**THE WHITE CANE BULLETIN**

**Florida Council of The Blind, Inc.**



**January – February 2016**

Articles for the White Cane Bulletin must be submitted to Greg Lindberg no later than the 15th of the month before it is published. Greg’s email is: glindberg@gmail.com

If you do not have access to a computer and email please find someone in your chapter to help you. We want to hear from anyone who wants to contribute to our newsletter, so if you cannot find a way to submit your article, call Greg at (727) 543-9807 and he will be glad to assist you.

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To remember the Florida Council of the Blind in your Last Will and Testament, you may include a special paragraph for that purpose in your Will or Trust. If your wishes are complex, please contact the FCB at 800-267-4448.

The FCB is a 501(c)(3) organization.

For other ways to support the Florida Council of the Blind, visit our Fundraising page found at [**www.fcb.org**](http://www.fcb.org).

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# ARE YOU MOVING? – Sally Benjamin

If you are moving please notify me of your new address so you will continue to receive your White Cane Bulletin. Also if you know of anyone interested in joining FCB and who would like to receive the White Cane Bulletin and the Braille Forum please contact me at: (850) 422-7752 or E-mail: floridacouncil@comcast.net

# WCB President's Message

# by: Jim Kracht

Is advocacy really worth it?

As I sit in the Miami International Airport preparing to fly to Lincoln Nebraska for the funeral of my very dear friend and longtime ACB supporter and member, I ask myself "Is advocacy really worth it?" What prompted this question is a couple of lines written in tribute to Steve Speicher by our immediate past President Paul Edwards. He wrote: "There were times in my life when I doubted if all the struggles to make things better were worth it. Steve was there to encourage, to constructively criticize and to make quiet and positive suggestions about things I could do."

As we start 2016, I think it's a good question to take a few minutes to reflect upon. So, what have we really gained by our advocacy efforts, especially in the most recent years?

1. The ADA: On a broader front, of course the adoption of the ADA and all that it means for individuals with disabilities is a perfect starting point. In 2015 we celebrated its 25th anniversary. It has been a real gain in so many ways.

2. Accessible websites: Hundreds or is it thousands of websites are now accessible. I can sit in the airport waiting for my plane and surf the web just like my sighted colleagues. The number of accessible websites increases regularly because of the ongoing advocacy efforts of individuals like yourselves.

3. Accessible phones: While sitting at the airport, I make and receive phone calls and have countless applications available to make my life easier and better. I do this on my fully accessible iPhone. I well remember the ACB resolutions and the ongoing conferences and advocacy efforts that occurred to make this all a reality.

4. Detectable currency: Last night I had to remove some cash in bills from a stack of currency to leave for payment of our cleaning lady. I got out the money identifier, did what needed to be done and thanked ACB and FCB for the ongoing efforts to make American currency identifiable by folks like us.

5. Para-transit: Para-transit has come a long way. When I was young, I lived in a California suburb where city buses and cabs were few if available at all. Now I live in a big city where public transportation is available. Detectable warning strips, bus stop announcements and audible signals all contribute to making public transportation more user friendly. Both my access to it and my independence are greatly enhanced by its availability and the existence of para-transit along with the newly emerging services from LYFT and UBER. They all help to make a more accessible environment.

6. Voting: Since 2004 I have been able to cast my ballot in Florida privately and independently. Soon casting that ballot will be verifiable as well. Thank you FCB and ACB.

7. Accessible prescription labels: This morning I went to my medicine cabinet for my daily meds and could read the braille labels on my prescription bottles by myself, without sighted assistance. I could have requested audio or large print labels if I preferred. Wow! Who would have thought this to be a reality 10 years ago?

8. Airport assistance: Obtaining assistance to get to the gate for my flight this morning made me stop and think about the results of the advocacy efforts that continue to be undertaken by ACB and its affiliates to improve the availability and quality of sighted assistance to help us traverse the concourses of our busy and ever growing airports. Giant strides have been made already, as illustrated by my being escorted to security by the airline check in person, and then, while there being teamed up with a sighted escort who helped me to and through security and on to my gate. We have come a long way.

