

VISION ACCESS

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by

the Council of Citizens with Low Vision International.

VISION ACCESS is a magazine by, for, and about people with low vision. VISION ACCESS is published quarterly in three formats (large print cassette, and email) by the Council of Citizens with Low Vision International (CCLVI), a not-for-profit affiliate of the American Council of the Blind. Views expressed in VISION ACCESS are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or of CCLVI. All rights revert to individual contributors upon publication.

VISION ACCESS welcomes submissions from people with low vision, from professionals such as ophthalmologists, optometrists, and low vision specialists, and from everyone with something substantive to contribute to the ongoing discussion of low vision and all of its ramifications. Submissions are best made on 3.5" disk in a format compatible with Microsoft Word. Submissions may also be made in clear typescript. All submissions should include a self-addressed stamped envelope. VISION ACCESS cannot assume responsibility for lost manuscripts. Submissions may be mailed to Joyce Kleiber, Editor, 6 Hillside Rd., Wayne, PA 19087, jmkleiber@hotmail.com

VISION ACCESS is a free publication to all members of the Council of Citizens with Low Vision International. Subscription and membership inquiries can be made to CCLVI's toll free line, 1 800 733-2258.

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From the Editor

Welcome to spring and welcome to our first issue of Vision Access for 2007. Like life, this issue is a mix of difficult concerns and light, pleasurable fare. This is life and this is low vision. Finding a balance seems to be a good way to go.

Our CCLVI Convention offers all of us a real time experience of a balanced week of play and learning and a chance to meet people. Read "Convention Preview" and make plans to join us.

Meet a special person in these pages. Kurt Weston found a way to use his camera after losing much of his sight-"From Fashion to Fine Art." Be insipid.

I asked for humorous articles and George A. Covington came through with his "Sorry Tail of Power Politics in the White House." It's a start that I invite you to keep alive. Send me your articles to help us all smile. Our "Leisure and Recreation" section has ideas you can use to enjoy the moment and to explore new options.

On the serious side, we feature the currency issue, accessible voting, Medicare, and more.

Thanks to all who contributed articles and ideas to make this issue possible.
JMK, 3/12/07.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Joyce,

I am very flattered to have two of my own articles in VISION ACCESS, alongside so many good things. I enjoyed George Covington's piece a lot, especially his saying that he photographs to see. It made me realize that nearly the only time I see people's faces or know what they look like is by seeing photos.

I liked that Bernice Kandarian paid you a nice compliment saying that you do a wonderful job and that the publication alone is well worth the dues. It is well deserved!

I enjoyed the "Power Point" article by Ken Stewart, and found Jane Kardas's information about accessing the Internet by phone very interesting.
Mike Vogl

Organization News

President's Message By Bernice Kandarian

Thanks to everyone who sent in membership dues for 2007. The list was forwarded to the ACB office on March 13 and it appears that our voting strength at this summer's ACB convention will be increased by one vote!

Carol Ewing of Nevada is chair of the Membership Committee and is working on strategies to increase the membership in the coming year. Our other committees are going strong too. The Scholarship Committee has received the applications for 2007-08 and members are in the midst of interviewing and identifying the recipients. Thanks

to Joel Isaac for his hard work in getting the scholarship application working online! Anyone wishing to serve on a committee, especially Membership, Publications and Fundraising, please call me at 800 733-2258.

I hope to see you at our convention in Minneapolis. You will find information from Program Committee Chair John Horst about the CCLVI events at the convention elsewhere in this issue of Vision Access

CCLVI Convention Preview

**By John A. Horst, Executive Director,
Pennsylvania Council of the Blind**

The Council of Citizens with Low Vision International Convention Program for 2007 will be exciting and challenging. We hope you will be able to attend. Please tell your friends and work associates about this great program and encourage them to attend as well.

At our first session on Sunday morning July 1 Phyllis Salchow OTR/L, Director of the Phillips Eye Institute and Vision Rehabilitation Center of Minneapolis MN, will lead a forum on low vision issues. Discussion will include: what's new in low vision aids, current concerns, and how referrals are received and treated.

"Job Jeopardy" is the topic of our Sunday afternoon session. Sarita Kimble Holiday, Human Resource Specialist at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Philadelphia will lead this session. Sarita will offer the employer's perspective on this subject and she will explore options for resolving job jeopardy issues. As Human Resources Specialist at the VA, Sarita is responsible for providing employee/labor relations technical guidance in matters related to: leave and attendance, discipline, alternative dispute resolution (conflict mediation), workplace violence and patient abuse for managers supervising health professionals in a variety of clinical areas. Sarita serves as the Medical Center's Reasonable Accommodation Committee Technical Advisor. In this capacity, she oversees the placement, retention and accommodations of employees with disabilities. Joining this discussion will be an Assistive Technology Specialist who will deal with technology difficulties in job jeopardy.

John Vaughn is the featured speaker for our Monday afternoon July 2 program. Mr. Vaughn has low vision and he has recently been appointed Chairman of the National Council on Disability. From his experiences, he will review how an individual with low vision functions at the executive level in business, agencies, and organizations.

For the second part of the afternoon, vendors from the exhibit hall will talk about their products which are designed to make life easier for people who have low vision.

On Tuesday afternoon July 3 Sarita Kimble Holiday will continue her employment discussion highlighting "Strategies for Overcoming Vocational Barriers." Members of the low vision community will share their challenges and solutions.

Next, we will conduct CCLVI's annual business meeting and post convention board meeting.

Wednesday afternoon July 4 will feature the subject of sports and low vision. Rick Morin and Ken Stewart will discuss securing special seating for fans who have low

vision. Also present, will be representatives from sports teams who will give their perspective on this topic. Ideas generated in this program can also be applied to other entertainment venues.

