**The**

****

**Advocate**

**Summer Edition 2021**

**PCB- A Peer Network
for All Impacted by Vision Loss**

PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL OF THE BLIND

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## MISSION

To promote independence and opportunities for all people with vision impairments.

## VISION

To continue to be recognized as the leading advocacy organization for people with vision impairments in Pennsylvania. The aim of all our efforts is to encourage and assist people in achieving their potential as valued members of society. PCB assistance, advocacy, and encouragement will be carried out in such areas as, but not limited to, all aspects of accessibility, transportation, education, employment, entertainment, recreation, and quality of life.

## FORMATS

The PCB Advocate is available in large print, braille, audio cartridge and email. Send changes of address or format preference to the PCB office. Contents are available to the public via pcb1.org and the PCB Information Line at 773-572-6314.

## EDITOR’S NOTE

Articles in this publication reflect the views of the individual writers. They do not necessarily represent the views and policy of PCB.

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If you wish to submit articles for consideration, submission deadlines are:

March 1, Spring

June 1, Summer

September 1, Fall

November 20, Winter

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# The Second Part of Voting at the ACB Convention

By Christine Hunsinger, PCB President

You will be getting your individual voting instructions and voting PIN, either by email or through the mail (if you don’t have an email registered with ACB). The first group of instructions went out for people with no email listed with ACB on June 1. Anyone who paid dues between March 15 and June 16 with no email is on a list being sent out on June 20. All these mailers will be both in braille and large print. Those of you with email will be a part of a list being sent out on July 6, so, you all will know the procedure for voting your individual ballots before the convention. The first day of voting will be July 19.

This is the second part of the voting at the ACB Convention, Delegate Voting. Does this ring a bell with you? You were listening on ACB Radio to the convention. You may have been attending an ACB Convention. It was time to vote. People turned in their ballots, but there was a roll call of affiliates who announced their Delegate Votes.

You may have wondered, what is a delegate vote? Each affiliate gets one delegate vote for every 25 dues paying members and fraction above half of that number with a maximum of 25 delegate votes per affiliate. PCB has, in the past, polled those attending the convention and divided our delegate votes to reflect the wishes of those attending, figuring that this vote should reflect the paper ballots our affiliate submitted. Now that everyone who paid dues for this year by June 16 can vote at the convention, whether they register for the convention or not, the Board of Directors decided that it would be best to also give all peers the opportunity to tell us how to vote the delegate votes.

We will have several ways that we can learn about candidates. First, ACB will have Candidate pages for review on the website after June 15. Second, there will be candidate forums where those who are running will answer questions which will tell us a little more about them. Third, if candidates are nominated from the floor, they will give a short speech explaining their qualifications.

There are thirteen positions to be filled, and the presidency will be the first position to be voted on. Once there is a contested election, the new individual voting procedure as well as the delegate voting procedure will be invoked. You will be told of the time during the following day when the ballot will be available for individual voting, and you must use your voting pin which you will have received along with voting instructions to cast that vote.

We expect that Cathy Long as the Alternate and Chris Hunsinger as the delegate will be available to take your preferences at the free conference call line of 605-475-4715 or toll free at 844-844-0414

Access Code: 815419#

One-Touch Dialing:

605-475-4715,,815419#

or

844-844-0414,,815419#

from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. in the evening before the vote. That time will be immediately after the general session ends on Sunday evening because the first voting contest will be determined during that General Session. Either Cathy or Chris will take the PCB delegate votes to a special Zoom Room where the roll call of affiliates will be conducted during General Session for any election and announce them to the convention. The delegate votes will be added to the individual votes to determine winners of contested elections. If no one has a majority of votes, the top two will meet in a runoff. If there is a run-off, we may have to have another phone call to determine delegate votes again.

It is thought that some of these positions will be voted on by acclamation so we won’t have to use the voting procedures for all votes, and it is hoped that we can get through all contests requiring a vote by Friday, July 23.

The company that is processing the remote ballots will be able to set up one election a day that requires actual voting on Monday through Thursday, but all the remaining elections will be held on Friday and possibly Saturday, July 24.

You will need to keep an eye on the general sessions to know which position will be voted on in the next day’s session. We will try to send an email out to the PCB-l list each day as soon as we know what contest is next to be voted on. Stay in touch with us either by email if you can, or through a peer with email to learn about the next contest on tap. Happy voting!

# Come and Walk with PCB

By George Holliday

YES, I’M TALKING TO YOU,

ALL PCB PEERS AND FRIENDS OF PCB!

The 2021 ACB convention is going virtual again this year and PCB has established a virtual walking team, “KEYSTONE CANE ABLES”. So, walk with us.

While you are registering for the ACB Conference, don’t forget to stop by our Walk page and sign up.

Everyone can support the team by making a donation. Please visit our team page at:

<https://secure.qgiv.com/event/acbwalk2021/team/878482/>

Once you reach the page,

1. Press the letter H to take you to the first heading, Keystone Cane Ables.
2. Next locate the “donate now” button and press enter. This takes you to the team donate page.
3. Check the amount you would like to donate or check other and enter your designated amount.
4. Continue following the edit fields to input your info.

For the past several years, blind and visually impaired people from across America have taken part in the ACB Brenda Dillon Memorial Walk. It’s a great way to have fun, to celebrate walking and a healthy lifestyle, and to raise money for ACB and PCB.

We are inviting you to join us as virtual walkers and supporters. On Sunday, July 18, 2021, the team will be participating in the ACB Brenda Dillon Memorial Walk.

