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Vision Access welcomes submissions from people with low vision, from professionals such as ophthalmologist, optometrists, low vision specialists, and everyone with something substantive to contribute to the ongoing discussion of low vision and all of its ramifications.

Submissions are best made as attachments to email or on 3.5" disk in a format compatible with Microsoft Word. Submissions may also be made in clear typescript. VISION ACCESS cannot assume responsibility for lost manuscripts. Submissions may be mailed to Joyce Kleiber, Editor, 6 Hillside Rd., Wayne, PA 19087, jmkleiber@hotmail.com
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From the Editor

Last month I saw a play “Molly Sweeney.” Molly was played by an actress who has low vision due to juvenile macular degeneration. In a newspaper article this actress, Pamela Sabaugh, said that living with low vision is living “a scavenger existence, always catching clues. I use the sight I have, but I don’t trust it until sound or touch backs it up.” This was a new way for me to think about my life with low vision. Perhaps we are all scavengers to some extent. Looking for clues and gaining information help me to cope.

I hope that some of the information and points of view presented in this issue of Vision Access will be useful to you. Enjoy meeting Joel Isaac, learn about a camping trip, meditate with the Hiker’s Prayer, become an expert on signs for people with low vision, learn about the newest magnification devices, and much more.

The articles to follow are the gifts to you from all of our contributors. We thank them. Enjoy your celebrations of Christmas, Chanukah, or Kwanza, and of course the New Year.

JMK, 12/3/07.

Organization News

President’s Message
By Bernice Kandarian

The Holiday Season is upon us, a time for reflecting on the past year’s accomplishments and focusing upon what we have to do in the coming year. We have discussed the great work of the Scholarship Committee during 2007. They are now working on the Carl Foley Graduate Scholarship and preparing for the 2008 Fred Scheigert competition. We had a successful convention in Minneapolis last summer and I cannot believe how soon the 2008 convention in Louisville will be here. If you have program ideas for 2008, please let me know. And, thanks to Richard Rueda and Carlos Gourgey, we now have a thriving email list which is officially sponsored by CCLVI!

The mainstay of the organization continues to be our quarterly magazine, Vision Access. Wherever I go, I hear from our members that the information contained in it is timely and useful. They even say that Vision Access compares favorably to The Braille Forum, The Blind Californian and other publications in the field. Congratulations to Joyce Kleiber on her continuing excellent work as editor!

Happy New Year and make plans to join us in Louisville this summer.
The Council of Citizens with Low Vision International awards three scholarships (entering freshmen, undergraduate and graduate levels) in the amount of $3,000 each to college students who are visually impaired, maintain a strong GPA and are involved in their school/local community. We are pleased to share information about our three deserving scholarship winners for the 2007-08 academic year.

Abby Misko is our entering freshman scholarship recipient. She graduated last spring with a high school GPA of 4.029. Abby is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in biomedical sciences and a minor in Spanish at Marquette University. Her goal is to become a pediatric doctor. First Stage Theatre Academy has had the biggest influence on Abby’s life to date and she contributes her life skill development, passion for public speaking and love for working with children to her experiences with this theatre group. Abby was born with Amoebas Syndrome which is characterized by facial paralysis.

Lisa Drzewuski is our undergraduate scholarship winner. She received her associates degree in liberal arts from Nassau Community College this past spring. Strong academic performance earned Lisa a place in Phi Beta Kappa National Honor Society. Lisa experienced vision loss as an adult and had the opportunity to make a more thoughtful career choice. She is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in social work at Molloy College, which she believes will be personally fulfilling and a benefit to her community. Lisa found the ACB/CCLVI convention to be exciting and informative this past summer. She has already joined the CCLVI membership committee.

Our third scholarship winner is Robin Lipsker in the graduate category. She entered a graduate program in social work at the University of Denver in summer 2007. Robin and her husband moved from Tacoma, Washington where she earned her Bachelor’s degree in June 2007 from the University of Washington at Tacoma. Most recently, Robin worked for 5 years as a transition support chemical dependency counselor. Robin was impressed and inspired at the ACB/CCLVI convention last summer, and is engaged in establishing a CCLVI chapter in Colorado.

2008-2009 Academic Year Scholarships Applications may be submitted each year beginning January 1st and all materials must be received by March 1st. To view the on-line scholarship application, please visit www.cclvi.org. Scholarship monies are awarded for the upcoming academic year. We encourage students to reapply each year for scholarship consideration.

Join us in congratulating our
outstanding scholarship winners! We look forward to receiving your scholarship application for the 2008-2009 academic year.

Chapter News

Metropolitan Council of Low Vision Individuals—Looking Good, Looking Close!

In October, our Chapter was approached by a research firm engaged by the New York City Transit Authority. We were asked to assemble a ten-person focus group of bus customers with various levels of vision impairment. Our task was to evaluate electronic equipment which would provide real-time information at bus shelters and on board buses.

We convened a representative sample of users, including four Chapter members. Our sample ranged from high partials to people with no functional vision, cane and guide dog users.

There was unanimous opposition to the red characters on a dark background, presented by a bus shelter visual-only device. We endorsed high contrast light characters on a dark background. As we rode up Manhattan’s First Avenue, we approved of the very understandable and detailed audible announcement prior to every stop!