Then Joyce Kleiber, L.C.S.W., will offer a workshop on Project Insight--CCLVI's program in which members offer information and support to people who are just learning to cope with vision loss.

Our program on Thursday afternoon July 5 will review current advocacy issues in low vision and what action CCLVI should be taking on these issues. Patricia Beattie, CCLVI Past President, and others will lead this discussion.

After this, Carlos Gourgey, Ph.D., will offer a support group for people who have low vision.

Our convention will have opportunities for fun and relaxation. Sunday afternoon at 4:00 we will feature our great CCLVI mixer. This is your chance to renew friendships and meet new people while sharing refreshments.

There will be a "Welcome to Minneapolis Dance" at 10:00 on Sunday evening July 1 and a "Farewell Dance," Friday evening July 6 after the convention banquet. Gordon Kent will provide the music for our dances.

CCLVI will also conduct a game night on Wednesday evening July 4 at 8:00. This is always lots of fun, greatly enjoyed by all who attend; so don't miss out on a great recreational opportunity.

Our social events are also fund raisers to help cover convention costs. Admission for each of these affairs is \$10.

Come one, come all to an outstanding CCLVI convention program in July 2007.

Summary of CCLVI Board Meeting, January 19, 2007

Board members voted to approve the appointment of Brian Petraits, CCLVI Scholarship recipient from Indiana, to the CCLVI board to fill a one year vacancy.

The Investment Committee reported the transfer of funds from a savings account to an 11 month CD to gain greater interest.

The Treasurer's report was approved.

The board requested clarification of what honesty insurance for board members will covers.

CCLVI's website remains under construction.

Updated guidelines and application for CCLVI Scholarships are displayed on this website and the application can be completed interactively on line. We thank Joel Isaac of Orange County California for the work he did to make this possible.

The CCLVI 508 Committee will have another meeting with Day al Mohammed prior to a February meeting of U.S. Access Board TEITAC--Telecommunications and Electronic Information Technology Access Committee. The 8 subcommittees of the TIETAC are in the process of updating the 508 guidelines.

John Horst, Convention Program Committee Chair reported. Board members made suggestions regarding topics and scheduling of sessions. Kathy Casey is directing publicity for the convention. John Horst is completing his letter about convention signage. Joyce Kleiber asked for volunteers to write reports of conventions sessions for VISION ACCESS. Recordings of sessions will be available on cassette and reports can be based on these recordings.

Carol Ewing, Membership Committee Chairperson, plans to attract new members to current chapters and to establish new chapters. She welcomes suggestions to reach these goals.

Certificates to acknowledge Life Members and dues policies for Life Members were considered.

Kathy Casey reported on the formation and development of our newest chapter, the New York State Council of Citizens with Low Vision.

The Scholarship Committee expects to determine recipients by April 15, 2007. This committee will clarify a proposal for funding for scholarship recipients to attend CCLVI's convention to receive their awards.

Ken Stewart is awaiting ideas for an accessible buffet contest at CCLVI's Convention Mixer.

Members of the Resolutions Committee plan to have a conference call prior to the convention so that resolutions may be effectively stated.

Joyce Kleiber asked for humorous articles for VISION ACCESS.

Mike Godino presented a resolution about accessible currency at the New York State Independent Living Council. Through this resolution members became aware of the currency issue and passed a resolution in support of accessible currency.

Quiet cars and driverless cars were discussed.

CCLVI Chapter Reports

Metropolitan Council of Low Vision Individuals,

(Representing the Tri-State Metropolitan Area around New York City) Chapter members continue to make significant contributions for the vision impaired community in many and diverse settings. Chapter member Raphael Rivas recently represented his home state of New Jersey on a national advisory panel to the Social Security Administration. He attended a two-day conference in Atlanta focusing on beneficiary programs including the "Ticket to Work" project.

Raphael is also active in a national youth disabilities group, and has been active in feedback meetings with the architects designing the new Yankee Stadium and a replacement for New York City's other major league baseball field, Shea Stadium. The Chapter has had at least two or three people at each of these meetings. In addition to advocating for readable signage and good way finding features, ticket policies are being discussed, as well as the ease of connections between the facility and public transport.

For information about this chapter, call 845-986-2955.

National Capitol Citizens with Low Vision

In December, Skip Sharpe hosted yet another Holiday Party at the VFW Hall in Wheaton, MD. You can always count on running into someone who you haven't seen in awhile. The DJ isn't bad either. Thanks, Skip!

In January, Moira Williams, President of Envision Technologies in Bethesda, told us about the new KNFB Reader. The Reader is a reading device which combines a digital camera with a personal data assistant. Everyone liked the small size but not the hefty price.

We tried something new in March, a dinner meeting at Red Hot & Blue in Rosslyn, VA. Over dinner, it was great to socialize with friends. Then, we heard from our guest, Rikki Epstein, ADA Project Officer at the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. She told us about a relatively new program where Metro trainers provide one on one training to help those with vision loss learn the layout of an unfamiliar station or bus route. It is a free service and there is no waiting list! Supposedly, there are no other transit organizations in the country that offer this. Way to go Metro! Rikki also fielded questions and comments on the bus and train service riders are experiencing. For information about this chapter call 703-645-8716 or email: nclv@yahoo.com.

People

Meet Kurt Weston

From Fashion to Fine Art

By Gail Willmott

Reprinted with permission from Kaleidoscope Magazine, Summer/Fall, 2006. Kaleidoscope Magazine is a publication about and by artists with disabilities.

Photographer Kurt Weston's work is often dark, compelling, and powerful, as in the case of his series of self-portraits entitled Blind Vision. Sometimes it is more light-hearted as with his series of touchable photographs in which the subject matter is outlined in caulk with titles such as "Flamingo Fountain," "Time to Feed the Feline," and "The Devil Inside." In either case there is something intriguing that draws the viewer into his work.