We will be walking to raise money for ACB and PCB. The team will be competing with teams from across the country to see who can raise the most funds in support of our great organizations. You can help by joining us as a walker and by raising money in support of your own efforts. Half the money you donate will be designated to PCB.

If you need additional information, you can contact one of the following:

George Holliday

Tel: 484-343-2722

Email: george48160908@gmail.com

PCB office

Local: 717-920-9999

Toll Free: 877-617-7407

Email: pcboffice@pcb1.org

Thanks in advance for your participation. Enjoy your walk!

# On Your Mark, Get Set, Zoom!

By Sue Lichtenfels, Conference Coordinator

The PCB Conference Team is getting ready to produce another awesome virtual conference, full of information, entertainment, and fellowship. Are you ready to participate? Let’s get your engine warmed up so you’re ready to make your move when the conference registration materials hit your mailbox later this summer. Believe me, you don’t want to be left in the dust when all your peers are zooming to the main event.

It all takes place Thursday, September 16 through Sunday, September 19 on the Zoom platform. With options to participate from a landline phone, cell phone, or computer, we hope no one who wants to join will be left behind. We are also offering toll-free calling so friends without an unlimited long-distance calling plan can be a part of the action. Of course, those who just want to kick back and listen will be able to tune in on the many ACB Radio options.

As you traverse the virtual conference universe, here are some attractions you’ll want to enjoy. Our Director of Outreach and Engagement, Melissa Carney, brings us a fresh perspective as she leads a Friday morning self-advocacy workshop. Other presentation topics include forming a Low Vision Support Group, low-tech shopping options, enhancing outreach among people of color, exploring handler/guide dog bonding, connecting with pop culture through podcasts, volunteering outside of the blind sphere, and sharing artisanry and craft ability with the world. We are currently seeking panelists for the volunteer and artisan presentations which Mary Ann Grignon writes about in “Calling All…” in this magazine issue. And the Peer Engagement Team is seeking informal testimonials about helpful gadgets and gizmos to produce a community share. A special Saturday presentation by Joseph Koury, author of “Seeing Without Eyes, One Man’s Journey Out of Darkness,” will address his journey across America as a blind driver and his incredibly unique perspective of blindness. This summer, the AccessiDocs team led by Tony Swartz will make the book available to everyone for free.

We can’t make a trip to virtual conference land without partaking of some entertainment. First-time attendees to the conference are invited to drop into Friday’s lunch lounge to meet, mingle, and maybe win a prize. For those of us common folk without an IQ off the chart, Tony Swartz is preparing a Jeopardy! game. Warm up your lie detectors for a game of Truth-Truth-Lie where you guess which statement is the person’s lie and then you try to fool the other players with your own Truth-Truth-Lie statement trio. On Sunday we will get a double shot of entertainment with a described movie in the morning and our top-notch live auction beginning at 3 PM Eastern. And don’t forget to stop by the always-entertaining PCB business meeting on Saturday afternoon with reports, discussions, and elections!

Access to this amazing weekend extravaganza can be yours for the low, low price of $0. That’s right, we are “Strengthening Community Through Unity” by removing all economic barriers to participation in this year’s PCB Conference. We’ll still need you to register so we can send out your conference program in your preferred format, include you in the door prize drawing, register you as an auction bidder, and sign you up for entertainment options. Free registration is available to everyone, not just paid PCB peers, so spread the word throughout your friends and networks. If ever there was a time to try a PCB Conference, this is it!

How about we put a little extra fuel in your tank? Our advocacy and impact are stronger when our unified community is larger. This year, we are running a Refer a Friend Sweepstakes. When a paid PCB member who is registered for the conference refers a non-member who also registers and attends the conference, the paid PCB member will be given one chance in the sweepstakes drawing to win a $50 VISA card. Refer two or three non-member registrants and get more chances to win! Just make sure your friends include your name when they complete the “Referred By” section on the registration form.

Another new feature of this year’s virtual conference is a very real addition to our conference program. The Community Shout Out Section will offer individuals the opportunity to share a positive message with others. For example, “Proud to be a part of the PCB community. Rock on PCB! (Ricky Rah-rah) or “Going blind opened my eyes to the real beauty in people. Thanks for supporting me.” (Justin Thyme). Contribute as little as $5 to this year’s conference during registration, and get a free Community Shout Out opportunity! Compose your unique message in 15 words or less for inclusion in the program.

Now that you’ve had a glimpse into the 2021 virtual conference universe, you know it’s not to be missed. Get the dates marked on your calendar (September 16-19). Connect with Conference Coordinator, Sue Lichtenfels at 412-480-9696 or sueperlative73@gmail.com to express interest in being on one of our panels. Set yourself up to continue getting conference planning updates by joining the PCB-L listserv, following PCB on social media, and checking the PCB Information Line monthly. Beginning in June, we’ll be putting out a conference podcast through those channels to keep peers informed. Finally, zoom, zoom, zoom, to your friends and colleagues to tell them about our awesome conference.

# Calling All...

By Mary Ann Grignon, Conference Team

More than usual, this article is speaking to you, all PCB peers!

This year's conference theme is "Strengthening Community through Unity.” As we all know, it's not just a theme for PCB, it's what we do all the time as a peer network. We gather, we share, we look out for one another.

So, why am I stating what might seem obvious? Because your conference team is calling on you, our PCB family to share your knowledge, experiences, and gifts this fall from September 16-19 at our virtual event.

First, we are calling all crafters to participate in a peer-driven panel discussion to be heard by and shared with, well, the world listening to our PCB conference through ACB Radio. We want you to describe what it is you do and how you do it. Whether you make jewelry, pottery, or soaps, whether you knit, crochet, or create some other craft I haven't imagined, we want to hear from you! Your story can inspire others to follow their creative dreams. The conference team is ready to help you craft your part of a panel presentation. Step up and share!

