which a small group of students, spread out with nine feet between them and wearing masks, launched into singing happy birthday to a fellow classmate participating in that same music class remotely. It was awesome, and we are looking forward to more of this in the not-so-distant future.

## **WCB HAPPENINGS**

### **Board Meeting Highlights by Alco Canfield**

The WCB board meeting convened on Feb. 6 was full of news and information.

Andy Arvidson is now first vice president because of the resignation of Meka White. The second vice president position is now filled by Sheri Richardson. Kim Moberg filled Sheri's board position. Alco Canfield is serving her first term as secretary. Julie thanked those previously serving in these positions.

There are three new chapter presidents:

- David Edick, Pierce County Association of the Blind
- Mike Magures, Peninsula Council of the Blind
- Tristen Breitenfeldt, Yakima Valley Council of the Blind

There are five new committee chairs. There are also two new committees: outreach and fundraising. An updated list of these committees will be posted to the website soon.

The library is still closed. The new receptionist is Lindsay Lucas. Amy Ravenholtz, outreach librarian, retired and someone is being sought for her position. The new state librarian is Sarah Jones. The Duplicate on Demand system is up and running. There are 30 openings for the Bookshare pilot. The Braille eReader Pilot will begin soon. Those participating will need to

complete a survey at two, four, and six months. The Patron Advisory Council meeting will be held June 12. The quarterly Book Club meeting is on March 25. The book to be discussed is "The Highest Tide."

Department of Services for the Blind is providing its services virtually with the exception of orientation and mobility training, which is provided in person.

The leadership summit and the spring board meeting will be held April 30-May 1. Both will be virtual.

For the second year in a row, WCB will participate in GiveBIG, the online fundraising event for nonprofits in Washington state. The board agreed that chapters meeting the constitutional requirement of membership data and dues deadlines will be eligible for the 50/50 share.

This is only a brief description of the February board meeting. You have a standing invitation to attend. There is so much more information than that discussed here. Don't miss out. Join us May 1 for the leadership conference and board meeting.

## **It's Time Once Again to Give Big by Lisa George**

Mark your calendars for the 2021 GiveBIG fundraiser!

This year's online fundraising event is May 4 and 5, with early giving beginning April 20. For the second year, WCB will be offering local chapters and special-interest affiliates the opportunity to raise funds. All donations received via these pages will be split 50/50 with the participating group.

New this year, individuals can also create pages and specify the chapter or affiliate to get the 50/50 funds. The person generating the most donations will receive an Amazon Echo Show 5. For more details, contact Lisa George or David Edick from the WCB Fundraising Committee.

It's easy to support WCB during this campaign. The minimum donation is only \$10, and we're hoping to have matching funds available to double the impact of your gift. Your contributions enable WCB's programs to serve the blind and visually-impaired community across the state.

You will find WCB in The Seattle Times Giving Guide on Sunday, April 25. Share the information with everyone you know, to educate others about the great work we do all over Washington. Lots of give-a-little will add up to GiveBIG!

<https://www.givebigwa.org/washingtoncounciloftheblind>

## **WCB Scholarship Opportunities, the Time is Now** **by Holly Turri**

If you are a high school graduate who lives in Washington state, are legally blind, and will be entering college during the academic year, Washington Council of the Blind might be able to assist you in making your dreams a reality. The same goes for those who wish to continue their education later in life.

To be eligible for a scholarship, you must be a resident of Washington state and legally blind in both eyes. An individual is defined as legally blind if he or she has a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the corrected eye, and/or 20° or less visual field in the corrected eye. The student must be attending a community college, four-year university, or trade school within the next academic year (fall 2021), and by the deadline you must complete and submit all required applications and all needed documents.

The deadline for application submittal is June 22. For detailed information and the actual application, please go to <https://wcbinfo.org/scholarships/>

We want to see lots and lots of applications this year. We want to be a part of making your dreams come true. Please share this opportunity far and wide with anyone who meets the criteria. It's a great opportunity for everyone who qualifies to potentially be provided financial assistance for their educational endeavors.