9. Audio description: Now I can go to the theater and benefit from descriptive video, or turn on television connected to at least one provider's accessible settop cable box and watch what I choose on television — some of it even being audio described. It's progress and we are moving forward.

10. Use of service animals: Today I can travel the country with a service animal independently and freely. If not, as in Washington DC where cabs were routinely not picking up passengers with service animals, legal action can be initiated to force compliance with the law. Independent travel with dog guides is certainly much better than it used to be.

11. A more accessible environment: And don't forget things such as the braille, audio and raised letter signs, marked elevator buttons and floor numbers, braille menus, detectable warning strips, bus stop announcements, audible pedestrian signals, etc. These all contribute to making a friendlier, more accessible and more welcoming environment for those of us who benefit from these aids.

I could go on but I think the most important theme underlying this list of accomplishments is that individuals who are blind or visually impaired do have a voice in this country and yes, they are being heard. I am grateful for and appreciative of my involvement in FCB and ACB. Thank you for the role that each and every one of you play in advocating to improve the quality of life for all of us. Yes, Paul Edwards, advocacy is really worth it, and we are glad that you are such a strong, giving and caring member of FCB. Together we in FCB are here to encourage, to suggest, to assist and to promote each individual's advocacy efforts to make things better.

Thank you.

# FCB Awards 2016 Information

# by William Benjamin

This is a reminder that award nominations will soon be due. Each of us know one person who shines above all others in our organization. Please take time to consider a member that you recognize to be deserving of an award. Nominations for awards must be received by February 28, 2016.

# FCB Convention 2016

# by Sally Benjamin

Get ready for FCB Convention 2016 in Jacksonville! Our convention will be held May 12 to May 15, 2016.

Room rates are $89.00 a night and we will be at the Lexington Hotel & Conference Center Jacksonville Riverwalk Hotel 1515 Prudential Drive Jacksonville, Florida 32207.

The Convention Committee is working hard to bring you another one of our great conventions. So make plans and save your money so you can attend and have fun with all of us!

# Editor's Message

# by: Paul Edwards

All can heave a huge sigh of relief! My position as Editor of the WCB is only temporary. I am helping out while we seek a permanent editor for our newsletter. However, as editor, I get to write a message and many of you know that I can't resist jumping on my pedestal when I get the chance. Editor’s Post-script – Please join me in welcoming and thanking the new WCB Editor, Greg Lindburg. Greg brings enthusiasm, fresh perspective and youth to our magazine. I look forward to enjoying his contributions! More to come about Greg in our next edition.

I want to spend a few moments celebrating editors and writers. Sally Benjamin and the late and very much lamented Patti Land are the latest in a long history of people who have used their skills to make the White Cane Bulletin as great as it is. Cajoling authors, proofing articles, making the Bulletin look good and doing all of this to meet deadlines is no mean feat. If you don't believe me, try doing it for a few issues. My hat is off to all of our editors who have made our magazine as good and as regular as it is. And, as all of you know, our editors do not get paid!

I know there are lots of people who write for the Bulletin and I want to take a moment to thank them for their time and commitment. When you let us know about what's going on in your affiliates, you are helping our organization get new ideas. When you are writing about an issue that concerns you, you are educating us and making us think. Thank you! There is one writer who I want to particularly compliment, though. She appears in this issue and was kind enough to step in and take my temporary role for our last issue. Sila Miller is one of the most insightful and compassionate people I know. She has, over the past many years, produced portraits of people in FCB. Not only has she helped us to learn more about our fellow members through these "spotlights". She has also helped to define what an advocate is. She has written with verve and compassion about those she has chosen and has contributed immeasurably to our knowledge of our history and our leaders. Thank you, Sila, we are lucky to have your skill, your compassion and your commitment!

I only have to do this once, I think so I would also like to thank all the WCB readers for cutting me some slack with my first issue. You are all the best people I know!

Editor’s Post-script – Please join me in welcoming and thanking the new WCB Editor, Greg Lindburg. Greg brings enthusiasm, fresh perspective and youth to our magazine. I look forward to enjoying his contributions! More to come about Greg in our next edition.

