



# **VISION ACCESS**

Council of Citizens with Low Vision International

Volume 28 | Number 5 |

<https://cclvi.info>

December 2021

## **Mind, Body, and Spirit Safety.**

by Cheryl McNeil Fisher

### The War-of-the-Candle-Lighting

A favorite part of the transition of Fall into Winter is apple season. I love apples in almost every form, which means the feel-good fragrance that fills my home is apple cinnamon.

I used to have apple cinnamon jar candles in every room. They each sat in decorative metal encasements for safety and to protect surfaces. No matter how many times I lit a candle, I marveled at the spark that flickered to life. Within minutes that powerful little flame created a stream of fragrance. As if on a mission, the aroma floated through the air, making its way into every room. Within 15 minutes, apples and cinnamon filled my home.

Vision loss was sudden. The limited sight I have in one eye diminished more with each passing year, leading to the War-of-the-Candle-Lighting. A book of matches lasted through three candle lightings. Then I found 2 inch stick matches, which made it a bit easier. After that, however, the scent began to change. Charred matches or wooden match tips were covering the top of the wax. Once the candle was lit, it was too hot to put my fingers in and take out the remains of the matches.

Add in the sulfur smell from lighting all the matches, and, well, it took much longer to achieve a feeling of joy and calm. It took 45 minutes for the apple cinnamon to permeate through the sulfur and burnt match smell.

A good friend of mine would come over and trim my wicks. "Long wicks create smoke," she said. My response, "Short wicks create frustration."

Back to my war story. While out shopping with that same friend, we found 10 inch stick matches in a pretty box. "Wonderful," we both thought. Pretty box; long matches equals easier lighting. The problem is not being able to see the wick. By the time I took that long stick match, moved it around the jar, knocking the burnt end of the match into the wick, I was down to a mini-match, burning my fingers. All that and I still didn't have a lit candle.

My husband bought me a long-handled lighter. Have you ever lit a candle with one? By the time I had it lit, there was a puddle of melted wax around the wick. I better not move the candle, or the liquid would put the flame out. Yes, in case you are wondering, I did try tilting the jar to light the candle. That resulted in the flame touching the glass, causing it to crack.

And don't ask me to use it to light a tapered candle. It will look like a birthday candle by the time the wick is lit. The war ended when I came home from getting my nails done. I attempted to light the candle and burned the tip of my nail. Done. War over.

I have also used the Scentsy plug-ins. They are great for some of you, but not me. Sounds easy. Plug it in and put a piece of fragrant wax on it. Great, as long as Cheryl didn't hit it, creating a wax mess on the wall, shelf, floor, or my clothes.

Today, my house is filled with fragrance. It makes me feel warmth, joy, and peace. I use battery-operated candles or plug-ins and automatic fragrances that plug in. Works for me and it makes it a safer place.

Lights that warm the soul and keep your body and mind safe.

This time of year is filled with magical lights. I fill my life with fairy lights every day of the year. It began the year I found indoor icicle lights. I hung them around the ceiling edge of my dining room, where they remain. The lights add warmth to the room. I can turn the ceiling fan lights off and still have plenty of light without the glare.

Sometimes lights seem more magnified. There are evenings I walk into my kitchen and immediately turn off the decorative ceiling lights and use the one over the sink. As we all know, our vision can fluctuate. The same room, same time of day, same lighting, can seem perfect one day, too dark another, or too bright another.

I purchased fairy lights on Amazon. The LED lights are embedded into the thin copper wire. I have them around the ceiling in my office. The plug is near the floor. The strand goes up the center of the wall, then around the ceiling. When I look at the first wall, it reminds me of a cross; even though it technically looks like a "T." I remain a visionary!

I have a 72 foot strand that covers a few wall edges and corners. There is no receptacle plug at the end to add another strand, giving it a finished look. I no longer walk into those two walls that used to jump out at me. You know, those walls that jump out of nowhere.

The fairy lights are also available with a small solar panel, approximately 3x4 inches, that you can put in or near a window, so it gets the sunlight during the day to light your world at night. I've given them as a gift to my grandson; he loves the starry lights and there's no concern of him playing with a plug. The solar-type has an on-off switch as well.

These are a few ways that I safely fill my mind, body and spirit with fragrance and light. If you enjoy the holiday lights, think of how fortunate we are. We see the lights on a tree or a house, bigger and brighter than the people we are with. Blurry vision has a unique way with lights. Wherever you are in your vision loss, you are not alone. If you are reading this, you know about CCLVI and ACB. In addition, there is a community of people you may not know, but they are waiting with open arms.

Wishing you safety and light in your life.



# **Cat Awareness Helps Keep Them Safe**

by Carol Mackey

I have two cats, a brother and sister, 14 year old Fancy Pants and Twinkle Toes. They are indoor / outdoor cats.

Over the last several years, as they have slowed down, I haven't been letting them out nearly as much, and only on "good weather days" and for shorter periods of time.

