



VISION ACCESS

Council of Citizens with Low Vision International

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2022 Fred Scheigert Scholarship Winners

The Fred Scheigert Scholarship Program awards three (3) students an individual prize of \$3,000. This competitive scholarship is available to full-time college students with low vision, chosen from among those who meet the visual acuity and academic guidelines. The 2022 scholarship winner bios are listed below.

Faith Norby:

My name is Faith Norby, and I am the 2022 Freshman Fred Scheigert scholarship recipient. I am from southwestern North Dakota and grew up near the town of Manning.

This fall I will be pursuing a degree in English Education with a minor in Special Education from the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota. After I graduate college, my goal is to become a high school English teacher somewhere in North Dakota and eventually pursue a master's degree in Special Education.

Grace Patterson:

I am a pre-law student at Florida Atlantic University's Honors College, where I double major in English and Law.

Once I graduate, I would like to attend Stetson University to earn my Juris Doctorate.

I plan to dedicate my life to public interest law and specialize in disability rights because I believe that my experiences as a disabled American can serve to advance this field and promote legal advocacy for those with disabilities.

I am confident that advocating and fighting for those with impairments so that they might enjoy more equal opportunity under the law will be a life well-lived.

Yael Medley:

I graduated from the University of South Florida with a Microbiology degree. Afterward, I gained a great deal of experience as a tutor, mostly in Organic Chemistry. I found a new love of this subject and that I enjoy helping others learn and explaining ideas. This led me to pursue a career as a professor. I am currently a Chemistry PhD student at Florida State University. After I graduate, I want to teach Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry at a community college. In my free time I enjoy reading, cooking, traveling and kayaking with friends. I also am interested in world history and the Humanities.

2022 Genensky Memorial Magnification Award Winners

This annual award program offers persons with low vision an opportunity to receive a magnification device.

Applications are taken each year and 3 to 5 qualified applicants are chosen to receive one of the donated magnification devices. This annual award program is in honor of Dr. Samuel Genensky, an innovator in low vision technology and founding president of CCLVI. The Genensky Winners Bios are listed below.

Emily Nelson will be a senior in the fall of 2022. Upon graduation she plans on attending college to study history and anthropology. She currently uses equipment provided by her school to complete tasks. When she graduates, she will need to return everything.

Debbie Deatherage is an assembly line worker for LC Industries in Louisville, KY. She uses magnification to check e-mail, Facebook and to do tasks online. She also mentioned attending many Zoom calls and says when others are screen sharing it is much easier to see the video when it is magnified on an iPad. Although she has one now, hers is very old and not working properly.

Sara Alkmin is an Administrative Law Judge who works for the state of Wisconsin. She travels for her job and in many cases needs to be able to review documents given to her just prior to a hearing. She is currently lugging around a CCTV so she can access the information other lawyers give her. Having an iPad would help her by providing a much more portable device while traveling as well as allowing her to view documents during a hearing instead of having to pause the proceedings in order to access the relevant information she needs in a timely manner.

Berkeley Inventor of blind adaptive technology wins MacArthur ‘genius’ prize

By Alix Wall

Joshua A. Miele won a prestigious MacArthur Foundation fellowship for his pragmatic inventions that help blind people navigate the physical and digital world.

Joshua A. Miele says he’s always considered the MacArthur Award “the American Nobel,” and felt that receiving it would be the ultimate signifier he had achieved. Credit: Barbara Butkus Photography

Joshua A. Miele got a text from an unknown phone number in Chicago a few weeks ago asking if he could schedule a call that day. The text was from a scientist at The MacArthur Foundation.

“When they ask you if you have time for a call, you say yes,” Miele told Berkeleyside Wednesday morning. But he spent the next few hours in meetings, and given that he had nominated colleagues for the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship in the past, he spent those hours thinking variations of the same theme: They do not want to talk to you about you.

“I’ve known about this fellowship from the time I was 11 years old.”

But this time, they did.

It was announced Tuesday that Miele, a Berkeley resident for three decades, is one of this year’s fellows. Winners of what’s commonly called the “Genius Awards” get \$625,000 over five years, with no strings attached as to how it is used. According to the MacArthur website, it goes to “individuals who show exceptional creativity in their work and the prospect for still more in the future. The fellowship is designed to provide recipients with the flexibility to pursue their own artistic, intellectual, and

professional activities in the absence of specific obligations or reporting requirements.”