# "Doing Something with the Blessings He's been Given"

# Paul Kurtz — In the Spotlight

# by: Sila Miller

Paul Harold Kurtz was born prematurely on March 29, 1952 in Jacksonville at the Naval Air Station hospital. He was a twin, weighing only one pound, 14 ounces and was blind, the cause of which wasn't known till some years later. His twin sister, Paula Carol passed away a number of days after childbirth. "It was undoubtedly traumatic for my parents to have had one child die and the other be blind for all intents and purposes from birth, but they determined that I would grow up normally and not in any way be sheltered from the normal bumps and bruises of childhood," says Paul. "Late in her life, my Mama laughingly told me," "Well, if I'd allowed you to do the things in this day and time that I did when you were a kid, I would have undoubtedly been reported to some government agency for abuse," he recalls. Paul Senior was a fireman and a contractor by profession and Carol, Paul Junior's mother was a homemaker for most of his childhood.

Paul's eye condition is Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) which causes abnormal blood vessel development in the retina of the eye. It can occur in infants born too early. Blood vessels of the retina begin to develop about 3 months into pregnancy and complete development at the time of normal birth. When premature birth occurs, the vessels may stop growing or grow abnormally from the retina into the back of the eye. The vessels are fragile. They can leak and cause bleeding in the eye. Sometimes scar tissue develops and pulls the retina loose from the inner surface of the eye, resulting in vision loss. Almost all babies born before 30 weeks or weighing fewer than 3 pounds at birth are screened for ROP.

After two years of daycare/kindergarten at River Side Presbyterian Kindergarten, Paul began public school in Jacksonville as one of the early mainstreaming pioneers. That was quite a busy day for the Kurtz family as Paul's little sister, Paulette was born on his first day of first grade. "My sister is a strong advocate for blind people and a very smart business lady," Paul proudly says. The Kurtzs recognized that young Paul missed out on certain things by non-attendance at the Florida School for the Blind in St. Augustine and later had him go through summer training programs to make up for some of the lacks, but they wanted him to have a normal at-home childhood and interact with sighted people, so he matriculated through the public school system. "I lived a rough and ready childhood, falling off of footbridges and out of trees, spilling some blood and getting sewed up in the process. But, I learned many valuable travel, mobility, and survival skills that I credit with helping me throughout my life. My Dad taught me to play sports of all types, slide down fire poles, and climb rocks to go fishing. My Mama taught me how to walk logs and train trestles," muses Paul.

Paul credits the Duval County resource teachers as well as many of his classroom teachers with his success through school. He learned Braille in first grade and learned to type beginning in second grade. Paul says, "Nobody's success is his/her own really, but reflects all of those people who have helped him/her throughout life."

Music has long been a passion with Paul. "My Dad wanted me to play guitar and my Mama wanted me to play piano so I learned a little guitar and took several years of piano instruction from a fellow blind student's mom. She taught us both by ear because the girl didn't know braille music. Next, I took lessons from the wife of the music theory teacher at Jacksonville, Mrs. Hoskins, who taught me Braille music and many classical parts of music that helped me right up through my college music theory training. Then one day, during a basketball game, I heard a Florida Gator cheer and I said, "what's that instrument?" I found out it was a trumpet and I said, "well I wanna play one of those." So in 7th grade, my parents rented me a trumpet and I started playing it in Junior High band."

Mr. Kurtz graduated with honors from Robert E. Lee High School in 1970, having won numerous awards for achievement, earned his Eagle Scout rank with many service and other achievements, and having been involved in student government and band in junior high. Everything wasn't a bed of roses, as Paul encountered discrimination in such areas as the high school band. But, his early life provided him an excellent launching pad for future endeavors.

Following high school, Paul attended Florida Southern College, earning a Bachelor's Degree in psychology with honors. He was active in the college band, performing as section lead and first trumpet in his senior year. Heavily involved in his social fraternity, Phi Sigma Kappa, he was also a "little brother" to the Alpha Gamma Delta Sorority. He participated as a member of student government in various capacities and was a member of the Omicron Delta Kappa academic fraternity, a member of Who's Who in Colleges and Universities, and rowed on the crew team. Despite having all these "irons in the fire", Paul met and fell in love with a fellow psychology student, Pamela Sue Clark. Following their Florida Southern experience, Mr. and Mrs. Kurtz attended graduate school at Florida State University (FSU), where both earned their Master's Degrees (Paul's in counseling, health, and rehabilitative services.)

