

Pennsylvania Council of the Blind

A peer network of people impacted by vision loss.

PCB's SPARK: The Newsletter for Igniting Ideas

Spring 2025

Leadership, Advocacy, and Impact: Pennsylvania Council of the Blind Peers Reflect on the 2025 ACB Leadership Conference

The 2025 American Council of the Blind (ACB) Leadership Conference brought together dedicated advocates, community leaders, and changemakers from across the nation in Arlington, Virginia, for five days of collaboration, education, and legislative engagement. Hosted March 14–18 at the Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel, the hybrid conference welcomed both in-person and virtual attendees who came ready to strengthen advocacy for individuals who are blind or low vision.



The Pennsylvania Council of the Blind (PCB) proudly sent several representatives to the conference, where they took part in a packed schedule that included the ACB Board Meeting, Presidents' Meeting, Legislative Seminar, and Capitol Hill visits. These leaders returned home energized and equipped with new insights, connections, and determination.

A National Stage for Local Advocacy

Each year, ACB selects specific legislative imperatives to present to lawmakers, and this year's priorities included:

- The Medical Device Nonvisual Accessibility Act (S.3621 / H.R.1328)
- The Websites and Software Applications Accessibility Act (S.2984 / H.R.5813)
- The Communications, Video, and Technology Accessibility Act (S.2494 / H.R.4858)

These proposals aim to ensure accessibility in areas that impact daily life—from health and wellness to information access.

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Fax: 717-920-9988

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Jason Miller, a PCB Board Member, shared how he brought these issues to life for lawmakers. “This year the ACB leadership seminar really highlighted the importance of telling actual, real-life stories,” Jason said. “When speaking to staff members or congressional leaders, I reminded them that the blind or low vision person could be their mother, little brother, or child.”

Jason emphasized that accessible medical devices aren't a niche concern, they're an urgent need. “Age-related macular degeneration affects nearly 20 million people,” he explained. “This legislation isn't just for people born blind, it's for people we all know and love who develop visual impairments later in life.”

Building Bridges and Sharing Ideas

Chris Hunsinger, President of the Golden Triangle Council of the Blind (GTCB), described the conference as both informative and energizing.

“We networked with other ACB members from all over the country who are interested in advocacy,” she said. “The Presidents' Meeting gave us an opportunity to have real conversations between affiliate leaders and ACB leadership, to talk about managing communication, feedback, and expectations.”

One highlight for Chris was the afternoon tour of the Library of Congress. “We marveled at the symbolism demonstrating the value of knowledge for all,” she shared. “We even got a bonus: seeing older equipment used by the National Library Service (NLS) dating back to the 1930s, along with a preview of a new talking book machine set to roll out in 2025.”

In addition to attending meetings and seminars, Chris and her colleagues made the rounds on Capitol Hill,



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visiting five legislative offices and delivering materials to every Pennsylvania House member. "I didn't quite hit 10,000 steps that day, but I got close," she joked.

Advocacy With Pride and Purpose

For Debby Hill, President of PCB, the visit to Capitol Hill held special meaning. "Walking through the office buildings of the U.S. Capitol made me smile," she said. "I was proud to talk to Congressional staffers and make them aware of legislation that's vital to the low vision and blind community."

Debby emphasized the need to remind lawmakers of long-standing protections like Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the ADA, and IDEA, essential civil rights laws that still require vigilant defense. "With today's political climate, it's necessary to keep these issues front and center," she noted.

Moving Forward Together

The 2025 ACB Leadership Conference was more than a gathering of advocates, it was a call to action. For PCB members, it reinforced the power of storytelling, the strength of collaboration, and the urgency of accessible legislation.

Whether touring historic institutions, exchanging ideas with national leaders, or climbing Capitol Hill, PCB's delegation showed up ready to represent Pennsylvania with pride, knowledge, and compassion.

As Jason Miller so aptly put it: "We weren't just there to check a box. We were there because these issues matter to real people, and we made that clear in every conversation."

For more information about the ACB Leadership Conference or to learn how you can support PCB's advocacy efforts, visit [PCB1.org](https://pcb1.org) or acb.org.

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A Fresh Look at Spring: Making the Season Accessible for Everyone

Spring in Pennsylvania is a time of renewal. Flowers bloom, birds sing, and the days grow longer and warmer. Whether you're walking through your neighborhood, enjoying time at a local park, or simply opening the windows to let in the fresh air, spring is a season that invites us all to get outside and reconnect with the world around us.

For individuals with low vision or total vision loss, spring also brings unique challenges that often go unnoticed by the public. As we embrace the beauty of the season, it is just as important to consider how to make these experiences accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

Seeing Spring Differently



For many people with low vision, spring's visual changes such as bright sunlight, blooming colors, and shifting shadows can be overwhelming. Glare from sidewalks, parked cars, or reflective surfaces can make it difficult to see clearly and safely navigate outdoor spaces.

Simple solutions can help reduce glare, consider wearing a wide brimmed hat or polarized sunglasses, especially on bright sunny days. Planning walks during times when the sun is lower in the sky such as early morning or late afternoon can also make a big difference. In addition, mobility tools like a white cane can offer greater control and confidence when exploring the outdoors.

Outdoor Accessibility Matters

Public spaces like parks, trails, and community gardens should be welcoming for everyone. Accessible paths, tactile guide strips, clear signage with high-contrast text, and audible traffic signals all make a big difference.

