**The**

****

**Advocate**

 **Spring Edition 2020**

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

PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL OF THE BLIND

931 N. Front Street

Harrisburg, PA 17102

**Phone: (717)-920-9999 or (877)-617-7407**

**Email:** pcboffice@pcb1.org

**Website: www.pcb1.org**

Facebook: PACounciloftheBlind
Twitter: @PCB\_Advocate

PCB Information Line: 773-572-6314

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, 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 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 the PCB.

EDITORIAL CREDITS

Content Editor: Sue Lichtenfels

Copy Editor & Print Layout: Christina Heintzelman

Audio Production: AccessiDocs Team

Braille Edition: Horizons for the Blind

SUBMITTING ARTICLES

If you wish to submit articles for consideration, submission deadlines are March 1, June 1,

September 1 and November 20

Send articles to ADVOCATE,

c/o Sue Lichtenfels Email- advocate@pcb1.org or 96 Robb Hollow Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15243.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Tips from Heloise Hunsinger by Christine Hunsinger…………………………………………………. 7

Upcoming Peer Discussion Calls………………. 11

PCB and the Brenda Dillon Memorial Walk…. 13

2020 1st-Timer Stipends and Merit Award

By William H. Grignon………………………………. 14

Make TheReImage the Reality………………….. 16

A Sensational Celebration………………………… 18

Why Bother? By William H. Grignon…………… 20

Still Requesting Peer Feedback by Sue Lichtenfels ………………………………………………23

Virtual Vision Loss Support Group ……………..30

2020 PCB Elections ………………………………….32

Ready, Set, Bid! By Mary Ann Grignon ………..33

Have You Done a Bylaws Audit ………………….35

Reward Excellence with a PCB Award by William H. Grignon ……………………………………43

Fund Development, It’s Give and Take by Mary Ann Grignon …………………………………………….46

Your Genes and Vision Loss by Jule Ann Lieberman ……………………………………………….50

Rosters: Who’s Who and What’s What by William H. Grignon ……………………………………57

Keystone Chapter News by Cathy Long ……..58

COVID-19 and Dogs by William H. Grignon ….60

Consigned to Mediocrity? Part 1 by Tony Swartz …………………………………………………….65

What I Wish the World Understood about Blindness and Visual Impairment by Rebecca L. Holland ………………………………………………..71

Without Sight by Elizabeth Oleksa ……………..80

Grab a Book and Enjoy! by Joanne Rath ……..83

Editor’s Note ……………………………………………85

Chapter & Affiliate Presidents …………………..86

PCB Board of Directors…………………………….. 87

Tips from Heloise Hunsinger

By Christine Hunsinger, PCB President

Hello peers. For this article, I’ll be doing my Heloise imitation.

When I ask myself about a topic to give my peers information on, I immediately start to think of technology and how we can put it to use to help us in our daily lives. That’s not fair though. Just because I can’t imagine life without my iPhone in my hand or pocket that doesn’t mean that you think that way.

I don’t always use computers and iPhones to make life easier. Let’s talk about tips and tools for the kitchen. I won’t give you a price list or item numbers, but I’ll tell you about the types of products I use to make tasks easier.

You may have given up on fried eggs because it is too hard to chase them around the skillet. And so, you may have just settled for scrambled eggs. Try silicone egg rings. After the skillet is hot, and the butter is melted, you can place silicone egg rings in the pan. Break an egg into each ring and they stay where you put them.

If you thought that you would always have to buy toaster pancakes, you can use those same rings for pancake batter as well. I usually make enough batter for two indulgent mornings of pancakes and pure maple syrup. I don’t know if pancake batter is still available already made in a carton at the grocery store. A little less than a quarter-cup makes a pancake and you don’t have one mass of semi-connected pancakes to flip.

Yes, you still have to turn the pancakes and eggs, but it is easier because you know where they are in the pan. Just put the spatula under the ring, grab its little handle with your other hand and shake the ring to dislodge the item. Your pancake or egg is on your spatula, and you can then flip it.

Perhaps, you don’t fry bacon because it splatters and pops, and you aren’t sure if you turned all of the slices anyway. Try putting the bacon in a cold skillet and using a sandwich press or panini press to keep it flat. It covers the bacon, and you don’t have to turn it. The bacon is done when it gets quieter.

Are you afraid that you will cut your fingers when you try mincing onions, peppers, or celery? You could use a food processer and learn which of the blades does what, but you can also use a chopper that is a jar with blades on a spring attached to the lid. You keep pushing down the handle until you get the vegetables as finely chopped as you want. You can check the contents of the jar to see if they are chopped into small enough pieces at any time. If you don’t like doing this by hand but don’t want a big food processer, some immersion blenders have a small chopping unit that works similarly, but it is electric. If you run it too long, you get puree.

I really like my silicone mitts for grabbing corn on the cob out of the pot instead of taking that big pot over to the sink to dump it. It’s a little warm, but I don’t get burned by sloshing water which I always think about when carrying a full pot of boiling water.

I look for steamer inserts with handles that fit pans that I use for cooking pasta and vegetables. I don’t have to pour the pasta into a colander; I just lift the insert and the submerged pasta comes out and the water ends up back in the pan.

Since I usually steam my vegetables, I only put enough water into the pan to barely come through the bottom of the steamer insert. While the water is coming to a boil, I measure the frozen vegetables, or cut up the fresh vegetables and put them into the steamer. I pop that into the pan of boiling water and let it cook. When the vegetables are ready, I just lift out the steamer of vegetables.

I hope that these little tactics help people look at their kitchen challenges in a different way. If you have tips and tricks that you use in the kitchen, send them to me at cs.hunsinger@verizon.net or give me a call. I’ll compile a list of those tips and tricks and pass them on to everyone.

Upcoming Peer Discussion Calls

Remember, PCB calls are open to all. Please, invite a friend to join us and enjoy the sharing.

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

Pass Code: 815419#

Swipe-Tap

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.

Your smart phone is millions of times more powerful than the Apollo 11 onboard computers; then why does it act so dumb? Join your head-scratching Peer Engagement Team for an electrifying discussion call about what's new, what's up, and what's that darn buzzing in your pocket! It's more than just iPhones and apps, it's a guided tour into your personal Techtopia. So much that can be done and so many darn ways to do it. Let's gather round the glow of our little screens and share the power!

Go Au Naturel

Monday, May 11, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.

Let's go au naturel with May’s peer discussion call. It’s all about lotions, potions, ointments, unguents, cleansers, compresses, tinctures, teas, and trusty down-home remedies and it's all natural. Join us for a friendly frolic on the green side as we share favorite nostrums and know-hows to destress, detox,  and keep your aura happy. DISCLAIMER: Before changing any medical regime, consult with your medical professional. PCB makes no  claim of safety, efficacy, or expertise, nor does it endorse any opinion, assertion of fact, or recommendation set forth by the participants.