Twinkle Toes, often tries to slip out the door, and I don't always see her. I have gotten in the habit, late in the afternoon when I know I won't be opening any doors again, to make sure I have touched each of them and therefore know they are in the house.

I had the experience of thinking they were both in, looked out the door to the deck and there she was staring at me, wondering why I wasn't letting her in!

For my cat's well being and in part safety, I try to follow a regular routine with them.

I feed them, not only at about the same time each day, but I follow pretty much the same routine in the morning and in the late afternoon when I feed them again. It helps me keep track of whether they are eating normally, as they usually do. I also clean their litter box in the morning and again in the evening. That keeps me aware of their litter box use.

My cats are skittish and disappear when anyone else comes near, which makes it hard for me to get a sighted person to check them out.

I make sure they are seen by the vet on a regular basis and I have recently started using a vet that comes to the house, which is less of a hassle for me, and the cats too. I just have to have them “corralled” ahead of time.

During the holidays it is pretty quiet in my life, but if I’m expecting company or making any other changes in the house, I try to be aware of the effect any of these will have on the cats and their routines.



## **Are You The Grinch Who Stole Christmas? Or Getting Through The Holidays**

by Valerie Ries-Lerman

Please see below for some, ah-hem, “interesting” ways to get through the Holidays.

1. Always be truthful with your relatives. If not, a white lie will come in real handy.
2. Always take out a loan to cover expenses. That way you can spend the whole of next year paying it off.
3. Always “Regift”. That is especially handy if not following number 2.

4. While we're on gifts, what do you say when you've received that perfect gift? Or maybe it wasn't so perfect after all? A neutral compliment will do the trick, saying "Oh so and so, you're so thoughtful. Now I know that you were really thinking of me."
5. Greet strangers like you've known them for years. This is a holiday tradition after all.
6. Eat all you want. This gives you a reason for creating that New Year's resolution.
7. Holiday dinner in some way lacking? Simply compliment the host profusely, while sneaking tidbits to their dog begging beneath you under the table.
8. Shop til you drop. That is, if you're smart, after the holidays.
9. Always "smile" and be at your bubbly best. That way no one can accuse you of not being in "The Holiday Spirit".
10. Above all else, remember "This Too Shall Pass". How many days till January?



## Candy Cane White Fudge

### Ingredients:

- 12 oz. white chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 14 oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped peppermint candies

### Directions:

1. Butter an 8-inch square baking pan; line bottom and sides with foil allowing foil to extend over the sides of the pan by about 1 inch and butter the foil.
2. Over medium-high heat, combine the white chocolate and condensed milk using a double-boiler or heat proof bowl set over a pot of hot water. Melt, stirring frequently, until smooth (about 5 minutes).
3. Pour mixture into pan; sprinkle candy over top.
4. Using a knife, lightly swirl candy into chocolate mixture.
5. Refrigerate until firm (about 6 hours or overnight).
6. Cut into 1" squares. Store in the refrigerator.

Yield: 64 pieces





# **We Have a Winner!**

by Writing Works Wonders

Cheryl McNeil Fisher & Kathy King

In more ways than one, Writing Works Wonders is creating winners!

After the intense work of reading, evaluating, and ranking many excellent submissions, a winner was announced for the 52 Words Only Writing Works Wonders' Contest!

Spanning August to September 30, 2021, this contest garnered an impressive number of entries incorporating the theme of "New Beginnings." The names of the entrants were hidden during the selection process.

Writing Works Wonders is a writing community for new and experienced authors, hosted weekly on a live Zoom call in ACB Community. It draws readers, aspiring writers and published authors with fun interactive activities, inspiring Interviews, and special events. While it is streamed and posted on ACB Media's Community channel, the podcast is also distributed via Internet radio, many podcast directories, and the podcast website.

In November, the winner and honorable mentions were announced! First Prize and \$25 was awarded to Carol Mackey of Maine! Honorable Mentions were also awarded: Second Place, Natalie Watkins, and Third Place, Rebecca Valladares.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this challenging contest! Please stay tuned for our next writing contest and a special thanks to our judges, Annie Chiappetta, DeeAnna Quietwater Noriega, Cheryl McNeil Fisher, and Kathy King.

Writing Works Wonders created a winning phenomenon! Have you heard the Buzz? Experience an incredibly talented community, unleashed improvisation and creativity in episodes 18, 30, and 36.

Looking for an activity for your writing group or community meeting? Listen to Writing Works Wonders round-robins and discover how we inspire creativity, collaboration, inclusion, and laugh-out-loud fun.

Advancing through a variety of strategies, we have been exploring events from virtual character masquerades to chain storytelling and who-done-it scenarios!

Watch the ACB Community Call schedule for our next Writing Works Wonders round-robin and join the wonder of creativity and fun. You can also sign up to receive the schedule of Writing Works Wonders events and corresponding Zoom links delivered to your inbox every Thursday. Visit [www.WritingWorksWonders.com](http://www.WritingWorksWonders.com) and click Contact Us, email us at [writingworkspodcast@gmail.com](mailto:writingworkspodcast@gmail.com), or leave us a phone message at 347-467-0221.

