VISION ACCESS
Volume 9, Number 3
Fall 2002
Copyright 2002 by the
Council of
Citizens with Low Vision International.

VISION ACCESS is a journal by, for, and about people with low vision. VISION ACCESS is published quarterly in three formats (cassette, large print, and computer disk) 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, 6 Hillside Rd., Wayne, PA 19087.

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.

Editor: Joyce Kleiber

CCLVI OFFICERS:
Patricia Beattie, President,
Bernice Kandarian, 1st Vice President,
LeRoy F. Saunders, 2nd Vice President,
Karen Johnson, Secretary,
Coletta Davis, Treasurer,
Carl Foley, Membership
Ken Stewart, Past President

CCLVI BOARD MEMBERS:
Charles Glaser
Mike Godino
Imogene Johnson
Jane Kardas
Joyce Kleiber
Barbara Kron
Fred Scheigert
Skip Sharpe
Janis Stanger
From the Editor

Recently members of my family have faced new medical challenges—my husband’s speech became impaired as a result of surgery to remove a cyst from inside his chest and my daughter was diagnosed with Celiac Disease—a gluten intolerance that results in malabsorption of nutrients including iron and calcium. In dealing with these medical conditions I learned about therapies, support groups, listservs, newsletters, conventions and websites that are available to people who face these challenges to their quality of life and their health.

I am glad that similar resources are also available to people who have low vision. I am happy to be an active part of this low vision culture. I am glad for all we have. I invite you, our members, to do what you can to take an active role in keeping our network alive and well. Let us hear from you by mail, email, or phone to our 800-733-
Organization News

Message From Our President,
Patricia M. Beattie, Alexandria Virginia

The 2002-2003 corps of officers and directors of the Council of Citizens With Low Vision are ready to roll up their sleeves to advocate for quality and appropriate services and for access to technology and the built environment. We are honored to have been elected to represent your concerns and interests in Washington D.C. and across the country.

We are a national special interest affiliate of the American Council of the Blind (ACB) and our permanent mailing address is at their National Office, 1155 - 15th Street NW, Washington, DC 20005. We want to hear your concerns and ideas. You may write to us c/o ACB, call us at our toll-free number 1-800-733-2258, or e-mail us c/o our First Vice President, Bernice Kandarian, the friendly voice that answers that telephone every day. Her e-mail address is bernice@tsoft.net. And, while we're mentioning the Internet, you will want to check out our website at cclvi.org.

We are working on the following objectives in behalf of our membership.

APPROPRIATE, INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICES, in every community, but--especially at tax-supported state rehabilitation centers. CCLVI adopted a resolution during its July 2002 convention in Houston to let our voices be heard across the country. We are distressed to see the growing trend toward adoption of a philosophy of "proper training in the skills of blindness" for everyone attending state rehabilitation centers in several locations. All participants are required to wear blindfolds or "sleep shades", use a long white cane, and learn braille. We believe people should have these options. But they should be OPTIONS. We in CCLVI and ACB believe in choice and individualization of services, as appropriate. We agree that people should have the opportunity to learn about various options, but not required to "be totally blind" during all training sessions.

Many members of CCLVI, and many clients of federal/state-funded rehabilitation agencies have some useful residual vision. But, even with acuity reduced to 20/70, many people can no longer read regular print, drive a car, and they have difficulty with other activities of everyday living. Those of us who experience macular degeneration or other age-related vision loss want to learn to use our residual vision and to learn what the professionals can teach us about living with low vision.

We fear that people forced to comply with arbitrary program rules in order to receive services may decide that there is no help for them in "blind rehabilitation". There is a difference between adjustment to vision loss and adjustment to total blindness. There is great variability in people's vision, their ability to use this vision and their needs.

It takes a long time for some people to accept that they have a vision loss. It is particularly difficult for some people to think of themselves as being blind. Thus it is hard for them to accept services from an agency that's called an "agency for the blind". They would find it difficult to accept a training program that forces them to use aids that especially identify them as being blind such as a white cane, a dog, Braille. Blindfolds are especially abhorrent to people who have vision. Why should they give up something that is so useful to them?
Many of us have become quite comfortable with being "legally blind" and even using a cane, dog or Braille. But for many of us, accepting these realities takes time.

What can you do? Check out policies and practices at the rehabilitation center in your community and state. Offer to conduct a low vision support group or to help advocate for appropriate services for each individual.

What else are we working on?

AUDIO DESCRIPTION FOR TELEVISION, MOVIES AND THEATER has suffered a major blow recently. A federal district appeals court decided that the Federal Communications Commission did not have the legislative authority to require audio description on a limited number of prime time and children's television programs.

What can you do? Write to the major networks, cable companies and public broadcasters who have been providing audio description and urge them to continue doing so. Explain how you like to enjoy TV without either missing part of the plot or having to depend on others to tell you what is happening.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY has long been of major concern to CCLVI and our members across the country. We support talking traffic signals, bumpy yellow strips on curb ramps to warn us of the change of elevation, and solutions to traffic engineers' efforts to control traffic with "roundabouts" instead of stop signs and traffic lights.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH is the major goal of a Task Force on Aging and Vision Loss which is coordinated by American Foundation for the Blind. We are collaborating with many other organizations to distribute posters urging people experiencing vision loss to seek rehabilitation services. We are working with organizations of eye care professionals to get the eye doctors and others to refer patients who need it to vision rehabilitation services. If you would like a poster and booklet on low vision let us know by contacting us in one of the ways we mentioned earlier in this message.

We have begun planning for our 2003 national convention to be held July 5-12, 2003 in Pittsburgh. People learn much during the program sessions and support group session and are amazed at all of the things to see and buy in the exhibit hall. Pittsburgh is easy to reach by plane, bus and train. Begin planning now to join us and share what you have learned about living with low vision and what you would like this organization to do in the coming months and years.

Chapter Reports

California Council of Citizens with Low Vision
"Guitar Playing Blind Baby Boomer Finds Happiness as Helen Keller's Torchbearer" Highlights CCCLV Fall Convention Program

By Bernice Kandarian

Our Fall Convention began on Thursday, October 31, with a presentation by ACB Second Vice President, MJ Schmitt, on the importance of special interest affiliates in the history of ACB. Barbara Kron and Jane Kardas did a role-play on how Project Insight works. We are recruiting volunteers and gearing up to do training at the next convention in April 2003.

On Friday morning, we had our usual joint session with the California Council of the Blind (CCBV) Committee on Access and Transportation. This time, a panel from the City of Irvine gave a presentation on a program to incorporate accessibility features into privately developed housing.
Saturday morning's joint session with the CCB Committee on Senior Blind was the setting for the "guitar playing blind baby boomer," Carl Augusto, President of the American Foundation for the Blind, who updated us on AFB’s National Agenda on Aging and Vision Loss.

Note: Patricia Beattie, President of CCLVI serves on the committee for Goal II of this National Agenda and Bernice Kandarian serves as her alternate.

Florida Council of Citizens with Low Vision
We are starting to plan our 2003 State convention. It will be held in conjunction with the Florida Council of the Blind the weekend of May 30 to June 1 in Fort Lauderdale. For further information, please contact Bobbie at our Project Insight line 1 800 26SIGHT. (1 800 267 4448).

Metropolitan Council of Low Vision Individuals, MCLVI, serving CCLVI
members in Northern New Jersey, New York and Connecticut, for membership information call 845-986-2955.

Our Chapter continues to meet at 110 William Street directly above a major transit hub in the heart of Manhattan's resilient Financial District, just blocks from last year's devastation. The anniversary of September 11th was a poignant reminder. We had scheduled a Chapter meeting that very evening right there.