Among the projects that the MacArthur Foundation cited for Miele’s selection were his inventions: TMAP, or Tactile Map Automated Production, a web tool for producing street maps for the blind, making it possible for blind people to get free, immediate tactile street maps of anyplace in the country; YouDescribe, which allows sighted volunteers to add audio description to any YouTube video for free; and a glove that helped users type braille on any solid surface without the need for a keyboard or input device, in the days before dictation was the norm for smartphones.

What they didn’t mention was that Miele founded The Blind Arduino Project, which allows the blind to get into the maker space, using an open-source hobby robotics platform.

Miele was especially surprised to be a recipient of the MacArthur prize since he left academia a few years ago to work for Amazon as an accessibility researcher. His work there makes Amazon’s devices and website more user-friendly for the visually disabled.

“One of my stepfather’s colleagues was in the first group of fellows and I’ve known about this fellowship from the time I was 11 years old,” he said. “I’ve always held it in my mind as being the American Nobel, and thought that in my career, it would be a real mark of having achieved.”

Innovation and Pragmatism

Miele, 52, lives in Berkeley with his wife, Liz, a retired librarian, and their two teenage children. His non-work pursuits include cooking and playing bass. (Disclosure: The reporter of this story has known Miele and his family socially for years.)

“I am incredibly proud to be part of a long legacy of blind leaders who come from and call Berkeley their home,” Miele said. “Berkeley is the city of the blind.”

For example, the current Clark Kerr campus dorms were previously the California School for the Blind before it relocated to Fremont in 1980, and developments in screen and voice readers to make computers more accessible for the blind were largely developed at UC Berkeley.

In 2015, Miele put on a storytelling forum celebrating Berkeley’s legacy for the blind. He now says he might use some of the MacArthur money to raise the profile of that side of Berkeley’s history.

“All of the major American ... civil rights and educational movements around blindness and visual disability came from Berkeley, and all of the leaders that have ever been significant either came from or lived in or came to Berkeley to learn. Berkeley truly is one of the most important cities historically for the growth and evolution of the blindness story in America.”

“It made much more sense to be proud to be blind.”

But the funny thing is that when Miele arrived in Berkeley as a Cal undergraduate in the 1980s, he didn't know any of the history.

“I came to Berkeley mostly because it was 3,000 miles away from Nyack, New York,” he said.

The fact that he was interested in physics, and Berkeley had an element named after it “was some good advertising,” he said. Plus, Cal had a long history of Nobel prize winners in the field.

When he arrived, he said, “I had never thought of myself as a person with a disability. I didn't want to be a blind person. I wanted to be just another guy, and avoided anything related to disability or blindness.”

His real education at Cal, he said, came from living communally, in a co-op, and for the first time meeting so many other like-minded blind students.

“I was hanging out with the coolest blind people I had ever known in my life,” he said. “Like so many other kids going off to college, I found my people and my identity in the disabled community at Berkeley and I realized that running from being blind was ridiculous and it made much more sense to be proud to be blind.”

While at first he thought about going into rocket science, an internship at NASA divested him of that notion. His career took a turn when he realized that “all of the people working in accessibility who were making decisions, who were writing and imagining the next phase of accessibility were sighted Ph.D.s.”

Being an actual user of the technology wasn't enough; he felt he needed a doctorate degree so he could have the same credibility in the field.

He went back to Cal to obtain a doctorate in psychoacoustics, a branch of experimental psychology that studies hearing and how it works.

Among the things Miele can take credit for are braille maps for the blind and a program that allows sighted people to describe YouTube videos for the visually-impaired. Credit: Barbara Butkus Photography
For 15 years, Miele worked at The Smith-Kettlewell Eye Research Institute in San Francisco. He also spent many years on the board of the LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

“Josh’s much-deserved success is due to an extraordinary combination of innovation and pragmatism,” said Charity Pitcher-Cooper, a colleague of Miele’s from Smith-Kettlewell. “In addition to his being dazzlingly creative, Josh has an eloquence of thought combined with a ruthlessness that makes most, if not all of his ideas winners.”

‘An incredible connection to Berkeley’

Josh Miele is often seen walking around Berkeley. Credit: Barbara Butkus Photography
Originally from Brooklyn, Miele was blinded and burned at age 4 when a mentally ill neighbor threw acid at him.

His late mother, Isabella, became his advocate.

“People in general assume that a blind kid is in danger, and my mother was not interested in protecting me,” he said. “She was interested in having me be as active and engaged with the world as possible.”

While Miele wasn't the best student, he benefitted from having the same teacher of the visually impaired from third grade until he graduated high school. He said Joan Smith was a “badass” in that “she loved me dearly and made me do all kinds of things I really didn't want to do. She also transcribed all of my Braille materials, drew all my chemistry, physics, and diagrams so I could feel them and basically provided me with a ton of the skills I would need as a blind kid to succeed in the world that sighted kids didn't need to worry about.”