Next, we are calling on those who volunteer in their communities in areas other than blindness to tell us about your endeavors. We are making this distinction because so many of us volunteer within PCB and other blindness organizations. However, many of us, including myself, are unsure how we might step out of our blindness comfort zone to contribute to our larger community. If you are the kind of outgoing individual who volunteers reading aloud in a library, serving meals at a soup kitchen, working with youth groups, or doing something else, we would like you to tell your story in a panel discussion during this year's conference. Please volunteer to enlighten your peers about how you got involved in the opportunity, what your relationship with sighted volunteers is like, and what challenges you’ve faced and overcome. We would love to hear from you, because most certainly, you are strengthening your community through unity!

Finally, the Conference Team is working with the Peer Engagement Team to create a gadget gallery to be enjoyed at this year's virtual conference. We are calling on anyone who has discovered a gadget, either low tech or high tech that has made a particular task so much easier, to share the resource with our peers.

Have you found a device to help in the kitchen, a tool to save time cleaning the house, a container for organizing, or such? We will make it easy for you to participate by prerecording your description of the product, where you found it, and how it works. With a little audio editing magic, our conference team will have you sounding like a professional gadget guru.

The best part of taking advantage of these opportunities is that because we are once again holding a virtual conference, you don’t have to fuss with your hair, makeup, or wardrobe. In fact, you can collaborate and share your expertise in your PJ’s if you like!

A virtual conference still takes real planning, so please contact us today to offer your talents, experiences, and gifts, contact:

Mary Ann Grignon at:

570-807-1276 or email at:

maryanna0407@gmail.com

Or your conference planning leader:

Sue Lichtenfels at:

412-480-9696 or

sueperlative73@gmail.com

We look forward to hearing from you and helping you to prepare your presentations.

# Going Once, Going Twice, Sold!

By Fund Development Team

If the title of this article has you feeling a thrill, your fund development team is right there with you. We are thrilled again to be presenting our exciting PCB virtual auction on Sunday, September 19 at the conclusion of the PCB Conference and convention.

So, what’s necessary to make our auction successful? Well, of course, you are! Sure, we do the organizing but, without your always generous donations and without your attendance, we would have no event at all.

Because we want to keep shipping costs down, our theme is once again “great things come in small packages”. Some items that were big hits last year were gift cards, tech gadgets, electronics, games, kitchen tools and of course, baked goods. Keep your ears and eyes peeled for suggested items that can be purchased through online sources.

This year, items must be shipped to our new secretary by August 15 so that auction item lists can be prepared in your preferred format and for our audio engineer, Tony Swartz to have the time necessary to prepare the Auction Item showcase to be held immediately prior to the auction.

Items should be shipped to:

Autumn L. Imhoff

993 State Route 956

Volant PA, 16156

When donating an item, please email or call Tony Swartz at:

610-799-4565 or

tbswartz@ptd.net

with the following information:

Item name

Detailed item description including model number if applicable, size, color, what is included in the package, etc.

Item cost

Where the item is purchased if applicable

How the item will arrive at our secretary’s home, (amazon, QVC, etc.)

Contributor’s name, email address if applicable, phone number, and mailing address

Last year we were close to having our best auction ever. Let’s make it our best this year!

# Everyone Has a Gift

By Financial Team

As someone who lost my vision late in life, I have been grateful for the advice of PCB’s peer-to-peer network in making my personal transition. PCB has peers endowed with the willingness and experience to assist others with similar transitions. However, dues and other revenue sources, such as the lottery tickets, alone are insufficient to meet all financial obligations.

While PCB has some financial reserves, supplementing recurring revenue, this source of financial resource needs augmentation to compensate for stock market declines and low interest rates. Dividend and interest income must be supplemented by market value increases and some liquidation to meet all financial needs, but when the market declines, as it did in 2020, any securities sold represented lost opportunities. PCB’s Board implemented cost cutting measures so that existing financial reserves provide an acceptable supplement for the immediate future. However, the long term organizational financial needs and growth of PCB’s advocacy influence demand that financial reserves be increased. This growth is necessary to continue assisting current and new peers in the visually impaired community as technological advancement quickens. Disability rights must also be preserved or improved in these changing times.

PCB’s Financial Team has established an endowment fund. Donations to this fund may be accomplished in various ways. While cash or marketable securities are preferred, donations may also be other forms of property. Donations may be tax deductible depending on your financial situation. Additionally, it may be possible to make donations directly from an IRA or 401(k) account without recording taxable income but fulfilling minimum distribution requirements. You should always consult a financial advisor or tax consultant regarding the taxable status of any donation.

Endowment gifts may be lump sum donations, a series of multiple gifts, the pledge of a future amount, or any combination of these methods. Additionally, an endowment gift may be directed toward a specific program or interest of PCB or used in the general fund. One-time cash gifts are simple to process. Donations involving multiple transactions or other property, including securities, require coordination with PCB’s Financial Team regarding the transfer timing and value.

PCB has many generous peers who willingly share their experience, knowledge, and talents with others. Everyone does not have financial resources beyond what is needed for their immediate needs. If you are financially fortunate enough, then please consider an endowment gift.

Additional information and the pledge form may be found at the Financial Team’s page on PCB’s website at www.pcb1.org. You may also contact the Financial Team by email at pcboffice@pcb1.org.

PCB thrives on the passion and generosity of its peers, whether through gifts of talent, fellowship, and funding. Financial contributions also assist with fostering a more inclusive network regardless of financial status. Please consider a contribution now or in the future.