At our September meeting this year elections returned all incumbents to office: President Ken Stewart, Vice President Isolde Keilhofer, and Treasurer Mildred Spinner. Advocacy issues remain a top Chapter priority, particularly the low vision friendliness of local transit systems, the usability of sidewalks, and, the accessibility features on the computers available for use in public libraries.

Thanks to Chapter member Mark Readie, we now have a Chapter website at www.mclvi.org. Chapter member Ed Mulloy has agreed to take on the website's "mastery" and CCLVI's Frank Welte has already linked us to the www.cclvi.org site.

Other Chapters
Delaware Valley Council of Citizens with Low Vision serving the Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey areas. For information about this chapter call 215-735-5888. National Capitol Council of Citizens with Low Vision: To contact this chapter at NCCLV@yahoo.com.

CCLVI's Web Site
CCLVI's web master, Frank Welte, has been busy updating our web site. Our site includes the list of officers and board members and chapter contact persons. These lists are complete with live email links. VISION ACCESS Vol. 9, No.1 and No. 2 have been posted on this web site.

There is also information about CCLVI scholarships and Project Insight. There are links to the Metropolitan Council of Low Vision Individuals and to the California Council of Citizens with Low Vision through the link to the California Council of the Blind.

We look forward to adding the Program for our 2003 Convention in Pittsburgh, fact sheets about Closed Circuit Televisions and other technology, answers to Frequently Asked Questions, Information packets about macular degeneration, retinitis pigmentosa, and diabetes. We will include links to the Health Library and to the National Eye Institute's brochure "What You Should Know About Low Vision".
**Project Insight Update**

Jane Kardas and Barbara Kron spoke about Project Insight to people attending the California Council of the Blind Convention in November. Jane and Barbara are members of the Project Insight Committee, of CCLVI's Board of Directors, and of the California Council of Citizens with Low Vision. They have felt the encouragement and support of others in their own journey of learning to cope with vision loss. They take every opportunity to encourage others to become a part of Project Insight—a program that offers information and support to others. Thank you, Jane and Barbara! We invite all Project Insight volunteers to speak about our project at State, Regional and Local meetings so that CCLVI can reach out to as many people as possible. Call CCLVI at 800-733-2258 for further information.

**Two Important Corrections**

First Correction: CCLVI Membership Renewal Notices were sent out in September. Many of you already responded, and we thank you. However, due to a misprint, the return address listed in these notices was not correct. Therefore, some of your checks are being returned to you by the Post Office. Please try again to pay your dues. Mail your dues to Coletta Davis, CCLVI Treasurer, 2879 East Alden Place, Anaheim, CA 92806. If you are a member of a CCLVI Chapter, continue to pay your dues through your Chapter.

Second Correction: If you read VISION ACCESS on cassette, and if you did not receive your cassette copy of Vision Access Vol. 9, Number 2, please call us at 800-733-2258 and we will try to correct this error.

**Vision Access and CCLVI's Budget**

Right now it costs CCLVI about $2.35 to produce a large print copy of VISION ACCESS. The cassette version costs about $2.00. Much of this cost—the biggest part of CCLVI's budget—could be saved if our readers would be willing to receive their magazine via email or by downloading their copy from our website. These optional formats may even be more convenient for you. Call us at 800-733-2258 to make your wishes known. Continue to support the work of CCLVI through your membership dues and by contributing your ideas and experiences.

**Science and Health**

**Research to Prevent Blindness**

The October 12, 2002 issue of SCIENCE NEWS, reports research to prevent blindness. This research was presented at a meeting held in Washington, D.C. from September 22 to 25, 2002. Here are some of these findings.

Neuroscientist Gregory R. Jackson and his colleagues at the University of Alabama in Birmingham may have found a way to diagnosis age-related macular degeneration, AMD, in the earliest stages of this disease. A different kind of vision is required to see in bright light than in darkness, such as when entering a movie theater. The healthy eye makes that adjustment automatically. People with early stage AMD require more time to make this adjustment. People might think they have normal vision. But if they have trouble making this adaptation, then they are at a much higher risk of developing AMD.
It should be easy to test for impaired ability to adapt from light to dark; this test would be noninvasive.

Another report at this meeting, considered the work of Dr. Larry I. Benowitz, a neurologist at Harvard Medical School and Children’s Hospital in Boston. He studied damaged optic nerves and how they might be regenerated. He noticed that fish and amphibians are able to regenerate their damaged optic nerve. He isolated several proteins that enable these creatures to do this. He combined several of these protein with a mammalian protein in a cocktail that he applied to rat optic nerve cells in a laboratory dish. Thus he was able to regenerate these cells.

J. William Harbour, an ophthalmologist at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis and his colleagues have discovered a way to stop the growth of two eye cancers; they have done this in cell cultures and in rabbits. One of these cancers is uveal melanoma; the other is retinal blastoma.

**HHS Announces Partnership to Improve Nation’s Visual Health**

In recognition of World Sight Day, HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson announced a new public-private partnership with the American Optometric Association (AOA) to improve visual health and implement the visual objectives contained in Healthy People 2010, the department's guidelines for health priorities in the first decade of the 21st century.

The new partnership, which is detailed in a recently signed Memorandum of Understanding, aims at preventing blindness and otherwise improving the eyesight of Americans. More than 1 million Americans aged 40 and over are currently blind and an additional 2.4 million are visually impaired. These numbers are expected to double over the next 30 years as the Baby Boomer generation ages.

"HHS is committed to improving our nation's health, and vision disorders are of prime concern," Secretary Thompson said. "Much of blindness can be prevented with early detection and treatment. For those who have already lost most of their vision, their quality of life can be greatly improved with vision rehabilitation services, training and devices. This partnership allows us to join forces with a nationwide network of optometric professionals, optometric students and schools of optometry, and patients to improve Americans’ vision."

Dr. Pat Cummings, president of the AOA, stated, "The leadership of the AOA believes that optometrists owe it to their patients and communities to play a greater role in helping them maintain not just good vision, but good health. Our House of Delegates passed a resolution of continued endorsement and support of these very important objectives. Optometry is committed to its role as primary eye care providers to the people of our nation."

Under the agreement, HHS will provide technical assistance for data and implementation activities through the National Eye Institute (NEI), the lead agency for the Healthy People 2010 vision objectives. In addition, HHS will facilitate joint professional education efforts and bring AOA together with other organizations that share a mutual interest in disease prevention, health promotion and the elimination of health disparities. It will also build new working relationships between state Healthy People coordinators, the public health community and optometrists.

Congress established the NEI in 1968. Its mission is to protect and prolong the vision of the American people. Through the National Eye Health Education Program, the NEI partners with over 65 professional, civic and voluntary organizations to conduct large-scale public and professional education programs.
In 2003, NEI will focus on the reduction of vision impairment in children (a Healthy People 2010 objective). Current activities include collaboration with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America to sponsor the "See All You Can See" Healthy Vision Poster Contest. During May 2003, they will also sponsor the first annual Healthy Vision Month.

**$2.5 Million Grant to Study Persons Aging with Hearing and Vision Loss**

A five-year federal grant of $2.5 million from the U.S. Department of Education's National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) is expanding the work of the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University. The project will explore ways to improve employment and community integration outcomes for persons who are blind or deaf and who are experiencing a secondary onset of hearing or vision loss resulting from aging. The project is a collaborative effort of the MSU-RRTC, the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) on Deafblind Youth and Adults in Sands Point, NY and the RRTC on Persons who are Hard of Hearing or Late Deafened at National University in San Diego, CA.

"The five-year project will provide opportunities to evaluate accessibility and usage of assistive technology, investigate community integration strategies, and develop recommendations to improve communication systems, transportation and job placement strategies. The information from the project will be utilized to develop model service delivery systems for service providers and to assist families and consumers improve the quality of life of those aging with vision and hearing loss", said B.J. LeJeune, the project's director.