PCB & the Brenda Dillon Memorial Walk

During the 2020 ACB conference and Convention to be held in Schaumburg, Illinois in July, PCB will be having a walk team. Our name is Home of Independence. We invite all PCB peers and friends attending the convention to join our team and walk. Also, those peers and friends not attending the conference can participate as virtual walkers for the team. Stayed tuned to the PCB-L and PCB Information Line for emerging details on how to sign up for the team or sponsor a walker.

2020 1st-Timer Stipends and Merit Award

By William H. Grignon, Team Leader

Before you know it, the PCB Conference and Convention will be here. (October 22-25 at the Crowne Plaza in Harrisburg) As in the past, we will be offering some first-timer opportunities. If you have never attended our conference, you may qualify for one of two first-timer stipends. One is allocated for a paid PCB peer who has never attended a conference. The other is for a peer or perhaps someone currently unfamiliar with PCB who has been adjusting to vision loss for less than five years.

In either case, the selected recipients will receive  a stipend which will help to cover conference expenses such as hotel stay, conference activities and meals, and transportation. The amount of each stipend will depend on several variables, including the number of qualifying applicants, transportation arrangements, and chapter support.

The official deadline to apply for a stipend is September 11, 2020, so you have plenty of time – but why delay? Write to stipends@pcb1.org to let us know you are interested and for which opportunity you are applying. Include your name, email address, phone number and a paragraph or two about how you hope to benefit from attendance at our 2020 conference in Harrisburg.

Your Peer Engagement Team also offers an annual Merit Award – not a scholarship – but a $500 award that can be spent on anything. We are in search of a student attending or about to attend a higher learning institution or post-secondary vocational training program who will complete an application and send it to our team. We will pick the three most deserving candidates, who will attend our conference all expenses paid, and it is at our conference that we will announce the winner of the $500 Merit Award. Look for our official application form coming out in mid-April – finalists will be chosen in early September.

A big part of belonging to a peer network is sharing information, like these great opportunities. If you have been to a conference, if you can remember back to your first, then you know how valuable the experience is. So, spread the word about these wonderful opportunities far and wide!

Make TheReImage the Reality

What image comes to mind when most sighted people hear "blind person?" How does that image shift when they meet a confident, competent person with vision loss? How does that image change when they get to know the person, happy, active, and engaged in the same every-day life situations everyone else experiences, sight or no sight?

The result, well that’s what we at the  Pennsylvania Council of the Blind call, TheReImage! We invite all peers with blindness or vision loss to join our online campaign to re-create the image of people with vision loss while establishing new possibilities.

TheReImage is one word and it’s one big idea: People with vision loss lead full, busy lives just like sighted people.

TheReImage is all about our stories, our passions, our adventures, and our everyday lives of family, faith, fun, work, and service. TheReImage is a place where many voices come together to rework the sighted world's false narratives, to tell our own stories in our own way, and show the world a powerful new image of what it means to be a person with vision loss.

Visit our site at TheReImage.net. There, you will meet all kinds of people, leading all kinds of lives, sharing all kinds of insights. Read others’ stories or submit your own story. It's all about sharing, it's all about truth, it's all about changing the image - it's TheReImage!

TheReImage.net, easy to remember, easy to share!

A Sensational Celebration!

Mark your calendars and start making your plans. You DO NOT want to miss the Keystone state’s premier conference for people who are impacted by vision loss either directly or through a friend or family member. Hosted by the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind, this community-wide conference will take place Thursday, October 22 through Sunday, October 25, 2020 at the Crowne Plaza in downtown Harrisburg. The weekend’s theme is sensational: Celebrating Our Senses.

That’s right, this year we’re breaking with tradition and not focusing all our offerings on vision loss resources, strategies, and issues. Instead, we’re celebrating all the other senses that empower, inform, and enhance our lives. Those senses go beyond the traditional see, hear, taste, smell, and feel into more complex senses such as spatial awareness, body movement, intuition, and our senses of humor, style, and well-being. We don’t just want to talk about our senses, we want to explore and enhance them through interactive workshops and hands-on activities. If you have an idea for a great session that fits this theme, send an email to presentations@pcb1.org. Visit pcb1.org/conference/call-for-presentations for more details on proposing a sensational session.

On a different topic, do your friends and family ever say, “You should get on American Idol!” If so, maybe you would like to sign up to be part of the after-banquet entertainment at the upcoming conference. We are working on an open mic night on Saturday, October 24. If you sing, play an instrument, tell jokes or stories, write and read poetry, or the like, get ready to show us your stuff and wow us with your talent.

If you want to be a part of this sensational evening, please call Cathy Long at 717-732-5265, or email her at long.cathy1223@gmail.com. Be sure to give her your name, phone number, and your talent. She’ll follow-up with you promptly. Please contact her by May 1, 2020 so appropriate plans can be made.

Why Bother?

By William H. Grignon, Team Leader

Why bother? Why sacrifice your time, treasure, effort, and enthusiasm in the service of PCB? Why participate in your Peer Engagement Team's latest program of outreach, inclusion, and collaboration? Why put yourselves out there as role models, ambassadors, and educators in a culture that still views blindness as something between a curse and a death sentence? Why lobby seemingly impervious public officials only to encounter indifference, lip service, grudging advances, and sudden reversals? Why continually reach out to persons with vision loss and offer them encouragement, mentoring, programs, and social opportunities only to see many of them show a flicker of interest then fall away? Why bother?

How about bothering because you really care? You care that all the social, employment, technical, and regulatory advantages that we now enjoy are the result of the work of thousands who labored over decades to make the world a little better for those who were to come. You care because we all know the loneliness and challenging moments that can accompany loss of vision and we want to make the journey of others a little easier. You care because we are all made stronger, better, and more complete human beings through our service to others.

How about bothering because you really can? You can because hardworking visionaries in Pennsylvania saw a need for a statewide network of peers with vision loss that could unite, uplift, empower, and celebrate one another. You can because you have the technological, social, and organizational means to communicate all our needs, concerns, plans, and passions. You can because PCB exists to serve one and all, all in one.

And how about bothering because there is satisfaction in knowing you have done your best and you have challenged your own doubts, fears, and self-limitations to dare to dream, reach out, and embrace something bigger than yourself?

And a good first step is to respond to your Peer Engagement Team's outreach and work with them to make your chapter stronger, better-equipped, and more fun. Your Team will be calling on you to bother. Answer that call!

Still Requesting Peer Feedback

By Sue Lichtenfels, Immediate Past President

In the last issue of this publication, the Peer Engagement Team requested feedback from PCB peers regarding what factors are important when it comes to participating in the PCB Conference and Convention. To date, the team has received about twenty responses to the survey. On behalf of the Conference Program and Planning Team (CPPT), I urge all peers to please take a few minutes to complete and submit the survey if you haven’t already done so. We are seeking feedback from all peers, but especially those who have never attended a conference before so we can understand how we can make it better and more accessible to everyone. We hope you will make use of each comment section to provide specific thoughts and suggestions whenever possible. Please do let us know what factors influence your conference participation so we can address future planning.