Round Robin Episodes:

Episode 18: Cody and the Cane and Llama Drama <https://writingworkswonders.com/2021/07/11/ep-18-writing-works-wonders/>

Episode 30: Round Robin Rodeo

<https://writingworkswonders.com/2021/10/03/ep-30-writing-works-wonders/>

Episode 36: Character Celebration with a Who-Done-It

<https://writingworkswonders.com/2021/10/03/ep-30-writing-works-wonders/>

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## **Cornbread Dressing**

Ingredients:

Your favorite cornbread

2 cups onions and celery, sauteed in 2 sticks of butter or margarine

2 cans Cream of Mushroom soup

2 cans Cream of Chicken soup

3 cups chicken broth

Shredded dark meat chicken

Sage

Poultry seasoning

Garlic powder

Salt & pepper

Directions:

Mix all ingredients together.

Cook in either your crockpot or bake in your oven.

Crockpot: 45 minutes on high or 4 to 5 hours on low.

Oven: 350 degrees for 1 hour in 9 X 13-inch greased dish

# Low Vision and Employment

by Valerie Ries-Lerman

Have you ever wondered what it takes to get, and keep, that job? Yes, there are various Web sites to peruse for job openings and career opportunities, but it's what will follow that job search that really counts. In this article, I simply examine a personal assessment of what it took for me to succeed.

I was employed for over 30 years at the California State Library Braille and Talking Book Library. It wasn't always easy, but it was very rewarding. Here are some helpful hints for attaining, and keeping, good employment.

## 1. Be Prepared For The Job Interview

Dress professionally. Emphasize your assets. Practice again and again. Figure out what your drawbacks are, and find ways you can work around them, even making them assets. For example, are you a perfectionist, a little too nitpicky? You can explain that paying more attention to details will, in the long run, make you a much more productive, accurate, and efficient employee in their organization.

## 2. Transform Setbacks Into Opportunities

If you get the job, and you have a setback, think outside the box. Are your assets being made good use of? If not, find the spot in your organization that would best align with your skills. For example, I moved from our circulation department (that was extremely visual) to the reader advisory department where it was a phone job using technical and people skills. I was able to figure out

which parts of the job had an intellectual work around so that the visual part of the position was decreased as much as possible. My eye strain lessened making the job much more bearable.

### 3. Reasonable Accommodation

Glory was the day I was given ZoomText, a computer magnification program. I had already designed my workarounds so adding this accommodation increased my productivity immensely. One note on using ZoomText, you must memorize your whole screen first, so that you know how to navigate it. The magnification is great but it only magnifies a small part of the screen at a time. As you move your mouse, the magnification follows.

### 4. Find Ways To Increase Your Job Skills

As stated above, how can you do it faster? More efficiently? More effortlessly? As a visually impaired person, you are going to have to prove your mettle and then some. Analyze the job, find those short-cuts and workarounds to your visual impairment. You might even discover new procedures that others in your office could benefit from.

### 5. Be Persistent

I found that determination and drive to succeed were instrumental in my success. Before reasonable accommodations, there were days when I wasn't sure I was going to make it, but I persevered. Once the right visual accommodations were delivered, I was home free.

### 6. Be Patient and Positive

You may have to go to numerous interviews. To attain the position at the Braille and Talking Book Library I experienced a 3-hour

interview. As a legally blind young woman, who did not carry a cane at that time, my visual impairment did come up. I was honest, confident, and positive in my approach. I had memorized my “assets”. Besides, there could be no arguing that a visually impaired person would not be an asset to a library serving the blind, visually impaired, and disabled.

#### 7. Remember Disabled Employees Make Better Employees

It must be said that despite being very fortunate in gaining my position, it is also true that a lot of time, effort and creativity helped me keep it. Above all else, I was wanting to work. Wanting to do your very best makes you a valuable employee. What company or department wouldn't want such dedication?

#### 8. Use Resources For The Blind

Taking all the credit for my job success would not be accurate. I must end by stating how much the California State Department of Rehabilitation was of assistance. Born premature, legally blind, and from a dysfunctional family, counseling, encouragement, and a college degree took me far. Thanks as well goes to organizations by and for the blind who gave needed support and job search information. Such essential programs in our society make a big difference in employment for the blind, legally blind, and those with low vision. Garner their assistance and step forth with confidence knowing your assets, perseverance, intelligence, and creativity will bring you employment that is not only sustaining but rewarding.

Good luck with your job search, and above all else, don't give up hope. Your future is there for the taking.

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VISION ACCESS is published six times a year in large print, audio and email.  
Published in February, April, June, August, October and December.

Vision Access welcomes submissions from people with low vision, from professionals such as ophthalmologists, optometrists, low vision specialists, and everyone with something substantive to contribute to the ongoing discussion of low vision and all of its ramifications. Submission deadlines are January 15, March 15, May 15, July 15, September 15 and November 15.

Send contributions to [CCLVIVisionAccess@gmail.com](mailto:CCLVIVisionAccess@gmail.com)