# Vision Quest: Meet the Real Joe Koury

by Tony Swartz

One of our presentations at this year's upcoming conference, "Questioning the Limitations of Vision Loss" will be based on a book by Joseph Koury, "Seeing Without Eyes".

Joe was the subject of a book by Lou Briganti, "Flying Blind: One Man's Journey Out of Darkness", which was added to the NLS collection late in 2019, DB97425. The book was the subject of a Library User's of America discussion at last year's ACB conference. The consensus of the discussion participants was that the accomplishments of the books protagonist were totally unrealistic, and some questioned whether the character was perhaps even fictitious.

Many of the participants in the discussion were then taken aback when I spoke up to inform them that not only was Joe a real person, but that he and I are very distantly related. I did admit that some of the episodes in the book were described out of context, and that the young man to whom Joe tells his story was a fictional character, a literary device of the author. One of the discussion participants then suggested that Joe attempt to write his own version.

When Joe and I next spoke, I told him of the reaction of the discussion participants and passed on the suggestion to write his own version of his story. Joe had been feeling somewhat uncomfortable with the way Briganti's book had related some of the events in Joe's life and had started to wonder how he could put the record straight.

After some consideration, Joe undertook the task of rewriting the book from his own perspective. He removed all of Briganti's literary devices, and devoted greater space to the explanation of perceptual concepts such as echo location.

In brief, in 1953, at the age of 19 Joe suddenly loses his vision, and out of despair and fearing to be a burden to his family, he decides to embark on a trip hitch hiking across the United States. More than just a cross country journey, it turns out to be a quest of exploration and development of his remaining senses. In the presentation to us Joe will briefly chronical his journey and describe the abilities he developed, allowing him to build a successful life, both personally and financially.

To prepare you for Joe's conference presentation, I have created a daisy version, a talking book of Joe's book, "Seeing Without Eyes". For those with email, in July I will email out a link to the book which will allow you to download the book as you would from Bard. For those who receive the audio edition of The PCB Advocate on cartridge, it will follow the summer edition. For braille readers, PCB will mail you a thumb drive holding the daisy edition which you can plug into your NLS player. The book is just under four hours in length; an absorbing read which will prepare you for an interesting presentation at this year's conference.

As for Joe, he's looking forward to your questions.

# Parliamentary Team Conference Deadlines

by Carla Hayes

Before you know it, the PCB Conference will be here! It will take place from September 16 to 19, 2021. Since our conference will take place earlier than it usually does, our deadlines for proposed amendments to the Bylaws and resolutions must also be earlier. They are as follows:

Proposed amendments of the Bylaws must be received by the Parliamentary Team no later than June 19, 2021.

Proposed resolutions must be received by the Parliamentary Team no later than July 31, 2021.

Proposed amendments that are approved by the Parliamentary Team will be publish no later than August 15, 2021.

The parliamentary Team will advertise to chapters and special interest affiliates for the names of their convention delegates no later than August 17, 2021.

No later than September 9, 2021, chapters and special interest affiliates who plan to have delegates present at the convention, must submit the names of their delegates to the Parliamentary Team. Delegates will be authorized by the Parliamentary Team during the convention.

Please make note of these important deadlines and plan accordingly. Proposed Bylaws amendments, resolutions and names of chapter and special interest affiliate delegates should be sent to Team Leader Carla Hayes at lengual@verizon.net If you have any questions, please call Carla Hayes at 724-941-8184.

# Voting at 2021 PCB Conference

By Parliamentary Team

After a thorough review and careful reading of the current PCB Bylaws, the Parliamentary Team issues the following protocol regarding delegate voting at this year’s virtual Conference:

1. At least thirty (30) days before the commencement of convention, the PCB Parliamentary Team shall advertise for chapters and special interest affiliates to submit the names of their two (2) delegates.

2. At least seven (7) days before the commencement of the convention, chapters and special interest affiliates shall submit to the Parliamentary Team the names of their two (2) delegates, who will be present at the convention Business Meeting to vote on behalf of the chapter or special interest affiliate.

3. At the convention, at registration or at some other feasible time prior to the business meeting, the Parliamentary Team will authorize all official delegates present at the convention.

4. At the beginning of the Business Meeting, the PCB Secretary shall take a roll of all authorized delegates present.

5. Any chapter or special interest affiliate who does not have any authorized delegates at the Business Meeting shall forfeit their delegate vote at that meeting. The Bylaws do not countenance alternates, proxies, or substitute delegates.

6. Similarly, chapters and special interest affiliates who only have one authorized delegate present shall have only one (1) delegate vote for that chapter or special affiliate.

7. For all matters requiring a vote, delegates vote first, then all peers who are present, including those who voted as delegates, vote in the popular vote.

8. The delegate vote and popular vote totals are then added to determine the outcome of the vote.

9. A tie vote means the motion fails.

10. Repeat steps 7 and 8 for each vote at the Business Meeting.

# Proposed Amendment: Voting at Convention

By Parliamentary Team

The following sets forth proposed text for an amendment to the PCB Bylaws to address an expressed wish to have the Bylaws reflect how we do things regarding voting at conventions.

CURRENT TEXT:

PCB Bylaws, Art. VII, Section 2. Voting

Official delegates shall be authorized to vote on behalf of chapters and special interest affiliates at annual conventions of the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind. Each Chapter and each special interest affiliate shall be represented by two (2) delegates. In addition, each member of a chapter or special interest affiliate who is present at the Convention is entitled to one (1) vote, provided he/she has paid membership dues in accordance with these Bylaws on record with the PCB Office for a minimum of thirty (30) days. This popular vote count shall be added to the delegate vote count and shall constitute the total vote for or against any issue. Any business brought before the Convention shall be decided by a majority vote except as otherwise stated in these Bylaws.