Soon after marrying, Paul and Pam were blessed with their children, Paul H. Kurtz III, born September 26, 1978 and Mallory Anne Kurtz-Mercer, born May 7, 1982. Paul's pride rings loud when he talks about his kids. "Mallory works for Florida Family insurance. She goes out and collects delinquent debts. She's also the person in a lot of cases that has been planning their conferences—all with a high school education. Paul has a degree in advertising, but determined early on that he wasn't a nine to five office worker. He's done everything from installing hardwood flooring to computer repairs. He's the best "non-blind blind person" I know of," boasts Paul. "When I'm in a technical jam, I call him. Both these kids run their own life. If there's one thing that I've given them, maybe it's an independence of thought. Because it really bespeaks of confidence when you can ride your own road and enjoy it."

Paul's working life began with experiences in telephone crisis counseling at Florida Southern College and a stint as acting director of Disabled Student Services at FSU in 1976. Paul says, "That's one job I wish I had back, but at the time, I felt I didn't have full credentials to compete for the job and do it right." He returned home for a year in 1976, established a home with Pam, and obtained a rehabilitation instructor job at Independent Living for Adult Blind (ILAB) before briefly returning to FSU to complete his graduate studies.

In 1980, Paul took a grant position working for the Disabled Student Services program at Florida State College, then Florida Junior College as a counselor. In 1982, a big change came for Paul as his college grant position ran out and he was jobless with a wife and two young children. Prior to his position ending at the college, he'd put out over 200 followed up upon resumes to employers all over the country and had been interviewed for a variety of positions. However, despite all this effort and scoring highly on the federal Professional and Career Examination (PACE) Test, Paul was still without employment. One Friday morning, a call came from Dot DeCuers, then a senior staffing specialist and later employment superintendent for the Naval Air Station (NAS) asking him if he was still interested in a position at the Air Station. Of course he was! Ultimately, Paul was hired as a GS-9-LEVEL Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) counseling specialist, dealing with EEO and other employee complaints. This was a staff position under the commanding officer at the Naval Air Aviation Depot (now

Fleet Readiness Center) and offered him access to all parts of the facility. The position was a confidential one which required personnel knowledge, people skills, and the ability to work under stressful conditions, dealing with many aspects of peoples' lives.

Because he saw the potentiality of computers and their use by not only blind people but everyone within society, Paul had also begun pursuance of a degree in computer science in 1980 at Florida Junior College. He jokingly calls this his "baby degree" but it had a profound impact on the rest of his career. After serving on the captain's staff for 5 years, Mr. Kurtz was laterally transferred into a computer programmer position during the summer of 1987. He had earned his computer degree in 1985 and had used that knowledge in his EEO position to track complaints and different other personnel matters. With his transfer, he began life as a computer professional and went from being a programmer to a programmer/analyst and to a systems administrator over the next 19 years. This involved grade and pay raises through promotion and the obtaining of a top secret security clearance. Even during this 19-year period as a computer professional, Mr. Kurtz was asked, and found time to be chairman of the Captain's EEO advisory Committee, participate on and chair the Mayor's Disability Council for the city of Jacksonville, and act as chief negotiator for a major employee contract for a variety of types of federal employees at the Fleet Readiness Center.

After his retirement in 2006, Paul had planned to go to music school and follow his avocation as a trumpet player into a vocation as a musician and teacher. Unfortunately, Pam had a job threat so he obtained a computer instructor position at ILAB, (now VERC, Vision Education and Resource Center) at Florida State College. At the time, the facility had a need for JAWS instructors and Mr. Kurtz fit that bill and cleared a major backlog of students. "My year-plus of work there was very gratifying because many of the students obtained jobs subsequent to my training. The training was always job-oriented even for non-job seekers because that gave it purpose," says Paul.

Upon leaving VERC in 2008, Paul pursued a semester of schooling in music at Jacksonville University which put him only two semesters from finishing a second Bachelor's Degree in music education. "Throughout my other career paths, I pursued advanced music training in theory and composition, history, ear training, and of course, in college-level trumpet training. I've pieced together my music education. I'm either crazy, persistent, interested, committed, or maybe a combination of all," chuckles Paul. "I would still like to complete that segment of my education, but at this point, I'm simply playing lead trumpet in two community concert band volunteer service groups, in a combo, for church, and teaching some trumpet lessons."