For questions, email Kim Moberg, Scholarship Committee chair, at AwardScholarship123@gmail.com.

## **Families Committee New Initiatives by Hayley Agers**

The WCB Families Committee is excited to announce that we are now hosting two different calls in our attempts to reach out and connect with more families impacted by blindness around our state:

1. Washington youth social club, which you can read all about in the new youth section of our Newsline, The Kids Are Alright.
2. WCB Families parent chat

This call is for parents and/or guardians of blind or visually-impaired children. This call provides an opportunity for parents to connect with other parents, find out more about what WCB and WCB Families have to offer, and discuss topics that will help them support their child. It takes place the fourth Sunday of each month at 6:30 p.m.

If anyone wishes to join the call, or find out more about what WCB Families has to offer, contact Hayley Agers at 425-870-3865.

## **Senior Vision Loss Committee, Tips and Tricks to Make Life Easier The Taming of the Toothpaste by Carl Jarvis**

Do you have a task that is difficult to complete? Do you wish you had someone to ask who might give you an answer to your problem? Well, your prayers have been answered. Welcome to the first edition of "Tips and Tricks to Make Your Life Easier" by the Senior Vision Loss Committee. We don't claim to have all the answers, but we can certainly direct you to resources, and we can collaborate to extend the knowledge of the WCB family. We welcome your questions and/or answers, and we look forward to a most enjoyable experience.

As rehab teachers for the older blind and low-vision folks on the Olympic Peninsula, we often organized support groups, where people could share their frustrations and learn solutions from each other's experiences. The most memorable of these gatherings is the meeting in Sequim that we named The Taming of the Toothpaste.

"I have a problem," said a young 60-year-old man. "It's not a big deal, but it frustrates me every time I brush my teeth."

If a problem frustrates you, then it's important, and we all need to find a solution.

"Well," he began, "every morning I grab my toothbrush and my tube of toothpaste. I remove the cap on the toothpaste tube, hold it down on the toothbrush bristles and squeeze. Toothpaste shoots out the end of the tube and falls to the sink, or the floor. I just can't seem to get the right squeeze on the tube so that only a little toothpaste comes out."

And so began an amazing number of solutions. Everyone had something to offer.

An older lady said that she held her toothbrush by the bristles, with one finger on either side, and gently squeezed the toothpaste between the two fingers.

Another lady said that she first squeezed the toothpaste onto her finger and then rolled it onto her brush.

"Why go to all the trouble, when you can squeeze the toothpaste onto your finger and rub your finger around your teeth before using the brush?" chuckled another fellow.

But for me, the best answer of all came from a man who had said nothing up to that time. "Heck," he laughed, "I'm all alone, so when I brush my teeth, I simply take the cap off the tube and put the end in my mouth and give it a healthy squeeze."

Problem solved.

## **Hats Off**

### **Compiled by Chris Coulter**

We extend our congratulations to, and celebrate with, the following WCB members:

- Opal and Bruce Goebel, Yakima Valley Council of the Blind, on their 50th wedding anniversary Feb. 7.

If you or someone you know has something for inclusion in Hats Off, email [TheWCBNewsline@gmail.com](mailto:TheWCBNewsline@gmail.com) with "Hats Off" in the subject line. Those items that may not meet the criteria listed below may still be very appropriate in your local chapter's "Around the State" article.

The following are reasons for inclusion in this column:

- Birth of a child, grandchild or great-grandchild
- Birthdays 75 years and up in 5-year increments (yearly after age 90)
- Marriage or wedding anniversaries 25 years and more in 5-year increments
- Graduation from high school, college or vocational program
- New job, career promotion or retirement
- Partnering with a dog guide
- Appointment to a city, county, statewide or national board or commission
- Exceptional recognition or award

## **AROUND THE STATE**

### **Guide Dog Users of Washington State** **by Vivian Conger**

Welcome to almost spring. I don't know about you, but I am definitely looking forward to it.

GDUWS will be having several focus calls between March and October. More information to come. Hoping you will join us on those calls.

Stay safe and healthy. Happy trails to all.