He also singled out his high school chemistry teacher, Richard Herbert, who was Miele's first phone call when he could share the MacArthur news, as well as his friend from Cal, Marc Sutton, who helped him get a job at Berkeley Systems, which is where he realized that building the technology he most wanted to use could be a career path.

As for what else he might use the money for, starting a nonprofit appeals to him, as does updating some of his older inventions like YouDescribe. An iPhone app he created called overTHERE, which was a finding tool for

the blind, also needs significant updating; he might hire someone to work on it.

Miele feels that the city of Berkeley has played a role in his professional development as well.

“When I walk down the Berkeley streets, I’m walking the paths that great blind leaders have walked before me,” he said. “I feel an incredible connection to Berkeley because of that and because you can be a burned, blind, one-eyed gentleman here and not cause much remark.”

Source:

<https://www.berkeleyside.org/2021/09/29/berkeley-inventor-of-blind-adaptive-technology-wins-macarthur-genius-prize>

Doctor Patient Relationships

By Kathy L. Friedman, LDO, FNAO, BA

How do visually disabled people find supportive communities if their doctor doesn’t offer any resources to them? It’s a valid question. I’m embarrassed to say that I thought I knew a lot about vision and low vision, only to learn that I know very little about blindness. Those of you

reading this, or listening to this article, you are in the low vision-blind community, and you know a lot about it. You are teaching me how to see and connect with others in your community. That's how I feel each time attending a meeting, summit, workshop, or conference for the blind. You are my eyes.

Before COVID, I represented a table of Assistive Technology for my state. It was filled with devices and brochures for all types of disabilities. When there were two of us representing the organization, each of us would take time to connect with other vendors and organizations. I took a skill used many times at optical conferences: learn from the experts, ask questions, and connect. At times, I would learn about something obscure, just because I could. As I look back on that experience, I see how that obscure information has been applied in different contexts today.

How about you? How do you participate in the services available to you? 'Let's Talk Low Vision' is a great example of FREE continuing education. Given that perspective, isn't it wonderful to have that resource? Other blind organizations offer exercise classes, sports talk, and healthy information for the brain and emotions. You are a lucky community! There are Free podcasts and radio stations where you can engage with others.

You belong to a community that sees you for who you are plus being loving and supportive. By any chance, have you shared this resource with your eye doctor?

Next, pull out the mirror and ask yourself: how do I participate and engage with my community?

While attending a Zoom educational series, the 'warm up' person had us sit up straight in our chair, shoulders back, and engage. Dean Graziosi and Tony Robbins put together a 5-day program called Own Your Future. It was intense because it made us look inside at ourselves, addressing the hard questions often kept in the dark places where we prefer not to venture. From an outsider's perspective, the warm up gal KK prepared us to engage physically. From my perspective, she was preparing us to engage psychologically too. The act of changing our posture and positioning began the process of shifting our mindset.

Day one was about creating an unstoppable mindset. It addressed the concept of who we are and what we do when no one is watching. Just rewriting that insight hit me like Wil E. Coyote getting trapped in his own plan to catch the Roadrunner. In each cartoon, Wil E. Coyote doesn't think anyone is watching his master plan, especially the

Roadrunner. In actuality, we are all watching, waiting for his master plan to fail. In the last episode, Wil E. Coyote catches the Roadrunner, then puts up a sign as he addresses the audience, “Okay, Wise Guys, - You Always Wanted Me To Catch Him-” (next sign) “Now What Do I Do?” Is this cartoon character being seen? Millions of viewers would say yes.

For the visually disabled, this creates a new set of perspectives. You may be doing things because you think no one is watching! Guess what? Some of us see you. It’s not about the visual part of who we are when no one is watching. It’s about who we are because our actions are being seen.

Another example: the Eye-Das communities have call-in meetings. In a meeting I attended, members called other members who weren’t on the phone call. They were seen as missing.

Recall the last time you were on a call and wondered where your friend was. This person was seen as not showing up. I wonder if that missing person realizes how much of a profound difference he had on that meeting. Taking a different perspective on that concept of ‘dance like no one is watching,’ you are watching. You are the one in control of your action or lack of action.

The concept of being unstoppable includes turning your mess into your message. For example, when I moved to Hawaii, the job I came here to do abruptly ended. I burned the proverbial bridge behind me, so I needed to return to the vocation I retired myself from, Opticianry. The first job lasted a little over a year, the second lasted over six years, and the third, less than a year. I got a part time job to pay the bills, but it wasn't even enough money to do that.

