**The**

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**Advocate**

**Winter Edition 2018-19**

**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 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, and employment.

The PCB Advocate is available by membership subscription 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 our information line at 773-572-6314.

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

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Browsing the PCB Gift Gallery

By Sue Lichtenfels, PCB President

As you can imagine, my seven-year-old is all about making her gift lists for Santa. At her age, she doesn’t yet appreciate that she’s been getting gifts all year long. Perhaps if we wrapped each pack of candy or each toy acquired throughout the year in bright paper and a sparkly bow, she would recognize the treats for what they are. Then again, perhaps she wouldn’t. It’s been my experience that none of us truly appreciate the gifts we have been given until they are gone or until someone points them out to us. Let’s consider some of the gift’s PCB has given to us.

Each month, PCB offers a menu of discussion calls designed to give the gifts of peer and organizational engagement. Both the Membership and Vision Loss teams host calls to provide fellowship and guidance on a wide variety of topics. Every other month our Advocacy Team brings forward issues impacting the independence of and opportunities for people with vision loss. During the opposite months, PCB’s leaders share news about what’s going on inside PCB and solicit feedback from our members during Organization Open House calls. Remember that each of these discussion calls is a gift to all, including members of other organizations. An additional perk of this gift is a toll-free phone number to enjoy these discussions without any cost to participants.

Another PCB gift that keeps giving throughout the year is the PCB Information Line. Available 24 hours a day, at your convenience, the line provides much more than a simple organizational update. And this December, our Communications Team will be overhauling the information line to provide you with even more interesting content. Call 773-572-6314 to enjoy the new menu of selections coming soon:

1 About PCB-- an organization overview, contact information, and Getting to Know Us membership guide.

2 Member Inbox-- PCB announcements, updates, news releases, and messages.

3 Monthly Calendar-- a listing of discussion calls, meetings, and events.

4 The PCB Advocate-- our quarterly information-packed, peer publication.

5 PCB Conference Connection-- archives of past conferences and info about future ones.

6 Peer Perspectives-- a replay of select peer discussion calls.

7 Talking Advocacy -- where the audio empowers us all.

8 Member Mic-- where we highlight podcasts, presentations, and performances by our members.

9 Vision Loss News and Nuggets-- informative and interesting posts culled from our email listservs.

And stop back at least once a month to unwrap a new collection of information.

It’s not just PCB members on the receiving end of PCB gifts, but also its chapters. Several years ago, PCB revised its raffle ticket sales program to give the gift of profit sharing to its chapters. Yet again in 2019, PCB will take on all of the administrative details of the Six-Month Calendar Raffle while chapters simply sell tickets and profit. PCB handles

acquiring the raffle license, printing and distributing tickets, entering ticket holder data into a spreadsheet, tracking winning numbers, making sure checks get mailed out to winners, and paying each chapter for their share of the profits. It’s time for chapter leaders to once again partake of this gift by calling the PCB office to order an allotment of tickets for your chapter’s 2019 fundraising.

Each year as we plan for our conference, PCB strives to give financial gifts in the form of subsidies and scholarships. We provide funds for up to five individuals across three categories to attend our conference for the first time. And in 2019, one of our first-time student participants will also be awarded $500 towards his or her tuition. For the last two years, PCB gave a $10 per night room subsidy for convention-goers. Each year, our conference planners seek out sponsors, so PCB can give attendees discounted rates for meals and activities. It’s very likely that the most popular financial gift we gave this year was a free conference experience to all of those who could not physically attend the event. By streaming our conference through ACB Radio’s various communication channels, many were able to enjoy the conference virtually. Consider joining us in Harrisburg October 17-20, for the 2019 PCB Conference and Convention, where the gift truly is in the experience.

I really could go on and on in my perusal of the PCB gift gallery. I haven’t mentioned the pcb1.org website where PCB’s two newest gifts for you are the leadership development section and the 2018 conference archives including the Bag It Up performance. Nor have I touched on the gifts of independence and opportunity that PCB promotes in all of its advocacy and education efforts. And then there is this very publication which we give you four times each year in your preferred format.

Really, there is no end to PCB’s gift-giving season, it continues throughout the year.

In closing I wish you a wonderful holiday season and healthy New Year. I leave you with a gift of philosophy, that as a parent and volunteer, I can affirm is true: it is better to give than to receive. While I try to instill this lesson in my daughter, I hope you will consider what gifts of service you can offer to PCB as we begin our work in 2019. Reach out to me through email to leadership@pcb1.org or by phone to 412-480-9696 and together we’ll figure out where your gifts of time and talent can best make an impact in PCB.

2018 PCB Conference Report

By Jackie Wissinger, Secretary

This year’s PCB conference was held once again at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Pittsburgh from Thursday, October 18th through Sunday, October 21st. It’s always a pleasure for me to return to the city where I attended school and where many precious and lifelong friendships were formed. This year was certainly no exception. Hopefully this brief summary of events will encourage those of you who were not able to attend this year’s conference to make every effort to join us in Harrisburg in 2019.

This year’s conference was streamed on ACB Radio, which afforded opportunities for others to participate, especially in our PCB auction. Audio archives of many conference events including the Saturday evening play are available for listening at pcb1.org/2018conferenceaudio.

The first session began at 7:00 on Thursday evening and was called to order by our president, Sue Lichtenfels. This was followed by the pledge of allegiance to the flag and an invocation led by Jackie Wissinger.

The theme of our conference this year was “Sowing the Seeds of Success.” Sue expanded on this theme by stating that those of us who are blind are no different from those who are sighted in our desire to be successful. She asked, “But what determines whether we will be successful?” She compared success to a plant, both of which require optimal conditions in which to grow. She continued, “The seeds to success are the positive internal attributes we possess grafted with the positive external influencing factors. How well we nurture these seeds will determine our life’s landscape.” She pointed out that for those with vision loss, “independence is the most important seed to possess.” Just as sunlight, fertile soil and water are crucial external factors in growing a garden, external factors such as where we live, who we know, finances, positive role models and others determine how successful we may be. “The greatest fertilizer for success is opportunity.” She compared PCB to a greenhouse which provides “an ideal climate where independence and opportunity thrive.” She compared independence and opportunity with the magic beans in the story of “Jack in the Bean Stalk,” stating that “These are our magic seeds to success.” She concluded, “With independence and opportunity we too can climb to the clouds.” I thought this was an excellent address, and I would encourage you all to listen to it in full on the PCB website.

Our next speaker was a representative from Carnegie Mellon University who spoke to us about using robots in order to help those with disabilities. He discussed 3 types of robots and their proposed uses. The first was a receptionist robot, which would not replace a human being, but which could be used in cases when facilities could not afford to hire a person. These robots are stationary and could be used to interface with other robots. The next robot was a mobile robot and would be designed to lead a person to a desired destination. This is not meant to replace a cane or a guide dog, however. The third type of robot is a small handheld device and could be used in helping with directions. I am not a techie, but it’s fascinating to me to think about the research that is going on out there to benefit mankind.

The reading of the proposed bylaw amendments was next on the agenda, presented by John Luttenberger from the Parliamentary Team. This was followed by a presentation by George Holliday, the PCB Fund Development Leader entitled “Providing a Fertile Future for PCB” where George introduced the concept of planned giving and its many options.

Quizzo was the name of the game for Thursday night’s festivities. Five teams competed as we all increased our knowledge and enjoyed some laughs in this fun game of trivia.

The exhibits opened on Friday morning, and this year there were 30 tables to peruse. Three voting machines were also available for demonstration, and we were all encouraged to take advantage of this great opportunity. Besides the exhibit hall, there were three activities on the menu for Friday morning. We could participate in the Audio Darts Tournament, tour the John Heinz History Center or attend the Vision Works Expo presented by PCB and the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS).

The Friday afternoon session of the conference was opened by our treasurer, Michael Zaken because our president was directing the rehearsal of the play which was to be performed after the banquet on Saturday evening. The first speaker was Diana Fishlock, a representative from the PA Department of Treasury, who spoke to us about the PA ABLE Savings Program. ABLE stands for Achieving a Better Life Experience. The program was signed into law in 2014 and has been running in PA for about a year and a half. It provides for those who have disabilities to save for qualified disability expenses without being penalized by the income and resource requirements of any federal means tested benefits, with some exceptions for SSI. A person on SSI could have up to $100,000 in an account, and if the amount exceeded this amount, the SSI benefits would be suspended for a time. Medical coverage would continue though, and the person would not have to reapply for SSI. She pointed out that there are state and federal tax benefits in the ABLE accounts and that a person can have only one ABLE account. There are no federal or state taxes on the money in an ABLE account or when it is withdrawn for qualified disability expenses. A person who is not on SSI can grow an ABLE account to over $500,000. She discussed the program quite thoroughly and told us that all this information could be found on the website, which is paable.gov. The phone number to call is 855-529-2253.