## **Pierce County Association Chapter Update** **by Julie Harlow**

We finished off the year 2020 with a successful virtual Christmas party. Our new year began with new members, and David Edick leading us with new ideas and plans. We welcome this new perspective. We have created a few new committees this year, and are looking at what our future goals and plans are going to be. We continue to try to support our members through the Zoom platform, while always trying to bring fresh and new ideas.

We sadly have lost another member of our chapter, Carol Jansky. Our hearts and thoughts go out to her family. She will be missed.

## **Skagit and Island Counties Council of the Blind** **by Andy Arvidson**

We are having two meetings per month now on the Zoom platform. And at one of those meetings, we have been inviting WCB committee chairs to give members an idea of what their committees are about, and hopefully spark some interest in joining. In January, we had Sheri Richardson from the Governmental Affairs Committee, and in February we had Nathan Brannon from the History Committee. Our constitution is in the process of being changed to add a second vice president. The resolution has been presented, and we are now waiting for the proper time lapse to vote it into effect.

We are talking about reaching out to teachers of the visually impaired, public schools, and colleges to get some outreach into the local area about the chapter. We will invite them to speak to our chapter and talk them into becoming members, and then pay that out of our treasury. We are a young

chapter, as we only started in 2016, but we are a mature group as we only have two members under 70. We are energetic and ambitious, looking to reach out to all who want us. We list our meeting in the local senior activity newsletters. Because of this, I got a call from someone who saw me in that newsletter and offered us some magnifiers that his mother had purchased before her passing and wanted them to go to a good home.

Don't forget when you wake up tomorrow you will not be the same person you are today, so celebrate and try to find a way to help someone else. This simple act will make your day worth living.

## **South Kitsap Council of the Blind** **by Kim Moberg**

Christmas is over and we, like many, had hoped to be able to meet in person for our end-of-year Christmas party, but as we all know that did not happen. So, we moved to plan B. We did a virtual Christmas celebration. All who attended received a little 2020 Christmas ornament. Thank you, Carol Brame (treasurer), for getting those for us. We all had fun sharing and playing games at our party. The trivia Christmas questions were a lot of fun and a big hit. Thank you, Danette Dixon, for giving me the idea.

On a sad note, but not entirely unexpected, our beloved member, Dorothy Bryant, now lives in the house of our Lord free of pain and illness. Dorothy will be greatly missed as she was loved by all. She was Granny to many in our chapter and loved it when we called her Granny. Dorothy always had a kind word to say and was always ready with good advice, as well. Unofficially, she was our parliamentary procedures person. She was also active with her Grange and with her church.

New officers have taken their places in our chapter, and others have stepped down from office for now. Thank you, Kevin Jones, for your service as vice president these past few years. Welcome, Jessamine Landby, as our new vice president.

At our upcoming meeting for February, we will have Julie Brannon, WCB president, as a guest speaker. Speaking of speakers, we are also going to



hear from a scholarship winner at an upcoming meeting. I also have a couple of other ideas for speakers for this year so stay tuned for upcoming announcements.

Happy New Year to everyone. I think the big goal for this year is having face-to-face meetings again. I have no idea what the future holds but I bet this is a goal for most WCB chapters. Here's hoping that in 2021 we all get to see this happen.

## **Snohomish County Council of the Blind by Danette Dixon**

Greetings from SCCB. It has been quite a while since we've written an article. We have been working this year to regain our former members. We are now up and running.

We are very excited to announce that SCCB has gained some new members. One of them is also a WCB scholarship winner. We are having a monthly support group on the first Saturday of each month. Our business meeting is the third Saturday. A committee is starting to work on the bylaws. They hope to complete this work in a couple of months. We are choosing a Secret SCCB Friend for the year. On special holidays throughout the year, our Secret SCCB Friend will receive a card or something fun. By doing this, it gives us an opportunity to get to know someone within SCCB.

## **Spokane Council of the Blind New Normal Not Nearly Normal Enough! by Debby Clark**

I challenge you to say that rapidly 10 times. So, enough about that subject.