National Capitol Citizens with Low Vision:

NCCLV along with four other local ACB affiliates was proud to sponsor the Mid-Atlantic ACB Affiliates Convention. Over 180 partially sighted and blind individuals from the tri-state area and beyond attended the event which was held from November 2-4 in Arlington, VA.

This joining of forces allowed us to offer the low vision community several exciting things not possible if we’d each gathered independently. We were able to have better presentations, attract more vendors and have opportunities to network with many others with similar visual challenges. NCCLV was also able to see what works and doesn’t work in other organizations that are similar in nature. Perhaps most important, NCCLV was able to attract new members to our organization.

Here are several highlights of this event. One was the luncheon where Jim Fruchterman, Founder and CEO, of the Benetech Initiative, Palo Alto, California told us about new developments in accessing books electronically. Attendees also were able to hear Mitch Pomerantz, newly elected president of ACB tell of his vision for ACB. We also had an opportunity to suggest areas where ACB can help us as partially sighted people.

Attendees got a taste of what a national convention is all about. There were 17 exhibits to explore and more than 21 presentations from which to choose. A fantastic jazz band was the highlight of the Friday evening reception. There
was something for everyone – partially sighted or totally blind; newly visually impaired or not.

The planning committee thanks those who attended and generously gave donations or items for the auction. We hope to make this a regular event but are in need of volunteers to assist in the planning. One of the many benefits of being part of the committee is that you meet new friends and can help ensure that the convention meets the needs of the low vision community. If you are in the area, please strongly consider donating your time to help make this happen. Contact Barbara Milleville at 703-645-8716 to learn more.

On December 8th, Skip Sharpe once again hosted our annual holiday party in Wheaton, Maryland. More time to network and enjoy the company of new and old friends! Thanks, Skip for coordinating this opportunity to gather!

One Chapter’s Operating Procedure
By Phil Kutner

Over time, a group develops a personality based on the leadership, location and interest of its members.

Because of its unusual combination of the above, the San Mateo County Council of the Blind (SMCCB) has a unique collection of activities and funding.

Reaching out to the greater community permits our chapter to participate and be a beneficial member. In contributing to raising awareness of visual problems and educating the public, we are returning to society some of the benefits we have received.

This is done mainly via booths at various types of community programs. These have included booths at Health Fairs, Volunteer Fairs, Senior Fairs, Emergency Preparedness Programs, Ethnic and Grandparenting events.

These exhibits are in three parts. The most important is the educational. Brochures and pamphlets are distributed from the major blind service organizations. The colored photos of guide dogs and puppies engender the most interest.

Second, are the guide dog demonstrations. There is an innate interest in the public wanting to pet the dogs—especially children.

Third, are the fun-filled optical illusion displays. These have been compiled over the years and are continually being augmented. These include locating objects within a picture, apparent difference in size of equally sized objects and use of varied shapes and forms.

By attending these events we have increased our membership. Business cards are distributed with the request that if they know
a visually impaired person to have them contact us. There is a small percent of sighted people who wish to join and participate in our programs.

The Annual Volunteer Fair at the College of San Mateo has been very helpful. It is a showcase for groups to acquire volunteers. In the past we have had Girl Scout Troops and today we are blessed with Alumnae of the Delta Gamma Sorority.

Each year we acknowledge our most active volunteer with the SMCCB Volunteer of the Year Award that is given at our annual picnic.

Social Events

Our monthly chapter meetings are held in a restaurant that has separate room facilities. Each person orders and pays for his or her own meal. The luncheon time is used for socializing and mixing.

In addition there are two major social events. There is The Annual Picnic in the Park at the beautifully shaded Twin Pines Park in Belmont. The committee prepares the tables, does the purchasing and does the grilling—while the volunteers help with serving. After eating there is bingo with wonderful donated prizes. Attendees also have the choice of bingo cards with large numbers or homemade brailled cards.

In December there is the Holiday Party. This is a special occasion with entertainment. These events are times for members to bring guests who are prospective members.

Sports

Thanks to the efforts of Past President, Frank Welte, some of us participate in one or more of these activities. There is the monthly bowling. We have used the special rail to let us know the location of the edge of the lane. Although we cannot see the pins, our volunteers tell us the number and location of the standing pins.

In the winter there is cross-country skiing. This is much safer than going down the slope. It doesn’t have the thrill of the wind rushing past your face; however, there is a great deal of exercise and exertion. It is truly simple, for you follow in the rut prepared by the person ahead of you.

Summertime finds us at the annual white-water rafting adventure down the America River near Sacramento, our state capitol. A professional group leads us. This includes the trip and a packed lunch. We are dropped off, and the cars meet us downstream after the excitement. Sure we wear the safety vests.

Finally there is the dancing. Some of our major events have music and we dance. There are some who attend dance classes across the Bay and others are interested in Western and line dancing.

Whatever your club activities include, the idea of doing it together and having group
participation leads to fun and enjoyment. Every chapter should set a priority to socialize and learn from our peers who also are experiencing the same coping problems.

For information about this chapter visit www.smccb.org.