Continue to email responses to Mary Ann Grignon, PCB First Vice President at maryanna0407@gmail.com or call her directly at 570-807-1276 for a phone survey. Mary Ann will compile the responses anonymously and provide a report of all feedback to the CPPT and the PCB Board of Directors. Please share your feedback with Mary Ann by Friday, May 15, 2020. Don’t delay and do survey today!

Note: for all questions using a numbered scale for answers, 1 is the least positive response (smallest impact) and 5 reflects the most positive response (greatest impact). Place an X in front of your selection. Please take advantage of the comment option provided on most questions and provide us as much feedback as you feel will be helpful.

1. Have you ever attended a PCB Conference and Convention?

\_\_\_\_\_Never attended

\_\_\_\_\_Attended in the past but not in 2019

\_\_\_\_\_Attended in 2019

2. Publicity: to what extent did you have timely awareness of the dates, place, and programs of the 2019 PCB Conference and Convention?

\_\_\_\_\_1 \_\_\_\_\_2 \_\_\_\_\_3 \_\_\_\_\_4 \_\_\_\_\_5

Comments:

3. Chapter promotion: to what extent did your chapter keep you informed about or actively promote your attendance at the 2019 PCB Conference and Convention?

\_\_\_\_\_1 \_\_\_\_\_2 \_\_\_\_\_3 \_\_\_\_\_4 \_\_\_\_\_5

Comments:

4. 1st-timer stipends/Merit Award: To what extent were you aware of the opportunities to apply for first-timer stipends or student merit awards?

\_\_\_\_\_1 \_\_\_\_\_2 \_\_\_\_\_3 \_\_\_\_\_4 \_\_\_\_\_5

Comments:

5. Cost: to what extent did cost factor in your decision/ability  to attend the Conference this year or in past years?

\_\_\_\_\_1 \_\_\_\_\_2 \_\_\_\_\_3 \_\_\_\_\_4 \_\_\_\_\_5

Comments:

6. Transportation: to what extent has the availability of transportation (or the lack thereof) played a part in your decision/ability to attend PCB conferences?

\_\_\_\_\_1 \_\_\_\_\_2 \_\_\_\_\_3 \_\_\_\_\_4 \_\_\_\_\_5

Comments:

7. Duration of conference: to what extent has the duration of the conference (Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) impacted your decision/ability   to attend PCB conferences?

\_\_\_\_\_1 \_\_\_\_\_2 \_\_\_\_\_3 \_\_\_\_\_4 \_\_\_\_\_5

Comments:

8. Content: to what extent has the entertainment, activities, speakers, and other conference programming influenced your decision to attend PCB conferences?

\_\_\_\_\_1 \_\_\_\_\_2 \_\_\_\_\_3 \_\_\_\_\_4 \_\_\_\_\_5

Comments:

9. Location: to what extent has the location of past PCB conferences influenced your decision/ability to attend?

\_\_\_\_\_1 \_\_\_\_\_2 \_\_\_\_\_3 \_\_\_\_\_4 \_\_\_\_\_5

Comments:

10. Value: to what extent do you believe PCB conferences are of value to the organization’s mission and should be continued?

\_\_\_\_\_1 \_\_\_\_\_2 \_\_\_\_\_3 \_\_\_\_\_4 \_\_\_\_\_5

Comments:

11. time of year:  If the conference were to be held during a different time of year, what month would be your preference?

12. Please feel free to add any additional comments, concerns or suggestions.

Virtual Vision Loss Support Group

Have you ever been at a family gathering or a social event where you felt alone because you were blind?

Is it sometimes tough for you to motivate yourself to accomplish your goals because you are frustrated and worn down with the added responsibilities of blindness?

Have you ever had difficulty with talking about blindness to family and friends?

Are you scared to live an active, independent life of your choosing?

Do you need advice about adjusting to blindness?

Well, if you have answered “yes” to any of these questions, PCB might have just the thing for you.

PCB offers a closed support group by phone which focuses on adjustment to blindness. The calls are private and confidential. They are led by Dr. AndreWatson Psy.D., who is a licensed psychologist who happens to be blind. Dr. Watson has experience with being a father, husband, employee, and friend. He is the author of the book entitled, Vision in the Dark and is a motivational speaker about overcoming life’s challenges.

These monthly groups with Dr. Watson are currently held on the first Tuesday of the month at noon for one hour. Those who are interested should call Dr. Andre Watson at 215-631-3230 or email him at Dr.AndreWatson@comcast.net to sign up. All are welcome, but space is limited.

# 2020 PCB Elections

During the 2020 PCB conference in Harrisburg, PCB will be holding elections for four board positions. Suzanne Erb and Cathy Long are each finishing up a two-year term and are eligible for a second two-year term. William Grignon and John Anderson are completing one-year terms and are eligible for two full terms. Please begin to carefully consider whether you would like to run for a position or encourage those you feel would be good leaders to consider running. The PCB Board of Directors typically meets quarterly. Meetings are held by phone except the conference in-person meeting. Please contact George Holliday, the Nominations Coordinator to suggest a candidate or express your own interest in running. You can reach him at george.holliday@comcast.net or 215-796-9813.

Ready, Set, Bid!

By Mary Ann Grignon, Team Leader

What comes to mind when you hear the words, “Going once, going twice, gone!” If you said an auction then you are correct. But, I’m not writing about any hum-drum auction, what I’m talking about is the PCB Live Auction being held this year on October 23rd at the PCB Conference and Convention, at the Crowne Plaza in Harrisburg.

It’s never too early to begin thinking about a contribution to our exciting live auction, whether it is an item you donate personally, or something donated by your chapter. I urge you to discuss auction donations at your next chapter meeting. In addition, please ask area businesses to consider donating to the PCB Live Auction.

If you’re wondering what items are appropriate contributions, then the list is endless. Of course items specifically designed for those with vision loss are welcome but so are baked goods, jewelry items, hand-crafted items, liquor, sports memorabilia, theater tickets, travel vouchers and all manner of bath and body items. Remember that food baskets and liquid refreshment always keep the bidding lively.

While we have no limit about how much an item is worth, and while we will assign an appropriate starting bid to each item, I urge you to keep in mind that your donation may not be sold for its listed value. Your donation will always be appreciated though and will contribute to the overall success of this fun and lively fund raiser.

Stay tuned on the PCB-L for some suggestions as to items for consideration and the vendors from which to purchase such items.

Have You Done A Bylaws Audit?

