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VISION ACCESS

Council of Citizens with Low Vision International

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CCLVI – The Place to Be in ‘23

By Zelda Gebhard, Membership Chairperson

No matter what time of the year it is, it's always a good time to be a member of CCLVI.

If you are a member of one of the following CCLVI Affiliates: Delaware Valley Council of Citizens with Low Vision, Kentucky Council of Citizens with Low Vision, New York State Council of Citizens with Low Vision, you will be contacted by your affiliate representative to update your information and pay your 2023 dues.

Members of the California Council of Citizens with Low Vision are asked to update your information by completing the online form and paying your dues at <https://cclvi.info/join/member-form/>.

If you are an At-Large member (not belonging to one of the above affiliates) you will receive a large print paper renewal form in the mail. Please complete and return it and your dues in the enclosed, addressed envelope or go to <https://cclvi.info/join/member-form/> to complete the form and pay online before February 1st.

Of course, Life Members need not pay dues, but we would still like to connect with you. If you have had any changes in your contact information or format preferences of the ACB Braille Forum or Vision Access, please call Zelda at 701-709-0262 to update.

We are proud of the work accomplished and progress made in 2022 and look forward to another positive year in 2023.

Some Current Member Benefits:

- Vision Access Newsletter, 6 issues a year in large print or email. Also, available at www.cclvi.org or on the Audio Update Line at 773-572-6315
- Three weekly Zoom sessions to connect, share ideas and have fun!
- Monthly Let's Talk Low Vision session for up-to-date information and education.
- Genensky Magnification Grant Awards
- Scheigert College Scholarships
- Bernice Kandarian Service Award, Friend of CCLVI Award
- Website with Podcasts and revised Resource Pages
- Opportunities in Leadership as an Officer, on the Board of Directors, or on one of the 15 active committees

If you have any questions or need assistance in completing your renewal, please contact Zelda at 701-709-0262 or cclvimembership@gmail.com.

Remember – The Place to Be in '23 is in CCLVI.

Fundraising News

By Kathy Farina, Fundraising Chairperson

The Fundraising Committee is hosting a new fundraiser.

EZ2See Calendars

Specially designed, hard copy calendars for individuals with low vision! Purchase one or many EZ2See calendars and a small portion of the cost will benefit CCLVI programs.

These 2023 calendars span 13 months and have been a big favorite with our members. Be sure to use the special code at checkout, CCLVI23, to receive a discount and help our work continue.

You can place your order online at <https://ez2seeproducts.com/> Be aware, when you check out, you will be transferred to another site where you will

enter the discount code CCLVI23. And if you would rather phone in your order, call toll-free, 800-234-8291 and remember to mention the code CCLVI23.

Getting To Know Everything California

By Valerie Reis-Lerman

Please join us for our California Council of Citizens with Low Vision (CCCLV) chat the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month at 4PM Pacific Time. Everyone is welcome! Membership in CCCLV is not required.

We are revitalizing CCCLV to meet the needs of those in California with low vision, as well as to address the concerns of individuals who have an interest in low vision. We are working on finalizing our constitution and by-laws, with board elections soon to follow.

Our chat group is just the beginning. We plan to have meetings covering various topics of interest from transportation, to technology, to social issues.

Please consider joining us to enhance our resources, thus enabling us to move forward in addressing the needs of low vision Californians.

Our Zoom link and phone number are below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85926690965?pwd=eWZBMmtEWW52dWVwYVYzdCtLbFE2UT09#success>

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,85926690965#,,,,*282367#

1(669) 900-6833

Meeting ID: 859 2669 0965

Passcode: 282367

To contact us, please email: ccclvchat@gmail.com

Self-Advocacy and Low Vision

By Donna Williams

At October's CCLVI Low Vision Peer Support Group the topic was self-advocacy with low vision. It was an interesting discussion with many sharing their experiences and strategies to help us all as we continue our journey forward. Advocating for what we need or want is so vital to our well-being and it enables us to more fully participate in society. Not only that but it also educates those around us if they choose to learn about who we are and what we need.

I have been a self-advocate for a very long time. When I was a very young child I learned from my parents. I listened to what they told others about me and my needs and if I didn't understand something I'd ask questions in an attempt to figure out why I had to do things in certain ways or why I couldn't do them at all.

I was born with cataracts and I've always had low vision. I don't think I realized how different I was or how much my lack of eyesight would affect my life until I started school. My parents had me placed in a resource room for blind children and I believe that is the first time I ever actually heard the word blind spoken as it pertained to me.