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### People

**Meet Joel Isaac**

Joel Isaac missed a step as he left the sanctuary of his church with his youth choir. At first people thought this misstep was cute, but it happened again and again and his parents became concerned. He was examined at Children’s Hospital in Los Angeles where he was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa. He was 8 years old at the time. Joel's vision was measured at 20/40. Now it is above 20/200. At this time the degree of his field and his central vision fluctuate.

In high school and college, Joel “muddled through.” He didn’t know what accommodations to ask for. He could not see the black board and reading text books was a disagreeable chore. One of his books was recorded on cassettes. He found this unwieldy—it seemed like 20 tapes were needed for one chapter. Joel did not know about CCTVs. So he relied on his listening skills and note taking to master material for his classes.

Joel majored in psychology at Cal State at Long Beach. He was curious about the psychology of decision making and about the thought processes involved. Realizing that he couldn't find a good job with a bachelor's degree in psychology, Joel turned to his interest in computers and electrical equipment. In 2 years he earned a degree in Information Systems from DeVry University. Joel said he chose DeVry over UCLA because the courses offered at DeVry seemed more relevant to the practical world of work and less conceptual than those offered at UCLA. In seeking employment, he found that in his field the confidence you have in what you know can matter more than the place where you earned your degree. His thirst for knowledge eventually led him to complete his Master's in information systems.

Joel uses a large screen monitor along with Zoomtext and JAWS.

Joel has had a “checkered” career. His first job was for an Israeli company that was a pioneer in streaming of audio and video material on the internet. He spent time during the dot com boom actively consulting with various companies. Since 2001 until just recently Joel has worked in web development and engineering for Lindora, an online and clinical weight loss company. He liked working for a company that affected people’s lives in positive ways. He used his technical skills, his concern for detail, and for getting things right.
His goal was to make software easier for people to use and at the same time more profitable for his company. Joel says he is tenacious in his efforts to find solutions and he asks for help when needed. He put into practice accessibility guidelines developed by Rite Aid. To these he added some of his ideas.

For 3 weeks in February 2006, Joel was treated at an alternative medicine clinic in India. He learned about this clinic from his wife, a physician. Doctors at this clinic address many eye conditions. They use homeopathy, natural means, to make eyes more light sensitive. They applied natural oils on Joel’s forehead to stimulate ocular pathways. They addressed pressure points to stimulate his eyes. After these daily treatments, Joel’s eyes were more sensitive to ultra violet light and so he was required to cover his eyes for about 4 hours. During those hours Joel used Jaws, a text to speech program, so that he could use his laptop. As a result of this experience Joel greatly appreciates that technology can empower people with disabilities.

To complete his treatment, Joel would have to return to India many times for more procedures and follow a vegetarian diet throughout his life. This is more than he is willing to do.

Before his experience in India, Joel had never been a joiner. Now he joined ACB and its affiliates, BITS (Blind Information Technology Specialists) and CCLVI. In these organizations Joel is learning what he can do to help others become more mobile, more active through technology.

Joel is webmaster for California Council of the Blind and for BITS. For CCLVI Joel helped to put the Fred Scheigert scholarship application for 2007 online. He will also help to do this for the Carl Foley scholarship and update the Fred Scheigert scholarship for 2008. Lastly, Joel has just accepted the position of treasurer for the California Council of Citizens with Low Vision.

For the last couple of months Joel has been learning braille. While he was in Minneapolis last summer for the ACB convention, a few of his new friends persuaded him that learning braille could help him continue reading even when his eyes are too fatigued to read visually.

When he is not working, Joel enjoys music, movies and nature. He sings in a choir. He has played the piano and now he plays the flute. Joel has a collection of flutes—some from South America, Ireland and India, some made of bamboo and some of wood. He appreciates the subtle differences in tone these various flutes offer.

Joel and his wife Nova, a physician trained in India, live in Orange County California in a suburban area that still has some rural characteristics. They live 5 miles from the ocean. There Joel has access to nature preserves and ponds inhabited by storks, herons and other wildlife. He often uses paratransit for business and pleasure.

Joel believes that people with
disabilities should do all they can do. In his youth his Mom worried that he would get hurt or lost when he traveled alone to work. She was protective. Joel says he sometimes talks to coat racks and this makes people nervous. Joel appreciates that people who first encounter someone with a disability need time to make everything click together. And people with one disability have to make efforts to become aware of the challenges faced by those with other disabilities.

Joel has mastered the challenges of his own disability, RP. He wants to use his skills and his personal experiences to help others. Just as his various flutes have special qualities, he knows that people with disabilities have special qualities. They can use these to enhance their own lives and the lives of others.

Recipe

Lemon Ricotta Pancakes
By Barbara Milleville

If you attended the ACB/CCLVI national convention last summer in Minneapolis, you may have dined at Hell’s Kitchen and tasted the luscious lemon ricotta hotcakes that were served. I recently found a recipe for these very yummy pancakes. Try them for yourself and see if those convention memories don’t pop into your head.

These pancakes are soft and delicate, although the addition of the whole wheat flour gives them a little heft and texture and a subtle nutty flavor. They’re best made with whole milk ricotta cheese because this produces the best flavor and texture. If you use part skim milk ricotta, more flour might be necessary because there is more water and less fat to act as binders. Make smaller pancakes as they’re easier to flip.