A welcome addition this summer was Paul and Pam's first grandchild, Brinley Belle Mercer. Paul says "She has the lungs of a trumpet player and knows how to use them when she's hungry or needs her diapers changed."

"Now, this could give everybody in FCB a lot of hope," says Paul, responding to my question about how he'd first learned of FCB. "Mike Taylor knew some of the guys I worked with at NAS. He and Donnagene Knutsen first contacted me back in 1983 or so and we went to lunch. At that time, I might have had the interest but simply just did not have the time—one kid around 4 and one just outa the hopper, fulltime employed, taking classes, and playing trumpet. Then once I retired and had a little more time to devote to it, Mike talked to me again. I told him before I'd run for any office, I wanted to learn about the organization—how it worked inside and out. And that's what I did. I mean, it's fascinating how long it took for that seed to germinate, only because I was doing other things and just didn't have the time. We're worried about getting older and no participation—our job is to plant the seed and go back and check on it once in a while," concludes Paul. Currently serving his second term as Clay Council of the Blind's President, Paul first held the office of Vice President for his local chapter beginning in 2008. "You've got to enjoy your people," he says, referencing a verse found in 2nd Corinthians that goes something like, "comparing themselves among themselves, they became foolish." "We need to enjoy each other for what we are, not what we aren't. I heard it put best this way, "Are you enjoying it or enduring it?"

With this heavy career and educational load, did Paul find time to do other things? Certainly. In his two local community band music groups, he's been president of one for an extended period and on the Board of Directors for the other. He's presently serving as Treasurer of Coalition for Concerns of the Totally Blind (CCTB), a position he finds very rewarding and because of his great belief in books, he also serves on the Board of Friends of Library Access, Inc.

Back in 1976, Paul had considered switching to a music education career. However, the books weren't available for him to teach music from and brailling the massive exercises involved would have been a nightmare. At that point, he vowed that if he ever had the financial capability, he'd provide braille music books for trumpet players. Beginning in 1984 and continuing to the present, he's done just that. "I've provided method books from the most basic to the most advanced, in all genres of trumpet including symphony orchestral instruction, instruction in commercial, solo, and jazz playing. I've provided about 35 method books to date to the Library of Congress and am nowhere nearly done."

The Library has now taken all of those books and put them on BARD for free download as well as having them available in hard-copy braille. "There will never be a time that a person wants to teach trumpet or practice in any genre of trumpet playing where they won't have method books available," Paul declares. "Recently, I've started on a personal project to put every single band, solo, brass and any other piece of music I've personally brailled over the last 40 plus years into a braille file, using a Braille Note Apex. I intend to offer these to any blind person who needs a part. It's better for a person to spend their time practicing and studying, rather than having to sit and hand-braille a piece with a person reading it. As I do new pieces for myself in my band groups, I'm putting those in braille file format as well so they can be used. It's as simple as sending a person a file attachment. Producing all the music is a massive operation and full of drudgery, but worth it to those who will benefit."

Mr. Kurtz is heavily involved in his church, Christian Family Fellowship, in Jacksonville and feels his church has provided the foundation and the stable launch pad for all of his other social endeavors. He leads the Men's' Ministry program, plays trumpet, sings in the church choir, and is on the church's advisory council. "I stole a saying a long time ago that applies to all of my activities, "The first part of success is showing up!""

In summation of his life, Paul says, "Things start with God and His ways, love of God and love of neighbor. Then, they come to your family, and then your friends, and a desire to help them. That spreads to your job and the many activities you can be involved in including Florida Council of the Blind activities. Since the first part of success is showing up, the second has to follow once you get there and that's doing something once you show up. Then, if you do all you can at that point, you've done enough."

Paul concludes, "If there's one thing I'd like to complete that I've not done, it's to finish my music education while continuing to serve where I'm serving in the things I do. I'm a man who's been extremely blessed, but I've tried to do something with the blessings I've been given."