From the PCB Parliamentary Team

What is a Bylaws Audit? It is a careful review of your bylaws to make sure everything in them is up-to-date, does not conflict with PCB governing documents, and is being adhered to by your chapter in its regular course of business. However, even before you can get to the audit, you need to answer some preliminary questions: Do you know where your bylaws are? Do you have the latest version of your bylaws? Are your bylaws available in accessible formats to all your members? Do you have a committee who is responsible for keeping, providing interpretations, and overseeing the amendment process? Once you have a committee and find the latest version of your bylaws, then you can perform the Bylaws Audit.

THE BYLAWS AUDIT

1) Make sure you have a bylaws process and committee.

Do your bylaws even have a provision governing how the document should be amended? If so, follow the provision. If not, have your Board form an ad hoc Bylaws Committee that is tasked with creating a pro forma amendment process and performing the Bylaws Audit. It is recommended that a pro forma amendment process include: performance of the Bylaws Audit, presentation of the findings of this audit to the Board, Board resolution of all needful amendments, publication to the membership at least two weeks before the meeting at which the amendments will be presented, and the scheduling of a meeting at which chapter peers will discuss and vote upon all proposed amendments. You should then include this process as an Article in your proposed revised bylaws.

It is recommended that this committee include the Chapter Secretary, a person who has a good handle on governing documents, an individual with good writing skills, and someone with extensive institutional knowledge of your chapter. Of course, one peer might wear a couple of these hats, but it is recommended that you have at least three people to exploit multiple viewpoints and provide an odd-numbered roster for deciding issues.

2) Make sure you are working with the latest version of your bylaws.

Document management can be one of an organization's biggest headaches. Your Secretary should have the latest version, but if he or she does not, ask around and do your best to find the most up-to-date version. You should then go through your Minutes to see if there have been any amendments to your bylaws that were not included in this supposedly latest version. If there are amendments, create a newer version and work with this document to perform your audit.

3) Make sure you work with one Master Document.

Appoint one member of the Bylaws Committee to be the sole keeper of the Master Document. Each committee member will have their own copy of the latest version, but only one person should have the evolving Master, so you don't end up with multiple versions.

4) Make sure there are no typos or grammatical errors in your bylaws.

It is surprising how a typo, faulty construction,  or poor grammar can alter a provision to say exactly the opposite of what its author intended or at least muddle the purport and effect of a provision. Run a spell-check, then proofread the document for homonyms and other gotchas. Then read every provision for sense and purport. Flag any unclear passages for discussion and resolution.

5) Make sure there are no internal contradictions in your bylaws.

Chapters have been surprised to find out that a provision in Article II is directly contradicted by or seemingly superseded by a provision in Article IX. At this point, make note of all contradictions. All contradictions will have to be corrected as amendments to the bylaws.

6) Make sure there are no obsolete provisions in your bylaws.

Some bylaws were written decades ago, and many contain provisions that no longer apply to our modern world of technology, definitions, and community. Flag these obsolete provisions and draft proposed revisions for your amendment process.

7) Make sure you are not missing any key provisions.

Some key provisions include: participation eligibility, dues, and deadlines; the roster of officers and their duties; election protocols and schedules; a list of standing committees and their duties; quorum for Board and regular meetings; how the bylaws should be amended; the kinds of motions that require something more than a simple majority vote; and provisions that set forth processes for suspension and expulsion. The Bylaws Committee should draft proposed provisions to address these gaps.

8) Present the findings to your Board (if your bylaws require this step).

Some bylaws skip this step and mandate that proposed amendments go directly to the chapter body for discussion and vote. Do what your bylaws tell you to do in this regard. Whether your Bylaws require presentation to the Board or the entire chapter, you should be prepared for a detailed and intensive meeting. The key is to lay out your findings in a logical, clear, and concise way. A good way to organize your presentation is to set forth the old text, then present the recommended revised text, explain the rationale for the proposed change, reach agreement, and add the resolved text to the Master Document. Start with typos and grammatical issues. These should be the easiest to resolve. Then work your way through the marked-up Master Document. Once you have resolved all outstanding issues, have a vote approving a final version.

9) Make sure you present amendments to the chapter in small pieces.

Amending Bylaws can be a tedious and confusing process. It is recommended that you break down each proposed amendment into a single bite-sized nugget (old text, proposed text, and resolved text), present these nuggets to the chapter one at a time, and have each nugget discussed and voted on by the chapter. Throughout this process, the keeper of the Master Document should be making changes as they are voted upon so you will have a complete, final, and duly voted-upon version at the end of this process. Once the bylaws have been approved, annotate the new version with the date of amendment and produce copies in accessible formats so all chapter peers have a usable copy.

10) Make sure your chapter is abiding by your bylaws.

Have you filled all Board positions? Are your officers doing what they should be doing?  Have you staffed all Standing Committees? Have you been meeting quorum and vote requirements? Identify any gaps between your amended bylaws and actual chapter practice and bring them up to the Board.

Does it sound daunting? It doesn't have to be. The key is to have a good Bylaws Committee and proceed in a logical and methodical way. We, the members of the PCB Parliamentary Team, are here to help. We can answer any questions that come up during your Audit, help draft language that means what you want it to say, and review your Audit. Just reach out to us. We are here for you!

By the way, if you want to propose any amendments to the PCB Bylaws, you must submit your proposal to the Parliamentary Team by April 30, 2020. And if you wish to suggest resolutions for the upcoming Conference and Convention, you must submit your proposals by August 15, 2020.

You can reach your PCB Parliamentary Team by contacting our Chair, Carla Hayes at lengual@verizon.net or 724-941-8184.

Reward Excellence with a PCB Award

By William H. Grignon, PCB Board Member

Once again, PCB seeks to reward excellence at its upcoming Conference and Convention (October 22-25) with four prestigious awards: John A. Horst Champion of Independence, TheReImage Leadership Award, PCB Peer Excellence Award, and PCB Community Impact Award (see details below).

Any individual can make nominations for these awards. Nominations are due by Friday, August 28, 2020. But don’t delay! Email nominations to awards@pcb1.org. Sorry, current members of the PCB Board of Directors are not eligible for these awards.

Include the following information about you and your nominee: name, mailing address, phone, and email address. Indicate in your nomination the award for which the individual is being nominated and 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 a person 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.

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.

So look around, identify worthy nominees, and submit those nominations!

Fund Development, it’s Give and Take

By Mary Ann Grignon, Team Leader

Grab a basket and take a trip around the fund development emporium

Here in aisle one, we have opportunities to win money for yourself and for your chapter with our calendar raffle. Simply grab some tickets for yourself for $20 each or a bunch to grow your chapter’s coffers. There’s a chance to win every night between April 1 and September 30. The winning numbers are drawn each night from the PA Lottery’s evening Pick 3.

In aisle two, you can browse items from Loving Touch Connection and while purchasing something lovely, hand-painted with both raised braille and print, you automatically donate 10% of the cost of your item choice to PCB! Keep your eye on this aisle because there are surprises every month. For instance, you in February, could have purchased a variety of mugs for valentine’s day. And specials for St. Patrick’s Day and Easter are coming too.