Our next speaker was Paula Reed Ward, a reporter from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Paula has written a book entitled Death by Cyanide which is available on BARD. She is very passionate about her work. She loves “delving into peoples’ lives, learning what it is that makes them tick.” She related some advice that she had been given by a mentor. He told her to develop a thicker skin. But it was her opinion that it was her sensitivity that enabled her to do a better job. She shared with us several stories which stuck out with her during her 21 years of reporting the news. These stories ranged from preventing 26 dogs from being euthanized and their subsequent adoption to bringing together a police department and several churches in a joint effort to curb the rising rate of homicides in a major city through the Victory Over Violence movement. She told us that she sees her job as a mixture of various professions: psychology, English, investigation and the law. She told us that she realized very early in her career what a powerful effect a newspaper can have on those who read it, which she illustrated very clearly in the stories that she shared with us.

Don Ciccone next updated us on the news from the Carnegie Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Don was excited to tell us that the library is now offering multiple title cartridges. This is due to a new piece of duplicating equipment called the Gutenberg, which can reproduce 20 cartridges at a time with multiple books on them. There are also plans for a digital player with the capability of downloading books directly from the BARD site. He also told us about Braille and tactile early literacy kits, which can be used by blind and sighted children. This is to encourage Braille and tactile learning. A sign language interpreter can also be involved in these learning sessions for the purpose of sighted, blind and deaf children together in an atmosphere of mutual learning. The library has also been doing an outreach program to other libraries in the state. It is always good to have Don Ciccone at our conference and to learn about what is in store for those of us who love to read.

 There were 2 concurrent break-out sessions at the conclusion of the Friday afternoon general session. The first was a presentation by Lisa Salinger, who compared and demonstrated the Braille Me and the Orbit Reader, which are 2 affordable Braille displays. The second was a discussion among PCB’s guide dog users to provide feedback on the formation of a new affiliate, PA Guide Dog Users and Supporters (PAGDUS).

Of course, our conference would not be complete without the PCB auction, which occurred on Friday evening. The bidding was lively, and as in previous years those who wanted to were able to participate by phone.

Jule Ann Lieberman conducted the Saturday morning conference session, which began with presentations from corporate representatives from Aira and OrCam. Aira uses “live sighted assistants;” whereas OrCam uses “artificial vision technology.” The representative from OrCam demonstrated the device, which has the ability to read money and documents, distinguish colors, and provide some facial recognition. It can be activated by voice, gestures and by a pressure sensitive strip. The representative from Aira told us that Aira is a blend of assistive technology and a live assistant. The company made arrangements for all conference goers to use Aira free of charge, and we were also informed that Wegman stores now provide free access to Aira in all their stores. He listed at least 3 advantages to Aira. This service can increase efficiency, enabling one to perform tasks with greater speed and effectiveness. It is also for the explorer. Agents can describe surroundings as fully as needed. Also, Aira is for the doer, assisting clients to perform such tasks as the assembling of furniture to a variety of craft projects. Aira can be accessed via smart phones or Aira glasses. It is also possible to communicate with Aira agents via text as well. Both OrCam and Aira were demonstrated, and a lively question and answer period occurred

Our next speaker was Joanna King from the Institute on Disabilities at Temple University. This segment was presented by the Vision Loss Resource Team. She began with an activity in which we were divided into teams and were asked to decide what the 3 most important items would be that we would take with us should be need to evacuate quickly. She squashed 5 misconceptions that people have regarding preparing for emergencies. I will just mention them and tell you that according to Joanna, they are not true. First: Most emergencies are short-lived. Second: I will never have to deal with an emergency where I live. Third: Many emergencies cannot be prepared for. 4: Preparing is too expensive and takes too much time. 5: I’ll be viewed as paranoid if I prepare. Another myth she busted is, “I can always call 911.” She told us that it really comes down to the fact that we are all responsible for the welfare of ourselves and for our families. She said that only 39% of American adults have developed emergency plans. She gave us 3 rules to follow in being prepared: make an emergency plan, be ready to both shelter in place and grab a go kit and be informed. She had some very good information for us. There was too much to review in this short report. She gave us handouts, and the entire session is archived on the PCB website.

Next up was a presentation by Chris Hunsinger and Joe Wassermann from the Advocacy Team. They discussed how services from BBVS and other blindness and rehab services might be improved. Should BBVS and OVR be combined or remain separate entities was asked among other questions. Joe pointed out that we should be represented when it comes time for that decision to be made. Since the population of elderly blind is growing, concern was expressed as to how their needs would be met. Chris pointed out that this was an issue which affects our entire organization, not just our advocacy teams. Chris asked us to get in touch with the Advocacy Team and to present our ideas about this issue because it affects all of us. A discussion followed. It was felt that a document should be composed stating our position in this matter, and then we need to seek out legislators who would fight for our position and bring our ideas to pass. Joe challenged chapters to, in the next 4 to 6 months, invite state legislators to a chapter meeting so members can express their needs and feedback on this important issue.

Over lunch, the Organizational Development Team offered the “Lead and Learn” presentation. Sherri Crum facilitated the discussion while Cathy Long, Jackie Wissinger, and Rodger Simmons shared sample tips and tools from the new leadership development section on the PCB website. It was emphasized that for guidance on either individual, chapter, or community leadership resources, members should visit pcb1.org/leadershipdevelopment.

Our business session was held on Saturday afternoon. It began with team reports. Advocacy: Chris Hunsinger informed us that the Advocacy and Governmental Affairs Team and the Education and Employment Team were combined. They have been tracking legislation, both state and federal that will affect our organization, and she encouraged all of us to contact our representatives as well. She reported that the “Advocacy for All” discussion calls were not generating as much member attendance as she had hoped. She expressed concern that the topics for the calls had not generated enough interest. She asked for ideas so that the calls could be tailored to match the interests of the group. The calls have ranged from paratransit to deafblind issues and the summer program for children offered by BBVS at the Overbrook School in Philadelphia. Next year the team will be concentrating on the BBVS OVR issue. John Horst next presented the Community Affairs report. He is in contact with several boards and committees and keeps abreast of issues throughout the state which will affect the blindness community. He related that the most meaningful part of the work that he does is the receiving of calls in the office from those who are blind or who are suffering vision loss or from their families and trying to meet their needs. He is also very much involved with the PAB through his involvement on its board.

Communications: Sue presented this report. The team has created a new promotional document entitled “Igniting Independence.” Using the words Self-confidence, Peer Support, Accessibility, Resources and Knowledge, (SPARK), along with the new peer registration form, the team has fashioned a framework to explain many aspects of PCB. Bob Lichtenfels and Rose Martin are very active with Facebook and Twitter, and Ed Facemyer uploads this material to the information line. The number for the information line is: 773-572-6314. In collaboration with the Membership team, Sue and Mary Ann Grignon created the Getting to Know Us guide. She informed us that the deadline for the winter edition of The PCB Advocate submissions is November 20.

Fund Development: This report was given by George Holliday, who encouraged us to keep track of our volunteer hours which we will need as we prepare to do some grant writing. He informed us that every volunteer hour contributed to PCB work is valued as a $24.14 in-kind donation. The calendar raffle was a success, but he said that we need more chapters to be involved. The Monthly Monetary Support program is still going on, and George encouraged all of us to get involved. He reminded us about the Planned Giving Program and said that we would hear more about it in the future. We will be learning about how families, friends and those outside of PCB can get involved. He thanked all the members of the team and especially Tony for all his hard work on the auction. Tony informed us that the final figures on the auction were in. We made a profit of $3,300. He thanked everyone who worked so hard on the auction and expressed the hope that next year’s profits would be better. Tony continued with a report on Accessidocs. The team has produced several documents including 4 issues of The PCB Advocate, the Getting to Know Us member guide, Welcome to NVDA and other smaller documents. There are 2 new members of the team, Ed Facemyer and Marty Mathews. There have been 2 promotional articles for this service, one in an issue of The ACB Braille Forum and one in the Lehigh Valley Center for Vision Loss’ newsletter. Tony stated that we need more volunteers to work on the team and a marketing team and a marketing strategy for the effort to succeed. He asked us to consider whether this project is worth our time and effort and that any ideas might be emailed to: leadership@pcb1.org.

Membership: Mary Ann thanked the members of the team. This team has been reaching out to members of the blindness community who have requested assistance. Along with the Communications Team, they created the Getting to Know Us guide. These 2 teams also developed the document entitled “Membership Is a FLAME” and have promoted it on an open house call, in our newsletter, and on our leadership development page. The Membership Development Team has reached out to those who have not registered and have tried very hard not to lose members. They have facilitated the formation of the PA Guide Dog Users and Supporters group. Team members have hosted discussion calls every month. She expressed concern that the past couple of discussion calls have not been well attended. She strongly encouraged us to fill out the membership registration form so that the needs and interests of the members can be met. She made herself available to help anyone who hadn’t completed this form to do so. Mary Anne also introduced the 5 scholarship winners.