One of the most important changes in the U.S. over the last 50 years has been the rapid increase in the number of people living into their 70s, 80s and beyond. A growing number of people who are living longer are those who sustained a disability at some point earlier in their lives. Many of these individuals will remain in the workforce due to extensions in the traditional retirement age. More information is needed regarding strategies that many older adults who have a vision and hearing disability use to sustain participation in the work force and community. "The need for prevalence information, as well as solid investigative research, is critical for developing strategies to more effectively serve this population," LeJeune said. "We are delighted to have the opportunity to work on this project with our collaborating partners from HKNC and National University. We have a strong research team and excellent resources for dissemination and training."

The RRTC on Blindness and Low Vision was established in 1981 and remains the only one of its kind funded by NIDRR. For more information contact Mrs. B.J.LeJeune Project Director at (662)325-2001.

**Translating Vision Research into Better Health**

The National Eye Institute is pleased to announce a new Request for Applications: DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ENHANCE VISION HEALTH COMMUNICATION http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-EY-03-002.html

The purpose of this RFA is to encourage the submission of research grant applications that create, develop, and evaluate health communication strategies aimed at translating vision research advances into improved health. Projects should be based on current health communication theory and directed towards disease prevention and health promotion. The NEI seeks investigator-initiated applications using novel methods
that reach out to public, public health, or professional audiences. The research should focus on improving utilization of current scientific knowledge in visual disease prevention and treatment in any of the six scientific mission areas of the NEI. It is expected that applications in response to this RFA will be from interdisciplinary teams of health communication experts knowledgeable about strategies, tactics, development, dissemination and evaluation of health information based upon scientific discovery, as well as vision scientists knowledgeable about the visual system. The anticipated award date is July 1, 2004.

Quality of Life

Member to Member
By Charles Gourgey, Ph.D.

With greater support available for disabled students and in particular for students who are blind or visually impaired, increasing numbers of us are taking advantage of opportunities for higher education.

Screen reading programs have become increasingly popular and are a great help to learning. Nevertheless, if we still have usable vision and have always been used to learning visually, it may be difficult to give that up. The computer allows us to take advantage of both sensory channels at once. Programs like ZoomText combine screen enlargement with speech to allow people to keep learning visually with the added speech support they may now have come to need.

But we are still in the early days of this technology, and the availability of resources in accessible format such as articles and textbooks is still a problem. The following question came into our listserv:

"While we are on the topic of braille vs. large print vs. speech, etc., do you have any suggestions on how a VISUAL LEARNER becomes a better audio learner? I am a very high partial... but reading is where I fall short (and driving too!!!!!!)."

"Mine is the old central vision issue. I can read really small print for a few minutes, but this does not help with textbooks. I have worked with RFB&D tapes and I am thankful, but they are the best remedy for anyone with a sleep disorder <GRIN>. I have scanned books and have them on line so JAWS can read them while I can see the print, since I need both to really comprehend.

"And many programs are now being implemented for textbooks on line or in alternative formats for those in grades through high school. I know some have knowledge of more; will all textbooks be available soon in an alterative format? Not that scanning is difficult, but it sure is time consuming. I have looked for research on this issue and there is none. Any particle of knowledge?"

R

R received the following advice from a member of our list who is a rehab teacher:

"Hi R:

"Do you use your state library service for the blind and visually impaired? If you were to listen to books on tape that are pleasurable or of interest to you, I believe it would slowly help you to better develop your listening and learning skills. I have seen it happen for many of my clients - even the older ones."
Help may be on the way for textbook users, although it will probably take a while. Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D) will be introducing a new format called "AudioPlus Text." This will consist of an audio recording of the book synchronized with its visual text so that one may follow both simultaneously.

In the meantime some books are already available in AudioPlus format, which is digital audio without the visual text. Digital audio has the advantage of "random access," which means that unlike cassette tapes, which run sequentially, with digital audio you can jump to different places in the book at will. Digital audio books (AudioPlus and eventually AudioPlus Text) are available in CD-ROM format (for more information see the RFB&D web site at: http://www.rfbd.org/AudioPlusLaunch/membersFAQsAPb.htm).

Another resource to check out is www.bookshare.org. They make books available using the DAISY format, a way of digitizing the text. RFB&D also uses DAISY for audio, but Bookshare also makes the visual text available using this format. Unfortunately, as of right now you can't get the two together, but you can use screen readers and screen magnifiers with the visual DAISY format to make the text more accessible.

And of course, the main advantage of DAISY is that it provides random access, allowing you to flip to any part of the book at will just as you can with an actual printed text. Textbooks are available, but selection is limited. Bookshare accepts scanned files for conversion to DAISY format; check the web site for details.

(To become a member of our WGPS [Working Group for the Partially Sighted] listserv navigate to http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wgps/ or else write to Carlos at laflauta@hotmail.com and ask for an invitation. When you write put "Subscribe - WGPS" in the subject.

---

**BLINDNESS COALITION VOWS COURT DECISION WON'T END DESCRIBED VIDEO**

WASHINGTON -- Leaders of advocacy organizations working on behalf of millions of blind and low vision children and adults today reacted strongly to the Federal Appeals Court decision on Friday, November 8, which vacated the Federal Communications Commission's July 1, 2000 rule and order mandating the major television networks to provide limited amounts of described video programs for visually impaired people. While expressing disappointment, the 17-member National Television and Video Access Coalition, which includes AARP; the American Council of the Blind (ACB); the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB); and the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), expressed its resolve to keep video description alive on prime-time and children's television programs, and to expand the service which makes visual information contained in televised programs accessible, via verbal description, to people who cannot see their TV screens.

Coalition Chair Dr. Margaret Pfansiehl of Silver Spring, Md., President of the Metropolitan Washington Ear, said, "Described television is, for people who are blind or visually impaired, what closed captioning is for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. We have worked for a dozen years to make this service available, and we are not about to have it disappear from commercial television networks just when blind people are beginning to discover the pleasure of television in the same way that other people take the medium for granted. Many people of good faith have supported us in our efforts to obtain and expand this essential service. Our supporters within the industry and within the disability community will continue to promote this access."
Charlie Crawford of Silver Spring, Md., Executive Director of the American Council of the Blind, added, "The ACB has worked too long and too hard to achieve the kind of inclusion that video described television was beginning to offer us to allow it to be taken away from us now." Crawford said that the technique of describing visual information verbally via the Secondary Audio Programming channel has been embraced enthusiastically by members of his organization, which includes blind and visually impaired people of all ages, all over the USA.

"ACB and other members of the Coalition are weighing our options and considering a number of next steps," said Christopher Gray, of San Francisco, President of the ACB. "The population of blind and visually impaired people continues to expand as the baby boom generation enters senior citizenship. People who lose their vision later in life have grown up watching TV, and they aren't going to like the idea of having to do without access to this mainstream medium, just when it began to appear that described video would allow them to continue to enjoy it."

Video description, developed for television in the late '80s by Boston public broadcaster WGBH, provides viewers who are blind or visually impaired with narration of key visual elements, actions, scene changes, and facial expressions during natural pauses in dialogue. Narrated description is delivered via the second audio program, a standard feature on stereo televisions and SAP-equipped VCRs since 1990. PBS has provided description of programming for over a decade, and the Narrative Television Network and Turner Classic Movies cable network also provide this program feature on a regular basis.

In July 2000, the FCC adopted rules designed to increase the accessibility of television and emergency information for viewers with visual disabilities. The rules took effect between April and June 2002, and required that the top commercial networks and the major cable networks provide 50 hours per calendar quarter of described programming to the nation's top 25 television markets. (More information on the FCC's description rules can be found at http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/videodescription.html.)