Christian, husband, father, friend, advocate, musician, and on the list goes. I'd say he's indeed "done something with the blessings he's been given". He graciously set aside a Friday evening for our interview and we covered much more than the limited space here permits me to write about—everything from people with disabilities and women serving in the military to healthy debating and disagreement, to health. The discussion was very interesting and appreciated and yes, went way past the hour I'd promised was all I'd take. Paul welcomes contact and may be reached by phone at (904) 388-1192 or by e-mail at phktrumpet@gmail.com.

# The Florida Council of the Blind

# Annual Blind Fishing Tournament

The Florida Council of the Blind is proud to announce its second annual Blind Fishing Tournament to be held on Saturday, March 19, 2016. It is based out of the Cape Coral Yacht Club located at 5819 Driftwood Parkway in Cape Coral, Florida 33904. This is actually the 5th year for this unique fishing tournament!

The Cape Coral Yacht Club's Beach Pavilion is the place where we will declare the winners, present the prizes and where all will sit down to a good, old-fashioned Florida cookout after the boats come in. We'll also have music, dancing, raffles and a whole bunch of "Fish Tales" too. You know, "The big one that got away"! Story of my life? LOL!

This year's tournament promises to be a great one. There will be up to 50 three person teams provided we can come up with enough Volunteer Captains this time around. With each team consisting of a volunteer sighted captain (with boat), a sighted mate to assist the angler, and of course, the blind angler.

For 2016 we're taking it Nationwide! We'll be hoping to attract blind anglers from all across the United States!

It will be an inshore slam with the biggest single legal keeper fish caught in each species by each team's blind angler. The species are Snook, Redfish and Sea Trout! Total bag weight is what counts! All teams will leave in their boats from the Yacht Club at 8:00 AM. They will fish the official tournament fishing grounds until 2:00 pm, when they must arrive back at the docks. (In the event of a tie, the first boat in wins.) The fish from each team will be measured and weighed, with the results recorded. The FCB is hoping to set the total number of teams at 50. So we might need up to 50 blind anglers. But if we end up not getting enough Volunteer Captains, we'll have to limit the number of blind anglers. We should get a better handle on this as time goes by.

Last year's winner of the Florida Council of the Blind's 1st annual Blind Fishing Tournament was a local blind lady who belonged to the Southwest Florida Council of the Blind (the local chapter of the FCB). Miss Debbie Tenbusch took home the $500.00 grand prize plus a special Hooters card good for free Hooters wings for one year. Cool, right? Now this is what it's all about! Helping blind folks get out on the water and have a chance to fish. Even if you don't even get a bite, it is truly worth the feeling of empowerment that you will catch.

I am now just getting a lot of things together for this year's tournament. I am quite hopeful that we will gain some major sponsorship. I would ask anyone that can help me in attracting any sponsorship for this unique fishing tournament to please contact me.

I would also now like to invite any blind fisher-people who think they would like to compete in this tournament, to please contact me for more info or to ask any questions. All my contact info is listed at the bottom of this flyer.

So here are the tournament particulars:

Blind angler registration will officially open sometime around the second week of February. That being Monday

February 15, 2016.

Note: I will give last year's tournament's blind anglers a one week head start notice to register. This notice will go out to those blind anglers who fished in the last tournament—sometime around February first. Hey, it's only fair! Right?

I hope this year to once again get the Talking Book Library of Florida to send out a print mailer announcing the opening of Blind Angler registration. It should be in everyone's mail box by Monday, February 15th, the registration's official opening date. Keep an eye out for it.

I will then post an additional official Blind angler registration opening notice on the FCB-L list serve on Monday, February 15, 2016.

The cost to enter this blind fishing tournament is $25.00 for the blind angler. If you bring your own sighted mate to assist you, they will also be charged the $25.00 entry fee. If you do not have your own sighted mate, one will be provided for you, free of charge.

When you mail in your check made out for the $25.00 entry fee, it Must be made out to FCB and received by March 1, 2016. Please include your name, address, your cell phone number and your T-Shirt size, as all team participants will receive a free tournament T-Shirt! Please mail all checks to:

FCB C/O Mike Ulrich

4642 Coronado Pkwy. A-101

Cape Coral, FL 33904

All team participants will need a state of Florida Saltwater fishing license. If you are 65 and over, you do not need a fishing license. If you are under 65 you will need a state of Florida saltwater fishing license. If you are blind you can obtain a free Florida Disabled fishing license. But this takes time. There are several forms needed to get one. I also can direct you to a link to go online and apply for one. Just contact me for more info.