Organizational Development: Sherri Crum presented this report. She stated that the main task of the Organizational Development Team during the past year was to get the leadership development section of the website up and running. Though much has been done, there is still much more to do, and Sherri reported that the team is continuing to work on this project. The website is [pcb1.org/leadershipdevelopment](http://www.pcb1.org/leadershipdevelopment). The website contains material for developing personal, chapter, and community leadership skills. She encouraged all of us to check out the website often and to let the team know if we have any suggestions of content that should be added. She thanked the team for their efforts.

Technology Access: Jule Anne Lieberman reported that the team is researching various alternatives for conference calling and web meetings. They are also working on getting information to the website. Their goal is to make sure that information is transmitted smoothly to the members and the community.

Vision Loss Resource Team: Jule Ann also presented this report. She also asked for suggestions for topics for the discussion calls. The team has created a document to be distributed mainly to care givers of those with vision loss.

Michael Zaken next presented the treasurer’s report. A motion was made to accept it, and it was seconded and passed.

Carla Hayes next read Resolution 2018-01, which is our only substantive resolution, which calls for every effort to be made “to ensure that Pennsylvania citizens who are blind or visually impaired are afforded every opportunity to cast an independent private ballot both in person and through absentee procedures prior to the 2020 election.” This resolution also calls for demonstrations of all voting machine so that those who are blind or visually impaired can provide feedback regarding these machines prior to the certification. Those who certify any machine which is not fully accessible will be found in violation of the ADA. This also applies to absentee ballot proceedings as well.

John Luttenberger next read the second reading of the proposed bylaw amendments. These proposed amendments were published in the fall edition of The PCB Advocate, and I will not discuss them here. Motions were made and seconded to accept these proposed changes and were passed.

Tony next presented the slate of candidates for the Board of Directors. There were 5 positions open and the nominees were as follows: Mary Ann Grignon, Cathy Long, Suzanne Erb, Rose Martin and to fill a one-year position, May Davis. Sue explained the procedure should we need to use the ballots. Should this be the case, each chapter would get 2 delegates if there were 2 chapter members in the room. These delegate votes would be added to the other votes, and the majority would win. All 5 candidates were elected to the board by acclamation. Tony thanked the members of the nominating team and then administered the Pledge of Obligation to the new board members. George suggested a round of applause for Sue for all the wonderful work she has done as our president, and we all gladly joined him.

The banquet and award ceremony were held on Saturday evening. Four awards were presented, two of them by phone, one was present at the banquet and the other was not able to attend. John Horst first presented the John Horst Champion of Independence to Elaine Welch, the former CEO of the Pennsylvania Association for the Blind. Jule Ann next presented the PCB Community Impact Award to Microsoft Corporation. TheReImage Leadership Award was next presented to May Davis by Tony Swartz. Michael Zaken presented our last award, The PCB Peer Excellence Award to Carla Hayes.

Our Saturday evening festivities concluded with the presentation of an original play entitled Bag It Up*,*  written by our multi-talented president, Sue Lichtenfels. I had the privilege of playing a role in this play, and I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was fun! If you missed it, please go to the website and give it a listen. You’ll be glad you did.

Our Sunday business meeting began with the necrology report. Five of our members have passed away since our last conference.

Tom Burgunder next presented the Conference Planning Team report. He thanked the team members and listed their individual contributions. He said that we had a dynamic group and added that we are looking for new members. Next year’s conference will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Harrisburg. We have a two-year contract with this hotel. He related to us that the format of next year’s conference will be similar to this year’s event. More details are to follow. Tom closed by focusing on the volunteers, which, he said, were “really spectacular this year.” This year’s volunteers were from Lions and Rotary Clubs, the Friendship Group and the Jehovah Witnesses. He asked for a motion that courtesy resolutions be sent to these organizations along with those that we always pass and send out. A motion to this effect was made, seconded and passed.

Carla Hayes next read the 3 resolutions including the substantive one on voting accessibility and the two standard courtesy resolutions. Motions were made and seconded to pass each of these resolutions, and they passed without discussion.

Our Q and A portion of the meeting was next. Sue asked for feedback from the group on the voting machines. The responses were varied and positive for the most part. She asked that all feedback be emailed to advocacy@pcb1.org. She then asked the members of the chapters if they knew where their bylaws were and challenged them to find them and to update them. She next asked for feedback and/or questions from us. Regarding leadership transitions, it was noted that chapter leaders should pass on all pertinent documents to those that follow them. The question was asked if anyone had heard of Charles Bonnet Syndrome. This is a type of visual release hallucination suffered by the partially sighted or blind. It was felt by one of our members that those suffering from this condition were in great need of some advocacy efforts. Sue next turned to a discussion of the PCB Organizational open house calls. Should they be continued? Are they useful? There were only positive comments on the calls and commendations for those who planned them. Mike Gravatt suggested that text messages could be used to remind people of the discussion calls, and he will bring this plan to the next board meeting. Sue reminded us of the toll-free number for the discussion calls. It is: 844-844-0414. Sue next asked for ideas for topics for the Advocacy for All calls. It was suggested that the Charles Bonnet Syndrome could be a good topic. A self-advocacy workshop was suggested and a discussion on protection for guide dog users.

A discussion was held about the membership form. How can we get more members to complete it? Is it too invasive? It was suggested that it could be termed a “Needs-Meeting Survey”. It was pointed out that part of the form is optional. Mary Ann stressed that if there are objections to the form that we are to let her know what they are. It was stressed many times that PCB wants to meet the needs of the members, but we need to know what those needs are. It was also pointed out that filling out the form only needed to be done once.

The question was asked: “When did we stop praying to God?” Sue responded that this occurred several years ago when there were comments from members who believed in other gods or who did not believe in God. We want each member to feel free to worship or not to worship as he or she chooses.

Sue concluded by thanking everyone for attending the conference, for all of the sponsors and the volunteers. She is looking forward to conference next year in Harrisburg, a sentiment with which I heartily agree. After the door prizes, the conference was adjourned for another year.

2018 Parliamentary Recap

by Carla Hayes, Team Leader

The Parliamentary Team was very busy in 2018. Here is a summary of the changes to the PCB Bylaws and the resolutions for 2018.

In general, the 2018 amendments dealt with the subject of Special Interest Affiliates and tightened up the language and format of the Bylaws to make the requirements for Special Interest Affiliates similar to those for chapters.

In Article IX: Chapters and Affiliates, Section 1 regarding chapters of PCB remained unchanged. Section 2 was modified to provide for the establishment of special interest affiliates similar to that for chapters, including: the number of members (eight rather than ten) and responsibility of charter approval reassigned from the convention to the board of directors. Since section 3 was revised to define identical standards of good standing for both chapters and special interest affiliates, section 4 regarding Special Interest Affiliates became unnecessary and was removed.

In Article IV: Membership, Section 9: Dues has been revised to reflect the following changes. The number of dues and method of collection of dues from each member of PCB, regardless of the type of affiliation, are now identical. The language establishing dues of fifty dollars per special interest affiliate has been removed. In the final paragraph, the words "special interest affiliates" are no longer necessary and have been removed.

Finally, in Article VI: Powers and Duties of the Board of Directors: Section 3 Credentials tightens up language ensuring that all provisions are identical for chapters and special interest affiliates.

If you would like to explore this year's revisions to the PCB Bylaws in more detail, please review John Luttenberger's article, "2018 Proposed Bylaw Amendments," which was published in the fall 2018 issue of The PCB Advocate. Since all the proposed amendments were approved at the PCB Convention, this article gives an excellent summary of the pertinent sections of the Bylaws before and after the revisions, and explanations for all the changes which were made.