PROPOSED TEXT:

PCB Bylaws, Art. VII, Section 2. Voting

Each peer-at-large and each peer in a chapter or special interest affiliate who is present at the Convention is entitled to one (1) vote, provided he/she has paid membership dues in accordance with these Bylaws on record with the PCB Office for a minimum of thirty (30) days.

For any voting issue that comes before the convention, a popular vote of all peers in chapters and special interest affiliates, as well as all peers-at-large, present and accounted for, shall be taken and a count be tabulated, and said tabulation shall constitute the total popular vote for or against any issue. Any business brought before the Convention shall be decided by a majority vote except as otherwise stated in these Bylaws.

Should the final tabulation of the popular vote end in a tie, then official delegates, representing chapters and special affiliates, shall vote to break the tie.

Official delegates shall be authorized to vote on behalf of chapters and special interest affiliates at annual conventions of the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind. Each Chapter and each special interest affiliate shall be represented by two (2) delegate votes.

A chapter or special interest affiliate who has only one (1) delegate at the business meeting may have that delegate cast both of the chapter’s or special interest affiliate’s votes.

A chapter or special interest affiliate whose delegates fail to attend the business meeting, may, after caucus of all members present, present the name of a member who shall serve as the delegate of that chapter or special interest affiliate and who shall then cast the two (2) delegate votes on behalf of that chapter or special interest affiliate.

Should the caucus of chapter or special interest affiliate members fail to agree on one (1) delegate, they may present two members who shall serve as delegates and each delegate shall cast one (1) delegate vote.

Should the delegate vote end in a tie, the motion fails.

# Reward Excellence with a 2021 PCB Award

By Awards Team

Once again, PCB seeks to reward excellence at its upcoming Conference and Convention (September 16-19) with four prestigious awards: John A. Horst Champion of Independence, TheReImage Leadership Award, Anthony B. Swartz PCB Peer Excellence Award, and PCB Community Impact Award.

Any individual, regardless of PCB membership, can make nominations for these awards. Nominations are due by August 1, 2021. But don’t delay! Email nominations to Will Grignon, at wgrignon13@gmail.com. Sorry, current members of the PCB Board are not eligible for these awards.

Include the following information about you and your nominee: name, mailing address, phone, and email address.

In your nomination, indicate the Award for which the individual is being nominated and provide a fulsome explanation of why the nominee is deserving of the award

Here are the four PCB Awards:

John A. Horst Champion of Independence

The award will be given to an individual who has:

* Performed at least 20 years of professional service in fields related to the rehabilitation or the education of people who are blind or visually impaired, or
* Dedicated more than 20 years of service to collective advocacy and public awareness efforts that promote independence and opportunity for people with blindness or vision loss, and
* The recipient’s service contributions must be well recognized in the community in which they live or throughout the state or nation as significant to the betterment of the lives of those with vision loss.

TheReImage Leadership Award

 The recipient:

* Must have overcome both the real and perceived challenges of blindness or vision loss to achieve an active, multi-faceted life,
* Have proven him/herself as a role model and leader within the blindness community through service, perseverance, empowerment, or achievement, and
* Have demonstrated to the world, through his/her independence and action, TheReImage of people with vision loss.

Anthony B. Swartz PCB Peer Excellence Award

The recipient:

* Must be or have been a member of the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind for more than 10 years,
* Have provided a long history of volunteer service to PCB’s events, projects, or chapters, and
* Have demonstrated distinguished service by taking on leadership roles within PCB or regularly going beyond expectations in service to PCB and fellow peers.

PCB Community Impact Award

The recipient of this award shall:

* Have made a significant difference in the lives of people with blindness or vision loss through a product, a service, or an employment practice that leads to greater independence and opportunity, or
* This award may be presented to a corporation, agency, or foundation that has provided significant support to the mission or projects of PCB.

# A Closer Look at Peer Engagement

By Suzanne Erb, Peer Engagement Team Lead

“How can I become more involved in PCB?” Well, let me count the many ways. When you read The PCB Advocate, when you attend chapter meetings, get involved with chapter activities, attend our PCB Convention, these are all important ways that you can become more involved with PCB. In addition, whenever you help a peer with a vision-related issue, or you call a legislator’s office, you are engaging in PCB efforts.

But there are more ways in which you can become involved in PCB. We have at least two email lists to which you should subscribe. The PCB-L list is a list where people post announcements about blindness-related legislation and advocacy, assistive technology, and other life-impacting topics. The other list, PCB-Chat, is a friendly list where we discuss all sorts of topics that may or may not have anything to do with vision loss. These lists do not have a huge amount of traffic, but they are fun and informative. Feel free to share the information they contain with your friends, especially your friends who do not have access to email. Some of the information is timely and may not make it to the PCB Information Line.

To subscribe to these lists, write a message to pcb-l+subscribe@groups.io for the PCB-L list, and pcb-chat+subscribe@groups.io for the PCB-chat list. You will receive a message asking you to confirm your registration. That’s all there is to it.

But wait, there’s more! We also would like to hear from you directly. Are there any topics about which you would like more information? Are there things you used to do but haven’t figured out how to do them as a blind person? Chances are, there is someone involved in our state affiliate who might have answers for you.

Every other month, we hold a book discussion. We are always interested in hearing about what books people are reading, and we would love to hear from you about suggestions for future book discussions.