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Some state and local parks in Pennsylvania now include guided tactile maps or offer audio tours. These features help make natural spaces more inclusive and enjoyable for individuals with varying levels of vision.

If you are planning a trip to a local park this spring, consider calling ahead or checking their website to learn about available accessibility features. And if you notice areas for improvement, do not hesitate to speak up. Advocating for accessible outdoor spaces benefits everyone.

Spring Cleaning and Home Safety

Spring is also a popular time for cleaning and organizing, and this is a great opportunity to make your home environment safer and easier to navigate. Here are a few quick tips for spring home accessibility:

- Label cleaning supplies with large print, braille, or tactile markers.
- Use contrasting colors to help differentiate items, such as using dark mats under light-colored objects.
- Clear walkways of clutter to reduce tripping hazards.
- Check outdoor steps and ramps for damage after winter weather.

By taking a few extra steps during spring cleaning, you can make your home a safer and more comfortable place.

Embracing the Season Your Way

Not everyone experiences spring the same way, and that is okay. While some may enjoy long walks or gardening, others might prefer listening to the sounds of birds or enjoying the breeze through an open window. What matters most is finding your own way to connect with the season.

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Technology can also help bridge gaps. Screen readers, audio description apps, and smart home devices can help you explore the season in new ways, from identifying plants to reading seed packets aloud.

A Season of Growth for All

Spring is a reminder that growth is possible in many forms. As we enjoy this season, let us also commit to growing awareness, improving accessibility, and making sure our communities are places where people of all vision levels can thrive.

Whether you are planting flowers, taking in the sunshine, or simply enjoying a moment of quiet, know that your experience matters, and that PCB is here to support you.

Let us make this spring season one we can all enjoy together.

Have ideas for improving spring accessibility in your area? Want to share your own tips or stories? We would love to hear from you! Follow the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind on Facebook or X today.

Fast Fact

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) reports that every day about 2,000 U.S. workers sustain job-related eye injuries that require medical treatment.

However, safety experts and eye doctors believe the right eye protection can lessen the severity or even prevent 90% of these eye injuries.



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Community Outreach

Rep. Andre Carroll Celebrates Grand Opening of District Office in Germantown



On Monday March 10th, 2025, State Representative Andre D. Carroll held a grand opening celebration for his new district office on Germantown Avenue. The event welcomed community members from across the 201st Legislative District, which includes Germantown, Logan, and West Oak Lane.

Carroll, a Democrat representing Philadelphia in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, shared a few heartfelt words before the ceremonial ribbon cutting.

“My entire life has been spent in our community, so being able to celebrate the grand opening of my office with neighbors is truly a blessing,” Carroll said. “Now that we’re open for business, my staff and I are ready to get to work on behalf of the good people of our district!”

After the ribbon was cut, Rep. Carroll and his team spent time speaking with residents about available state services and programs.

The celebration also brought together community leaders and advocates, including Pennsylvania Council of the Blind (PCB) board member Jason Miller and his wife LaKisha Miller, who were there to support the event and highlight the importance of accessible government services.

Rep. Carroll’s office is now open to the public at 5845 Germantown Ave., Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Residents can call (215) 849-6592 for assistance with state-related concerns.

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Pittsburgh Sign A Thon 2025 Celebrates Deafblind Communities

The Mall at Robinson came alive with energy and community spirit during this year's **Sign A Thon 2025**, a vibrant event celebrating Deaf culture, language, and connection. Hosted by the **Center for Hearing & Deaf Services**, drawing in families, advocates, and community members from across the region.

Attendees enjoyed an afternoon filled with live entertainment, children's crafts, and access to helpful resources and information, all designed to promote awareness and celebrate the diversity within the Deaf, Deafblind, and hard of hearing communities. The event took place in both the Grand Court and the Rotunda inside the mall.

Among the many organizations represented, **Sherri Rodgers** proudly attended on behalf of the **Golden Triangle Council of the Blind (GTCB)** and the **Pennsylvania Council of the Blind (PCB)**. Sherri hosted an informational table where she connected with visitors and handed out materials about GTCB's mission and services.

The **Golden Triangle Council of the Blind** is a nonprofit advocacy group serving the Greater Pittsburgh area. GTCB works to promote independence and equal opportunities for individuals who are blind, visually impaired, or Deafblind. From supporting accessible transportation to advocating for voting rights and cultural inclusion, GTCB continues to make a lasting impact. Their monthly meetings bring together people of all ages — blind, deafblind, low-vision, and sighted — who are committed to making their community more inclusive and informed.

GTCB is a proud chapter of the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind and remains active in outreach and public education efforts throughout the region.



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Peer Spotlight

Diane and Mel Krek of BLT Art (www.bltart.com)

BLT Art was established in 2015 by Diane Krek. Diane was diagnosed in 1990 with Retinitis Pigmentosa, a genetic eye disease that will eventually lead to total blindness. With her remaining vision, she had a desire to paint acrylic seascape and landscape pictures and sell high resolution prints to raise funds for blind and low vision research.



Jason Miller: Advocate, Leader, and Innovator



Jason Miller, a dedicated board member of the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind, was honored with the **Durward K. McDaniel First Timers Award (East)** and attended the 2024 American Council of the Blind convention. The experience allowed him to connect with advocates nationwide and learn more about ACB's inclusive work.

Jason is also the founder of **Paschall Access Solutions (PASS)**, a business focused on digital accessibility for blind computer users, including seniors.

With a passion for equality and innovation, Jason continues to inspire and lead in the push for accessible technology and inclusion.

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