Three resolutions were approved at the 2018 PCB Conference and Convention. RESOLUTION 2018-01, Guaranteeing Independent and Private Voting for Persons Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, was composed by Sue Lichtenfels on behalf of the AGA Team. Since accessible voting is of utmost importance to those of us who are blind or visually impaired, and it is essential for all PCB members to have a clear understanding of the coming changes in voting procedures, I feel that it is best to print this resolution in its entirety rather than summarizing it. Here it is:

RESOLUTION 2018-01

Guaranteeing Independent & Private Voting for Persons Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

WHEREAS, Title 2 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires state and local governments to ensure people with disabilities have a full and equal opportunity to vote including voter registration, polling site location, and casting of ballots; and,

WHEREAS, more than twenty-eight years after the passage of the ADA, Pennsylvania voters who are blind or visually impaired have never been afforded the opportunity for a fully accessible absentee ballot which would enable them to vote independently and privately; and,

WHEREAS, the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) requires that each polling site in jurisdictions conducting federal elections have at least one voting system that is accessible, including to citizens who are blind or visually impaired, which provides the same opportunity for access and participation, including privacy and independence, which other voters enjoy; and,

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania will be decertifying fully accessible machines that have been providing voter access for over a decade and forcing its counties to move to a paper record balloting system; and,

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth will be certifying a new collection of voter verifiable balloting machines for the counties to choose from, with the goal of implementation by 2020; and,

WHEREAS, the most basic voting process of writing on a paper ballot is not accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired; and,

WHEREAS, the technology exists to provide Pennsylvanians who are blind or visually impaired with both an absentee ballot process and an in-person voter-verifiable ballot system which are fully accessible, and provide for an independent, private, and secure vote;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the assembled convention of the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind (PCB) on October 21, 2018 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Pittsburgh-Green Tree, that PCB call on the Governor of the Commonwealth, the Secretary of the Commonwealth, the Bureau of Commissions, Elections and Legislation, and each County Board of Elections to make every effort possible to insure that Pennsylvania citizens who are blind or visually impaired are afforded every opportunity to cast an independent and private ballot, both in-person and through absentee procedures, prior to the 2020 General Election; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that PCB strongly urge the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Bureau of Commissions, Elections, and Legislation to arrange a special, interactive demonstration of all machines under consideration for certification, which is open only to people who are blind or visually impaired, so that these individuals may provide real-world feedback on the accessibility of all processes of these machines, prior to their certification; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Bureau of Commissions, Elections and Legislation, by certifying any machine that is not fully accessible, will be in violation of the ADA and therefore vulnerable to litigation on behalf of citizens who are blind or visually impaired; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Bureau of Commissions, Elections and Legislation certify an absentee balloting system that is accessible to citizens who are blind or visually impaired, and that a declaration from the Secretary be made to every County Board of Elections requiring the Board to adopt and implement such absentee voting system by the 2020 deadline to receive any moneys allocated to support election upgrades; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that PCB provide a copy of this resolution to all named officials and entities upon its adoption.

Resolutions 2018-02 and 2018-03 were courtesy resolutions thanking the convention planners and the Staff and Management of the DoubleTree by Hilton in Pittsburgh-Green Tree, respectively. Finally, we decided that from now on, we will write additional courtesy resolutions thanking the organizations that provide volunteers who help with various tasks at our annual PCB Conference and Convention.

I would like to conclude by thanking all the members of the Parliamentary Team for all their time and hard work on the 2018 amendments and resolutions. They include: John Luttenberger, Tom Burgunder, Mike Gravitt, and Fran Sine. I would also like to thank PCB President Sue Lichtenfels and the Executive Board for all their support and hard work. These amendments to the Bylaws and resolutions would not have been possible without all of you.

Whereas and Be It Resolved

By Chris Hunsinger, Second Vice President

The title of this article is a reminder that our membership has passed a resolution that needs your on-going support to realize. As you should be aware of by now, at our October conference, we passed a resolution about accessible voting machines and absentee ballots. We have sent that resolution to all 67 county Boards of Election, our State Legislators, the Governor, the Bureau of Commissions, Elections and Legislation, and the Secretary of the Commonwealth. We need to make all concerned know that we truly care about this resolution. We need everyone’s help to make that point.

The Advocacy and Government Affairs Team is asking that members and friends contact their county Board of Elections to let them know that we want to be part of the decision-making body of stakeholders in the county’s selection of accessible voting machines. Since each county will be making its own decision, it is vital that each of our members reach out to his or her specific county board to express concern and become involved in hands-on testing of pending voting systems.

We also know that the absentee ballot system that is now in use is filled with obstacles to private independent voting, so we want that to change as well. It also is important that we contact our state legislators to let them know about the absentee ballot issue because some of the changes may well require legislation. For many people the convenience of No Excuse Absentee Ballots would make it easier to acquire a ballot without much paperwork. But to make the system fully accessible, the ballots will need to be provided in an accessible format for us such as by phone or online—not a print paper we need to fill out.

I am giving you links to find contact information for your county’s Board of Elections and to locate your state legislators’ offices. The link for the list of county election officials is: tinyurl.com/PACountyElections. Make a note of the official in charge and address your comments to that individual. You can look up your State legislators at: legis.state.pa.us if you don’t have access to the Internet, call the PCB office at 877-617-7407 to ask for assistance in getting your contacts.

Here is a script for you to use with your county.

“My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a member of the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind. I live in \_\_\_\_\_ county and would like to speak to (the individual you noted as the election contact person).

Our organization recently passed and sent to your office a resolution on Accessible Voting Machines and Accessible Absentee Ballots. Since the counties will be picking new voting equipment from a list of equipment newly certified by the State of Pennsylvania, I want you to consider the views and opinions of people who will need accessible voting machines when the county is making the decision about which equipment to buy. I am concerned because none of the machines the state has been demonstrating include an accessible feature that enables people who have vision loss to verify their paper ballot. And of course, the old fashion pre-printed paper ballot and pen, like our current absentee voting process uses is not accessible to us either. There are ways that both the in-person and absentee processes can be made fully accessible so people with vision loss can exercise their right to an independent and private vote. I encourage you to consult with the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind or other organizations of the blind to determine what method will work best for our county and its residence with significant sight loss. Please keep me informed of any nearby demonstrations of voting equipment and meetings where the purchase of the equipment will be discussed, so that I too can be a part of the process. Let me give you PCB’s contact information and mine as well.”

Be sure you have PCB’s contact information which is in the front cover of this newsletter.

With your legislators it is important to explain that the current absentee ballot system is neither accessible nor independent. Short turnaround times, communication by mail, and the use of pen and ink ballots make it difficult for blind people to handle this process in an independent manner. We seek an overhaul of the system that makes it accessible to all.

Join your PCB peers as we hold statewide call-in days on January 8 and 9, 2019. We’ll each be reaching out to our county election officials, state legislators, the Secretary of the Commonwealth’s office, and the Bureau of Commissions, Elections and Legislation so that our voting rights issue is brought to everyone’s attention. More information will be available on the listserv and information line.

Upcoming Discussion Calls

Call: 605-475-4715 or toll-free 844-844-0414

Enter passcode: 815419#

Everything Braille

Friday, January 4 at 8 PM

Join us for a celebration of Louis Braille’s birthday as we discuss “Everything Braille.” Lisa Salinger will begin the call with an abbreviated version of her conference talk on comparing the Braille Me and the Orbit Reader braille displays. Then we’ll open the discussion to hear how you have used braille to make various aspects of life more accessible. In addition, can you share any resources for hard-to-find or unusual braille items such as jewelry, games, t-shirts, greeting cards, etc.? If you’re a braille user, you won’t want to miss a dot of this discussion call.

Hibernation Hobbies

Monday, January 14 at 7:30 PM

How do you pass those long, cold, snowy days? Join us for a fun and interactive discussion call, where you can share your favorite winter pastimes; whether it’s gaming, baking, crafting, reading, curling up on the couch in front of the TV, or the like. Or maybe you’re a cold-weather enthusiast who can’t wait to tell us about the awesome outdoor winter activities we’re missing. Whatever your preference, come ready to share!

Getting Organized

Monday, January 21 at 8 PM

Once the holidays are over, and the tree and gifts are put away, let’s think about getting organized to make our lives easier in the new year. Can you easily find a blouse or pair of earrings or pair of shoes you want when you are in a hurry to get dressed to go out? Can you quickly find the right kitchen tool or important document when you need it? Ed Facemyer and Jeanette Schmoyer will share some suggestions for being more organized and thus more comfortable with vision loss while dealing with daily tasks.

Advocacy for All Call

Wednesday, January 30 at 8 PM

Coming out of the 2018 PCB Conference and Convention, our advocacy efforts have been focused on two priorities: improving blindness rehabilitation services and ensuring independent, private voting in our Commonwealth. Join us for an update on our efforts thus far. We want to hear how you’ve been affected by these two issues and get your feedback on moving forward.

Seeking Members for Capitol Hill Visits

**Exciting, empowering, unique, informative, these are just a few adjectives that have been used to describe the experience of attending the ACB Legislative Seminar. If you have ever thought about what it would be like to go to our nation’s capital to visit face-to-face with your congressional representatives, and to do it alongside peers from across the country, PCB may have the opportunity for you.**

The American Council of the Blind annually conducts a national legislative seminar in the Washington, DC area. The purpose of the seminar is to provide a forum for members of the Council to visit with members of the House and Senate, familiarizing them with issues and national legislation vital to our interests.

Delegations of state affiliates, from throughout the nation, travel to our nation’s capital. During the first day of the seminar, attendees are informed of the specifics of those issues and legislative initiatives ACB has determined to promote. On the second day of the seminar, members of each state delegation travel to the Hill, paying a personal visit to each of the legislators representing their state; those appointments having been made in advance.