In aisle three, we have the opportunity to donate to PCB and ACB through the Monthly Monetary Support (MMS) program. You look a bit confused about how you personally benefit from this aisle. Well, allow me to explain. First, PCB can provide all our offerings in part because of the money we raise each year and who benefits from PCB offerings? That’s right, you do. But that’s not all. If you join the MMS program before the end of the ACB national convention in July with just a $10 monthly commitment, or if you raise your current monthly donation by $5, you will be entered into a drawing for an Apple XR11 iPhone. The lucky winner will be drawn in mid-August. Simply call the ACB office in Minneapolis at 612-332-3242 and they'll help you fill out the necessary forms to get you started. Oh, and yes, your donations are tax deductible.

In aisle four, let’s get cooking! Pick up a No Measure Cookbook in braille for $25 or in large print, DAISY audio, or Word format for $12.50. Give the PCB office a call to make your purchase.

Now let’s hear it for aisle five where there’s virtually something for everyone! This is the Amazon Smile aisle. A portion of everything you buy from Amazon, when you specifically check out using the Amazon Smile page goes into PCB’s coffers so shop a lot! To set up an Amazon Smile account, just go to smile.amazon.com and log in with your Amazon username and password and follow the simple steps to choose the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind as your charity.

While aisle six is empty right now, it will start to fill up with items to be purchased at our live auction. The team hopes you’ll send in your offerings to fill this isle sooner than later so folks can start to browse long before October.

The Fund Development team continues to look for ideas from you, PCB peers for new ways to raise funds so we can grow our offerings. Like anything else in PCB, fund development only makes sense if we all collaborate to find ways to grow our funds with the most participation possible. In order to accomplish this, we need your input, talents, ideas and ultimately, you! Please contact Mary Ann Grignon 570-807-1276 or maryanna0407@gmail.com with your ideas, input and talent.

Your Genes and Vision Loss

By Jule Ann Lieberman, Team Leader and Certified Low Vision Therapist

Since the discovery by Watson and Crick of the double helix DNA, various hereditary eye conditions have been identified. This article will list some conditions that result in vision loss due to changes in the retina. The retina consists of seven layers of light receptor cells which produce the electrical signals that the neuro pathway needs to produce an image. The eye conditions I will describe include changes in the chromosomes that can alter or destroy the light receptor cells of the retina. In future articles, I will discuss additional inherited eye conditions that can affect other parts of the eye. It is the hope of the Vision Loss Resource Team that you will gain a better understanding of the basis of your vision loss or another person’s diagnosis. Much of the data described in this article can be found at the Foundation Fighting Blindness and National Eye Institute websites.

An inherited condition that has been in the news in recent years is Leber Congenital Amaurosis (LCA). LCA affects 1 in every 50,000 individuals, but it accounts for 5% of all retinal dystrophies and 20% of blindness in school-aged children. To date, mutations in nineteen genes are reported to cause LCA. Despite the breadth of current knowledge, genetic defects in about 30% of LCA cases remain unknown. In other words, vision loss can be a result of nineteen identified changes in the gene and, still, in some cases, the defect is unidentified. LCA is usually diagnosed in infancy or early childhood. Parents or caregivers may notice that the baby’s eyes are not tracking objects or appear to be moving erratically. Children with LCA may also be observed frequently pressing their fingers on their eyes. Like many eye conditions, functional vision can fall within a range with LCA, ranging from acuity loss of 20/400 to just light perception. LCA is an autosomal inherited gene trait; each parent is a carrier of the defect and may not experience vision loss as a result.

LCA has been in the news due to recent advances in gene therapy; repairing the light receptor cells with an insertion of a “corrected” gene. Spark Therapeutics’ vision restoring RPE65 gene therapy is the first gene therapy to gain FDA regulatory approval in the U.S. for the eye or any inherited condition. Known as LUXTURNA™, clinical trials have indicated that vision was restored for LCA study participants with age ranges of 4 to 44. The Process of Gene therapy involves introducing the corrected gene via a vector that will remove or destroy the affected gene and replace it with the corrected gene. The vector is a retrovirus which has been altered so as not to cause disease but as a delivery system to seek out the damaged gene and replace it with the corrected gene. The vector is administered either by an injection or IV. The success of this gene therapy for LCA is exciting, not only for those with this diagnosis, but also for other inherited retinal disorders.

Another eye condition, retinitis pigmentosa (RP), also results in a degeneration of the light receptor cells. The light receptors cells come in two forms: rod and cone cells. In most forms of RP, rods are affected first. Because rods are concentrated in the outer portions of the retina and are activated by dim light, their degeneration affects peripheral and night vision. This can narrow the functional field of vision (tunnel vision) which can interfere with orientation and mobility. Cones are responsible for color detection and acuity, and, as RP progresses, the cones can also be damaged, causing the decrease in central vision. RP can lead ultimately to total vision loss, no light perception. RP is typically diagnosed in children or young adults and ,in many cases, by age 40, legal blindness occurs with a reduced field to 20 degrees like the diameter of a nickel. RP is estimated to affect roughly 1 in 4,000 people, both in the United States and worldwide. RP can result from changes in as many as 50 genes.

RP can be inherited by autosomal recessive inheritance (described previously) or by autosomal dominant inheritance. In this inheritance pattern, it takes just one copy of the gene with a disorder-causing mutation to bring about the disorder. When a parent has a dominant gene mutation, there is a 1 in 2 chance that any children will inherit this mutation and its associated disorder.

A third inheritance pattern is X-linked inheritance. In this form of inheritance, mothers carry the mutated gene on one of their X chromosomes and pass it to their sons. Because females have two X chromosomes, the effect of a mutation on one X chromosome is offset by the normal gene on the other X chromosome.

Stargardt’s Macular Dystrophy (STGD) is an eye condition that primarily affects the cone light receptor cells closest to the portion of the retina called the macula. Mutations in a gene called ABCA4 are the most common cause of Stargardt’s disease. This gene makes a protein that normally clears away vitamin A byproducts inside photoreceptors. Cells that lack the ABCA4 protein accumulate clumps of a fatty substance that forms yellowish flecks. As the clumps increase in and around the macula, central vision becomes impaired. Eventually, these fatty deposits lead to the death of photoreceptors and vision becomes further impaired. The incidence of STGD is estimated to be between 1 in 8,000 and 1 in 10,000 in the U.S. and, typically, is diagnosed in adolescence and young adults. The vision acuity can decrease to 20/200 or worse with a slow progression and remain stable for some time. Gene therapy is slow to advance in Stargardt’s and other disorders that affect ABCA4 due to the size of ABCA4, as it is a very large chromosome and the current delivery systems (vectors) cannot carry the repaired gene. Other gene defects on ABCA4 include Cone Rod Dystrophy and some forms of RP.