You can simply purchase a Saltwater fishing license at one of your local area providers such as a Walmart sporting goods department, or your local bait and tackle shop.

All blind anglers are allowed, and encouraged, to fish with their own equipment. But if you do not own your own rod and reel, and tackle, this will be provided by your volunteer captain.

As in last year's tournament, I will most likely provide some live shrimp for every team again this year, if possible.

All team members are encouraged to bring with them on the boats: Sun Screen, a hat or some kind of sun protection, some kind of breakfast food or snacks. You won't be provided with any food until we all sit down for the cookout at 3:00 pm. So be prepared.

I will most likely provide free coffee and doughnuts on the morning of the tournament but it's not certain. Keep your fingers crossed!

If anyone has any questions, please contact me:

Mike Ulrich

Home phone: 239-540-7431

Cell phone: 239-565-5845

Email: mulrich@centurylink.net

OK so here's the part where I would usually tell you how being able to go out and fish by myself has given me back a part of my sighted life I thought not possible. How going out fishing has given me a great feeling of independence. How I still have my Bass Pro Shops pull behind fishing cart. How it is always loaded with 3 rods, a gaff, my tackle bag, my 5 gallon live bait bucket with aerator, my cooler with enough food and drink for the day, and that I either pull it, or load it up on the para transit bus and go fishing by myself! But most of you have already heard all that, but have you actually tried to do that? How many of you blind folks just want to go fishing?

Well, there's absolutely no excuse now! If you really want to go fish, give me a call and I'll give you all the info on this tournament. Now I won't guarantee that you'll catch fish (this is why they call it fishing, ain't it). But I will absolutely, hands down guarantee you will have a great time!

See you out on the water!......... Mike

Michael D. Ulrich

Just an ordinary average blind guy!

Fundraising Committee Member

Florida Council of the Blind

"Providing Insight for Blindness"

# CAREERS & TRAVEL; DO WE FEAR?

# by: Paul Kurtz

As a blind professional who has pursued three career tracks, counseling, computer science, and music, I have had to do my share of travelling both inside and outside the United States. After returning from a trip to Philadelphia where I had a complicated exit due to weather, I rethought a promise I'd made to put down some thoughts regarding a trip I made to Thailand in 2005 and decided to add some other thoughts to it.

My trip to Bangkok, Thailand was made for the purpose of attending an International Trumpet Guild (ITG) conference. I flew from northeast Florida through Atlanta, GA, to Japan, and then to Bangkok. The trip took about 21 hours, went up across Canada, and around the North Pole. I didn't know this until after I reached Japan.

This trip was interesting in that my family members who normally don't worry about anything I do made comments showing me they were worried about this particular trip. They'd seen television reports about crime and kidnappings as well as drugs being passed through Bangkok and were sure that I could easily disappear while there. Me? I simply took my normal precautions, securing my finances, transportation and hotel reservations ahead of time. And, as always, I asked questions about where I was going, what to see, and any problem areas that might come up. Most importantly, I expected to have a good time. I had had work issues previously with people having fears about me travelling, but this was the first for my family.

Because I slept a great deal on the trip over, I had no jet lag and was ready to do some sight-seeing the next morning after arrival. The hotel secured a guide for me who spoke some English and off I went. I got to see the temple outside the king's palace, with shoes off, the outside part of the palace, the King's Craft Works which I'd read about, and talked to a carpet maker who had very, very nice rugs for sale. I talked to a lady about jewelry that was taking care of three children who'd been orphaned by the recent tsunami on the coast. She is a wonderful example for all to follow. It is a Thai belief in general that if you do well to others, good will also come to you. The golden rule applies.

The conference was wonderful. The Grand Hotel had great Thai food and once the waitresses found that I love Thai food, they had me try many, many things. I'm not sure what all of them were but they were wonderful. The staff was helpful but not intrusive. A man named Prassett Pishayasoonthorne had been my initial contact via e-mail and I think he planned very well.