Then I got the job with the Assistive Technology organization mentioned earlier. Months into the COVID pandemic, that position disappeared. I was pulling as many tools out of the toolbox as possible. This began with reconnecting with a befriended low vision device vendor. She connected me with Christine Chaikin of Insightful Publications. Christine has connected me with you and zillions of other wonderful people. My mess was not being able to hold down a job in the traditional paradigm. My message is connecting with people with visual disabilities, which can be as stress-free as dancing down the yellow brick road. Yes, there were lions and tigers and bears and Dorothy also made it to Oz.

Back to the original concept: who we are when no one is watching. Are you hiding in your cave? Are you connecting

with people by phone? Are you choosing to laugh because you can?

The answers don't matter to me, and they need to matter to you! One last thing. Please connect with your eye doctor and make sure he or she knows the resources you use. It may just help someone who you don't know yet, and would love to meet you.

Writing Works Wonders, Winner of the 2022 Vernon C. Henley Media Award, announces the publication of Writing Works Wonders Creative Writing Prompt Journal

About the Book:

Encouragement and guidance to accelerate your creative writing, one prompt at a time! The hosts of the popular Writing Works Wonders podcast offer the means to unleash your imagination and bolster your confidence.

Recent Reviews:

Stimulating, Motivating, and Fun! The Creative Writing Prompt Journal is a resource you will use many times over. It gets your creativity flowing and captures your

imagination. High energy and high praise for the dynamic team of Cheryl and Kathy.

—Marlene Mesot, Author of the 4 Elements of Mystery series

Through their synergistic magic, Writing Works Wonders and their writing prompts have given me the knowledge and confidence to finally publish my work! In addition, they have built a community that blends sharing, caring, and lots of fun every week! This book captures that energy.

—Lisa Gilmartin

This book is filled with a treasure trove of inspiration. It all started with the weekly program. I couldn't wait to start writing after hearing the prompt for the week. Their workshops, Round Robin Phenomenon, Open Mics, author interviews, along with their upbeat personalities, are what I needed to finally organize my work and publish my first book in 2022.

—Carol Mackey

Available at all your e-book retailers.

The Large Print Paperback is available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

Contact Cheryl and Kathy at
info@WritingWorksWonders.com

Calendar of Events

Everyone is welcome to attend these events by accessing the Zoom mobile app, visiting the Zoom Web site at <https://zoom.us> or calling (312) 626-6799, and entering the appropriate meeting ID and passcode.

Subscribe to our CCLVI-Chat email list to receive weekly meeting reminders and Zoom details by emailing our CCLVIWebmaster@gmail.com. In addition, all CCLVI events, except our business meetings, are listed on the ACB Community Call schedule. Those without email can access that information by calling 1-800-424-8666 and following the prompts.

CCLVI Low Vision Discussion

Themed chats—First Monday at 8:00 PM ET

Speaker - Fifth Monday at 8:00 PM ET

Meeting ID: 851 0259 7284

Passcode: 225846

CCLVI Game Night

Second and fourth Mondays at 8:00 PM ET

Meeting ID: 851 0259 7284

Passcode: 225846

CCLVI Low Vision Peer Support Group

Third Monday at 8:00 PM ET

Meeting ID: 851 0259 7284

Passcode: 225846

CCLVI Board of Directors Meeting

Second Tuesday at 8:30 PM ET

Webinar Meeting ID: 832 0701 7136

Let's Talk Low Vision with Dr. Bill Takeshita

Join Dr. Bill and his guest for this monthly informative program

Third Tuesday at 8:30 PM ET

Meeting ID: 874 7608 2312

Passcode: 225845

CCLVI Special Event

Weekly calls on a variety of topics related to low vision

Thursdays at 8:00 PM ET

Meeting ID: 826 0270 2438

Passcode: 225848

CCLVI Low Vision Coffee Hour

Fridays at 11:00 AM ET

Meeting ID: 829 5076 8948

Passcode: 225843

KCCLV Low Vision Support Calls

Business meeting, first Wednesday: Informative meetings for low vision individuals across the US third Wednesday of each month at 8:00 PM ET

Meeting ID: 862 9889 697

Passcode: 975864

* Topics and speakers are subject to change. Please reference the weekly CCLVI emails and ACB Community Call schedule.

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VISION ACCESS is published six times a year (February 15, April 15, June 15, August 15, October 15, and December 15) in large print, audio, and email.

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