Serve the pancakes with jam, fresh fruit or fruit syrups. Try topping each with a dollop of sour cream or with crème fraîche and caviar. This recipe makes about 20 silver dollar size pancakes. Doubling this recipe makes about 4 servings.

1 tablespoon melted unsalted butter, plus additional butter for cooking
1 cup whole milk ricotta
2 eggs
2 tablespoons light brown sugar
Zest of ½ medium lemon, finely minced
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
¼ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons whole wheat flour
2 tablespoons all purpose flour

In a large bowl, whisk together the butter, ricotta and eggs until thoroughly combined. Add the brown sugar, lemon zest, vanilla, nutmeg, salt and whole wheat and all purpose flours and stir until thoroughly combined.
Travel and Recreation

Camping Near the Apostle Islands
By Joyce Kleiber

“Do you want to go camping after the CCLVI convention in Minneapolis?” asked Barbara Milleville, a friend who also has low vision. This question took my breath away! I hadn’t been camping for more than 40 years. I didn’t think I could get to a campground carrying tent, sleeping bag, mat, food, extra layers of winter and summer clothing, bug repellent and sunscreen. I don’t drive and neither does my husband. My friends may have camped when they were younger, but not at our age.

I’ve always loved being outdoors. As children my parents took us along on their fishing trips to a number of Wisconsin lakes. Here we enjoyed walks through the woods, roasting marshmallows at a camp fire, and swimming in the lake. I felt a twinge of jealousy when our children went camping with the Scouts and then occasionally with their young adult friends. Now someone was asking me if I wanted to take a camping trip. Barbara and I decided to go for it.

The magic carpet was provided by an organization based in Minneapolis—Wilderness Inquiry or WI for short. WI offers trips to many destinations in the US and internationally and serves people with a variety of physical, cognitive and emotional disabilities participating alongside those without disabilities. We decided on a 3 night trip to the Apostle Islands on Lake Superior in northern Wisconsin not far from the Canadian border. These islands were named by early Jesuit missionaries and explorers who counted 12 islands. There are actually more than 12, but who cares.

Prior to the trip the WI staff sent me emails and a phone call detailing expectations about this trip. The staff told me what to pack and asked about my fitness

Heat a griddle over medium high heat and rub the end of a stick of butter over the surface to grease it well. Drop a heaping tablespoon of batter per pancake onto the griddle and cook for about 3 minutes, until the underside of the pancake is golden brown and the top is slightly dry. Gently flip the pancake over (it might be easier to use two small spatulas to do this) and cook for another 2 minutes, until the edges are barely crisp and both sides are golden brown. Add more batter to the griddle, as needed, for subsequent batches.

Recipe source: Tina Wasserman

43 calories, 3g fat, 2g saturated fat, 29mg cholesterol, 46mg sodium, 2g carbohydrates, n/a dietary fiber, 2g protein.
status, if I needed any accommodations for my low vision and if I had any special dietary requirements.

The day finally came. We met at the WI headquarters in Minneapolis and boarded a large van with a trailer loaded with 8 kayaks, wet suits, life jackets, food and cooking equipment, tents and our personal gear.

Right from the start I enjoyed getting to know our leaders, Sarah, Andrea and Julie and some of the other campers who sat near us in the van. This trip was for women only and there were 11 campers and 3 guides.

After a 4 hour drive we arrived at our camp site on a bluff overlooking Lake Superior. It was sundown. Barbara especially enjoyed the sunsets which were drop dead gorgeous...like none we'd seen before. Sarah, one of our leaders, showed us how to set up our 2 person A-frame tent. I had never done this before and Sarah was enthusiastic because I was having this experience.

I wondered if my aging body would be comfortable during the night in a sleeping bag. But I was distracted from this thought as we all gathered around a camp fire. Sarah told us of the activities planned for the weekend, including a required preliminary tip test while aboard a kayak.

Then we introduced ourselves and told what we hoped to experience on this weekend. I told the group about my low vision and that my wish was to see the stars in a place where the lights of cities and suburbs don’t diminish the lights of the stars in the night sky. Our leader read us a story of the Ojibwa Indians, a tribe native to this area, and Benjamin Armstrong who advocated with them successfully in Washington D.C. This story transported me further from the cares and concerns of my life near Philadelphia. Before falling asleep I promised myself I would endure the dreaded tip test.

At breakfast I visited with other campers. I remember Diane and her daughter Jodi. Diane had just published her first book, Spirit Car, the story of her Dakota Indian ancestor. On my way home I found this book at a Minneapolis Airport book store and I enjoyed reading it.

Our guides then drove us to a spot where we could don our wet suits and launch our kayaks. After our tip test, we planned to kayak along the shore to explore sea caves, something I had never even heard of.

"Whoever is anxious about the tip test, stand over there.” Of course, this was me and two other honest campers. “All right, you’ll be first.” I was stunned but climbed aboard with the others and held my breath as the kayak was led into deeper water. The water was really cold – about 50 degrees. There we rocked our boat until it tipped over all the way, full circle and I popped out. I felt cold and wet, reached for our kayak, and was happy this initiation was over. I had survived!