Those years in the resource room were idyllic. I had lots of friends and spent most of the time having fun while learning. Then when I turned 10, I was mainstreamed. Going to public school was difficult. It was like the total reverse of what I was used to. I felt as though I was thrown into the deep end of the pool with no life raft. Kids made fun of me because they didn't understand. I knew how to talk with adults about my vision issues but no one prepared me to deal with children who could not understand how to interact with a low vision individual who looks like she is totally blind. I need to explain here that I have underdeveloped muscles in my eyelids. This means my eyes don't open very far causing

me to look as though my eyes are closed while I'm awake. I'm sure you can understand the misunderstandings I deal with on a daily basis. Well, when you are a child, it is hard to grasp the fact that other kids might be uncomfortable or even afraid of you. So many times, I came home from school in tears. The adults in my life kept telling me to ignore those who were hurting me. I tried but it was very difficult. It took me years to learn how to deal with those situations in a way that helps everyone involved to be comfortable.

Despite my struggles to be accepted by my sighted peers, I did have other self-advocacy successes as a child. When I was in the resource room, my teacher wanted me to learn braille. At that time, I thought braille should only be for the totally blind. I knew I could see and I wanted to read print just like my big sister. I didn't care how large it was; I was determined to read using my eyes. When my teacher approached me about learning braille, I asked her what my parents thought and she told me that it wasn't up to them, it was my choice. I said a pretty emphatic "no" to her. I felt good about my decision, but I wanted confirmation that I was making the right choice for myself. I broached the subject with my parents and found out they wanted me to learn print first. Then, if I chose to learn braille, that would be ok with them.

The same year I started going to the local public school. I had a different experience at the eye doctor. After the usual exam he informed me that he wanted to check my pressure right there in the office. I don't mind telling you, I was very scared. This was the first time he planned to do this on the same day as the exam. Every other time I was given anesthesia. As he was explaining what he planned to do I began to fret. Was he going to give me anesthesia right there in his office? Was it going to hurt without it? I kept saying that I didn't want him to do the test. He was insistent though. Perhaps my facial expression gave me away because he showed me the machine he would use. He turned it on and held the device against my hand. A soft puff of air came out and he told me that was all there was to it. Then he gave me a choice; I could let him check the pressure in the office that day or I could have it done the way I had been doing it for years. Of course, I chose that soft puff of air over not eating and getting nauseous after having anesthesia.

It seems so long ago that I had my first swimming lessons in the turbulent waters of self-advocacy, but I'm so very glad I did. It is a continuous learning process and we may not always make the right choices for ourselves. However, we own the results. That makes it easier to change the situation so we can achieve the outcome we desire. I didn't think I needed a low vision peer support group. I

consider myself to be well adjusted and resourceful and I've been my own best self-advocate for years. However, we all know one can be a very lonely number. It is vital to be connected to others and it's great to be a part of a group that shares the same journey. We may all be at different points in our journey, but consider this; perhaps if we join the discussion, we can support others who might need our resources, encouragement, or strategies. Who knows the impact you may have on someone's life if you join the CCLVI Low Vision Peer Support Group call on the 3rd Monday of the month. Watch for the zoom announcement and come participate. See you there!

The Eye Doctor's Dilemma – I Can't Help You

By Kathy Friedman, LDO

"I can't help you see better," said an eye doctor.

Have you heard those words from YOUR eye doctor?

Many people with diseases like Macular Degeneration and Diabetic Retinopathy have heard that from multiple eye doctors. They go from doctor to doctor, hoping to hear a different answer. The first time you hear those words, it's a

shock. A doctor who cannot help a person see better, more clearly! Isn't that what they do?

A different perspective is...

... many eye doctors have a specialized knowledge that does not extend beyond basic prescriptions, medications, or surgery.

For example, a corneal Ophthalmologist refers a detached retina case to a retinal specialist Ophthalmologist. It used to be that an Optometrist referred high eye pressure patients to an Ophthalmologist, sometimes one who specializes in Glaucoma.

Times have changed, especially in these aspects of eye care.

Some optometrists manage their own glaucoma patients, until there is need for surgical intervention by an ophthalmologist. Opticians fill vision prescriptions. Most opticians fit and fill spectacle prescriptions. (Meaning, show you frames, take measurements, close the sale, and fit the final product to you upon delivery. Sometimes you even get an adjustment to make the frame fit better, which is what they are trained to do.)

Some opticians have specialized training and credentialing in fitting and dispensing contact lenses. It's one thing to sell you a vial with soft lenses and another thing to fit the lenses to diseased eyes with conditions such as Keratoconus.

A small percentage of Optometrists and Opticians specialize in low vision eye care and devices.

Very few eye care professionals also recommend support groups, resources, and offer tips and tools in navigating the vision they currently have. Even once a person has been diagnosed as having a visual impairment, these patients are referred to a local blind center or just told "I cannot help you." Then the person must fend for themselves.

Enough.

The Seeing Beyond Vision Loss programs are designed for low vision patients and their families, programs for doctors and their staff, and programs that bridge the doctor and their patient who is no longer correctable with 'standard' tools and modalities.

These programs leverage the great resources already available, integrating communities and vendors specializing in the low vision blind services and devices.

For your free copy of “Oh No, I’m Losing My Vision” Top 10 Concerns Regarding Not Seeing Clearly, visit

<https://bit.ly/OhNoVisionLoss>

About the author:

Kathy L. Friedman, Licensed Dispensing Optician, has helped people see better and look better for about four decades. Like a pharmacist who fills medical prescriptions, Kathy fills vision prescriptions for spectacles, contact lenses and low vision devices.