The Motion Picture Association of America and the networks attempted to vacate the Federal Communications Commission's rule under a contention that the FCC did not have the Congressional mandate to make such a rule. On Friday, November 8, the Federal Court of Appeals in a three-to-zero decision sided with the industry.

"The Access Coalition welcomes the early indicators that the television industry will continue to provide video description on broadcast and cable television on a voluntary basis," said Coalition Chair Pfanstiehl. "We will continue to advocate for this essential access. The nation's 12 million citizens with visual impairment are eager to see that the industry maintain and expand the number of programs which include description, and we applaud those commercial broadcast and cable networks that began providing description as of the date the FCC's mandate went into effect."

ACB Executive Director Crawford says, "Future actions of the coalition in regard to legal and legislative initiatives will be informed by the continued resolve of national broadcast and cable networks and local cable companies which pass through (or neglect to pass through) the description content on the SAP channel. We, at ACB, have appreciated the quality of the descriptions, and the willingness of some to go beyond the requirements of the FCC rules. For example, in July 2002, we gave an 'Access Award' to the Fox television network who began providing description even before the mandate went into effect, and who extended the service to its most popular prime-time programs."

ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, as well as the top five cable networks: Lifetime, Nickelodeon, TBS, TNT and USA Network have all joined with PBS and Turner Classic Movies to provide described programming. Viewers who are blind or visually impaired, their families and friends now enjoy such varied described programs as CSI: Crime Scene
A "roundabout" is a traffic circle. But it's a traffic circle specifically designed to move intersecting vehicular traffic without the need for red and green lights controlling movement. Roundabouts are becoming very popular with the engineers who lay out road systems. Roundabouts have been demonstrated to move more vehicles with fewer collisions at higher efficiency than any other intersection design.

But, roundabouts are often located where pedestrians want to get across, so they are expected to do so without the vehicle traffic flow being interrupted. The pedestrians that are most successful, of course, are those who are agile and able to judge when there is a gap in the traffic movement sufficient to permit a safe crossing. Never is the permissible pedestrian routing directed across the rotary portion of the roundabout, only on "the legs" which bring vehicles into it and out.

From the perspective of anyone who does not have the requisite agility and/or vision, the roundabout is inherently a discriminatory feature of the physical environment. Therefore, the design of roundabouts was included in the U.S. Access Board's proposed guidelines released for public comment on June 17, 2002. These proposals were among the many developed by the Board's Advisory Committee. I was privileged to represent CCLVI on this Committee. The Advisory Committee's position was that signalization is called for wherever necessary to give people with disabilities the opportunity to cross any street that other pedestrians can safely.

The Institute of Transportation Engineers, ITE, recognized the clash of basic purposes in the Access Board's proposal for signalizing a highway feature that works well partly because it has no signals intruding on constant traffic flow. The ITE launched a responsible pursuit of a reasonable solution to the dilemma. After first struggling with the issue internally, it organized a workshop in which various stakeholders could thrash out a counter-proposal to the Access Board's proposed solution. A Workshop was convened in Washington D.C. on October 28th. The hope was that the two-day session would produce a statement that could then be submitted, within the slightly extended period for public comment, before the Board advanced to the next stage of the long and complex sequence. This process culminates with federal rules enforced by the U.S. Department of Justice.

There were 45 of us in attendance and we were told that about 80 others who wanted to participate had been turned away. The group present did indeed represent the stakeholders. Along with CCLVI and the American Council of the Blind, there were other disabilities represented: Also present were local and federal highway officials, a number of professional traffic design specialists, and academics. The ITE and their co-sponsors, the Federal Highway Administration, were generous in their allocation of time. There were many presentations both in narrative and in very dramatic and persuasive video tapes, made at real-life roundabouts, illustrating the difficulty or impossibility of a disabled person, typically blind, crossing a roundabout leg by judging a sufficient gap in the traffic flow.

Both in general sessions and in smaller break-out groups, verbal exchanges revealed an acknowledgement of these difficulties but also a reluctance to compromise what traffic engineers consider the essence of a roundabout-no imposed interruptions to
the flow of vehicle traffic. These exchanges between opposing points of view were, to
the credit of the workshop's leaders and the participants, always civil even though the
stakes were high. One attendee announced at the start, "We are here to do battle".

The following series of paraphrased utterances heard through the course of the two
days will, I think, demonstrate the dimensions of the problem and, will explain why a
staffer from the Access Board opined at our adjournment that she was disappointed in
the workshop's limited results: Comment: The sounds of constantly moving traffic mask
any audible clue to a gap a pedestrian could use to cross. Response: When traffic is
light, there are many safe gaps. Comment: The pedestrian usually must cross two-way
traffic--vehicles approaching the circle road and those departing from it. Response:
Typically there is a splitter island for pedestrian refuge en-route across. Comment:
The splitter island usually is designed to force the pedestrian to zigzag at the
splitter island. Response: That "Z-crossing" helps the pedestrian and the
approaching motorist to become aware of the other's presence and intention.
Comment: The number of people with disabilities will greatly increase in future years.
Response: The greatly increasing volume of vehicle traffic demands use of the most
efficient traffic moving designs. Comment: By the year 2030, more than 50% of the
U.S. population will be at least 55 years old. Response: Roundabouts have proven to
reduce vehicle collisions by as much as 60%. Comment: Pedestrian fatalities are rising.
Response: The slow vehicle speeds in roundabouts have achieved a 94% reduction in motorist injuries. Comment: Even with a marked crosswalk, the vision
impaired pedestrian feels very unsafe if a vehicle is not required to stop for him. Response: Traffic laws do require a vehicle to yield to any pedestrian in
a crosswalk. Comment: Studies have shown non-compliance with those laws as high
as 90% or more. Response: That's a problem that can be solved with effective
enforcement of the law. Comment: Police do not give adequate attention to that kind of
enforcement. Response: Including signalization in a roundabout's design not only
significantly increases the initial cost of construction but also to the annual maintenance
burdens.

No voices were raised at the meeting in opposition to installing crosswalks with
good location aids, curb ramps, detectable warning strips, and barrier strips along the
roundabout edges where no pedestrians should cross. There was also consensus that
research should be conducted on design features and technological innovations that will
both effectively assure safe vehicle speeds and alert pedestrians of approaching traffic.
When I offered "Stewart's Axiom": 'If any pedestrian, then every pedestrian', there was a
murmur of support around the room and no one challenged it directly. My point of
course was that if a particular spot was not safe for a disabled person to get across,
then there should be no place for any pedestrians at all to do so. I believe that some
roundabouts may be very important to good traffic flow, and that where there is an
alternate route for all pedestrians nearby, exclusive priority can be given to the vehicle
traffic. That would be a parallel to the legitimacy of limited access highways that
sometimes exclude certain classes of motor vehicles as well as bicycles and
pedestrians.

There was also general agreement around the room when we adjourned that
another similar work session at some future time would be worthwhile. Roundabouts
are obviously here to stay. They are ubiquitous in the United Kingdom and France.
The estimate for the U.S. is three hundred so far. Two states where they have caught
on big are Colorado and Maryland, both of which were represented in the ITE
workshop. In Colorado there are about 80 on local roads and 10 thus far on state
routes.
Yellow Pages Listings Made Accessible
By Ellsworth Pierce

There is a service that is provided to people who can't use conventional yellow pages. This service will give users access to business listings across the US. I think this is a great service.

To access the service, call 1 (888) 654 1236. After that, you will be prompted to enter an access code. Enter 4544. Following this, you will be prompted for either the city name and state or the zip code of the businesses you want to find.

The system is voice activated, but also allows users to enter numbers via the keypad. After the zip code, you are prompted for what business type listing you want to look up, such as real estate, insurance, etc.

The service will give you a listing of numbers for that type of business and you can select the specific one you want. They can give directions to the business, too. The best thing is that they will connect you to the business!