In 2019, the ACB Legislative Seminar will be held on Monday, February 25 and Tuesday, February 26. Attendees will arrive at the seminar hotel, the Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria, late Sunday afternoon, February 24 and head home late Tuesday afternoon, February 26 after meeting with legislators on Capitol Hill.

Any PCB member wishing to represent the organization at this upcoming event should submit a brief resume and/or bio to the Legislative Seminar Selection Committee (LSSC) outlining their qualifications as a representative and describing why they want to attend. The resume may be submitted in any accessible format, including, but not limited to, email, braille, large print, or audio. Email applications should be sent to advocacy@pcb1.org with all other formats mailed to PA Council of the Blind, Attn. LSSC, 931 N. Front Street, Suite B, Harrisburg, PA 17102. All applications must be received by Monday, January 14, 2019. Applicants should be able to function independently with daily living skills and to manage a long day traversing the Capitol complex with sighted assistance.

The LSSC will select seminar attendees by January 21, and promptly notify all applicants of their status. The number of candidates selected may be limited by the available budget for this event. PCB will cover the two overnights (double occupancy) at the seminar hotel and travel reimbursement. Additional reimbursement for meals at PCB’s daily per diam will occur as the allotted budget will allow, provided that receipts are submitted. For more information about this opportunity, contact Chris Hunsinger at 412-881-9328.

Getting to Know You

By Mary Ann Grignon, Membership Development Leader

First, allow me to take this time to wish you all a wonderful holiday season. However you celebrate, may it be the best of times.

Warning, if you do not read this article to its conclusion, you may miss out on a giveaway opportunity!

While normally I try inserting a bit of wit and humor in my articles, and while I will endeavor not to bore you, my focus for this edition of The PCB Advocate compels me to be a bit more serious than usual.

Let me begin by saying that we, PCB’s leadership really want to know our members. We aren’t voyeurs who just for the sake of gossip want to know what makes you tick, no, we truly want to know you, so we can develop programs that meet your needs, spark your interests and fulfill your desire to network with others in the vision loss community.

To that end, our team worked hard on developing a questionnaire to gather the kind of information that would help us to do just that. I will admit that in error we called this form a network membership form. So, to show you that we are listening to your concerns, we would like for you to think of this as a getting to know you survey.

Let’s break the process down. The top portion of the questionnaire is very much like what you are used to seeing in our old registration form. It entails providing the kind of information that allows us to register you with ACB and keep in touch with you as a member of the PCB network. This encompasses up to and including selecting your membership type. And while you may have provided this information years ago when you first joined the council, we felt it was time to do a major update of everyone’s information because there has been inconsistent annual updating of chapter membership lists.

Below that is where the survey begins. While the next two sections are optional, we are hopeful that in expectation of up-to-date programming that fits your interests and needs, you will complete the survey. Did you know that you could have it your way? That is, order up your survey in braille, large print, do it online at pcb1.org/membership, have one sent to you via email, or do it by phone to the office. Whatever your preference, just ask. We are here to serve! You should also understand that if you experience no change in your circumstances, you need not go through this process again.

During the Q&A portion of Sunday’s session at this year’s conference, there seemed to be some concern that the survey as we will now call it was somewhat personal in nature. Well, I guess in a way, it is personal. That is, it is about you, a member of the PCB network. It is all about the leadership’s need to strive toward making PCB an organization exciting and interesting to all, to you our current members and to any thinking of joining us.

At the end of this edition of The PCB Advocate, you will find the survey already in the format we have listed as your preference. I hope that with the perspective I have put forth above, you will consider completing as much of it as you are willing to share with those of us who want to improve your organization.

Oh, I almost forgot! Now that you have read this piece to its conclusion, I’ll tell you what the giveaway is. Well, if you are a dues-paid member for 2018 or 2019 and you have already completed and submitted the new questionnaire since its release in November 2017, or if you do complete and submit the “Getting to Know You Member Survey” by January 15, 2019, you will be entered in a drawing to win one of three $50 VISA gift cards. How’s that for incentive?

My sincere thanks to those on the Membership Development Team, Rose Martin, Nancy Scott, George Holliday, Mike Gravitt, Will Grignon and of course, Sue Lichtenfels. They are all wonderful.

2018 Fund Development Activities and Beyond

By George Holliday, Team Leader

Another great year is soon to be over, and the PCB Fund Development Team is reviewing 2018 projects and looking forward to another great year in 2019.

If you were at the state conference, you probably heard me briefly discussed current projects such as the car donation program, the room-rate 50/50, the calendar raffle, the annual auction, the Monthly Monetary Support program and PCB conference donations. Over the Past several years, PCB has depended on these revenue funding resources, however, some of those revenue streams have dwindled. Currently, there are no thoughts of discontinuing any projects, but we are exploring additional options

The team has begun to explore two additional fund development options: The Grant Writing Program and the PCB Planned Giving Program. Both projects will take some time and work to develop, but we have to start somewhere.

It takes time to put together grants, but they can be very beneficial. One important piece when writing grants is to include the organization’s volunteer hours. Grantors like to know the number of hours involved. So, the PCB teams are asked to track their volunteer hours. Every member volunteering on a team should track his or her hours and report them back to the team’s leader. At this time, a volunteer hour is worth $24.14 as per the Internal Revenue Service. So, if a team tracks 100 volunteer hours, it is valued at $2,414 in in-kind support of our work. This looks great when writing grants because we demonstrate that our members are putting a lot of resources into the organization, and so should the grantor.

This holiday season let your friends and family know how they can give the Gift of Independence and Opportunity through the PCB Planned Giving Program. The PCB Planned Giving Program includes different ways of gifting to PCB. These gifts will assist in helping make the world a better place for people experiencing vision loss. A Planned Gift to PCB creates a legacy. It will assist PCB in meeting its mission and goals such as: funding advocacy efforts, developing scholarships, providing convention attendee subsidies and more.

Some of the ways to make a charitable contribution are:

1. Gifts of Cash
2. Bequests
3. Designate a specific amount, a percentage of your total estate or a share of the remainder after gifts to your heirs.
4. Gifts through Living Trusts
5. Gifts of Real Estate
6. Gifts of Life Insurance
7. Gifts of Retirement Plans
8. Gifts of Securities

In Closing, on behalf of the PCB Fund Development Team, I wish you a happy holiday season. If you have any suggestions for the team or would like to join the team you can contact me at george.holliday@comcast.net or 215-796-9813.

2018 AccessiDocs Report

By the AccessiDocs Team

In 2018 the AccessiDocs team produced accessible Daisy3 versions of the following documents: four editions of The PCB Advocate, Welcome to NVDA 2018 by Joseph Lee, Lehigh Valley Resource Guide for Seniors, PCB’s Getting to Know Us guide, the 2018 PCB Conference Information Packet, and the 2018 PCB Conference information book.

During the last year the AccessiDocs project became a team effort, with PCB members Marty Mathews and Ed Facemyer joining the Accessidocs team. As a team, we've been embarked on training sessions and we've worked as a team in the production of The PCB Advocate audio editions. All of us on the team know there is quite a bit to learn in this ever-changing environment of digital reproduction.

Also, during the last year, the AccessiDocs project has been promoted through articles discussing the concept of the service in The PCB Advocate of course, but also in the ACB Braille Forum, and the latest edition of the newsletter of the Center for Vision Loss in the Lehigh Valley. In addition, our president has designed and brought online the AccessiDocs.com website which will require additional development and monitoring as a further promotion of the service. Looking forward, the future of the AccessiDocs service will depend on the further recruitment of volunteer workers and more importantly, a marketing strategy for the service and the formation of a marketing team.

I will conclude this report with a question and a plea to our membership. How many of you within our membership believe in the AccessiDocs service and feel the provision of documents in an accessible audio format is worthy of PCB's investment of time and resources? As an example, if those of you who receive The PCB Advocate in a Daisy3 audio format feel it important to you, then the PCB leadership needs to hear from you in one form or another. If you believe that furthering the development of a service to produce navigable audio documents is worthwhile, then consider referring local government entities, transit authorities, agencies, and organizations in your area to PCB, requesting that they make their documents accessible to you. If you have computer skills or any experience in marketing, or web design, then consider joining the AccessiDocs team. Whether referring AccessiDocs, volunteering your service, or requesting further information, contact Tony Swartz at tbswartz@ptd.net, or write to leadership@pcb1.org. Through your referrals and support You can have a significant impact on the future of the AccessiDocs project.

What I Have Learned This Year from PCB

By Jule Ann Lieberman, First Vice President

As 2018 heads into 2019 I have been thinking back on the many tips, success stories, and gestures of support we have shared this year.

From PCB discussion calls I have learned: how to beat the blues; how to meet new people and keep relationships strong; how to keep learning through classes at Hadley, and through on-line learning; how many ways I can read audio books; how to travel as a person with blindness or vision loss with or without a dog guide; and how to shop, wrap, decorate and entertain family and friends either at home or in the good company of friends elsewhere.