She is currently bridging the sighted and visually impaired with resources, and tips and tools in educational programs such as:

- Seeing Beyond Macular Degeneration – First Step to Proactive & Preventative Care
- You Can See Clearer Now the Blur Is Gone – Seeing Beyond Blurred Vision, 5 Phases of Vision Change
- Seeing Beyond Macular Degeneration – Navigating Resources for You and Your Family

Bringing Your “A” Game to Life’s Challenges

By Blake Lindsey

Convincing employers to look at how much people with blindness are capable of accomplishing is still an obstacle, but much less so with the aid of today’s remarkable technology. Each time I get a new job, I encounter the same apprehension that people with sight have about working with someone sightless. Unfortunately, many people do not give those who are blind adequate opportunities in the workplace, simply because most people have never had the chance to learn about today’s helpful technology and how much we are able to achieve with it.

Once I am given the chance to prove to an employer my abilities, along with the required modifications, when necessary, their apprehension completely vanishes. The people who have given me opportunities have earned my respect and admiration because they have added value to my life. It also encourages teamwork when my colleagues observe my accomplishments and productivity. I am confident that I add value to any company I work with and that I serve its customers well. It is fulfilling to know that through my positive attitude and best efforts in the

workplace, God has enabled many others to see the light through my loss of sight.

At age 19, I was pleased to have an opportunity to help blaze the trail for my well-deserving, hard-working friend Stephen Kerr. He is totally blind like me and wanted to get into commercial radio. One summer, when I was nearly 19 years old, I got to work with K-98 and received positive press on a televised news segment, which reduced thousands of peoples' apprehension by helping them to understand that radio was an excellent and feasible career for blind communicators.

Stephen has a great attitude, and he had the bonus of working with caring people at the station who helped him excel. Darrel Heckendorf was an engineer determined to take on the challenge of modernizing a blind-friendly radio control room for my buddy's employment and independence. For more than 20 years he worked at Entercom's radio KKMJ-MAGIC-95.5 in Austin, Texas. Several years ago, I had the pleasure of meeting with Stephen and Darrel to sample Darrel's creation for myself. His solution to our challenge was simple and completely obliging to me as well. Darrel had laid a full-sized piece of Plexiglas over the computer touch screen and cut finger-sized holes precisely where the functionality was located. A blind person can easily familiarize themselves with the

screen by memorizing the exact count to the correct hole in the Plexiglas to execute the specific task required. Yeah! No more Braille labels that easily fall off!

For further convenience, this template folds up and out of the way for those who don't call for this modification. It is a cheap and simple solution to assist those visually challenged in radio broadcasting. It even eliminates the need for an assistant, which I had to employ throughout my 22-year radio career. I look forward to using this adaptation some day in my own radio setup.

I often sit and think about the people like Darrel who make such great contributions for the advancement of others. What would life be like without those caring people who focus their inventions on helping others who face unique physical challenges? I thank God for these extraordinary people, and an extra special blessing I wish upon Darrel Heckendorf.

Hootin' Holiday

By Cheryl McNeil Fisher



Image Description: Book Cover with a snowy white background. Hootin' Holiday Sister Shenanigans Series is written in a bold, dark blue font. Piper, in a purple coat, and Kylie, in a pink coat, are on their stomachs, legs and arms up, so they can fly down the hill on the snow using just their coats and snow pants. At the bottom is written Cheryl McNeil Fisher.

Piper and Kylie will make you laugh out loud with their Sister Shenanigans. They have new skis and want to try them out at Grandma's. Momma wants them to have lessons first, but, "We don't need lessons. After all, we watched the Winter Olympics."

The girls create fun in everything they do.

It's a slumber party at Grandma's. Kylie accidentally swipes Piper's cheek while decorating cookies. You have to read to believe. What? Icing make-up?

You will want to read Piper and Kylie again and again. The series is based on the author's childhood memories with her sister.

The author brings the reader into the story to create the experience of making cookies, decorating, sharing stories, feeling the cool air on their face, smelling the pine trees, and so much more.

Review: Fisher does a superior job at weaving life lessons, respect, and love. Her stories read with as much action, humor and intrigue as an adult book. The impressive dialogue hooks you on the first page!
-Marlene Messot, The Snowball Effect

Signed print copies available by contacting Cheryl at cmcneilfisher@gmail.com (12, 14 and 20 fonts available)

Ebooks are available on all eBook platforms. Also available by contacting your library to access a digital copy via OverDrive and Libby.

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 6972

Passcode: 975864

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

Philmore: Audio Update Line

If you or someone you know does not have access to the internet, but would like to access our publication and podcasts, call the 24/7 Philmore telephone line at (773) 572-6315. Follow the prompts and you can listen to the latest issue of Vision Access, as well as Let's Talk Low Vision, Sound Prints, and other podcasts.

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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