Here at Spokane Council of the Blind we are trying not to reinvent the wheel. Things look different, but our goals are still the same. We aim to include, encourage and educate each other. We are, after all, here to do this in community.

We have continued to have our once-a-week phone calls. These can be informative and fun, and we are getting to know each other better as we become a little more engaged in each other's lives. We have talked about books we are reading, iPhone things we are learning and what we can share about our Echo devices. We talked a little about movies we have seen and gadgets we have that add greatly to our lives. These range from talking infrared thermometers to the special talking insulin blood sugar monitor that doesn't require poking your finger any more.

We still have a formal business meeting via phone on the third Monday of the month at 11 a.m. We have also enjoyed these. Debby Phillips has done a great job keeping us in line.

There will definitely be some things we will continue to do, even when our new normal becomes changed again.

## **United Blind of Walla Walla by Heather Meares**

Spring is definitely in the air, and with it comes an increasing sense of hope. We asked the question at our last meeting, "What makes you happy today?" The answers were warmer weather, feeling the sunshine while sitting on a swing, working outside in the garden again, good health reports, the upcoming potential of more normal life in a retirement facility that has been locked down, new technology, and shredding old boxes of unnecessary paperwork. All these answers have one thing in common – hope. And I have to say that this has been a difficult concept to hold onto this past year, so it brings me great joy to watch it happening to us all. Does this mean everything is better and back to normal? No, but it means we are moving forward with our lives, no matter what comes our way.

Our group experienced a simulated escape room, created by Frank Cuta, and at times it felt like we would never get out of the locked room. We couldn't find the clues, or solve the puzzles very quickly. But with a bit of guidance, including Frank asking if we were going to gab all day or get this door unlocked because we are running out of oxygen, the team worked

together and finally unlocked the door. I couldn't help but relate this to how we have all felt during the past year.

Slowly we are getting vaccinated, stepping out of our locked doors, seeing signs of life in nature and in our community, and hoping to be together in person again soon. Meanwhile, we continue to shred all that unnecessary negative energy to make room for the hope that springs eternal.

## **United Blind of Tri-Cities** **by Janice Squires**

Like every other chapter in the state, because of the virus, the UBTC is conducting most of its activities via conference call. All of our members are really missing our three most popular events – support group lunches, card group, and our narrated plays. We are happy to report, as we move into phase 2, we will be meeting in person for our book and technology groups.

Our monthly chapter meetings are still quite popular, and many of our members do join the conference call. In February, Matt Hines from the Washington State School for the Blind was our guest speaker and told us about a new program. WSSB is partnering with the Washington State Department of Health to establish an accessible web and phone line centralized hub of information for blind, low-vision or deafblind individuals. Many of our UBTC members contributed feedback to assist Matt and all involved in this project, in voicing our concerns.

Our Outreach Committee, chaired by Sherry Dubbin, is looking into a new program that we learned about from the Walla Walla chapter. We would like to assist families of blind or visually-impaired children in this very hard time of need. We would like to work with school district TVI's to connect us with these families. The UBTC will share in the future with you on how this idea is progressing.

Five of our members participated in the American Council of the Blind legislative seminar at the end of February. We successfully set up personal conference call meetings with our congressional representatives and urged

them to support the three major legislative imperatives that were established this year by the national office.

With spring on its way and many of us receiving the vaccine, we hope to be together again very soon.

### **United Blind of Whatcom County by Holly Turri**

As the COVID-19 pandemic lingers longer and longer, thank goodness for Zoom. In many ways, I think we keep in touch more now than we did in the days of freely moving around.

We elected a new second vice president – Gloria Riley. Although she lives in Forks, she is a vital part of our group.

Our Fundraising Committee has developed new avenues for bringing in revenue. More on these in the future.

We've had a virtual Christmas party, birthday celebrations, and just plain social calls. I'm proud to be a member of such a caring group of people.

### **Washington Council of the Blind Diabetics by Danette Dixon**

I am overly excited to say WCBD has been a special-interest affiliate for almost a year now.