In May, we featured a presentation by Steph McCoy, owner of Bold Blind Beauty. As a teaser, I will share a quote from her Bold Blind Beauty Make-up and Beauty Tips Guide: “**Final Note:** Real beauty radiates from within. Being self-aware is real beauty and it does transcend barriers. Real beauty is not easy, but it is powerful. Once we are able to fully embrace ourselves for who we are, we are liberated from the tyranny of others’ definitions of us.” What a powerful way to end a fun evening of make-up tips and tricks from a blindness perspective. But, you may not have even known that this informative presentation was taking place.

Another cool happening is being hosted by our Director of Peer Engagement, Melissa Carney. She has been leading discussions on everything from cheese to cleaning, and this is only the beginning. Of course, if you are signed up for the lists you will find out about all these great things. Be sure to alert your friends who may not have email access.

I do hope that you will consider subscribing to these lists so that you can get up-to-the-minute information and so that you can have yet one more way to have your say.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at suzerb1@comcast.net or
215-313-0550. I may not be available when you call, as I work part-time, but feel free to leave a message and I will return your call.

Happy reading, listening, and engaging!

# A Gallery of Gadgets and Gismos

By Suzanne Erb, Peer Engagement Team Lead

As people with varying degrees of vision loss, many of us have discovered low- or no-tech ways of solving life’s pesky problems. We use all kinds of gadgets and gismos to solve all kinds of difficulties around the house, outside, on trips, and in all sorts of tasks in our daily lives. While some of these items may be vision-specific, many are not. The Peer Engagement Team invites you to give us your ideas for a presentation at this year’s convention. We are calling it a “Gadget Gallery.” If you have ideas about tools that you use to get things done that you think other peers would find helpful, please contact me. .

The Peer Engagement Team has come up with a few questions that we would like you to answer, so that we can give as thorough a description of the gadget as possible. This will help folks to decide whether they can use it, where they can obtain it, and whether they can afford it. Here is the list of questions.

1. Name and Purpose of the device:
 What do you use it for and why.

2. Description of the device: What does it feel like? How exactly do you use it? Please try to describe it in a way that other people will understand how to use it from your verbal description.

3. Interesting features: Why do you like this particular product? What are its benefits??

4. Shortcomings: What do you wish it could do differently?

5. Cost of the device: How much did you pay for it? If you haven’t bought it recently, please make sure it is still available and, if possible, find out its current price.

6. Where to obtain the device: If you don’t remember exactly where you got the device, please provide the kind of store where it can be purchased, such as a drugstore, a department store, or other kind of store.

7. Your overall recommendation/opinion: What is your overall evaluation of the device?

Please get your ideas and tips to me by July 6th. Please also let me know if you have any questions about this idea. We will help you turn your ideas into recordings so that your ideas will sound great. If you have an idea for a device that you think others would like to know about, but you’re not sure of the best way to present it, please get in touch with me.

The best ways to reach me are by e-mail suzerb1@comcast.net or by phone
215-313-0550. I look forward to hearing from you and discovering new gadgets together.

Also, be sure to check out the Vision Loss Team’s article, “Helpful Kitchen Appliances,” found elsewhere in this edition.

HELPFUL Low-Tech KITCHEN APPLIANCES

By Vision Loss Team

Appliances discussed in this article are the Hot Shot, the Big & Bold Low Vision Timer, Talking Timer, Liquid Level Indicator, and Crock-Pot.

Sunbeam Hot Shot water dispenser. For fast fixing while making. Tea, hot cocoa, instant oatmeal, soups and more. This hot water dispenser heats up to 16 ounces of hot water quicker than a microwave and without any mess. Water dispenses right into your cup or bowl. Compact size is ideal for office, dorms, and small kitchens. It has an auto-shut-off safety feature and convenient cord storage. Just open the lid, fill your favorite cup with cold water and pour it into the reservoir. Close the lid and plug in the Hot Shot. Press the button located at the top rear of the hot shot. When the water comes to a boil, you will hear a click and the heating stops automatically. Just above the top of the cup you will feel a lip-shaped button. Press it and hold it down until all the hot water drains into the cup. The amount of cold water you put into the cup is the same amount of boiled water you will get back. No spills, no mess. Available at Amazon for $22.18. Most likely Maxi-Aids has this item as well. Call 800-522-6294.

The Big and Bold Low Vision Timer. This device comes in black with white numbers or white with black numbers. It sells for $14.75 from Maxi-Aids. Regular price $19.95. Perfect for cooking, exercising, etc. Easy for people with arthritis to use. No batteries needed. It can time for one hour. For the longest ring, wind it all the way to one hour, and then turn it back to the desired time. Numerals are also able to be felt. That will provide the longest ring time.

Talking Timer. This is sold by Maxi-Aids. Item number 703270. This timer uses two AAA batteries, located behind a door in the back of the timer under the magnet. You can stand the timer up somewhere or attach it to a metal surface. When facing the timer, you will feel four buttons. Going from left to right they are hour set, minute set, time remaining, and timer on or off. During the last ten seconds of the time, it sounds off like a count-down for the space program: 10, 9, 8 etc. Then it announces in a loud, annoying voice “time is up.” It says that for an entire minute and then stops talking, but you can shut it up with a press of a button.

Another great kitchen appliance is the Liquid Level Indicator. This device runs on batteries. It has a small wand that fits on the top of the cup and, as you pour liquid, you get a squeaky alert to tell you to stop pouring. These are also available from Maxi-Aids.