In all these inherited retinal eye conditions, low-vision devices can be of benefit, such as optical or video magnification. Computer and mobile technology have greatly assisted persons with vision loss from inherited eye conditions to live independent lives.

Contact the PCB office or a low-vision center for suggestions on where to find a device that can meet your needs when vision loss results from these inherited eye conditions.

Rosters: Who's Who and What's What

By William H. Grignon, Team Leader

Does your chapter or affiliate keep, update, and distribute a roster - an up-to-date list of all peers, their contact info, and other pertinent data?  A roster is your best tool for keeping everyone informed and in the loop. If your group has a Membership Secretary, managing the roster should be one of the assigned tasks; if not, then the Chapter Secretary should perform this duty.

Here is a suggested format for each entry in your roster:

Name

Mailing Address

Best Phone

Best Email

Preferred Reading Format [large print, electronic, cartridge, Braille, etc.]

Date of Birth [just the date, not the year]

Any Other Data You Deem Relevant/Necessary [for example, some chapters record the degree of vision loss, i.e., T for totally blind, P for partially blind, and S for sighted]

Once your point person has confirmed the accuracy and completeness of your updated roster, note the date of this most recent update in the document, circulate this roster among all your chapter peers and send a Word copy to the PCB Peer Engagement Team to Will Grignon, wgrignon13@gmail.com.

Keystone Chapter News

By Cathy Long, KCB President

The Keystone Chapter is meeting the third Saturday of each month between 11:00 a.m. and noon. We have 21 members. Each month we handle the business of the chapter and then there are other things we do. Since we are a phone chapter and cannot meet for a Christmas meal or party, we had our own version of it in December. Each person was asked to share a Christmas story or a Christmas memory. It went well and helped me feel closer to the peers of our chapter.

In January we had a normal meeting, but we do one thing that most chapters would not need to do. Each month there is a part of the meeting where one person tells us about himself or herself. Just a short bio or things that are important to that person.

In February, Chris and Kim from Mystic Access presented the Blind Shell phone to us. Based on questions asked, I feel confident that a few people are considering this option.

In March, we are going to hear a presentation about how to complete the census form by phone.

 In April, Jule Ann Lieberman is going to talk  to us about the services of TechOWL and the low interest loan program.

We probably will not have any guests in May or June, but who knows what bright ideas someone will come up with by then.

It is our goal to support and educate our peers. I feel good when I have helped someone else. If you would like to learn more about our chapter, please email me at long.cathy1223@gmail.com or call 717-732-5265. We welcome guests, so please dial in to an upcoming call at 712-451-0011 and use pass code 442357#.

COVID-19 and Dogs

By William H. Grignon, PAGDUS Secretary

Reader’s Note: The following article is provided for informational purposes only and should not be construed as professional medical advice for you or your pet. Please consult your physician, veterinarian, or the local health department for medical advice.

Recently, headlines raced around the world that a 17-year-old Pomeranian quarantined in Hong Kong had tested positive for COVID-19, sparking fears that pets can get the virus from humans or that humans could be infected by contact with their pets. So far, this is the only known case and it is suspected that the dog may have gotten the virus from its owner, who does have COVID-19, or it might have gotten it from contact with some environmental source. Sadly, in Wuhan, China where the outbreak is believed to have started, authorities are reportedly euthanizing animals that are found in homes of people infected with the virus, even though the American Veterinary Medical Association reports that multiple domestic and international health organizations that pets are not at risk for contracting or spreading the novel coronavirus.

In the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that, at present, there is no evidence to suggest that dogs or cats will become a source of infection of COVID-19 in other animals or humans. And, as far as realistic risk factors—if, for instance, a dog is usually at home and doesn't contact other dogs or people and no one in the household has COVID-19, the odds that the pet would become infected are highly unlikely.

Experts say if a person has COVID-19, he should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just like he would with other people. When possible, another member of the household should care for the animals. The sick individual should avoid direct contact with pets, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food. If the ill person must care for a pet or be around animals while sick, washing hands before and after interacting with pets and wearing a facemask may be directed by the physician.

As a matter of everyday health, it is always a good idea to wash hands with soap and water after contact with pets to help avoid transmission of more common illness-causing agents, such as E. coli and Salmonella.

To protect a pet from respiratory diseases, one could vaccinate the pet for Bordetella, parainfluenza and canine influenza, which are the most common vaccine-preventable respiratory diseases in pets. A veterinarian can help determine which vaccines a pet should have, based on its risk factors.

Some pet owners in mainland China have been fitting their dogs with tiny face masks, but there is no benefit to that — in fact, it's probably fairly distressing for the pet and could cause them to panic. If dog owners are particularly concerned, they can wipe their dog's paws with antiseptic wipes after they have had a walk outside -- but they should take care not to overdo it, as wiping too much can dry out a dog's paws.

Pet owners, who work in high-risk medical situations or belong to a higher-risk population such as senior citizens, people with respiratory ailments, or those with immune deficiencies, should prepare for their pets' needs in the event that they are diagnosed with the virus and cannot care for them for a period of time. It is suggested that owners do the following:

•Identify a friend, family member, or pet sitter to take care of the pet(s) if ever necessary

•Have crates, food, and extra supplies on hand in case pets need to be moved quickly

•Research boarding facilities and make sure pets' vaccinations are up to date in the event boarding becomes necessary

•Prepare a list of the medications the pets take including dosages and administration instructions. Make sure there is enough medication on hand for at least a two-week period or longer.

•Make sure pets are wearing an identification tag or are microchipped.

Do not panic, be prepared, and use good hygiene for humans and dogs.

Consigned to Mediocrity? Part 1

By Tony Swartz

It is necessary to preface my observations and comments regarding the state of services for the blind in Pennsylvania provided by private agencies with this disclaimer: My observations and comments are solely mine and do not represent the opinion of the leadership and peers of the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind.

Beyond Philadelphia, provision of the majority of services to blind Pennsylvanians is through the member agencies of the Pennsylvania Association for the Blind (PAB), founded in 1910. Though there have been several mergers and reorganizations since, these agencies were founded within the first half of the 20th century and have been loosely affiliated with the PAB. Each of the member agencies is incorporated as a separate nonprofit entity, governed by an independent board of directors, with a voluntary affiliation through annual dues to the central PAB.

While there are a few notable exceptions, the funding of many of these agencies is reliant on the charity model. In the United States, agencies serving the blind have their routes in the late 19th century and were originally established to provide custodial services to a segment of the population widely viewed as objects of charity with little opportunity for self-sufficiency.

Excluding several PAB member agencies that have developed funding sources based on contracted manufacturing, Today, while the majority of PAB agencies may receive as much as 30 to 40 percent of their annual funding through community sources such as the United Way, and state funding distributed through the PAB, the major portion of their annual budgets are reliant on the charity model.