The Sight-impaired Enjoy the Thrill Of Surfing
By Luis Monteagudo Jr.

From The San Diego Union-Tribune, reprinted with permission.

Scott Leason learned to surf growing up in Newport Beach and never got tired of it. Then on July 4, 1993 -- a date he can't forget -- two "gang-bangers" robbed the convenience store where he was working and shot him in the head.

Leason lost both his eyes and stopped surfing. Until yesterday, that is. On an overcast morning at South Carlsbad State Beach, Leason got back on a surfboard for the first time since the shooting. He was one of about 20 blind and sight-impaired people who were taken surfing by volunteers.

"It's just great to be out in the ocean again and paddling," said Leason, 46, of Paradise Hills.

The annual event, the sixth, was originated by Larry Graff, a member of the Encinitas Lions Club and a surfer. He had heard about blind people who were taught to water ski and he thought it would be great if people with vision problems could be introduced to, as he calls it, the magic of surfing.

Volunteers from the Lions Club, the Swami's Surfing Association and the San Diego Surfing Academy helped teach members of the Blind Community Center of San Diego.

Although some of the students had surfed before, others were new to the sport. "They kind of talked me into it," said Dolly Valdes of her friends at the center. "They told me it'd be a lot of fun."

Before they got into the water, Valdes and the others were first given basic instructions by Pat Weber, who with his wife teaches surfing through the Surfing Academy.

Weber instructed the students on the finer points of standing up and balancing themselves on their boards. He also gave them some encouragement.

"Even the best surfers wipe out," he shouted.

As the first group of students headed into the ocean, they went slowly and stayed close to shore, challenging only the smaller waves.

"At first the water was cold and I was a little nervous," said Valdes, 42, of North Park.

But as the clouds gave way to sunshine, Valdes, who is partially blind in both eyes, headed out farther.
"It was a lot of fun," she said.

Each student had at least two volunteers at their side to guide them, and in some cases hold their hands. Other volunteers were closer to shore to assist the students when they rode in.

The waves ranged from two to five feet. But that didn't dampen the enthusiasm or sense of accomplishment.

Volunteers applauded and cheered whenever students stood up on their boards. They hugged and high-fived the students after they finished their rides.

"It's extremely challenging, but the most important thing is their attitude," Weber said. "It's a go-for-it attitude, it's the spirit, that allows these people to be successful."

Before heading out, Leason said he expected problems from not being able to see the waves. But after spending almost an hour in the surf, he talked about how he overcame that problem.

"I had to use the sound and try to relate what I knew from before and try to get into the rhythm of the ocean," he said.

The volunteers and instructors also had a good time in the surf.

"I call it soul food," Weber said. "This is good for the soul. It's just so spiritually uplifting when you see the stoke on their faces. That makes you stoke."

Luis Monteagudo: (619) 542-4589; luis.monteagudo@uniontrib.com

Stop and See The Roses!
Color Poems Inspired by Visually Impaired Artists
By Eiko Fan

I teach sculpture to people who are visually impaired at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. My class is part of the Museum's Form in Art Program. My students use many colors in their work even though they have little or no sight. In spite of not having seen colors for many years (some for over 50 years), my students create art works filled with color. Romaine, one of my students, purchased a handheld digital color-identifier. Now she knows what colors she is using in her artwork and that her husband's clothing is not mismatched.

I found that my students remember colors from their childhood. Claire remembers her mother's bedroom was purple with silver trim. I am amazed that often, what my students hear around them, causes images of color preserved in their memories to leap into their consciousness. I believe that for these students, color is a spice and flavor for their imagination, and poetry for their lives.

Even though I am an artist, I take little time to stop and appreciate color. Perhaps this is because I see so easily. If I couldn't see colors anymore, I would regret this and wish I had taken a better look at the sky, the ocean and nature, and the museums filled with art and so many colors. I thank my sculpture students who teach me how precious my sight is, that I can't take it for granted.

I asked my students to list their thoughts and feelings about particular colors. I then organized their images into poetic form. Here is a sample of the poetry I compiled.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *
RED

Hot, Danger
Loud color,
Red is Blood, reminds me bf my young son I've lost
Red is an apple,
Red bike and Red wagon, from my childhood long ago.

Red is my car I used to drive
Also the blood of Jesus
Sunset, lifeblood burning with fire
Red is nosebleeds
Bullfighting and Rage
Catsup, tomato and the special color of love.

Red is an attention getter
Flowers and pretty things

Red has vibrancy and excitement
Red is startling, Fast cars and speed tickets
Red is the color of a sexy woman
With warmth.

ORANGE

Orange is happy and giggly
Sunset and sunrise
Orange feels like annoyance
I like to wear bright colors

I remember my kindergarten teacher saying
"You don't want that color crayon"
I love to wear orange to go with my hair
I remember orange flowers

Thinking of poetry ideas
Acidic fruits and pumpkin
Bright orange shirts and food
Orange tree, Orange juice

Autumn leaves, vivacious
Memories of sun and warm heat
Orangutan fur in sunset
Orange is joyous color!
orangutan fur in sunset

Who’s Going to Drive Miss Daisy?
By Dept. of Health and Human Services

As people live longer and more older drivers give up their driving privileges, family, friends and public officials may find themselves asking, as it was in a popular film, “who's going to drive Miss Daisy?” The question could become a critical one as America ages, according to a new study*, which finds older men and women who outlive their ability or willingness to drive may be dependent on alternative transportation for more than a decade in later life. "Hundreds of thousands of older people quit driving each year and must turn to alternative transportation. This change in status can create
unforeseen economic and social burdens that need to be addressed in the same way we have encouraged people to think about planning for retirement and end-of-life care. I don't think sufficient attention has been paid to the transition from driver to non-driver in the aging population," says Dan Foley, M.S., a biostatistician at the National Institute on Aging (NIA) and lead author of the study, published in the August 2002 issue of the American Journal of Public Health.

Almost 10 percent of the nation's drivers are older than 65, and that percentage could increase rapidly in the next decade as the post-World War II "baby boom" generation begins to reach that milestone. In addition, a greater proportion of women age 65 or older is driving than in the past. By 2030, projections suggest one in five Americans will be 65 or older, and the number of people aged 85 and older - currently the fastest growing segment of the older population - could exceed 10 million. But in Foley's study, driving cessation peaked at about age 85, suggesting more of the oldest old may be dependent on other forms of transportation in the future.

The investigators analyzed data gathered in 1993 and 1995 as part of the NIA-supported Asset and Health Dynamics Among the Oldest Old (AHEAD) study. From this nationwide sample of people ages 70 or older, they assessed follow-up data on 4,996 men and women who were able to drive and had access to a car. Based on a statistical analysis, these drivers represented approximately 13.7 million Americans aged 70 or older who were driving in 1993, the baseline year. Overall, 82 percent of men and 55 percent of women in this age group drove that year. Driving prevalence declined with age, ranging from 88 percent of men in their early 70s to 55 percent of those 85 or older. Among women, about 70 percent drove in their early 70s compared to 22 percent still driving at age 85 or older.

Two years later, 7 percent of the drivers had died. Another 9 percent were alive, but had quit driving for other reasons. Overall, these findings suggest that more than 600,000 people age 70 or older stop driving each year and become dependent on others to meet their transportation needs. About 400,000 older drivers die of all causes annually. Other than death, poor vision, memory impairment and an inability to perform one or more activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, eating, transferring between bed and chair, toileting, and getting around inside the home) were common reasons older people stopped driving.

"Driving skills are dependent on three areas of wellness: physical fitness, thinking clearly and seeing well," Foley says. "Whether a person can continue driving hinges on the severity of the disability or functional loss in one or more of these three areas. Over time, people seem to reach thresholds where they believe they can no longer safely drive."