Even more, I never knew that if I pack a separate bag for my dog guide or bring along a travel crate, both can be checked for free while taking flights. I learned that you can wire ornaments on an artificial Christmas tree and store it in a dust free bag so that it will be ready to go each holiday. I found out that many of our PCB friends have a voice activated assistant who not only sets timers and alarms but can be a fun game partner. On safety and security, I learned that the safest way to get cash is from a bank branch rather than an ATM and when paying for a purchase I should always tell the cashier what bill I am giving him to avoid potential dishonesty. I learned the importance of our voting rights and how we all need to take an active role in the election process either in -person or through absentee ballots. I also learned that those with both hearing loss and blindness or vision loss can benefit from having support persons and how as a community we can advocate for this continued service.

Once again you all have proven to me that some of the most inventive, creative and thoughtful persons I have met are those who are blind or have vision loss. I look forward to 2019 to learn even more from you all!

LVCB: Drifting towards a New Year

By Liz Oleksa, LVCB President

The Lehigh Valley Council of the Blind (LVCB) is drifting towards a new year, but not before wrapping up a great 2018. LVCB continues to strive to be the leading advocacy and peer support network in the Lehigh Valley for those living with blindness and visual impairments. We work together as a team to support one another through our challenges and accomplishments. It takes each member to help LVCB be the incredible organization that it is today. So, a huge THANK YOU to all of our members, near and far!!!

Our fundraising efforts continued as we held our annual hot dog sale September 22 and 23, 2018. Our thoughts were to try a hot dog sale in the fall instead of the early summer months, as schedules lighten and the weather begins to cool down. We also shortened our sale from three days, down to two days, and had great success. Our Gertrude Hawke chocolate candy bar sales also were another hit this year. Flavors ranging from milk chocolate, to mint chocolate, to dark chocolate raspberry and so many more sold like…well…like chocolate bars. At only $1 per bar, they made a great snack and pick-me-up, but an even better fundraiser. We look forward to doing this fundraiser again next year.

As the 2018 year wraps up, LVCB reveals our new 2019 officers as well as updated committees. We look forward to seeing what this new combination of member committees will bring for not only our chapter, but our community. Our 2019 officers were selected at our November 17th meeting. The officers are as follows: President, Liz Oleksa; Vice President, Gary Dvorshak; Treasurer, Jameel Memon; Recording Secretary, Debbie Rozear; Corresponding Secretary, Dianne Michels. We welcome all members into their new positions and look forward to working together to make an even stronger LVCB in 2019.

LVCB recognizes a member each month as the LVCB Member of the Month. September was Rita Lang,   October was Jim Hauser, November was Elaine Young and December is Trudy Fatzinger. Congratulations to all our Members of the Month for standing out and being a special part of our chapter!

LVCB plans on holding our Winter Luncheon on Saturday, December 8th, 2018 at Superior Restaurant in Emmaus, PA from 11am until 2Pm. We are looking forward to sharing in friendship, good food and celebration as we close 2018 and welcome in a sparkling 2019.

Remembering George Culp

by Carla Hayes and Jack Bauer

We of the Washington County Chapter of the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind are saddened to report the death of George Culp, a dear friend and a long-time faithful member of our chapter. George J. Culp, age 79, of Washington, PA, passed away on November 9, 2018 at Manor Care in McMurray. A son of Walter and Mary ELIZABETH Garner Culp, he was born on July 26, 1939 in Mahoning Township in Montour County.

Mr. Culp was a man of many achievements. A graduate of Collingswood High School and Lehigh University, he worked as a railroad engineer for Conrail in Pittsburgh and SEPTA in Philadelphia. He enjoyed scuba diving, golfing and cross-country skiing.

George gave freely of his time to help others. He was a dedicated chapter member for several years. He used to pick up the members of our chapter and drive us to the Washington and Green County Association for the Blind or to local restaurants for chapter meetings and to other Council events. He spent many hours writing letters and making phone calls to legislators, doing research for our chapter, and helping us with fundraisers and other projects.

George Culp was also a family man. He is survived by his wife, a daughter, three grandchildren, one great granddaughter, a brother, a brother-in-law, and several nieces and nephews. He also had a sister who is deceased.

finally, George was a loyal friend to all of us in the Washington County Chapter of PCB and to many other people. He was always willing to give a piece of advice, a word of encouragement or comfort during difficult times. We could call him, and he would always be there to lend a helping hand.

As you can see, George was a very special man. His positive outlook, ingenuity, integrity, and sense of humor were only a few of the many qualities that made him an extraordinary individual. We all love him, and we will miss him very much!

Attending the ACB Conference and Convention

By Debbie Rozear

I have been attending the ACB Conference and Convention since 2009. My first experience was held in Orlando, Florida. Although I had attended the PCB Conference many times, all that the week-long ACB Conference and Convention had to offer was quite overwhelming. There were approximately 1,500 people, about 500 dogs and a pony at this convention. One of our members at LVCB said that he saw me blossom while attending. Since that first convention I have attended every year. Each year they are held in different states around the country. Before starting to attend, I had never been off the East coast. I can’t wait to attend again next year.

There are often ways to get assistance to attend the ACB Conference and Convention. Sometimes the state affiliate will help to send someone from one of the local chapters. There are also academic scholarships that include a conference experience plus tuition assistance. There are two first-timers’ scholarships, awarded to one ACB member east of the Mississippi and one to the west of it. For the last few years, ACB has also offered the JP Morgan Chase Leadership Fellows program which brings several potential leaders to the conference for networking and mentoring.

This past July, I had the pleasure of being nominated for the JP Morgan Chase Leadership Fellows Award. Attending the 2018 ACB conference and convention was even more fulfilling than attending other years. By receiving the award this year, I was able to stay for the entire event and participate in many activities and workshops that I otherwise would not have considered signing up for or have been able to afford. Meeting many new people and having the privilege of meeting past recipients of this prestigious award has given me eye-opening experiences and has made me more enthusiastic about being more involved in this great organization.

 Beginning in 2019, I will be co-chairing the ACB Awards Committee. Since returning home, there have already been some opportunities to share some of the things I have learned at the convention. I am hoping to share more of my knowledge with other members and on committees in the near future. This was a great opportunity to learn and grow not only as an advocate, but as an individual. I recommend this opportunity to anyone who may have an interest in pursuing it in the future. Not only did I learn, but I also became friends with people that I otherwise would have never met. While some will become lasting relationships, others are acquaintances that I look forward to renewing at future conventions.

In 2019 the ACB Conference and Convention is being held in Rochester, NY. The dates are from July 5 through July 12. There will be many concurrent activities and events going on during the week to fill anyone’s schedule. So far there has been a glimpse into two of the tours that will be offered. Before the opening session, ACB members will have the chance to visit the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. The final tour will be a visit to Niagara Falls. For many in our PCB family, this year’s conference site of Rochester is very close. If you would like the experience of a lifetime, try to make it there even if only for a day or two. You won’t be sorry.

ACB Scholarships Now Open

The American Council of the Blind has a great opportunity for students who are legally blind to earn a scholarship, whether you are going to a technical college, an entering freshman, undergraduate or a graduate student. Over $45,000 in scholarships are awarded to students each year. To be eligible, you need to be legally blind in both eyes, maintain a 3.3 GPA, and be involved in your school/local community.

 As a scholarship winner, you will experience firsthand ACB’s National Conference and Convention in July, where you will meet other students who share the same life experiences, create lasting friendships, and network with individuals who understand what you are going through and can help you with your journey.

 The 2019 ACB scholarship application is now open! Access the form at [acb.org/2019-scholarship](http://acb.org/2019-scholarship). The form must be submitted no later than February 15th, 2019 at 11:59 P.M. Central time.

 For more information, please contact Nancy Feela in the ACB national office at 612-332-3242 or toll-free 800-866-3242. We look forward to receiving your application materials.

Latest Happenings with the Airlines

By Joe Fagnani

Airlines continue to update their policies regarding animals that fly onboard planes because consumer complaints are up 80% this year. We think a lot of this is because they allow emotional support animals and pets to fly in the passenger cabins.

There has been a dramatic increase in numbers of people who, identify as having a disability or anxiety, who bring dogs, cats, and other kinds of animals onboard, resulting in associated increases in the number of incidents involving badly behaved and uncontrolled animals. It should be noted that accredited schools do not train cats, rodents, pigs, snakes, insects, etc., to be service animals. Also, certification does not mean that the dog has come from an accredited school, since there are more self-proclaimed certification facilities than there are accredited schools. While there was a movement toward miniature horses to guide the blind, that has since been found to be too problematic. If the airlines are motivated by concerns for the safety of all, they need to revise their policies about accepting emotional support dogs and pets for their passengers and crews.