Having been involved all my life in the PAB world, as a client, an employee, and a board member of several member agencies, I accepted the charity model as a given. It wasn't until about a decade ago, as a member of an agency board involved in an unsuccessful attempt to merge our agency with a large nonprofit rehabilitation provider which had broken out of the charity model, that my eyes were truly opened to the pitfalls of reliance on charity as the major source of an agency's funding. Given the vagaries of charitable giving – the ebb and flow of the economy and the wax and wane of community support for the cause - annual funding is prone to fluctuation; on occasion, significantly. As a result, planning and commitment to a long-term service or program is problematic. In the more than 30 years that I've served on PAB member agency boards, the majority of board discussion and involvement was focused on fund development, and next to little on service provision and its nature or quality.

For the last four years, I've served as a director on a board of a nonprofit social service agency in my community which has worked hard to break away from the charity model. Roughly 70 percent of its annual budget is funded through fee for service. This allows for our board meetings to focus on the various aspects of running the agency and their impact on the quality and nature of service delivery. And, while directors of nonprofits are obligated to monitor the financial status of the agency, contribute financially, and participate in public fundraising ventures, it’s been so refreshing to serve on a board where the attention and energy isn't dominated by fund development.

Beyond the constraints on program planning imposed by fluctuating funding, there is another pitfall of the charity model with a more sinister aspect. While most nonprofit service providers conduct some form of funding solicitation, it is much more likely for those agencies serving the blind whose fund development is based on the charity model to center their appeal on long outmoded stereotypes of the blind, promoting a custodial rather than a rehabilitative mission. The leaders of today's PAB agencies might forcefully argue that they are far more enlightened, but let me quote several sentences from a holiday appeal letter mailed to donors from a PAB member agency this past December.

"You need to know how important you are to us and how grateful we are for you. You also need to know how needed you are because we are who you used to be. We were your mother, brother, sister, or daughter, and were [sic] fighting every day...." What if you lost who you were? What if you lost pretty much everything that defined you - your work, your hobbies, the activities you enjoy, and your sense of how you make the world a better place."..."Please help us make sure that people like Mary never lose themselves forever.

So, what's wrong with this message? This agency for the blind conveys to the community that the onset of vision loss eradicates the individual, her relationship to others, her very identity. Can you see that this is such a destructive message to convey to the community, and, in particular, to an individual just experiencing vision loss. I would hope that we all understand to our core that we remain who we are, despite our vision loss. But you may think, so what! It’s just a bit of dramatic hyperbole, a tug on the heart-strings meant to open a few wallets. But through the years the images add up to a negative tableau shaping the community’s view of who we are.

I believe that until agencies serving the blind can break from the charity model, they will continue to be subject to the service delivery and fund development pitfalls I've cited above. Despite the lofty language of their mission and vision statements, they will be forever consigned to mediocrity.

But how can these agencies break away from the charity model? How can we as consumers help them? I'll offer some suggestions in part two of this article.

What I Wish the World Understood about Blindness and Visual Impairment

By Rebecca L. Holland

I am a visually impaired writer and pastor currently living in Altoona, Pennsylvania. I know that not everyone is religious, but I passionately believe that people with disabilities should be welcome anywhere we choose to go, including places of worship. In my career as a member of the clergy, I am often overlooked and underestimated due to my visual impairment. One of my least favorite compliments is, “You preach so well, for someone who can’t see.”

I know that I am not the only person to encounter ableism in the world and in the workplace. For that reason, I wanted to share an excerpt from my latest book, The United Methodist Church & Disability: Essays and Practical Tips for Churches, Clergy, and People with Disabilities. I’m excited to announce that my book has been published in large print paperback and on Kindle. It was a passion project of mine and it is my sincere hope that it will help others, especially other people who are visually impaired and churches who would like to be more accessible.

In the interest of helping to raise awareness, here are the top three things I wish the world at large (including the church) understood about people who are blind or visually impaired.

1. Blindness is a spectrum.

Not everyone who uses a white cane is completely blind. In fact, the majority of people who are blind have some amount of useable vision. I am considered to have low vision or to be visually impaired. My vision fluctuates based on many different factors, including how tired my eyes are and how much pain I’m experiencing. Some days, I can read street signs, go for long runs in the bright sunlight in familiar areas, or recognize parishioners from across the room. Other mornings, I wake up to find that I can barely read words written in large print. It is unsafe for me to drive and I use a white cane to help me travel when I’m in an unfamiliar area.

People with all types of disabilities, not just blindness, face a world in which society at large makes all types of misinformed assumptions about us and our capabilities. I once spoke to a woman who has multiple sclerosis and sometimes uses a wheelchair when she goes shopping. When we were discussing this issue, she told me, “Lots of times in the past, I’ve stood up for a minute in order to reach something from a higher shelf at the grocery store. When I do that, people accuse me of faking. I’ve had strangers say to me in the middle of the cereal aisle, ‘You don’t really need that wheelchair! I caught you faking!’”

When I asked her how she responds to these microaggressions, she answered, “I do my best to just ignore them. I don’t owe them an explanation. I don’t need to explain to them that some days I can get around better than others, or that not everyone who needs a wheelchair is paralyzed. But it still hurts when people say cruel things.”

2. People who are blind or visually impaired use phones, computers, and all types of technology.

I truly believe that technology and education are the two great equalizers for people with disabilities. They also go hand in hand. I would not have been able to earn my undergraduate degree in English Education or my graduate degree in Divinity without the use of adaptive technology.

When I moved to Washington D.C. in order to attend seminary, the first thing I did was to purchase an iPhone. I was only in school for about three months before I purchased an iPad as well. I love these two Apple products and I use them every day in my ministry.

The iPhone and the iPad come equipped with adaptive software that allows me to make the fonts larger and invert the colors. The iPhone and the iPad also come with Voice Over technology. This means that these devices can read aloud anything that is displayed on the screen.

In addition, more and more books are becoming available in digital format. I do most of my reading using the Kindle app or the Voice Dream app (more about this great app in a later chapter).

There is no end to the wonders of adaptive technology. Right now on my phone there is an application called Be My Eyes that will connect me to a sighted volunteer through a video call. I try not to rely too heavily on this app, but it’s been a huge help when a sighted friend isn’t available. I’ve used this app when I’ve been unable to locate an item that has gone missing in my church (my pink notebook was under a pew) or if I can’t figure out how to turn on the new copy machine (the power button was on the back with all the wires).

There are lots of great accessibility apps that are available for the iPhone. I use the KNFB reader on a regular basis. This app allows the user to take a picture of any printed text (such as a menu at a restaurant or a prescription bottle) and then the app converts the text to large print and reads it aloud.

I also use a computer with a touch screen and a program called ZoomText, which enlarges the screen so that I can use a regular computer in order to do word processing or browse the internet. I use ZoomText when I write sermons, plan worship, or work on my latest book.