Statistical analysis showed that the average number of years a person continued to drive - the driving expectancy - was significantly less than overall life expectancy. For instance, men and women who were still driving at ages 70 to 74 were expected to drive, on average, another 11 years. But these men were expected to live about 17 more years, and the women nearly 21 more years. This gap between driving expectancy and overall life expectancy means men in this age group who stopped driving were dependent on alternative transportation for an average of six years. For women, the gap translated into about 10 years dependence on other transportation modes.

At age 85, those still driving had a driving expectancy of about two years. But even at this age, men would have 4 non-driving years of life remaining and women nearly 6 years. Researchers found no differences in driving expectancy between urban and rural areas.
"Driving has an essential role in helping older men and women live independently. However, with age, a person's competence and confidence behind the wheel may erode to the point that quitting becomes an unfortunate necessity and dependence on other means of transportation becomes an inevitable reality," Foley says. "If we, as a society, fail to take steps to help older people prepare for and cope with this transition, then the goal of improving the quality of life in old age will be greatly compromised, both now and in the foreseeable future."

The NIA, a component of the National Institutes of Health, leads the federal effort in supporting and conducting basic and clinical research on aging and the special needs of older people. For information about the NIA, visit the website at http://www.nia.nih.gov/. For a free copy of "Older Drivers," an Age Page, and other free brochures and booklets about aging and health topics of interest to older people, call the NIA Information Center at (800) 222-2225. *Foley, DJ, Heimovitz HK, Guralnik JM, Brock DB, "Driving Life Expectancy of Persons Aged 70 Years and Older in the United States," American Journal of Public Health, vol. 92, no. 8 pp. 1284-1289. DJ Foley, JM Guralnik, and DB Brock are with the laboratory of Epidemiology, Demography, and Biometry at the National Institute on Aging., Bethesda, Maryland. HK Hemovitz is with Sytel, Inc., Rockville, Maryland.

Travel Disability Hotline Announced

The U. S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) aviation consumer disability toll-free hotline became operational on August 5, 2002. The toll-free numbers for the aviation consumer disability hotline are 1-866-266-1368 (voice) and 1-866-754-4368 (TTY).

DOT is asking disability organizations and agencies to help spread the word about the establishment of the hotline. People with disabilities are encouraged to call the hotline for information and assistance if they should experience disability-related air service problems.

Disability groups helped to test out the hotline before it became operational and DOT will use caller feedback in the coming few weeks to fine tune the system for effective response to disability issues in air travel.

Five Star Cooking Made Easy
By Joyce Kleiber

You are at the supermarket. You have a shopping list that you prepared using your 20/20 pen. You need to buy more than 12 items because you plan to make your favorite sweet potato casserole. Here is your list: sweet potatoes, bananas, green apples, butter, ginger, cinnamon, allspice, salt, apple juice, lemons, dried apricots, walnuts.... You have low vision, and so searching for what you need and consulting your list repeatedly to make sure you have everything, equals frustration.

The produce aisle, like a Monet painting done in strokes of deep reds, greens and oranges looks pretty, but "Wow!" Oh how forbidding to you-you can't see details. Cans of soup, like squat toy soldiers wearing red jackets and white trousers lined up in neat rows look all alike, shelf upon shelf upon shelf. How will you ever find the cream of mushroom!

How will you transport these and the other items you put in your cart. You don't drive! It's quite a load to carry. The checker is likely to ask, "Do you have a ride today?"
At home, you unpack your bags and put everything away. Then comes the day when you will cook. But can you now remember where you stored each of the 12 ingredients for your casserole?

Now consider a recipe for a sweet potato casserole with only three ingredients and a five star taste! The three ingredients are sweet potatoes, oranges, and ginger. The shopping and cooking experience becomes oh so much more manageable. The recipe is excellent. Rozanne Gold, one of America's most prominent chefs and authors, created it. A three-time winner of the James Beard Award for her best-selling cookbooks, Gold is also the entertaining consultant for Bon Appetit magazine. Her most recent book is Healthy 1-2-3: The Ultimate Three-ingredient Cookbook. Other books by Rozanne Gold include Recipe 1-2-3 and Desserts 1-2-3. Gold is chef-director of the Joseph Baum & Michael Whiteman Co., best known for creating New York's Rainbow Room and, sadly gone, Windows on the World.

I recommend the magic and ease of cooking elegant and tasty recipes that use only three ingredients. Like a musical cord, this recipe blends the richness of the earth in the sweet potatoes, the warmth of the sun stored in the oranges, and the dissonant tang of ginger. Here is the recipe for Rozanne Gold's "Favorite Sweet Potatoes."

Ingredients:
3lbs. Sweet potatoes
2 juice oranges
A 2-inch piece of fresh ginger

Wash sweet potatoes. Put the unpeeled potatoes in a pot and cover them with water. Bring the potatoes to a boil, cover the pot, reduce heat and cook till potatoes are very tender, for about 50 minutes.

Meanwhile, using a fine grater, remove 1 teaspoon of zest from the oranges. Then squeeze 1/2 cup of juice from the oranges. Peel the ginger and mince to very fine. This yields about 1/4 cup of ginger.

After the potatoes are cooked and cooled slightly, slip off their peels, cut them into chunks and place them in the bowl of a food processor. Add the orange zest, orange juice, and ginger and process until the potatoes are very smooth.

This recipe can be prepared in advance and then reheated in a microwave or conventional oven. Serves 8. Enjoy!

Technology

Computers Are Talking

THUNDER BAY, Ontario -- ReadPlease Corporation announced the release of the newest version of their text-to-speech software -- ReadPlease Natural Voices Edition. This latest member of the ReadPlease family of software is a result of a licensing agreement signed with AT&T earlier this year.

"This is a real advancement in speech technology," says Rob McCormack, president of ReadPlease Corporation. "With AT&T Natural Voices(TM) Text-to-Speech Engine, your computer sounds human, it is quite simply the best speech technology that money can buy."

Thousands of people use ReadPlease software and with the AT&T speech engine they now have a voice that is unmatched in quality. Using the AT&T Natural Voices speech engine, ReadPlease boasts the most realistic, human-sounding synthetic speech available on the market today. Samples of the voice may be heard at http://www.readplease.com.
"AT&T Natural Voices TTS engine offers an ideal solution for the PC applications being developed by ReadPlease," says Lex McCusker, general manager of AT&T Natural Voices software. "A more natural sounding user interface will enhance the ReadPlease product and help increase user acceptance."

Anyone serious about using the Internet would agree that there is a great deal of reading from the computer's monitor. Many ReadPlease users are finding less eyestrain and muscle strain as they relax letting ReadPlease software read text from their computers. Additionally, one of the popular applications of ReadPlease software is for proofreading text.

ReadPlease is widely used by individuals with disabilities, such as dyslexia and low vision. The software can also be used as a speech substitute for people who are unable to talk due to a disability.

ReadPlease is only available on CD ROM and may be ordered from the Internet at http://www.readplease.com. Additional languages will be released in the months ahead, starting with Spanish.

AT&T Natural Voices TTS engine is considered to be one of the most human-sounding computer-speech systems in the world. The award-winning product consists of a text-to-speech "engine" that turns written words into natural-sounding speech, a library of male and female voices in different languages, and the ability to custom develop a voice that becomes the unique property of the customer.

New languages are being introduced approximately every three months and product enhancements are added on a regular basis.

Headquartered in Florham Park, NJ, the product team leverages the talents and expertise of AT&T Labs, one of the world's premier corporate research organizations. Since its introduction, AT&T Natural Voices products are quickly becoming an accepted standard by which all other TTS engines are measured.