After kayaking for about an hour, we came to the sea caves. These were breathtaking! They
seemed to go on and on forever. I saw layers of pink sandstone formations, some more than two stories high. There were arched openings in these formations through which the water of the lake swirled and echoed almost eerily as it splashed against the interior sandstone walls. We took our kayaks into some of the larger caves. The dark green clear water and the green pines atop the sandstone bluffs mirrored and framed these beautiful pictures. We enjoyed the detailed descriptions of the scenery that the guides gave us.

The next day we kayaked from a different launching place and explored wrecked ships, one along the shore, the other still submerged about 100 feet from the shore in the lake’s clear waters. We learned about the history of these disasters and about early trade and settlements on the lake and the Apostle Islands.

After a picnic lunch on a small beach we started back hoping to visit one of the islands. The waves grew higher and stronger and about thirty sailboats appeared behind us as sailors took advantage of the change in weather. Sarah checked her weather radio and decided that we all should head for shore.

Safely on shore, we voted to hike through the woods. Our destination was a bridge formed out of sandstone across one of the sea caves. Other hikers in our group thoughtfully alerted me to changes in the rough terrain some of which were obscured by shadows cast by leaves and branches. All of us were so hot after this two hour plus hike that we took a dip in the cool waters of the lake—a great substitute for a much needed but not available shower.

On our last day, we kayaked through a bog—very shallow water where wild rice and wild iris grew and a large turtle napped on a floating log. A spit of land separated the bog from the Lake. We kayaked into the lake where gentle waves welcomed us. Again on a small beach we stopped for lunch—wraps filled with a cream cheese avocado blend topped with salsa. Food is always good after exercising out of doors.

I knew our time was ending and I would have to say “Goodbye” to those with whom I shared this special experience. Beth, a librarian from a state university and a more experienced camper, took a moment to call my attention to a pitcher plant I would have missed because I don’t see details well.

This was a weekend of quiet, active, camaraderie. I felt very relaxed. The sights, especially the sea caves, are nature in large print. I had to use faith when people told me about the turtle on the log and the wild irises. That turtle probably didn’t want to be seen because he didn’t provide me with enough visual contrast between himself and that log. I touched the pitcher plant and got an up-close look. I was always glad to come back to shore after several hours of kayaking. It was a good kind of tiredness.
I am grateful that there is an organization like Wilderness Inquiry. One of our guides, Andrea, said she had helped a camper with MS feel comfortable on this same trip earlier this season. Our guides were well trained. Sarah is a biologist who really loves this area and wanted others to appreciate its beauty as she does. I never sat in the back of our 3 person kayaks because the person in that position steers the boat. I do not see well enough to find the landing place, so I let people with better vision do that. I was happy to lend my muscles to the task of moving our kayak through the waters, to be a part of the team. I felt like singing and I did. It feels good to remember this awesome little adventure.

To arrange a trip of your own, contact Wilderness Inquiry by phone at 800-728-0719, or visit their web site: www.wildernessinquiry.org

A Hiker’s Prayer
By Mike Vogl

Lord…Guide me as I travel this mysterious path called “life.” Teach me to be a rambler, one who finds enjoyment along the way, one who can enjoy the scenery along a detour, one who can adjust to Plan B.

Let me relish THIS moment on THIS trail. Let me not wish to be someplace else, or be anxious about what lies ahead. Give me a true friend, someone who will walk side by side with me, instead of merely pointing the way.

Let the willow, dogwood and elder teach me to be flexible, to accept change, to spring back from heartaches.

Let the oak, the hickory, the beech remind me that there is no strength like gentleness.

Let me learn from the cedars, pines, and hemlocks the true meaning of hope; acceptance of who we are, where we are, and what we have is enough for us as creatures trusting of You.

Give me the courage to risk the unfamiliar fork in the trail if it might lead to a new discovery or to helping someone in need.

Give me perseverance to keep going when the trail seems ever uphill and never ending.

Teach me to listen! To the chirping frogs and to the chiming hermit thrush—but especially to the stories and songs behind the words of those who hike beside me.

Surprise me with a tumbling waterfall, melt me with velvet moss, take my breath away with dewy stillness.

Startle me with star flowers, thrill me with trillium, mesmerize me with marsh marigolds—let me always keep a sense of wonder.

Let me see Your sculpture in rocks, Your painting in sunsets, Your music in birdsongs, Your poetry in wildflowers, Your wisdom in all of creation.

Amen
(Editor’s Note: Sharon Togi is a voting delegate to the American National Standard’s Institute. In this capacity she writes the standards for signage that get adopted. She is also a member of the Access Advisory Committee of the California State Building Standards Commission.)

When you enter a public facility, you should be able to read at least some of the most important signs. Since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1992, the federal government has issued general guidelines for accessible signs. Some states have more detailed rules for signs, and it is expected that the federal government may soon issue more detailed guidelines as well.

Sign designers and sign companies need guidelines so that the signs they produce can actually be read. Here are some useful guidelines.

--Use non-glare materials for the portion of the sign that has the message. Shiny backgrounds and letters prevent access, but it’s OK to use shiny materials for the frames or decorations on the signs.

--Use high contrast between the sign message and the background. High contrast means dark on light colors or light on dark colors.