Our last kitchen appliance is not that small but is able to make very yummy food. This is a Crock-Pot. You can buy one from Wal-Mart. These days it is hard to find one that has a knob that can be clicked to the desired setting. Many Crock-Pots now have a menu and flat panel. You could mark it with bump dots and memorize the menu and it would work for you but try and find one with the knob that clicks instead. On this Crock-Pot all the way to the left as you face the Crock-Pot is off. One click to the right is warm. The second click to the right is low. This means food will take between six to eight hours to cook. The last click to the right is high. This means food will take three to six hours to cook. Maxi-Aids does sell Crock-Pots with knobs. Also, a great thing about a Crock-Pot is that the crock can be removed from the outside metal heating element so you can wash the crock.

The R-word: Retiring Your Guide Dog

By PAGDUS

When is it time for your guide dog to retire? This is one of the most difficult questions any handler has to answer and there are no hard-and-fast rules. The facile answer is, when the dog no longer wants to work, but this can be difficult to figure out, especially if, one day, he is slow and droopy, and, another day, he’s full of beans. Notwithstanding the difficulty of this fraught inevitability, handlers will do best if they become familiar with the signs and have some kind of plan for their precious companion.

The first question to ask is: How old is my dog? One source breaks it down this way: for mid-sized dogs, the first dog year is equal to fifteen human years, the second dog year is equal to nine human years, and every dog year after that is equal to five human years. For example, your ten-year-old Lab is 64 in human years. The formula is more favorable for smaller dogs and less favorable for larger dogs. Guide dogs usually work for six to seven years and usually retire around ten or eleven years.

Of course, chronological age is just one factor. Another important factor is how hard or easy your dog has worked. Obviously, one or two trips to the store, church, and the grocery store per week imposes much less wear-and-tear on your dog than if he has navigated buses, the subway, and city streets five days per week.

Finally, you can factor in your dog’s overall health. If he has been relatively healthy, then he should enjoy increased longevity. Any serious illness or condition will tend to shorten a dog’s life expectancy.

Now that we’ve set forth some basics, let’s try to answer the big question: When should my dog retire? Sometimes, dogs will let you know. It will be time to go to work and the dog will just refuse to get into the harness. This will probably occur at the end of a long decline, but it might happen overnight – he’s just had enough. More frequently, as noted above, he will show signs of slowing down and reluctance to climb up into a bus, but the next day, he will be perky and seem fine. In the end, you will have to make that heart-rending call.

It’s important to pay attention to the signs:

* Reluctance to wear the harness
* Slowing down pace noticeably
* Losing focus during travel
* Indecision where the dog previously demonstrated decisiveness
* Slower to re-ramp up to lead after a period of lying down
* Failure to respond to correction
* Increased irritability: growling, chuffing, head-shaking, sighing
* Sitting down and refusing to go any farther

It is important to remember that most handlers will tend to deny the signs and try to talk themselves into thinking their dog is fine, but it’s crucial that you pay attention and bring your concerns to your veterinarian to make sure there are no underlying health issues. Too often, handlers will put off the decision about retirement until both the dog and the handler are unsafe. Just imagine crossing a busy intersection and the dog decides right there and then to call it quits.

As the handler, you should honor your feelings and find resources that can help you work through them. Other guide dog handlers, guide dog organizations (like PAGDUS), and your guide dog’s school can provide you with excellent feedback and encouragement from folks who have gone through what you are going through. Guide dog handlers tend to be a very supportive community and they know just what kind of a special bond you have with your dog and just how painful coming to terms with his retirement can be.

OK, you’ve detected the signs, there is no underlying health concern, and, after much soul-searching, you have decided it is time. Now what? There are basically two options: keep your dog as a pet or put him out for adoption.

It should be noted that most guide dog schools allow the handler to keep the dog after retirement.

Obviously, your dog is much more than a navigational tool. For many, the guide dog is a precious member of the family and the thought of farming him off to someone else is simply intolerable. So, option number one is to keep him as a pet. If you do this, there will be a transition period where the dog thinks it is time to work but you leave the house without him. This will cause some confusion and maybe some sadness, but your dog should adjust to the new setup, especially if you lavish him with love and make play time at home a priority.

Of course, if you retire your dog and don’t get a replacement, you will probably have to revert to using the white cane. Make sure you have the right outlook and the necessary training to ensure that you are a safe and competent cane traveler.

Now that you have retired your guide dog and he is now a pet, you have to decide whether you will get a replacement dog while your retired dog is still with you or you will wait until your retired dog goes to the happy hunting grounds before you even think about getting another guide. Only you can resolve this dilemma.

There are certainly pros and cons regarding keeping your retired guide as a pet and getting a new guide dog. Most importantly, you and your guide get to keep living together. However, you should know that such a situation can generate confusion in both dogs and depression in your retired dog as he watches you and your new dog leave the house. You may also find it harder to bond with your new dog with your old dog present and needing affection and reassurances. This situation highlights one big advantage of schools that offer hometown training. Instead of you going away for a month or so and coming back with a brand-new dog, hometown training can enlist the expertise of a trainer in the home situation, not only observing signs, but also offering on-the-spot remedies, hopefully ensuring the smoothest possible transition. Even if your school does not offer hometown training, it should provide you with guidance and resources, including expert support as you navigate the challenges of this double-transition.

Given the real challenges of trying to bond with your new dog while your old dog is at home, many handlers find that adoption can be the best option for both handler and dog. Many handlers find a friend or family member to adopt their guides. This is nice because you can visit your guide and know he is part of a loving family. Another option is to have your guide dog school supervise an adoption by either the puppy-raiser family who trained him or by one of the many screened applicants who are on school adoption waiting lists. Your school should provide you with updates about your dog, but they might discourage visits because it might prove too emotionally stressful for dog and handler. Finally, there are organizations that provide comfort and therapy dogs, and guide dogs have had successful second careers providing companionship to loving owners.