Weston became a fine arts photographer after spending several years during the mid '80s and early '90s as a sought-after commercial photographer in the fashion industry with his work appearing in glamour and beauty publications worldwide. In 1991, he was diagnosed with AIDS and had periods of grave illness in which he fought many infections. Later he contracted CMV retinitis, an AIDS related complication which gradually took his sight rendering him legally blind by 1996 with no vision in his left eye and limited peripheral vision in his right. Weston sees the world as if it is an impressionist painting.

A year earlier he had moved from Chicago to Southern California to be near his father and brother. Though he was gravely ill with, according to his doctors, about six months to live, Weston decided to take his cameras "just in case something great happened." A miracle did happen in the form of a relatively new type of AIDS therapy,

anti-retroviral medications called protease inhibitors. Within months after beginning these drugs, Weston's health began to improve. However, the damage done to his eyes was permanent. He attended the Braille Institute in Anaheim to learn skills to keep his independence.

As much as he loved his work, Weston didn't believe he could take photographs again. One day something compelled him to pick up a camera and much to his surprise he found he could still focus a lens. He had joined Asian Pacific Crossroads, a support group for gay and lesbian people. When they discovered he was a photographer, he was asked to shoot two months of a calendar the group was compiling as a fund-raiser and after some thought, Weston took up the challenge. With the help of low vision enhancement equipment obtained from the California Department of Rehabilitation, he was able to shoot the entire calendar. So began Weston's renewed career as a photographer.

In the area of fine arts photography, Weston has had great success. His work has been exhibited in many prestigious galleries and museums throughout the country. In February of 2005 the Huston Museum of Fine Arts purchased photographs by Weston for their permanent collection. Through his work and as a board member of Very Special Arts of California, he has done much to advocate for participation in and access to the arts for people with disabilities. Shared Visions, an exhibit which Weston organized and curated, shows the works of twenty-one blind and legally blind artists from across the country. The exhibit opened last fall and will be on display through September 2006 at the Southern California College of Optometry in Fullerton. The college has made it possible for patrons with low vision to fully participate in the exhibit by providing them with low vision enhancement devices.

Weston's Blind Vision series of images was included in the Shared Visions exhibit. These five black and white self-portraits capture both the physical and psychological struggles of losing his sight. Weston says the vision that remains for him is like having cotton stuck in his eye. When taking his Blind Vision self-portraits, he sprayed a piece of glass with foaming glass cleaner and took the pictures sitting behind it. In two of these stunning images, "Losing the Light" and "Peering Through the Darkness," his hand appears to be pushing away the foam-the obstruction to clear vision. When taking photographs and making prints, Weston, "puts his work together like a puzzle," relying on his memory and years of experience as well as what he sees.

In addition to his work for inclusion of people with disabilities in the arts, Weston actively works as an educator concerning HIV and AIDS. He is involved with a program called Positively Speaking which sends people with the illness to schools to talk to students in the hopes of preventing further spread of the disease.

Weston is currently studying for a Master of Fine Arts from California State University-Fullerton. Through earning this degree, he will have the opportunity to add to his body of work and to become an arts educator. He puts most of his energy into his studies, his photography, and his advocacy, making the most of each moment despite his illness and visual impairment. While hoping for a cure for AIDS one day, Weston says, "In the meantime there is so much work to be done."

Editor's Note: Showing his work at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C. as part of winning the international competition is a high point in Kurt Weston's second career. Art experts from such places as New York's Museum of Modern Art and the Kennedy Center as well as an independent curator selected Weston's work from among 292 entries from around the world. To view Kurt Weston's work visit his website: www.kurtweston.com

Science and Health

The Mechanics of Vision

By Bill G. Chapman, Ed.D.

Most people today know that a computer is nothing more than a box full of switches. Each byte of computer data (A byte is one letter, digit or symbol found on the keyboard.) is made up of eight bits (or switches) turned either on (=1) or off (=0). A capital "A" might be 1,0,0,0,0,0,0,0, that is, one switch turned on and seven others turned off. A lower case "a" might be 1,1,0,0,0,0,0,0 and so forth, until each letter, digit and symbol has its own code (called ASCII codes).

This is exactly how our eyes function. Light enters the eye reflected off the things we see. The light is focused onto the retina. The retina is covered with millions of photoreceptors (electrical generators) that produce a charge of electricity whenever they are struck by light. In each scene we see, all of the photoreceptors generate an electrical charge (=1) or they don't (=0). These codes are carried to the brain via the optic nerve. The code for a spruce tree, for example, might be 0,0,0,1,1,1,0,0,0. The code for a Douglas fir tree might be 1,0,0,0,1,1,1,0,0,0,1. NOTE: I am greatly simplifying this. There are millions of switches in each code instead of the few that I show here. From birth to death we learn these codes and store them in our visual memory (data base).

A baby enters the world with a blank slate. The newborn has no memory of codes previously learned. Slowly he or she must learn the codes. For weeks the newborn is fed at a given hour. Each time the baby is fed, he or she sees the bottle which has a code, for example, 1,0,1,0,1,0,1. Weeks later the baby sees this code and remembers. He realizes, "Yesterday, when I saw 1,0,1,0,1,0,1, I got something to eat." The baby sees the bottle for the first time. We see only when the computer in our visual memory can match codes with (1) what the eye is sending to the brain now and (2) what was learned earlier.

When we learn about the mechanics of vision we can understand the visual confusion (blur) the partially sighted often experience. If disease or accident destroys part of the retina, it changes the code for the things we see. The macular degeneration patient who loses central vision might see only 0,0,0,?,?,?,0,0,0 when he or she looks at a spruce tree. The person who has lost peripheral vision due to RP or severe glaucoma will see only ?,?,?,1,1,1,?,?,?. Today when we see familiar objects, the codes being sent by our damaged retinas, are not the same codes we learned years ago. Our eyes have changed the codes; we are not sure about what we are seeing.