--Use letters, numbers and symbols that are large enough to read from where you need to read the sign. For instance, if a sign is 10 feet behind a counter, it needs to be larger than a sign that you can go right up to. Overhead signs or signs very high on walls have to have at least 3 inch high letters.

--The style of the letters can’t be decorative. No curlicues, for instance. Type doesn’t have to be absolutely plain, but it needs to have clear letter shapes that are easy to read.

--Install signs adjacent to doors on the latch side, not on doors. People who are up close to read a sign on a door might be pushed over when someone else opens that door.

--Install signs at eye level for the average standing adult.

One reason that the ADA guidelines for signs have not been followed by many businesses and government agencies is that people who are visually impaired haven’t complained about the lack of readable signs. That’s partly because many people have not known that they are entitled to have access to signs. They don’t realize how much it would help them to get around buildings independently. You can use these guidelines to help businesses critique their signs.

When you go into a building, especially a building built or
remodeled since 1992, notice the signs. If there is a sign mounted next to a door, then you should be able to read at least some of the information on that sign. When you go to the restroom in a restaurant, check for a sign next to the door. You shouldn’t have to ask which restroom to use. When you use an elevator, make sure the buttons have raised numbers and that you can read the floor level signs on the door jambs as you leave the elevator.

If you don’t find these kinds of signs, try to find someone in charge and tell them about the lack of accessible signs. Tell them you’ll be back in a couple of months to see if they have improved the signs. If possible write a letter to the management of the building. Follow up! There are no “ADA sign police” so it’s up to you to insist on your rights under the law.

Also complement the managers of buildings in which signs are accessible!

Pat Beattie Advocates for Pedestrian Safety

Last autumn, Patricia Beattie, Past President of CCLVI and current chair of ACB’s Environmental Access Committee was invited to a session convened by the Department of Transportation, DOT, for the state of Maryland. Pat was chosen because of the work she has done both on behalf of CCLVI and ACB regarding pedestrian safety issues. At this meeting participants formed 12 teams, each with one member who was either blind or visually impaired. Other team members were orientation and mobility instructors and traffic safety officers. Each team was to evaluate and make recommendations concerning 12 different configurations offered by manufacturers of construction site barrier equipment. These manufactures wanted to know “What works,” “What doesn’t work,” and “Why.”

Pat Beattie writes about her experiences at this event: “This was a great opportunity to work with industry and state and federal government officials to find solutions that will ensure the safety of pedestrians who are visually impaired when they encounter a sidewalk detour around a construction zone. It is getting in on the ground floor so that the resulting federal and state regulations will effectively meet pedestrians’ needs. Devices ranged from talking signs to barriers which attempted to channel pedestrians into the detour route. Such barriers provide constant feedback through the cane and hand rail trailing. Route options should not be confusing to guide dog handlers.

One major issue on which I gave much feedback was how pedestrians can know which side of the barrier to choose as the proposed route; often the "wrong"
side is not barricaded to allow
construction vehicles and workers
to have access behind the barrier. Some of us who may not be able
to read signs have a knack for
selecting the wrong side of a
fence or other barrier when there
appear to be two options.

“There also were some
eamples of underfoot detectable
warning surfaces in various
colors - red and black as well as
the more familiar yellow. Officials
wanted to know which seemed to
be the most detectable for
pedestrians with low vision.
Research has shown that yellow
seems to work best for most
people with low vision, but that
contrast with the surrounding
surface is a critical component.”

Pat Beattie also noted an
important decision issued by the
U.S. DOT to the state of Maryland.
This decision is that if that state’s
DOT fails to consider a request by
a citizen who is visually impaired
for an audible traffic signal at a
particular intersection, the state
may be in violation of the
Americans with Disabilities Act. In
this respect Maryland may be a
model for other states.

If you have questions about
these matters, contact Barbara
Milleville or Patricia Beattie by
calling CCLVI at 800-733-2258.

Advocate’s Alley
By Ken Stewart
Helping the Helpers

As a part of the increased
attention to homeland security,
many local governments across
the country are organizing
"Community Emergency
Response Teams", CERT.

I signed up for the CERT
training offered by New York City
government more than a year ago.
I attended the first four or five
weekly sessions and then
dropped out, having
accomplished my goals of
assessing the curriculum and
giving input. The experience
confirmed my expectation that the
training was short on material
about how to provide emergency
aid to people with disabilities.

The input I offered to the
trainers, all employees of the Fire
Department, reflected the ideas of
many in the vision impaired
community, and was expressed
through an acronym- "I-POD." In
this acronym “I” represents
identify yourself ("I am a police
officer"). P is for personalize your
communications where there are
several potential audiences
("Ma'am, in the blue jacket with
the white cane"). O is for offer
help, don't simply impose it. D is
for describe rather than prescribe
("Fire hose across the floor here",
not "Watch out!" or "Be careful
here!")

Very recently I had another
opportunity to reinforce our
message using “I-POD.” I was
telephoned by someone inviting
me to take the training. I
summarized for him my previous
participation, and my motivations
for doing so. His response was, "Oh, we have plenty of disabled people in the program." I challenged him to name some. He offered only one name, someone I know, someone who is... yes, you guessed it, a wheelchair user! The outcome of that telephonic sparring though, was his commitment to plug me into the program's high command, where I can assess if any of our early input has reached the training curriculum. And, here I will have an opportunity to offer further help to the helpers about how to be most helpful to people with vision impairments during a community emergency.