People accompanied by certified service dogs are also concerned about safety onboard an aircraft. Requiring updated vaccination records does not address the behavioral issues that can make sharing a cabin or a row with a frightened or untrained animal any safer for passengers or crew members. Like anyone else who flies, we don’t want ourselves or our well-cared-for service dogs (including up-to-date vaccinations) to be exposed to communicable diseases, or distractions that can result in our being unsafe. We understand the airlines’ concern about the health and behavioral certification for service dogs, because having well trained and controlled dogs, makes flying a more comfortable experience for everyone.

The airlines received an exception from the ADA regulations and are controlled by the Aviation compliance division of the department of transportation (DOT). The DOT breaks down the animals into two main groups, service dogs and pets. Service dogs are further broken down in to three groups: service (for physical disabilities), psychiatric (can perform defined tasks) and emotional support dogs (not trained to perform assistive tasks).

Pets need documentation 48 hours in advance of the flight and must be in a carrier. Emotional and psychological support dogs require documentation to be supplied 48 hours before flying. A service dog for a physical disability does not have to have documentation.

The DOT is supposed to clarify the requirements for the different groups of animals by the end of 2018. The current policy states that if you are traveling with a trained service dog, in some cases, you may be asked to show:

1. The dogs Veterinary Health Form and/or an immunization record or other proof that the dog’s vaccinations are current within one year of the travel date.

2. While not required, customers are encouraged to upload this documentation to My Trips through the Accessibility Service Request Form.

Airlines say valid tags issued by your local animal services department will suffice as “other proof that the dog’s vaccinations are current.”

If the airlines think that your dog is not a certified service dog, they may ask the following two questions:

 Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?

 What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

If there is still a problem at this point, the handler can ask to speak with a Complaint Resolution Officer (CRO). The CRO should know all the rules and policies surrounding allowing animals on the aircraft.

In addition, effective July 10, Delta Airlines announced, pit bulls as pets are not allowed inside the cabin.

The ADA does not accept emotional support animals or pets as service dogs. We think the acceptance of these animals by the DOT promotes the spread of fraudulent service animals in other places of public accommodation.

Editor’s Note: Joe Fagnani submitted this article in his capacity as the Board President of the Center for Independent Living of South-Central PA and Chairman of the Service Paws of Central PA Board.

Exciting Designs on Display

By Jeanette Schmoyer and Jacob Ford

In mid-October our grandson, Jacob Ford, invited my husband, Dick, and me to join him for a visit to the Cooper Hewitt Museum in New York. The museum was featuring a temporary exhibit scheduled to end on October 22, 2018. The exhibit was titled “The Senses: Design Beyond Vision,” a design exhibition which focused on designing for senses other than sight. Many of the curated inventions, devices, and designs were developed for those with sensory disabilities, or other disabilities such as dementia.

The Cooper Hewitt Museum is one of nineteen museums that fall under the wing of the Smithsonian Institution and is one of three Smithsonian facilities located in New York City. Cooper Hewitt is in the Andrew Carnegie mansion on the upper east side of Manhattan, next to the east side of Central Park.

According to the website, “Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum is the only museum in the United States devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design. After a three-year renovation, the museum re-opened in December 2014 with exhibitions featuring a rich mix of design objects from our permanent collection, unique temporary installations, and dynamic interactive experiences. We also have an exciting calendar of events, including hands-on workshops, talks, and family programs.”

On a lower level of the museum there were objects and ideas that had been winners in a high school student design contest which also dealt with consideration for people with disabilities.

In the main exhibit, some of the most interesting things we saw on display were kitchen and bathroom items using contrasting colors. For example, plates for eating had a high contrast red ring around the edge of the white plates. Similarly, the white sink in the bathroom had a high contrast red ring around the edge of the sink and had the same contrasting red sink hardware. Hand rails for the tub/shower and towel racks were also in dark contrasting colors on the white bathroom tiles. This use of dark contrasting colors was designed for those with dementia because it directs their attention to the items and helps them focus. However, as we know, high contrast is a known vital ingredient for people with low vision and thus serves the double purpose. See more on the high-contrast bathroom hardware by HEWI: **tinyurl.com/ycckoop6.**

In another area of the main exhibit we were able to pick up and examine eating utensils with tactile markings on the handles to identify the utensil without touching the bowl of the spoon or the tines of the fork. The marking on the knife indicated the sharp edge of the knife. For more on the tactile cutlery and more by Simon Kinneir, see: tinyurl.com/y9j6vuuu.

The high-tech item that will interest many of you is a braille tactile watch that had refreshable braille on the face of the watch. Pushing a button on the side of the watch would bring up the braille pins to tell the time. An alarm could also be set which would vibrate and then pop up the braille pins to indicate the appropriate time. In addition, this “Dot watch” could be paired with your smart phone and the watch would vibrate to indicate the arrival of a text message or caller ID for a phone call and present the text of a message in braille. This Dot watch was available in the museum gift shop and is also available from Amazon. It is advertised as the first braille and tactile blue tooth smart watch. This company is also working on a larger Kindle-like device with a large array of refreshable Braille, as well as a standard for public signage and wayfinding. See more on their accessible website: dotincorp.com.

A system of color labeling called Feelipa was on display. It was based on shapes. For example, if a triangle stood for red and a circle stood for yellow, then orange was made up of half a triangle and half a circle. In the system, light and dark shades were indicated with horizontal bars over the relevant color shape. One bar for white/light, two for grey/medium, and three bars for black/dark. Any combination of two primary colors could be represented with the combined shapes. This system would work well if it became universal, at least within one nation. The tactile shapes could be used on furniture, paint cans, clothing, and so much more. See their own accessible website: [feelipa.com](http://www.feelipa.com/).

Among the student-winning presentations were items for other disabilities, such as a wheelchair that had a back that folded down to become a walker. There was an idea to translate sign language into text and audio to allow deaf and hard of hearing people and sighted people to all communicate with each other simultaneously.

Another practical idea was a proposed standard for tactile markings embedded in sidewalks and walking paths, to be felt by canes. Grooves indicate the direction of a path. Differing dot patterns indicate building entrances, bus stops, lowered curbs, and construction zones. Video with audio description of these is here: [youtube.com/watch?v=lJAmnwGzD54](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lJAmnwGzD54).

I hope you have enjoyed walking through this exhibit in your mind’s eye. We live in exciting times with amazing technology and new ideas for inventions for people with disabilities. I thank Jacob for encouraging us to come see this exhibit, and for his assistance in doing research for this article.

The street address for the Cooper Hewitt Museum is 2 E 91st St, New York, NY 10128. The phone number is 212-849-8400. The website is [cooperhewitt.org](https://www.cooperhewitt.org/).

First Man

By Nancy Scott

I am a NASA nerd. I remember Alan Shepard’s sub-orbital flight. I remember waiting late into the night for the first moonwalk.

I kept hearing commercials for the movie “First Man.” I really wanted to see it. I asked my computer wizard, Angel, if she would like to go.

I had been to three previous Regal Cinema movies with description. Two worked fine and one did not.

We went to the Regal in Phillipsburg, NJ. It was the first showing on a Tuesday, just after noon but we arrived in plenty of time.

We bought tickets and asked for the headset that enables video description. This is what Regal calls their narration of visual elements for people who cannot see the screen.

“No problem,” said the manager—my first man in this adventure.

(Angel said he was the guy in the suit.)

He came back with large headphones and a receiver to wear around my neck with volume up and down buttons. I thanked him and crossed my fingers.

Since we got to theater 8 early, we watched all the commercials. There were lots of them. My first clue that the correct setting was on my headphones was that I did not hear pre-movie speaker content through the headset. For a long time, I didn’t hear anything through my headset. I asked Angel if the unit was on. She said yes and that there was a green light.

Only two commercials, specifically for Regal Cinema refreshments, were described. But once I heard the first one, I knew the manager had set the device correctly.

It would help if a computer voice could come on occasionally to say that video description was on. I understand that most commercials and movie previews change. So only advertisements for Coke and popcorn could be spoken in my ears.

I heard just the voice of the describer in the headset. My guess is that if you hear other audio, you probably have the wrong setting if the theater offers other accessibility services. The prerecorded track of the describer was my second man.

Each ear of my headset was fully enclosed with a band over my head. I wore one ear on for the description and one ear off for the theater speakers. I adjusted the description volume, especially for explosions and the like. Movie theater speakers are very loud.

The video description was immediately helpful for knowing where the movie began and where scenes shifted. Text on the screen and subtleties were verbalized. Sometimes, I heard description first.

“She closes the car trunk.” And then I heard the metallic noise and knew what it was. Sometimes, there were camera views of Neil Armstrong’s eyes or dials with numbers. Or memories of his daughter. (I didn't know he had a daughter. She died very young.)