After a year of not being able to read, the visually impaired begin to forget seldom used words like "numb" and "enhance." When our memory of these words is not refreshed about once a year by seeing them, they are forgotten. People who lose words may use these words in speech, but when they first see them again while using a reading machine, magnifying glasses or a hand magnifier, they do not recognize them.

If you stumble over a word seen on a reading machine or magnifier, stop and spell the word. Usually this enables you to recognize it. Before going further, look at this word again, knowing what it is. Begin rebuilding your visual memory of how that word looks. Learn the new code.

Never quit reading; use a reading machine, magnifying glasses or a hand held magnifier. If you don't, your situation will worsen. You can reach the point where you can recognize only words known by a preschooler: of, a, on, cat, the and etc.

Quality of Life

Structured Negotiations Result in Accessible Debit Card Use By Lainey Feingold

On behalf of the American Council of the Blind, the California Council of the Blind and the American Foundation for the Blind, Linda Dardarian and I have negotiated legal agreements about tactile point of sale machines with Walmart, Safeway and Trader Joe's. These companies have agreed to install tactile keypads so blind and visually impaired people who cannot read a flat screen can enter their own PIN number or phone number or cash back amount when using a debit card at a point of sale machine. Sometimes the tactile keypads are built in to the point of sale unit, sometimes they snap on as an overlay, and sometimes they are on a separate unit attached to the point of sale device.

Walmart already has installed several tactile keypad units at every store in the country. Safeway started in California and will be installing these units nationwide before the end of the year, at least 3 in every store. Trader Joe's will begin installation later this Spring and will start, after testing, by installing the units at one third of its aisles in every store nationally. Staff at all these stores should have received training about why blind and visually impaired people need the tactile keypad, and how to assist people in using them.

In addition to these three companies, ACB, AFB and CCB are engaged in negotiations with many other companies on the point of sale issue, including 7-Eleven, Rite Aid, CVS, Target and Radio Shack. People should feel free to contact us if they encounter a point of sale device they cannot use or have any questions about this initiative.

In addition to the point of sale work, we are also continuing to monitor Talking ATM installations at many national banks, and are working on issues of accessible websites, alternative formats for financial information, accessibility issues in health care, accessible credit reports, audible pedestrian signals, accessible software for call-center at home employment, and descriptive video for movie theaters.

As lawyers, we do this work with ACB, AFB, ACB affiliates and individual members of the blind community using a legal advocacy method called Structured Negotiations. Structured Negotiations focuses on collaboration and solution without litigation.

If readers of Vision Access have issues that they think we can help with, they should feel free to contact us. The best way to reach us is by email at ailto:lfeingold@earthlink.net or call toll free at 800-332-6177 and leave a message for Scott Grimes.

Advice for Job Seekers
By M.J. Schmitt, Founding Member
and Current First Vice President
of ACB

I have been just plain lucky and have been in many right places at right times. My first job was as a Dictaphone typist at Taylor instrument Company. Then I was a Dictaphone operator at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester. In my third job for Strassenburgh Laboratories, I was promoted from Dictaphone typist to secretary of the export department. Then I attended programming school while working as a secretary for the National Technical Institute for the Deaf on the campus of the Rochester Institute of Technology, RIT. After 6 months there, I interviewed for and accepted a position as programmer at the computer center at RIT. Then I moved to Chicago where I worked as a programmer for Sears on the 48th floor of the Sears Tower. I kept this job for eighteen and a half years.

Here is a little advice to those of you who are pounding the pavement in search of a job. Believe in yourself--that you've obtained the training to do what is required of you and that you plan to do as well as you can every day, no matter what your mood. As I was leaving an interview for any job I really wanted, my parting words to the interviewer were: "All I want is an opportunity to succeed or fail on my own merit."

More Timely Production of Textbooks for
Students with Impaired Sight

Congress, educators, publishers, software developers, and accessible material producers across the U.S. have worked together to create an internet-based process that will expedite the development of textbooks for blind and visually impaired students in accessible formats, such as braille and large print. The American Printing House for the Blind (APH), was selected by Congress to house and manage this project. APH announced that all components of the system are online, right on schedule.

In 2004, President George W. Bush signed into law the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), calling for the establishment of the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) at APH by December 2006.

In addition to NIMAC, IDEIA also called for the development of a highly structured standardized file format called the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) to be used by publishers submitting electronic textbook files to the NIMAC.

Prior to the development of NIMAS in 2005, textbook files were created in many different formats, making the translation process complex and labor intensive.

The establishment of NIMAC at APH, along with the development of a standard file format, has set the stage for a new era in accessible textbook production. Publishers of educational materials can now deposit standardized electronic files into a central repository that is part of the NIMAC. Authorized users, such as state education agencies, can download these files directly from the repository. These agencies, or private companies working as their agents, can convert the files into accessible formats. The files will enable them to more easily translate print into braille or large print.

For more information about NIMAC, visit www.nimac.us on the web or contact Julia Myers, phone (502) 899-2230, email: NIMAC@aph.org.

Recreation and Leisure

On Line Group for Readers

All people who love to read and who are blind or visually impaired are invited to join an online discussion group. The purpose of this group is to discuss reading experiences, both good and bad. Members may also direct others to new sources for materials which are accessible. To sign up send an e-mail to: EnjoyReading-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Enjoying Nature's Songs--

Birding by Ear

By Mike Vogl

I am a low vision bird watcher. Does that sound like an oxymoron? Bird watching implies sight. But, in fact, birding, as it is called, can be enjoyed as much by the visually impaired as by the fully sighted. Identifying birds by their calls and songs is just as rewarding as sightings. We like to call it bird listening, or birding by ear. (In fact sighted ornithologists identify more than half the birds by their calls, not by sighting.)