By sheer coincidence, later on the same day of that telephone discussion, I had another chance to share the "I-POD" advice. It was a meeting in the Manhattan Borough President's Office in which a representative of the City's Emergency Medical Technicians, ambulance crews, addressed a large and diverse group of people with disabilities. I asked her to identify for us, what specific disabilities training content is given to EMT's. She seemed puzzled to hear that there might be some information available pertinent to a specific disability. Her request for particulars allowed me to trot out "I-POD" once again. To her credit too, she was receptive to follow-up afterward toward one more opening to help the helpers help more effectively!

### Book Reviews

**Out of the Corner of My Eye,**
By Nicolette Pernot Ringgold

In this revised edition, *Out of the Corner of My Eye* remains a personal and compelling story of someone who lived successfully with macular degeneration and who shares her struggles and her triumphs with people who are coping with the condition now. Although the text of the original is essentially the same, so that Nicolette Pernot Ringgold still tells her inspiring story in her own words, each chapter contains a new section entitled "Living with Macular Degeneration Today." These new sections are written by Priscilla Rogers and Judy Scott of the American Foundation for the Blind Center on Vision Loss and by Esther Smith, a Board member at the Center, who adds her own recent experience with macular degeneration to provide important new insights for readers. The book's new sections present information on what has changed—and what hasn't—since Mrs. Ringgold adjusted to her own vision loss and on new techniques and products that are now available. The Resources section is completely new and
expanded, providing sources of
more detailed information and
assistance.

The cost of this book in

paperback is $24.95; online
edition or downloadable MP3 file
is $15.00.

http://www.afb.org/store

Aging and Vision Loss:
A Handbook for Families,
By Alberta Orr and Priscilla Rogers

As the number of older people
experiencing vision loss
continues to increase at an
exploding rate over the upcoming
years, all of us may find that a
family member or friend we care
about has become visually
impaired. Aging and Vision Loss
contains reassuring, supportive,
and helpful information on
meeting the needs of the older
person and family caregivers as
well.

Here you’ll find:
* Practical information on vision
loss
* Answers to common questions

and advice on dealing with a full
range of situations and
circumstances to which people
need to adjust
* Adaptive strategies for carrying
out everyday tasks and
participating in leisure activities
* Explanations of how any living
environment can be organized for
independent living
* A comprehensive resource list
$19.95; paperback, ASCII disk or
CD-ROM;
$12.00 online. Look for senior
discounts when ordering online.

Assistive Technology

Aids for Watching Television
By Bill G. Chapman, Ed. D.

Television has become a major
source of news in our society and
when you can’t see it, you feel lost
and deprived. There are three
ways the partially sighted can
overcome this problem. All three
involve use of various kinds of
magnification.

Approach Magnification:
Approach magnification is a
scientific fact about vision. The
closer you get to something, the
better you can see it. The ratio is:
When you cut in half the distance
between your eyes and the target,
you double what you can see.
This is true if you are talking
about inches or feet.

Children learn this principle
eyearly. They sit or lie two feet in
front of the TV set. You can do
this too, but I recommend that you
find a way to elevate the set so the
center of the screen is eye level. If
you have lost central vision, use
eccentric viewing. In other words
look at the upper right corner of
the TV cabinet instead of the
center of the screen. I met a man with very low vision who watched TV while lying on his back with a small TV set sitting on his chest. Get close.

Magnification:

Make the picture bigger by buying a large screen TV. You will still need to sit close. If you have lost central vision, you must also use eccentric viewing. My eyes are six feet from a 52 inch screen while using eccentric viewing.

Fifty years ago there was danger from radiation if you sat too close to a TV set. Modern TV sets are shielded and emit no radiation.

Telescopic Magnification:

If you can’t or won’t sit close, there is another way. Buy a pair of sport glasses (telescopes mounted in spectacle frames). I recommend the Selsi model 227, 2.5X (about $55.00) or the Selsi model 229 with plastic lenses, 2.8X, (about $40.00). The 227 is heavier and has better optics and more comfortable nose pads. The 229 is lighter and cheaper. These aids are great for screen sizes of about 25" or less. Because of their narrow field of view they are a liability when sitting close to a large screen. Use these sport glasses for TV, movies and stage plays but their power is too weak for sports like football.

These aids have an adjustment for pupillary distance. Loosen the plastic nut inside the frames that hold the telescope to the frame. Move the telescopes out or in until they center in front of your pupils, then tighten the nut.

The best way to use these glasses is to sit at a distance from the set where the field of view through the telescopes is the same size as the screen. If you have lost central vision, point the scopes at the screen, but fixate on the upper right area of what you see through the scopes. In other words, use eccentric viewing while looking through the scopes.

Both of these sport glasses are heavy. The 227 weighs 2.7 ounces. This is very heavy. Gradually learn to accommodate this much weight on your nose by taking them off during every commercial. After about a year of wearing them, you should be able to wear them through a two hour movie.