In January, we gained five new members and I am sure that there are more to come. About this time last year, the officers of WCBD were creating our constitution with help from Lisa and Frank. This has been a huge accomplishment. We are officially a non-profit and a charitable organization, along with many other accomplishments. Thanks to Kim and all who worked to make this happen.

The February call will feature a couple of people who have had diabetes for many years. We try to have a speaker every other month.

In April, if it is possible, we will hear from someone about Non-24, but this is not confirmed yet.

Right now, we are looking at how and what kinds of fundraising we can do. The money raised will be used to help members attend convention, start a crisis fund for those who need help, and pay for diabetic medications.

Our meetings always end with a check-in chat. This is just to see how all are doing. It also gives all of us a chance to get to know others in the affiliate.

## **Yakima Valley Council of the Blind** **by Lisa George**

### **YAKITY YAK FROM YAKIMA**

Happy spring, everyone. This year especially, we're grateful that the days are getting longer, the snow is behind us, and more activities are opening up, even if it has been a very slow process.

We're keeping in touch with each other on our monthly business meeting calls, being educated by guest speakers, and celebrating our milestones – Bruce and Opal Goebel's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, Tristen Breitenfeldt's 35<sup>th</sup> birthday, and the year-long anticipation of the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of our beloved Anne Ridenour.

Our chapter has been the fortunate recipient of a bequest (awarded through Yakima Lions Club), giving us funds to donate equipment to the Disability Support Service department of Yakima Valley College for use by blind and low-vision students. We also donated funds to the financial aid program at our local low-vision clinic.

We're hopeful that our convention this fall will be in person, and have initiated our savings match program again this year. Fundraising efforts continue with our Papa Murphy's coupon cards, and participation in the online fundraiser, GiveBIG.

It's bittersweet that we're back to bowling the same week that our past president, Darla Hatfield, passed away. We remember all the bowlers like Judi Thompson, Bud Kohl, and Bud Adams who have gone before, knowing that they're ready to roll now with Darla.

Stay healthy, get vaccinated, and enjoy the summer.

## **2021 WCB Calendar of Deadlines and Events**

For more details on events listed,  
please subscribe to the wcb-l list or call 800-255-1147.

Saturdays at 10 a.m.  
join the WCB Coffee and Conversation Zoom call.

### List of Abbreviations:

DSB	Department of Services for the Blind
WASILC	Washington State Independent Living Council
WCB	Washington Council of the Blind
WSSB	Washington State School for the Blind
WTBBL	Washington Talking Book & Braille Library
ACB	American Council of the Blind

### **APRIL**

**5** – Last day for chapters to sign up to participate in GiveBIG

**5** – Treasurer's call at 7 p.m.

**12** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

**15-16** – WASILC meeting, Seattle

**18** – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.

**20** – Early giving begins for GiveBIG online fundraiser

<https://www.givebigwa.org/washingtoncounciloftheblind>

**26** – President's call at 7 p.m.

**30** – WCB Emerging Leaders Summit (virtual)

## **MAY**

- 1** – WCB board meeting from 1 to 3 p.m. (Zoom)
- 4-5** – 2021 GiveBIG fundraiser
- 6** – WSSB Board of Trustees meeting
- 10** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.
- 16** – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.
- 18** – WCB committee leaders' call at 7 p.m.
- 24** – President's call at 7 p.m.
- 31** – Deadline to submit articles for the WCB Newslite Summer 2021 issue

## **JUNE**

- 7** – Treasurer's call at 7 p.m.
- 11** – DSB State Rehab Council meeting from 9 a.m. to noon
- 11** – WSSB commencement and Board of Trustees meeting
- 14** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.
- 20** – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.
- 28** – President's call at 7 p.m.

## **JULY**

- 12** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.
- 15-16** – WASILC meeting, Ellensburg
- 16-23** – ACB conference and convention (virtual)
- 18** – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.
- 26** – President's call at 7 p.m.
- 28** – WCB committee leaders' call at 7 p.m.

# **Washington Council of the Blind**

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Bruce Radtke**

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