Birding is a very popular pastime with an estimated 45 million participants in America. For me it's a quiet way to enjoy the out of doors--the sheer pleasure of hearing a wonderful array of nature's songsters.

Birding by ear does not require travel to remote places. Start right in your backyard or in the park down the street. I began at a young age, hearing birds I could not see. I asked others what kind of bird I was hearing. They could often identify common birds such as robins and cardinals. With all the noise in our modern world, I had to become attuned to hearing bird calls which range from soft chirps to clear whistles to raucous calls.

Then I got Cornell University's ornithology lab's recordings of birdsongs, a set of two LPs, which I listened to over and over. Today there are dozens of recordings to help identify birds by ear on cassette tape and CD. They are available at nature centers, bookstores, and at stores such as Wild Birds Unlimited.

Yet it was often difficult to link the specific bird to a particular call, and I soon realized that the main objective of birding is to enjoy the sounds of nature. Birds sing and call for various reasons -- mating, alarm, territorial, gathering -- but to my ear they often seem to be singing out of pure joy. Some birdsongs are unbelievably musical, others are eerie, but all bring a thrill to the listener. Enjoy first, learn to identify later.

The effort to learn bird identities is worth it. Every bird that I learn to identify by its sound gives me a sense of accomplishment. Whenever I hear that bird again, happy feelings of achievement add to the sheer pleasure of enjoying the sound itself.

All of this became easier for me when a friend who identified the birds and their calls was at my side. Members of bird-watching groups are eager to share their expertise with beginners. Most nature centers have birding groups and outings. Check to see if you have an Audubon Society in your area. It's a great resource. Find a person or group under whose wing you can learn birding by ear.

Learning one bird call will lead to knowing calls of similar sound. Once you know a robin and you hear a similar call, but with attitude, it will probably be a grosbeak. The same is true of telling the wood thrush from the hermit thrush. I get a great thrill to recognize the trumpet of the sand hill crane, the seven second long rollicking call of 110 separate notes of a winter wren. Having the skill has enriched my life, enhancing the enjoyment of the moment.

A good website to learn birdsongs is www.1000Plus.com/BirdSongs. Here are some others:
www.uwgb.edu/birds/wbba/speciesaudios.htm
www.birds.cornell.edu/programs/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/
www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/song.html
www.learnbirdsongs.com
www.whybirdssing.com

Brainstorming about What People with Vision Loss Can Do for Fun

By Joyce Kleiber

Recently Pat Beattie, CCLVI Past President, was asked to suggest activities that people who have significant vision loss can do to add zest to their lives. Pat's random list crossed my email screen and I couldn't resist sharing it with you, readers of Vision Access. The ideas are not in any logical order and I left it that way; I think this may help you to freely come up with additional suggestions of your own. I invite you to share your experiences in any past time you've enjoyed in pages of future issues of Vision Access.

Here are Pat's ideas.

- Play cards using large print, Texas-size and low vision playing cards
- Take a cruise using ACB cruises, DaMar Travel and other services that accommodate people with visual impairments
- Volunteer - I teach ESL to immigrants at my church
- Get onto a computer with magnification and/or synthesized voice or Freedom Box

- Use audio described movies, theater, TV
- Go white water rafting, lake canoe paddling, portaging
- Cross country ski with Ski for Light
- Tandem bicycling
- Tell stories to grandchildren using Twin Vision books, or get children's books from Library of Congress talking book program, learn these stories to share with children
- Shop on the internet
- Join the Peace Corps
- Take up swimming or access other local government recreation programs or adult education classes
- Get a guide dog for mobility and as a fun and loving partner in a new lifestyle
- Read publications available on-line, in large print, or on cassette and newer electronic formats
- Needlework - keep on or learn to knit or crochet
- Music - take up an instrument, write songs, join Friends in Art
- Compile your favorite family recipes to pass along to the next generation - create your own cookbook in large print, electronically, or teach the grandchildren to make them
- Take grandchildren on public transportation or Para transit on field trips - find hands-on activities, where a kid can do the reading and where you have to do the leading
- Organize a local support group and/or monthly socials
- Stay active in your church or community organization
- Organize a fund-raiser for your favorite charity or to support something you would like to accomplish in your community
- Learn how to get onto a clinical trial at National Eye Institute or at a local university
- Learn Tai-chi or Yoga to help with balance
- Research your family tree - all the way back to ancient times and migrations around the world via National Geographic Society's project where you send in a saliva swab and \$100 and find out where your ancestors began and moved around the world
- Play accessible computer games
- Help your church get large print hymnals and worship service bulletins, and make their website accessible
- Get involved with your local independent living center
- Try ceramics, pottery, tactile arts
- Go back to college and finish up your degree - or change fields

TRI IT Camp for Women A Workshop for Blind Athletes and Sighted Guides

TRI IT is a fun 3-day instructional camp aimed at introducing visually impaired women and sighted guides to the sport of triathlon. Participants will be introduced to basic swim, bike, and run/walk skills necessary to complete a sprint triathlon. Sighted guides and blind athletes will learn the fundamentals of swimming together with a bungee cord, riding together on a tandem bicycle, and running together with a tether. The camp will conclude with a mini-tri on Sunday morning.

The camp is open to any adventurous blind or visually impaired women who have a desire to learn the sport of triathlon. In addition, any courageous sighted women who wish to give the gift of guiding to a visually impaired woman are invited to this camp. Visually impaired women are encouraged to recruit and bring their own sighted guides.

Participants should be in good health and complete a physician consent form and waiver prior to camp. In addition, participants should have elementary skills in swimming, biking and run/walking. They will be most successful at this camp, if they are able to swim 2 lengths of pool freestyle, ride a bike if they are a sighted guide, ride a tandem if they are visually impaired, and be able to walk/run a mile under 20 minutes.