Source of Supply:

LS&S Products, P.O. Box 673, Northbrook, Il 60065, Phone: 1-800-468-4789. This company accepts major credit cards. The LS&S catalogue numbers for the 227 and 229 are GO-227C and GO-229.

These sport glasses are made by Selsi Optical Company, but they do not sell retail. Nonetheless you can see a picture of them online at www.selsioptics.com. Click on Low Vision Products, then scroll down to the third picture.

Zoom-Ex – Portable Scanner/Reader/Book Saver

ABISee, Inc. is proud to premiere the Zoom-Ex Portable Scanner, an innovative tool that makes it possible to turn any
computer into an accessible scanner and reader for blind users. With Zoom-Ex you can easily start and stop scanning or reading with a single key press. Faster than traditional flatbed scanners – it takes only 3-7 seconds from the time you start scanning to the time Zoom-Ex begins reading.

The durable but lightweight design of the Zoom-Ex Portable Scanner consists of a 2 1/2 inch digital camera on a specially designed stand, which also acts as a guide for lining up the book or document to be scanned.

Because of the unique camera and stand design, the camera is always at the exact distance needed to create a clear image, and a blind user will always know exactly where to place the material to be scanned.

The Zoom-Ex Portable Scanner can operate in either manual or automatic mode. When Zoom-Ex is in automatic mode it senses when a page has been turned, leaving the user’s hands free to easily turn the pages.

Because the Zoom-Ex scanner includes its own text-to-speech and OCR programs, and runs off any Windows-based computer or laptop, you can use it almost anywhere there is a computer to install the software on: in the classroom or library, at conferences and on vacation.

Product features include:

- Intuitive design makes it easy to position books and documents for scanning as the unique L-shaped design of the stand provides a guide for aligning materials.
- Recognizes and verbally identifies page formatting and design elements, including columns.
- Lightweight: complete tool weighs less than one pound.
- Fits in a standard backpack when folded: dimensions (folded) are 17 1/2 inches length 4 1/2 inches wide.
- Runs off of your USB - no additional power packs or batteries required.

The price of the Zoom-Ex Portable Reader is $2395. Contact ABISee at http://www.abisee.com, or 1-800-.681-5909

Zoom-Twix – Portable Scanner/Reader/CCTV

Zoom-Twix has two cameras:
1. Zoom-Ex still camera that scans the whole letter-size page instantly.
2. Video camera that rotates 360° horizontally and vertically. The user can switch from one camera to another with a single key stroke.

Zoom-Twix is only 2 lbs, folds up like a tripod and fits into your laptop bag.

Here is a list of the most important tasks that Zoom-Twix will enable visually impaired students to do:

--Use Zoom-Twix as world’s first instant text-to-speech – place a page under the camera, one click and the text is read to
you in a few seconds.
--Instantly scan and efficiently read complex texts such as newspapers and science textbooks on a computer screen. No need for an X-Y table, magnified lines are wrapped automatically and no longer run off the screen. Up to 40X magnification.
--Save documents as text for future reading or editing or save as images.
--Scan small print text and print it enlarged.
--Listen to text read aloud and view magnified graphics at the same time or see the pronounced word being highlighted while the text is being read to you.
--You can learn any of 8 foreign languages. Texts in Spanish, French, German, etc. will be formatted for you and converted to speech.
--Read whole page or read by paragraph, by sentence, back and forth or spell the word while listening to a book that is being read to you.
--Scan a whole book and create an e-book in minutes without destroying the book. Our patented motion detector allows scanning pages without pushing a button.
--Listen to a previously saved book, as a voice reads it for you; or see magnified formatted text on the screen using the same program with no additional devices.
--Use Zoom-Twix to view distant objects such as a blackboard in class, save snap-shots with one key stroke and use them later.
--Write under the Twix camera.
--Take Zoom-Twix around with your laptop anywhere you go, it needs neither power nor light source.
Zoom-Twix’s price is $3495. This includes both the device and software.
Contact ABISee at http://www.abisee.com, or 1-800-681-5909

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

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

Name___________________________________________________
Address_________________________________________________
City_________________ State _____ Zip Code _________________
Country ________Phone _________ E-Mail ____________________

Membership Status: I am:
___ New member. ___ Life member of CCLVI.
___ Renewing my membership. ___ Life member of ACB.

Visual Status: I am a:
___ person with low/no vision. ___ fully sighted person.

I wish to receive the CCLVI publication, Vision Access in:
___ Large print     ___ Cassette     ___ E-mail     ___ Do not send

Please send the American Council of the Blind Braille Forum in:
___ Large Print     ___ Cassette     ___ Computer Disk
___ E-mail     ___Braille     ___ Do Not Send

Dues Structure (Payable in up to three annual installments):
_____ Individual $15.00
_____ Organization or Agency $25.00
_____ Life Member $150.00

Payment Due:
$______ Annual Dues
$______ Life Membership Dues (full or installment)
$______ Additional Donations
$______ Total Amount

Make check or money order payable to “CCLVI” and send to
CCLVI Treasurer: For Office Use Only:
Mike Godino Date Paid:_____ Date of Dep______
104 Tilrose Avenue Check # _____$______ Cash______
Malverne, NY 11565-2024
Ph: 800-733-2258

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