More information about AT&T Natural Voices TTS products can be found at http://www.naturalvoices.att.com. The Server and Desktop editions of the TTS engine, and all voice fonts should be ordered online at http://www.naturalvoices.att.com/buy/. The Server and WAV File edition engines and custom voice icons must be ordered by phone by calling AT&T Natural Voices' Help Desk at +1(877) 741-4321 (toll free for U.S. callers), and asking for "sales," or by calling +1(973) 360-8513.

Pocket PC for People Who Are Visually Impaired

Freedom Scientific Inc. and Microsoft Corp. announced the availability of the PAC Mate by Freedom Scientific. PAC Mate is a revolutionary personal data assistant for people who have low vision or who are blind. This launch signals the first time a mainstream Personal Data Assistant product has been available to people with disabilities. Built on the Microsoft Windows CE platform and tightly interwoven with Microsoft Pocket PC applications, the PAC Mate is equivalent to Pocket PC devices for sighted users, supports many of the same third-party applications and enables individuals who are blind to make the most of their time, whether they are at their desk or on the go. Unveiled during National Disability Employment Awareness month, the PAC Mate promises to play a key role in empowering and increasing the productivity of people with disabilities in the work force.

Using Microsoft Pocket PC technology in combination with the JAWS screen reader running on the Microsoft Windows CE operating system, the PAC Mate converts objects and text to speech so users who have vision impairments can hear documents, images, and web content. In addition the PAC Mate connects easily with desktop software and
Talking Signs Become Available

Talking Signs(r) technology is an infrared wireless communications system that provides remote directional human voice messages that make confident, independent travel possible for vision impaired and print-handicapped individuals. The technology was pioneered and developed at Smith-Kettlewell Eye Research Institute, Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center in San Francisco, California.

The system consists of short audible signals sent by invisible infrared light beams from permanently installed transmitters to a hand-held receiver that decodes the signal and delivers the voice message through its speaker or headset. The signals are directional, and the beam width and distance can be adjusted. The system works effectively in both interior and exterior applications.

Talking Signs may be used wherever landmark identification and way finding assistance are needed. To use a Talking Signs system, the user scans the environment with the hand-held receiver. As individual signals are encountered, the user hears the messages. For example, upon entering a lobby, one might detect "information desk" when pointing the receiver directly ahead, "public telephones" when pointing to the right and "stairs to the second floor" when pointing to the left.

Messages are unique and short, simple and straightforward. The messages repeat, continuously identifying key features in the environment.

Talking Signs Transmitter Installations-San Francisco Area

Installed:
* City Courthouse
* New Main Library
* Civic Auditorium
* Pier 1
* Department of Public Works
* Rose Resnick Lighthouse for the Blind
* McKesson Plaza
* Bank of America branches
* La Mediteranee Restaurant
* American Foundation for the Blind
* China Basin Terminal
* Midori Hotel
* Presentation Senior Housing
* Union Square stores
* 911 Emergency Communications Center
* BART/Muni Powell Street Station
* BART Freemont Station
* Caltrain Stations at 4th and Townsend
* Municipal Railway platforms
* Muni bus shelters
* Public Toilets

Currently being installed:
Conference

Uniting for Employment

The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, RRTC, on Blindness and Low Vision will be conducting its annual training conference April 14-16, 2003 in Mesa, Arizona. The conference, Uniting for Employment, will unite private sector employers and rehabilitation professionals for the purposes of developing strategies that improve employment outcomes of individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired. The registration fee is $125 and the deadline to register is March 30, 2003. For further information, please contact Ms. Stacy Butler at the Mississippi State University-RRTC 662-325-3304 or email her at sle2@ra.msstate.edu.

People

A Letter from Mike Godino

Dear CCLVI Members and Friends;

My name is Mike Godino, and I reside in Baldwin, New York. Thanks to all who voted for me to become a CCLVI Board member. I am happy to say, CCLVI is a membership organization. So whether you voted for me or not, whether you attended the convention or not, call on me to help you help CCLVI.

This is how I became involved with the blind community. Way back when I had perfect vision, I was an automobile technician for General Motors. It was in the summer of 1992 when I began to have some difficulties with my vision. I remember it as though it was yesterday. I guess it is one of those dates you never forget. That date was, August 28, 1992. That was the day I woke up blind. It wasn't just, "having problems seeing," it was "I can't see" blind. Although I had an appointment with an opt-neurologist on the 30th, I called her office and demanded she see me that day. As I
waited in the office for the Doctor to make some free time to see me, I wondered what the remainder of my life was going to be like. Then I would push those thoughts aside and tell myself the doctor better be able to fix this--whatever it is. Although the doctor could not fix my eyes, she did diagnose my now under control Multiple Sclerosis.

That however was only the beginning of a long road to a rebirth, recovery or whatever else you want to call it. In brief without the details, I spiraled into a deep depression, my wife left me, I was now considered legally blind, I had no career and I did nothing for two and a half years. Then, one day, I decided to get up off my duff and do something. As strange as it was, I signed up at the local community college so that I could take some Physics classes. What did I know about Physics, you might ask. Absolutely nothing, but I did have an interest. Good bad or indifferent, it was here that I had my first experience with the strong, long arm of discrimination.

The School had a department for students with disabilities and the caring instructors all pointed me in that direction. It was there I learned about extended test times, private tutors and the whole host of perks for disabled students; however, I also learned that there was this wonderful thing called a CCTV. By using the CCTV I could read my books without straining. The Department for students with disabilities referred me to the local Agency for Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, VESID. VESID promised me the world; I believe the term they used was, "anything you need." But all I wanted was a CCTV so that I could read at home.

As that semester passed, I became more and more disenchanted with this organization called VESID. Again, the caring instructors came to my rescue. They told me about this blind girl who used a guide dog and suggested that I find her and ask for some help. So I did and that was when I began to climb out of my hole and become part of society again.

Her name was Lori, she was bright and pretty and she knew all about being blind. She helped me to understand what I should expect and the rules in getting what was due me as a blind person. Lori also helped me to understand that VESID was stringing me along and was never going to get me a CCTV. As we neared the end of my first semester, Lori suggested I call the Client Assistant Program, CAP, about the empty promises from VESID.

I was amazed that one phone call could have such an impact. My VESID councilor called me and finally had a plan. He suggested that I have my eyes evaluated at the expense of VESID and we go from there. Long story short, I then became a consumer of the NY State Commission for the Blind and had a CCTV a month later. However, if I did not meet Lori, I would probably still be wondering, "How will I ever read these books." I needed someone to show me the way.

From there Lori and I became friends and she introduced me to the American Council of the Blind. My first year in the Council was filled with trepidation about being blind. I continued to review in my head "Am I blind or not? I don't feel blind. I don't think I look blind, but who knows what blind looks like." After the first year, I began to settle in and get involved with some of the activities of the chapter and found that I was enjoying the responsibilities. That summer the chapter had elections and I was nominated for president. What did I know about running an organization, much less an organization of and for people who are blind--nothing. However, Lori and others convinced me that I could handle it. So I gave it a try.

Naturally, I was in up to my neck and didn't know it at that time. Yes, I knew that we had bid on a convention and planning the convention is what put me into this position in the first place. Apparently I possessed leadership skills I did not know about, and others identified these attributes. Anyhow, now I was in my first term of three two-year terms as President of the American Council of the Blind of New York, Long Island Chapter. Additionally, if I might add a toot of my own horn, the 1995 State convention
was the biggest ever and since. I did good for my first time out, and made a lasting impression.

Being a person who pushes to achieve, I continued to strive for acceptance within ACBNY. I asked to be placed on committees and worked at getting to know the leadership in the organization. When given a task, I set my goal for completion of the task high so that I could impress the leaders of the organization. Thereby I hoped they would call on me again to fill a need. I am now completing my first term as treasurer of ACBNY. I look forward to being reelected at the upcoming convention for which I am the Convention Chair.