No matter which option you choose, please know that it will not be an easy process. It is important for you to stay informed, be aware of your feelings, and be open to the support and encouragement schools and other handlers can provide.

# Ah, Thunder, We Barely Knew You

By William H. Grignon

Well, Thunder, the Yellow Lab who was supposed to be my guide dog, came, plodded, and went back from whence he came. In a nutshell, it wasn’t a fit.

Thunder was gentle, loving, and affectionate. He just wasn’t too enthusiastic to guide me at the pace I needed. He would also lose focus and start wandering off the intended route, veering into driveways and meandering around to find curb cuts. Even though it was only in the high seventies, he pooped out quite quickly and, at one point, just sat down, as if to say: “I’m sorry, but that’s all I have.”

It wasn’t a total loss, however. I got the chance to see what it felt like to be a guide dog handler and glimpse the kind of focus, attention, and responsibility being a handler required. It is an awesome responsibility and, truthfully, it was rather scary.

In the end, it was a hard lesson learned: I am not ready for a guide dog and, if I am brutally honest with myself, I never will be. I only hope Thunder can be matched with someone who likes to dawdle along and who can reciprocate Thunder’s loving nature.

# This Year at the Philadelphia Regional Chapter

By John Luttenberger

In this second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, The Philadelphia Regional Chapter continues to meet virtually on the second Saturday morning of each month, using the FreeConferenceCall.com telephone service. Members appreciate the opportunity to interact with each other as they conduct the chapter’s ongoing business. Back in November 2020, the chapter voted to suspend its elections, and to extend all officers’ terms by one year.

At the end of 2020, the chapter sent holiday greetings and a $10 Wawa gift card to each local member; our one out-of-state member’s holiday greeting contained a 7-Eleven gift card.

In January 2021, Treasurer John Anderson informed us that we had raised $330 for our end-of-year holiday charity, Shriners Hospital of Philadelphia, in memory of former PRC President Patricia A. Russell, who passed away in 2018. The funds were sent to Shriners Hospital in February.

Prompted by questions from president Brotman, members mentioned favorite holiday gifts they'd received, and their plans for 2021.

In February, the meeting’s opening prayer was given by our newly-appointed Chaplain, Dianne Davis.

We voted to present Lavera Diggins with a PRC Life Membership. Lavera, who recently celebrated her 90th birthday, has been a member of this chapter since 1985, and had served as our Treasurer for 31 years.

Pam Shaw commenced our celebration of Black History Month by reading a portion of a proclamation issued by former President Barack Obama in February 2015. We then heard brief presentations from four members, speaking about a black person of note each had chosen. Vivian Williams closed our celebration by singing one of Marian Anderson’s most popular spirituals, “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child.”

In March, Pam Shaw, Joe Sickora and Bette Passanante-Rodriguez reported on the virtual ACB Legislative Seminar and its legislative imperatives for this year, which took place February 22-24.

Our guest speaker was PCB President Christine Hunsinger, who spoke to us about the February 22 ACB Affiliate Presidents meeting.

In celebration of St. Patrick’s Day and all things Irish, We began by recognizing a chapter member whose birthday falls on “the day” (March 17). Bette Passanante-Rodriguez sang an Irish Satire song by Robbie O’Connell. President Brotman read an Irish poem, “An Irish Blessing.” John Luttenberger shared some facts about St. Patrick’s life, followed by some Irish humor. Bette Passanante-Rodriguez sang another song by Robbie O’Connell about an Irish American fantasizing about his return to Ireland in triumph.

In April, we congratulated PRC members Alton and Diane Davis as they celebrated their 34th wedding anniversary this month.

In celebration of National Poetry Month, poems and songs were presented by Dan Simpson, Ethel Siegel, Pam Shaw, Diane Davis, John Luttenberger, Eleanor Kraczyk, Lavera Diggins, Ed Facemyer, Daisy Morgan, Bette Homer, and Robert Sulkin. This part of the meeting was made available on the PCB Info Line for the month of May, thanks to chapter member Ed Facemyer.

In May, PCB Parliamentary Team member John Luttenberger reviewed deadlines for submission of proposed PCB Bylaw amendments and resolutions changes for the 2021 PCB Conference.

Our guest speaker was Maggie Feldon, a nurse from Vanda Pharmaceuticals, Inc., who spoke on non-24.

Looking to the future — with vaccinations well under way, and ever fewer restrictions on gatherings of all kinds — we eagerly await the day when PRC can again gather in person for its meetings.

# Yoda: An Abecedarian

By Sue Lichtenfels

Avoiding the visiting vet.

Barking for attention.

Chasing tennis balls and frisbees.

Digging holes.

Eating everything in sight.

Flapping his silky ears.

Groaning during ear rubs.

Helping until the end.

Ignoring the pain.

Jumping onto the bed.

Keeping me safe.

Learning as a pup.

Mounting other dogs.

Nosing for crumbs.

Opening doors.

Pushing elevator buttons.

Questioning the need for practice.

Retrieving my dropped items.

Shuffling along hardwood floors.

Traveling by plane, train, and boat.

Urging affection with his golden lab looks.

Venturing unleashed through the neighborhood.

Whining like a microphone’s feedback.

Xeroxing bones in his dreams.

Yielding to moving cars.

Zig-zagging around obstacles.

[June 2020]

# UNDERWRITING CONTRIBUTIONS

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