This camp runs from April 19-22, 2007 at Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Participants are invited to stay at the Hot Springs Lodge and Pool directly across from the world famous Glenwood Springs Hot Springs. Training classes will be held at the Hot Springs Athletic Club and in the Hot Springs Pool.

Tri it, you'll like it! Whether you're looking to be a recreational triathlete or compete at the world championship level, this camp will help build a team of supportive women who want to make fitness and health a lifetime goal.

Instructors at this camp are Nancy Stevens, Blind triathlete, and ITU Short Course World Champion Nancy Reinisch, 20 year triathlete, USAT Level 1 Coach. Sighted Guide Carol McCurry, Marathon Runner, Sighted Guide Judy Haynes, 20 year triathlete, Swim Coach, Personal Trainer Wendy Caldwell: 10 year triathlete; Sighted Guide Helen Mcqueeney: Personal Coach; Sighted Guide Members of the Roaring Fork Women's Triathlon Team.

The fee for this camp is \$250 per participant which will include lodging, food, and training.

The camp is filled for this year. But do plan ahead for the next camp experience offered. Contact Nancy Stevens at 814 Minter Avenue, Glenwood Springs, CO 81601 or by email at nstevens@sopris.net

Accessible Web Site for Yarn and Patterns

The Lion Brand Yarn Company has redesigned their Web site to accommodate the needs of the blind and visually impaired. Through recent surveys, the company found that about 16% of their users were visually impaired in some way and would benefit from the improvements.

The most popular feature is the "Pattern Finder," a unique search tool that locates patterns from an archive of over 1,450 knit and crochet patterns, most of which are free. Every one of over 1,100 free knit and crochet patterns on the Web site is available in three formats: standard, large type and braille.

As part of a program to create a Website that is designed to serve the needs of different customers and is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act(ADA), the company asked for information about their Web site visitor's preferences in viewing patterns. Since that time, 49,139 (13.5%) have requested large type, 5,994 (about 2%) say they use jaws (this is text-to-speech system for those that are blind but can hear)and 2,176 (about 0.6%) say they use input in the format for the Duxbury brailier.

The braille is used by people who prefer braille or they may be people who neither see nor hear. A Yahoo! group of blind knitters guided the company's web developer, Nancy Miracle, in creating the specialized software.

All told, 57,309 people (about 16% of Lion Brand's new subscribers) indicate that they are vision impaired in one way or another to the point where they appreciate the new special formatting of the Lion Brand Website.

Visit: Lion Brand Yarn

www.lionbrand.com,

Contact: Ilana Rabinowitz

(201) 804-3999 Ilana@lionbrand.com

**Reminiscing Just for Fun
Sorry Tail of Power Politics
in the White House
By George A. Covington**

Between 1989 and 1993 I served as a White House staffer. It was during the reign of George Bush the First.

Now that the statute of limitations has run out, I can safely disclose certain well kept, White House secrets formerly known by only the most insider of the insider. After twenty years in Washington, I can assure you that you can't believe the media! No longer being part of the Washington scene, I feel that it is time for the truth to be told: Millie was a bitch. That mutt was one of God's ugliest creations. It was so ugly that only a kindly soul like George Bush would shower with it. As Special Assistant to the Vice-President for Disability Policy, I was prepared to believe all those long, glowing articles on this sweet, wonderful and beloved first pet of the land.

However, one day while on my way to get a cup of coffee in the cafeteria of the Old Executive Office Building, I ran across this waddling, toddling, power pup. To begin with, this animal's legs were too short, probably because the dog was too fat and they actually compressed. Its head was too big, its ears were too long and it had a stupid expression which probably hid a brain the size of a gnat. I leaned over to let the dog sniff my hand so it would know I was a good friend and White House staffer. Millie sniffed, snorted, turned and waddled off. I had to control the impulse to shout "If I ever decide to get a seeing eye dog, don't bother to audition!"

I was willing to accept this as a chance first encounter. Maybe Millie simply didn't warm up to strangers very easily. In the back of my mind I wondered: does this mutt treat the Secretary of State with such disdain? What about the other cabinet members, the press secretary, or my boss the Vice President?

Several months later I was coming from a Rose Garden event as Mrs. Bush was leaving the White House to walk Millie. I decided to give the beast another chance. This time I had my camera with me to document the event. I said, "Here, Millie, Millie, Millie," in my most condescending, patronizing and loving tone. Again the beast waddled over and I repeat "waddle," this dog does not walk, it waddles. She sniffed my shoe, snorted again, turned abruptly and waddled off toward the bushes to do her deeds. I felt like screaming: "What did you expect, Gucci?" I had been snubbed. I realize now this

cretin was simply hung up on her own publicity.

I checked into those stories about her writing books. I now have it on good authority that those books were actually ghost written by one of the Secret Service bomb-sniffing dogs.

Advocacy

Accessible Currency Myth vs. Fact

By Day Al-Mohamed,

Director of Advocacy and Governmental Affairs

In 2002 the American Council of the Blind filed suit against the Department of the Treasury alleging that the Department of Treasury violates section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, by its repeated and continuing failures to design and issue paper currency that is readily distinguishable to blind and visually impaired people. In November, U.S. District Judge James Robertson ruled "It can no longer be successfully argued that a blind person has 'meaningful access' to currency if she cannot accurately identify paper money without assistance."

Since that time there have been numerous articles and radio and television programs on the subject. In the midst of all the media attention misinformation about access to paper currency for the blind has and will continue to surface. Below is a short true/false sheet on which addresses the most common myths about ACB's decades-long effort to obtain meaningful access to paper currency and offers some talking points that can be used for interviews.

ACB encourages its members and affiliates to keep this issue current (pun intended) by contacting and speaking with their local newspapers, radio and television stations. Let them know how important meaningful access to money is and it can impact your life. It isn't just enough to handle money but to be able to effectively independently identify and manage our own finances completely.