One of the many things I learned, as I became involved with ACBNY, is how to plan events. As I stated above, I was handed a state convention as my very first task out as chapter president. However, as time went on, I have become an efficient convention planner and feel I am good at assembling and carrying out a well-run convention.

Since joining ACBNY, I have planned five conventions and assisted in the planning of one of the other two. I find the task of planning events challenging and I look to push the envelope when planning. I feel that something new insights people to participate. Who wants the same old thing all the time?

In addition to the planning skills I learned as a member of ACBNY, I learned how to advocate for people who are blind. I found this to be an easy task, in principle, because I was advocating for my own cause; what could be better than making ones own acceptance into society better. As a member of ACB, I have attended five national conventions, four national legislative weekends and five state legislative weekends. If you’re wondering, I do very much enjoy advocacy work. I enjoy it so much, I now do it for a living. The Queens Independent Living Center employs me as their Systems Advocacy Coordinator. As the Systems Advocacy Coordinator at QILC, I teach others how to work toward some predetermined goal of compliance. Therefore, in addition to the chance to develop my skills as a planner, my work with ACB has also brought out other skills that I now use at my job.

As a Board Member of CCLVI, I look forward to working with the members of the board to produce a convention program we can all be proud of for this year and in years to come. Additionally, I want you all to know, I am an advocate and, I look forward to assisting you with any questions you might have regarding blindness and low vision. I hope all who read this article will join me and become active in CCLVI. Share in the feeling of being a small part of something that is much larger than we can imagine while moving the low vision agenda forward. Alone we are small, together we are large, and we can overcome all barriers confronting people with low vision.

Let me close by saying thank you to all the people who helped me to find myself and become an integral part of the whole blind community—ACB and all its affiliates. With a special thanks to the now love in my life, Lori. Thank you.

Armchair Traveler
By Jane Kardas

Armchair Traveler
By Jane Kardas

Have you ever dreamed of traveling to exotic places? Would your curiosity lead you to travel towards Japan, England, South America, Australia or other unknown destinations? Then sit back, get comfortable and travel with me as an armchair traveler and meet some of our newest CCLVI foreign members! Our first destination will be Rostov-on-Don, Russia to meet Yeugen (U-geny) Azdyshev.

I correspond with Yeugen on cassette tape. He interlaces his dialog with Russian music. This music consists of vocals, which I obviously am unable to understand; however, I find the melody fascinating and most appealing.
Yeugeny was born September 24, 1951 in Rostov-on-Don, Russia. He was born sighted to Russian Orthodox parents. At the age of 3 months Yeugeny contracted meningitis, and by the age of 3 years became seriously visually impaired, with optic nerve atrophy. Yeugeny attended two schools; the first school he attended was for blind and partially sighted children. While attending this school he also attended regular school so he might study music. Yeugeny furthered his education by attending the College of the Arts, studying the Russian Accordion called the Bayan (Bi-on). This is much like a typical accordion except instead of piano type keys it has 3-5 rows of buttons on the right side.

Yeugeny worked from 1975 to 1997 at The Teachers House as an accompanist. The Teachers House is what we would call a studio, where one might study theatre, English, and voice. He worked with individuals in the vocal studio, teaching what he described as romance, folk and pop songs. The Teachers House closed in 1997 and Yeugeny has been unemployed since that time. His only source of income is what would be equivalent to $40.00 a month U.S. Currency from his pension.

Yeugeny was married in 1978. This marriage was brief and lasted only three months. But all was not lost, for he was to reunite with Svetlana, who he had met 18 years previously. They married in 2000 and became a family with Svetlana’s 12 year-old daughter Karen, and are extremely happy. He says they love him very much. Svetlana is sighted and works as a social worker.

Yeugeny learned English in school and was top of his class. He continues to further his English by listening to Radio broadcasts in English such as World Service Radio Moscow, Voice of America, Radio Candidate International and tapes from friends in the United States and Scotland. He states that he now thinks in English. And I must add that his English is impeccable! He is working on eliminating his Russian accent, which is difficult for me to detect at this point. He is very "happy and quiet" that he is able to make his speech understood. Yeugeny continues to learn English; the best tools for him are The Matilda Ziegler Magazine, (where I discovered him), Newsweek, Readers Digest and others on cassette tape.

Yeugeny has told me to feel free to ask any questions I might have. In my latest letter to him, I was eager to ask about his city, it's architecture, and it's politics. In the past we considered Russia to be our enemy. I find it most interesting that now Russia is our ally in fighting shoulder to shoulder, defending the rights and privileges in war against terrorism in Afghanistan.

In our next edition of VISION ACCESS, I look forward to introducing you to Sheila Stovart from Totnes, Devon, England.

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, 1155 15th St. NW, Suite 1004, Washington, DC 20005. Our Tax ID number is 1317540.
Resources

Art for the Visually Impaired
Eiko Fan
610-446-0376
email: eiko@danieldorff.com

AT&T Natural Voices TTS
1-877-741-4321 (Help Desk)
1-973-360-8513

Bookshare
www.bookshare.org

CCLVI
1155 I5 Street, NW
Suite 1004
Washington D.C. 20005
1-800-733-2258
www.cclvi.org

CCLVI Treasurer
Coletta Davis
2879 East Alden Place, Anaheim, CA 92806

CCLVI Chapters
California Council
1-800-733-2258

Florida Council
1-800-26SIGHT or
1-800-267-4448

Metropolitan Council
845-986-2955

Delaware Valley Council
215-735-5888

National Capitol Council
301-763-7573
202-546-0897
www.yahoo.com

Freedom Scientific
1-800-444-4443, est. 1131

Health and Human Services
Doug Dollemore
301-496-1752
National Eye Institute
2020 Vision Place
Bethesda, MD 20892
301-496-5248
www.nei.nih.gov

Readplease Corporation
www.readplease.com

Recordings for the Blind & Dyslexic
http://www.rfbd.org/AudioPlusLaunch/membersFAQsAPb.htm

RRTC at Mississippi State
Mrs. B.J. LeJeune, Project Director
1-662-325-2001

RRTC Conference
Ms. Stacy Butler at the Mississippi State University-RRTC 662-325-3304 or
email her at sle2@ra.msstate.edu

Talking Signs, Inc.
812 North Boulevard

Baton Rouge, LA 70802
Voice: (888) 825-5746 (toll free)
FAX: (225) 344-2811
Email:info@talkingsigns.com
www.talkingsigns.com

Travel Disability Hotline
1-866-266-1368 (voice)
1-866-754-4368 (TTY)

Working Group for the Partially Sighted, WGPS Listserv
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wgps
or email Carlos at laflauta@hotmail.com

Yellow Pages
1-888-654-1236
Access code-4544
CCLVI 2003 Membership Application or Renewal
Please send dues payment to CCLVI Treasurer, Coletta Davis
2879 East Alden Place, Anaheim, CA 92806
Name
M
F____
Address
City____________________
State_ _ Postal Code_______Country________
State_ _ Postal Code_______Country________
Phone
E-Mail

New member.
Life or paid up Life member in year(s).
Organization or Agency.
Person with low vision.
Totally blind person. Fully sighted person.

I wish to receive the Vision Access in the following format:
Large print Cassette Computer disk
E-mail Do not send Vision Access

I wish to receive the Braille Forum in the following format:
Cassette Large Print Braille E-mail
Computer Disk Do Not Send Braille Forum

Please indicate your local CCLV chapter preference:
California Florida Delaware Valley
National Capitol Metro (NY/NJ)
Member At Large. Do not inform local chapter.

Please Include a Dues Check for one of the following:
US or International Individual $15.00;
Organization or Agency $25.00
Life Member $300.00. *May pay in three (3) annual installments of $100.00.
28