More adaptive technology is being developed every day. I eagerly look forward to the day when I can get my own self-driving car.

3. Most importantly, people who are blind or visually impaired can do anything anyone else can do; we just might do it a little differently – and this is true for all people with disabilities.

In my own case, I can’t fly an airplane or drive a car, but there are plenty of other things that I can do. This is true for all of us. God has given us all unique gifts and graces. The apostle Paul tells us, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.” (New International Version, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

In my own life, I have been most limited not by my low vision, but instead by society’s attitudes toward people with disabilities. Often, well-meaning people will say to me, “Wow! I didn’t know you were visually impaired,” or “but you don’t look blind.”

I sense that these people mean these as compliments, but these comments represent problematic underlying assumptions regarding people with disabilities. There is no one way to be blind, just as there is no one way to be disabled. Some people who are blind care about fashion and makeup. Others, like many people who are sighted, are less interested in fashion. Some people who are blind have advanced degrees and some are passionate about interests other than academics.

In college, I was required to switch from music education to English education because an important professor refused to teach students with disabilities. Later, when I was looking for a romantic partner, I discovered that many people did not want to date me once they found out that I had a visual impairment and was unable to drive. The underlying assumption was that they were afraid that they would need to, “take care of the poor blind girl.”

Eventually, I met my spouse, and he is truly a blessing to me. We take care of one another. I also am incredibly blessed to be serving in ministry, where music is an important part of worship planning.

There are people with disabilities who are doctors, attorneys, teachers, musicians, and stay-at-home parents. Some of us work outside the home and some of us do not for a variety of reasons. People who are blind can work, pursue career goals, and have loving families. We can fall in love, get married, and some of us choose to become parents. People with disabilities can be loving and supportive spouses as well as kind and nurturing parents. It is possible to be a person with a disability and to also live a life that is full of joy.

 Note: This essay and many others like it are available in my new book The United Methodist Church and Disability: Essays and Practical Tips for Clergy, Churches, and People with Disabilities. Available in large print paperback and Kindle. Now available on Amazon.

Without Sight

By Elizabeth Oleksa

Living in a darkness,

Searching for light,

In midst of isolation,

Come sadness and fright.

A lost and helpless feeling

Of hopelessness and despair:

What is the point in living

In a world so unfair?

Reaching for support

Through every twist and turn,

Feeling the way around,

A new way to learn.

A wanting for comfort,

Some help there to find.

Thoughts of going crazy,

Overwhelm the mind.

Hearing a kind word,

The offer of a helping hand.

Gives peace and comfort

So few truly understand.

But somewhere in life,

There are others like me;

Others who live their lives

Unable to see.

No sight in their eyes,

But a light in their heart:

A vision for the future,

A fresh place to start.

Experiences of living

Just everyday lives,

Guidance on finding,

A beautiful journey without eyes.

It is a huge misunderstanding

For what so many think they know.

Even without sight,

A proud life I show.

No shame in loss of eyesight -

Allow me to set the tone,

Advocating for those who cannot see,

Letting them know they are not alone.

For I was once there too -

Not knowing which way to go.

With support and guidance to help me through,

My life’s purpose began to show.

Fight through the hard times.

You can make it out on top.

Never give up on trying.

It is not time to stop.

For life has just begun -

Although a new path it may be.

There is so much worth living for

And for that you don’t need eyes to see.

Grab A Book and Enjoy!

By Joanne Rath

I love to read! As a child, especially during summer, I would impatiently wait for the mail truck to arrive with some braille books. Often, no books arrived! Now, I primarily read audio books, mostly on my iPhone. I now have AfterShokz Headphones and I wear them all day long. I listen to books while cleaning, doing laundry, doing dishes, while riding the bike at the gym, and when I am waiting at the doctor’s office. Of course, I enjoy reading in my recliner or when I have difficulty sleeping as well. I encourage you to grab a good book and enjoy!

The following information is taken from BARD about a few books I have recently read and recommend.

As Bright As Heaven DB90310

Meissner, Susan. Reading time: 13:23.

Read by Jennifer Hubbard

1918. The Bright family have moved to Philadelphia to put the death of the youngest child behind them and build a better life. But now the Spanish influenza is tearing its way through the country. As the flu threatens, a new child arrives on their doorstep. 2018.

The Yankee Widow DB96362

Miller, Linda Lael. Reading time: 14:07

Read by Jack Garrett.

Virginia, 1863. Jacob is fighting with the Union Army when he is wounded in battle. His childhood sweetheart and wife, Caroline, leaves their farm near Gettysburg to search for him among the thousands of wounded soldiers being treated in Washington, DC. Unrated. Commercial audiobook. 2019.

Window on the Bay DB95908

Macomber, Debbie. Reading time: 9:47

Read by Erin Bennett.

Now that her children are grown, Jenna's life is at a crossroads. She and her friend Maureen decide to finally take a trip to Paris--but then Jenna's elderly mother breaks her hip. The good news is that Jenna is smitten with her mother's surgeon, Rowan. Unrated. Commercial audiobook. Bestseller. 2019.

Editor’s Note

Contributions are encouraged to support the accessible formatting of The PCB Advocate in braille, DAISY audio cartridge, large print, and electronic Word file. Donations are tax deductible. Gifts can be made by credit card either online at pcb1.org or by phone to 877-617-7407. Donations by check can be mailed to PCB, 931 N. Front Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102.

CHAPTER/ AFFILIATE PRESIDENTS

Cumberland County………..………………….Bill Davis

Golden Triangle…………………Christine Hunsinger

Hank Bloomberg………………………………Dana Leet

J. F. K…………………………………..David Lee Shaw

Keystone…………………………………….Cathy Long

Lehigh Valley………………………….Gary Dvorshak

Oil Valley…………………………… .....Eric Schreiber

PAGDUS…………………………………….Rose Martin

Philadelphia Metro………………..George Holliday

Philadelphia Regional……………Shirley Brotman

Washington County……………………..Carla Hayes

York County……………………….Roberta Simmons

PCB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Christine Hunsinger, President…..412-881-9328

Mary Ann Grignon, 1st VP……………570-807-1276

Rosemary Martin, 2nd VP…………… 215-756-1624

Jacqueline Wissinger, Secretary..814-765-6768

Michael Zaken, Treasurer………….412-655-1234

Sue Lichtenfels, Past President…412-429-1727

John Anderson………………………… 215-410-8524

Suzanne Erb……………………………. 215-568-5795

William Grignon……………………….. 727-564-9759

George Holliday………………………..215-796-9813

Jule Ann Lieberman, …………………610-688-6517

Cathy Long……………………………….717-732-5265

Robert Shingleton……………………. 484-529-4911

Scott Stauffer…………………………. 717-842-0069

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

LARGE TYPE EDITION