TRUE OR FALSE?

Making paper currency accessible to the blind and visually impaired is an extreme measure and an unheard of accommodation.

FALSE.

Almost 200 countries issuing paper currency have made their currency accessible using various methods, leaving the United States as the only nation that prints bills that are identical in size and color in all their denominations. These include nations and groups with larger populations and currency printing needs such as Canada and the European Union, but also smaller countries such as Barbados, Namibia and Uruguay.

TRUE OR FALSE?

Making paper currency accessible isn't really necessary because it only affects a small group of people.

FALSE

Cataracts, which result in cloudy or blurred vision, affect 20.5 million people in the United States today, but that number will rise to 30 million in 2020. Diabetes as a result of obesity is an increasing issue for millions of Americans, and for 5.3 million of them, diabetic retinopathy will cause vision loss. For seniors, age-related macular degeneration and glaucoma will affect 1.6 million and 2.2 million people respectively, and those numbers are expected to grow. What those statistics mean is that roughly 1 in 250 people will have some sort of visual impairment by 2020. In addition, making paper currency accessible will impact a much larger group of individuals than just those who are blind and visually impaired. The increased ease in differentiating money will work to the benefit of seniors, individuals with cognitive disabilities and even people without disabilities in environments where there is low lighting such as restaurants, taxicabs, and bars. Curb cuts were created for individuals who use wheelchairs, yet non-disabled pedestrians such as people with strollers, wheeled luggage and moving dollies have significantly benefited and make regular use of curb cuts. Closed captioning was initially thought of as an imposition forced on the public by the deaf community, and yet it is now widely used in places such as airports, hospitals, bars and gyms. Creating an additional means of identifying paper currency has the potential to be just as beneficial to society as a whole.

TRUE OR FALSE?

Making paper currency accessible makes it easier to counterfeit U.S. money.

FALSE

The advent of computers, scanners and printers and other even newer technology has made counterfeiting even easier. However, tactile changes, such as a number of those proposed and utilized by other nations as a part of their accessible currency initiatives, make it more difficult to counterfeit currency.

States Not Meeting Access Requirements for Voters with Disabilities

Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) voting machines, once considered essential to ensuring private and independent voting booth access for voters with disabilities, often do not work as promised, according to a new report published February 14, 2007. Authored by access technology expert Noel Runyan and published by election reform groups Demos and Voter Action, "Improving Access to Voting: A Report on the Technology for Accessible Voting Systems shows that, due to inadequate or malfunctioning voting machines, voters with disabilities are frequently forced to ask for assistance or compromise the privacy of their vote"--severe violations of federal disability accommodation requirements.

The report details significant difficulties for voters with disabilities, including: the lack of a controllable interface for those who are unable to use touch screens or tactile key inputs; inadequate audio access features for people with visual or cognitive impairments, with dyslexia, or with severe motor-impairments; and lack of privacy curtains to prevent others from reading the voters' selections on their visual displays.

"I originally had high hopes for the new voting machines" said Noel Runyan, the author of the report. Runyan, who is blind, is a professional electrical engineer who has spent much of his career developing access technologies for people with visual impairments. "Even with my technical background and the help of poll workers, I could not get the Sequoia Edge II DRE to work. I have since tested most of the available voting systems at conferences and at the National Federation of the Blind's accessible voting systems lab, and my fears have been confirmed: Most of the DREs deployed were not designed with real disability access in mind."

States have been required to provide at least one accessible voting system per polling place since the passage of the Help America Vote Act in 2002, legislation designed to guarantee a fair and secure vote for all voters. To comply with this requirement, many states, armed with new federal dollars, rushed to purchase DREs specifically because they were billed as accurate, quick, and accessible to voters with various disabilities. These efforts failed, and the report details the variety of ways current voting systems fall short of federal standards.

"Improving Access to Voting" also makes a series of additional recommendations to address these concerns, such as using simultaneous audio-video output, enhanced video display controls, dual-switch input controls and voting aids like electronic video magnifiers and tactile ballot marking systems.

"There will never be one perfect voting machine that meets all accessibility needs," Runyan said. "So election administrators should adopt blended systems, such as a combination of optical scan ballots, electronic ballot marking devices with appropriate accessibility features, and multi-lingual paper ballots."

"This report shifts the debate about voting systems. The question is no longer 'Do we have to trade off accessibility to get secure voting systems?'" said Susannah Goodman, Director of the Federal Elections Program at Common Cause. "The question is 'Does Congress have the political will to replace the currently deployed voting systems with systems that are both secure and accessible?'"

"Since the passage of the Help America Vote Act in 2002, a small handful of voting machine companies have made an enormous profit selling DREs as the most accessible technology on the market," said John Bonifaz, Senior Legal Fellow at Demos and a consulting attorney to Voter Action. "This report directly challenges that assumption. Congress should recommit itself to truly providing accessibility for all voters with disabilities, a promise that has not been fulfilled by the DRE technology."

Contact: Holly Jacobson, Voter Action, Email: holly@voteraction.org
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Tim Rusch, Demos
Email: trusch@demos.org
Phone: 212-389-1407

Advocate's Alley
By Ken Stewart
Ramping Up the Sidewalks

I was walking along a Lower Manhattan block, deploying my long white cane in the bright midday sun which takes away virtually all of my usable vision. I detected an upgrade beginning. That was a surprise but believable on that unfamiliar block.

Suddenly there was a low wrought-iron fence across my path. I turned toward the curb line, intending to circumvent the obstacle, but discovered the little low fencing alongside me too. Only then did I realize I had walked up a building-side entrance ramp. Its surface material was identical to the sidewalk's, and its slope so gradual as to disguise its actual identity.