Angel was not alive when this first moonwalk happened. She didn't know Walter Cronkite and Wally Schirra explaining acronyms and trying for poetry. I tried to quietly warn her when something bad would happen, like the Apollo fire that killed three astronauts and maybe gave Armstrong his chance to be First Man.

Shall we count the actor who played Neil Armstrong as my third man?

Neil Armstrong stops after his first lunar step and looks down at his footprint in the gray, fine sand. I would have missed that without the video description.

There is a haunting scene when Neil Armstrong drops his daughter’s bracelet into a moon crater. I would have totally missed that, too.

Angel googled the bracelet scene and no one is sure that it happened. There was a moment when Neil Armstrong went off the mission plan, so perhaps he did release the bracelet.

Angel said she tried to hear the description and wished she had a headset to hear it better. For me, video description is a real inducement to go to first run movies.

I thanked the young man at the counter for the wonderful headset. He was glad and said the headphones were new. I guess he was my fourth man.

I may have known more than some sighted folks watching the movie. Some small steps toward access are larger than they seem. It’s just like stepping onto the moon.

From the Corner of My Eye

By Jule Ann Lieberman

About five years ago while I was in graduate school, I would take the regional rail to my lab classes on campus at Salus University. In the early hours of the morning this meant that I would board in Devon and exit at Jefferson Station in Philadelphia. I would then wait about ten minutes to board a train to Jenkintown. Having some functional vision, I was able to see how some other passengers reacted to me.

My dog guide (then Johann) would guide me to the bench at Devon Station. I saw out of the blurry corner of my eye that a fellow passenger got up and moved further down the platform. At the time, I just thought perhaps he was not comfortable with dogs, so I brushed this off. The next day I left Johann home because of weather concerns and traveled with my cane instead. I located the bench, and again the man got up and moved down the platform. Thinking that people are basically accepting, I shrugged the incidents off, considering that maybe he wanted to board further down in the line of cars.

A similar incident happened at my connecting station as well. This time a woman who was sitting on the far end of the bench as I sat down got up and moved to another bench. The same behavior happened whether I was using my white cane or my dog guide. Since I’ve never had a problem with my personal hygiene or my dog’s hygiene, and I was dressed in work appropriate professional clothing , I deduced it was only the fact that I had visible evidence that I was blind that seemed to repel these fellow passengers. Seeing their willful avoidance really depressed me at first.

Of course, this played on my mind and with my personality type, I wanted to go up to each of them and say, “Hey, what is your problem? I too work, ride the train and live a full happy life.” Was it that they thought I would have my “hat in hand” where the term handicapped originated, or did they fear my blindness was contagious? But I followed my mother’s advice from childhood to keep being kind, and for those who reject you, it is truly their loss not yours. Now I just smile when I see this happen and think to myself, I am here, I am working hard, and I am loved by family and good friends.

My blindness has not lowered my self-esteem nor should anyone who is experiencing changes in their vision feel excluded. My mother’s words remind me that the loss is theirs when others choose to exclude me. It makes me think about others that have been excluded and discriminated against only on the fact that they are different. Do not fear the discrimination but live your life as you want. While I wish I had not “seen” this behavior, I prefer to focus on all the great new people that Have taken the time on the train to treat me as an equal. Keep being kind and others will join you!

Trust and Walk with Me

By Liz Oleksa and Bryce Krispie

This poem/song was written to the song called “Shut up and Dance with Me” by Walk the Moon.

Oh, please don’t you give up.

Just keep your faith in me.

I know that you are holding back,

But TRUST and walk with me.

This human and I were meant to be,

So please just TRUST and walk with me.

She lives her life in physical darkness,

And lives everyday with no sight.

She feels helpless both day and night,

But I will help her see,

Allow her to finally feel free…

She took my harness in hand,

I love how it just happened,

We hit the road, and I thought…

Oh, please don’t you give up.

Just keep your faith in me.

I know that you are  scared and holding back,

But TRUST and walk with me.

I know this human and I were meant to be,

So please, just TRUST and walk with me…

My brand-new harness matches with her sneakers,

We would work hard and learn from our trainers.

With my head held high, I guided her,

I will help her see,

Giving her the confidence to finally feel free…

Again, she took my harness in hand,

I love how it just happened,

We hit the road, and I thought…

Oh, you are not giving up!

You are keeping your faith in me!

You are not as scared or holding back,

You are TRUSTING and walking with me!

I knew this human and I were meant to be,

I am so glad that you TRUST and walk with me…

By using my eyes

she can start to see her future,

I feel as though my life is now complete as I guide her…

Now, she takes my harness in hand,

I love how it just happens,

We head on home together and I think…

See, you have not given up!

You have kept your faith in me!

You are not scared or holding back,

You have full TRUST and now we walk as a team!!

I knew the day would come when you would finally see,

Believe in yourself, TRUST and you are truly free!

you have not given up!

You have kept your faith in me!

You are not scared or holding back,

You have full TRUST and now we walk as a team!!

I knew the day would come when you could  see,

We believe in Us; TRUST and we  are now a team and free!

The day my human and I were matched as a Seeing Eye Guide Dog team, our lives became complete. She completes me, and I her. Together we TRUST and believe, knowing that with my help, she can live independently, with confidence and dignity.

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PCB- A Peer Network for All Impacted by Vision Loss

Getting to Know You Member Survey

Fields with \* are strongly requested.

 Name\*:

 Birth Date:

What is your current age range\*: (please check one)

\_\_\_\_ Over 65

\_\_\_\_ 51-65

\_\_\_\_ 31-50

\_\_\_\_ 18-30

\_\_\_\_ Under 18

Street Address\*:

City/State/Zip\*:

County\*:

Phone #1\*:

Phone #2:

Email:

Please note: All members will be automatically added to PCB’s email distribution list. Announcements of events, opportunities, and resources are sent out 2 to 3 times each month. For members without email access, PCB posts monthly updates to the PCB Information Line, available by calling 773-572-6314.

Preferred Format of Material\*: (please check one)

\_\_\_Braille \_\_\_Large Print

\_\_\_Email \_\_\_Audio/NLS Cartridge

Are you a person with vision loss?\*

\_\_\_\_YES \_\_\_NO

How long have you experienced vision loss (please check one)

\_\_\_\_ Less than 2 years

\_\_\_\_ 2 to 5 years

\_\_\_\_ 5 to 10 years

\_\_\_\_ More than 10 years

If you are not a person with vision loss, how are you impacted by vision loss?

\_\_\_Family member \_\_\_Friend

\_\_\_Community member \_\_\_Professional

\_\_\_Colleague

Select your annual network membership type\*:

\_\_\_Individual Adult $10 \_\_\_Individual Junior (under 18) $5

\_\_\_Nonprofit Agency $20 \_\_\_Corporate/For-profit $60

Which of the following PCB offerings are of interest to you?\* (Check all that apply.)

\_\_\_AccessiDocs Document Conversion Service

\_\_\_American Council of the Blind

\_\_\_Annual Conference

\_\_\_Having/Being a Vision Loss Mentor

\_\_\_iDevices for Independence

\_\_\_Leadership and Volunteer Opportunities

\_\_\_Local Chapters (additional fee may be required.)

\_\_\_PCB-Chat Listserv

\_\_\_PCB Telephone Information Line

\_\_\_Public Awareness & Peer Outreach Literature

\_\_\_Public Policy/Advocacy Projects

\_\_\_Quarterly Newsletter

\_\_\_TheReImage Campaign

\_\_\_Topical Discussion Calls

\_\_\_Vision Loss Resources

Are you interested in being listed in a data base of individuals who provide peer support to others impacted by vision loss? Please note, your name, email and telephone information will be shared with individuals who contact the PCB office seeking peer guidance.

\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

If yes, what type of experience or expertise might you be comfortable providing? (e.g. assistive technology, parenting, organizing, a specific occupation, language fluency, etc.)

Which of the following topical areas are of interest to you? (Check all that apply.)

\_\_\_Accessible Products/Devices

\_\_\_Adjusting to vision loss

\_\_\_Advocacy

\_\_\_Braille

\_\_\_Education

\_\_\_Employment

\_\_\_Guide Dogs

\_\_\_Health & Fitness

\_\_\_Hobbies

\_\_\_Home Management

\_\_\_Parenting

\_\_\_Personal Development

\_\_\_Sports

\_\_\_Social Media

\_\_\_Technology

\_\_\_Transitioning to Adulthood

\_\_\_Travel

\_\_\_Other (Please list.)

If you are seeking vision loss resources, please tell us more about your needs so we can best offer assistance.

Please note PCB program coordinators will contact you to provide or gather additional information based on your responses to all questions.

Free Matter for the Blind

Or Handicapped

(Handle as 1st class Mail)

Domestic Mail Manual Sec. 135.7

RETURN TO

PA COUNCIL OF THE BLIND

931 N FRONT STREET

HARRISBURG, PA 17102

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