I was pleased that all of my friends and colleagues who travel in wheelchairs could thereby enter that building easily and independently. But I also recalled a particular conversation with an architect who specializes in accessibility designs.

That professional architect and I spoke often while we both served on the U.S. Access Board's Public Rights of Way Access Advisory Committee. We spoke about retro-fitted ramps installed to eliminate the almost ubiquitous "one step" entering retail shops and other commercial spaces adjacent to urban sidewalks. She assured me it is ordinarily structurally feasible to install a ramp just inside the entry rather than out on the sidewalk.

Since then I have been seeking any opportunity to advocate for that remedy. I hope that this will limit the number of exterior ramps. Such ramps add to the profusion of sidewalk furniture around which any vision impaired pedestrian must navigate while attempting to follow the building line along an urban sidewalk. Opportunities for such advocacy are infrequent. My impression is that these installations are the results of individual retailers responding to threats of litigation, or to a genuine concern for users of that establishment. This issue is well suited for inter-disability dialogue; such dialogue may enlighten advocates for people with mobility impairments about the best placement for ramps. The retailer might realize that an interior ramp would permit pedestrians to get a closer look at window displays. I would also like to see local legislation which would give the property owner a slight tax break too. The area devoted to the ramp inside his premises could appropriately be subtracted from the establishment's overall square footage when calculating real estate value.

The Access Board's Advisory Committee studied design approaches when an entire string of adjacent stores are one step up from the sidewalk plane. In this case the sidewalk could be elevated and ramps could be avoided entirely. When a single entry ramp is needed, such a ramp should have a tactually distinguishable surface and edge rails which comply with both visibility and cane detectability standards.

Questions about Medicare

The Medicare Rights Center offers Medicare policy and news updates. Visit the Medicare Rights Center's website at www.medicarerights.org. Here you will find:
--a Medicare Part D Appeal Manual,

- facts about prescription drug costs,
- a monthly seminar on Medicare issues such as "Medicare and Home Health Care"
- a Medicare interactive counselor to get answers to your questions like "When will Medicare pay for a second opinion?"
- updates on Medicare prescription drug benefits
- a chart to help compare Medicare plan options
- subscribe to MRC's free E-Newsletters to stay on top of Medicare changes
- a list of discount drug programs
- "Dear Marcie" answers to commonly asked questions about Medicare concerns
- and much more.

Assistive Technology

First Windows Mobile Screen Reader

HumanWare U.S. announced the strategic compatibility of its BrailleNote mPower Family with Code Factory's Mobile Speak Pocket screen reading software. In March, 2000, HumanWare unveiled the first Braille and speech PDA designed for persons who are blind, and over the past seven years, it has continued to set the standard for portable, intuitive access to countless mainstream applications.

HumanWare is the exclusive distributor for Mobile Speak Pocket (MSP) in the United States. Developed by Barcelona-based, Code Factory, this dynamic, innovative company has paralleled HumanWare's commitment to its customers on the software development front. BrailleNote users will now have direct access to hundreds of Windows Mobile PDAs and cellular phone solutions, and are able to enjoy access to all of the mainstream applications used by their sighted friends, family members, and colleagues through Mobile Speak Pocket.

BrailleNote users can establish a wireless connection to these MSP equipped devices and access them in a Braillecentric, note taking environment that feels familiar to them. This allows the user to read the contents of a PDA or cellular phone screen in his preferred Grade of computer or contracted Braille. MSP runs on the most current version, Windows Mobile 5 for PDA/cellular phone devices, preventing important data loss if the device's battery goes flat. Users can access popular mobile applications, beam contact information, appointments, or tasks to sighted co-workers and friends, and enter Grade II Braille into Pocket Word documents. Users will be able to toggle back and forth between their familiar BrailleNote KeySoft applications and their PDA/cellular phone.

For more information, call (800) 722-3393 or email at us.info@humanware.com.

HumanWare
175 Mason Circle
Concord CA 94520
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Freedom Scientific Shares News via Podcast

Freedom Scientific now has an official podcast. FSCast is Freedom Scientific's monthly podcast. Hosted by Jonathan Mosen, Vice President of Blindness Hardware Product Development, FSCast features news, interviews, and product demonstrations relating to Freedom Scientific products. FSCast is a great way to make the most of the products you have as well as learning about what's new and what's around the corner.

FSCast Episode 1, for December 2006, features an interview with Bryan Carver, the Director of Technical Support at Freedom Scientific. It also presents information about pacmategear.com and introduces three key people behind the PAC Mate Gear user-guided Web site.

You can subscribe to the podcast, download the MP3 file, and learn more about podcasts and how to hear them at the FSCast home page at <http://www.freedomscientific.com/fscast>

Request for Contributions

CCLVI gratefully accepts contributions from readers and members to help pay for the costs of publishing Vision Access, the costs related to our 800 line and Project Insight, and for funding the Carl E. Foley and Fred Scheigert Scholarships. Please send contributions to CCLVI Treasurer, Mike Godino, 104 Tilrose Avenue, Malverne, NY 11565-2040. Our Tax ID number is 1317540.

Resources

Bird Songs

www.1000Plus.com/BirdSongs

www.uwgb.edu/birds/wbba/speciesaudios.htm

www.birds.cornell.edu/programs/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/

www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/song.html

www.learnbirdsongs.com

www.whybirdssing.com

EnjoyReading-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Feingold, Lainey

<mailto:lfeingold@earthlink.net> or call toll free at 800-332-6177 and leave a message for Scott Grimes.

Freedom Scientific

FSCast home page at <http://www.freedomscientific.com/fscast>

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175 Mason Circle
Concord CA 94520
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Medicare Rights Center
www.medicarerights.org/subscribeframeset.html

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Council of Citizens with Low Vision International
An Affiliate of the American Council of the Blind
2007 Membership Application

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