Think of this, too. At the conference, in fairly close proximity to each other, you had a jazz player from Japan, mouthpiece maker from Taiwan, young peoples' concert band from mainland China, tremendous brass quintet called The Brandt Brass from Russia, Thai groups from Midol University, and conference participants from all over the area. Music brought us all together and everybody worked in peace. We had a wonderful concert at a naval auditorium on the river and the public was invited.

After the conference was concluded, I had the chance to see the Bangkok Zoo and a soccer game between elephants. I travelled more in the city and had some great food at a restaurant. I got a massage which made my fat body feel ten years younger. Because of flight schedules, I was able to spend eleven wonderful days in Bangkok. I flew back through Seoul, South Korea and New York.

I brought back a lifetime of memories of people and places and a wonderful tailored suit. But, more importantly, I brought back affirmation of some things I believed and still believe. First, we shouldn't be limited by fears of others. If we take good, common sense precautions, we can travel and enjoy it. Second, if we go into a trip ready to enjoy and learn about the people we meet and to be interested in them and their lives, we'll learn a great deal and enjoy it. Third, if we are willing to adapt in cases where there's not a safety, monetary, or life concern, we can make our trip enjoyable for those around us as we go. Fourth, if we go into a trip determined that those who serve us will enjoy it both through good gratuities since it's their livelihoods and through our cheerful enjoyment of them and what they have to show us, we'll get more good things than we bargained for. Fifth, although there are security concerns that didn't exist thirty or forty years ago, our good relations with the people we deal with on trips will steer us clear of any problems.

I'd go back to Bangkok in a heartbeat if opportunity presented itself. I had a ball. Having travelled to the Caribbean, Mexico, Canada, and Thailand, I know that we blind people can be well-travelled and have a ball doing so. I did and you can, too!

# News from the Greater Orlando Chapter

# by Martha James

The members of the GOCB wish all of you a very Happy New Year as we start 2016. Here are the results from our election of officers for the upcoming year:

President: Charles Brooks

1st Vice President: Martha James

2nd Vice President: Dan Spoone

Recording Secretary: Mattie Hickson

Treasurer: Sheila Young

Membership Secretary: Dawn Brooks

Congratulations to all officers elected!

Thanks so much to all who have joined our organization and those who continue to support our efforts. Our annual jewelry party was held on December 12, at the home of Gary Sinclair. We would like to thank him for opening his home for this wonderful event. Thanks to Paul and Patty Odham for bringing such a great selection of jewelry.

To wrap up the year, our chapter held our Christmas luncheon on December 5th at Red Lobster. A donation was given to two vision students at Princeton Elementary School to help brighten their Christmas. Thanks to all of our members and friends who joined us at these events.

There is plenty of work ahead for our chapter in the coming year, as we prepare for the Cite and Soul walk on March 5th. The annual trivia night will be held on April 9th. We invite anyone interested in participating to join us for a fun night.

In addition, for those with computer access, GOCB is on both Facebook and Twitter. You can find us on Facebook by typing "GOCB" and follow us on Twitter@GOCB\_FL. GOCB invites all readers of this newsletter to like and follow us on these social networks.

**(Editor's Note: We did not receive the earlier Sarasota report so we are including both updates.)**

# Sarasota Council of the Blind Updates

# by Karen Christie

Our September Council of the Blind meeting was held on Monday, the 14th, at Denny's restaurant. Though many of our members were still away on vacation, we did have a good turnout. It was wonderful getting to visit with everyone again, as our last business meeting was in May, and many of us hadn't seen each other since then.

Our speaker during the September meeting was Ellen Hillstrom, president of the Venice Chapter. Mrs. Hillstrom told us a bit about her own background. She told how she didn't want to admit at first that she was losing her vision, but once she became part of the Venice council, it seems to me like she feels comfortable knowing that she is among peers facing the same vision issues. Her cheerful personality helped make it an uplifting meeting.

Unfortunately, another one of our council's members passed away recently. Lucy Koch lost her battle with lung cancer on August 9. Lucy loved to have fun, and we will all fondly remember her and miss her strong French accent.

It is now October, and this has been a particularly busy month for our group. As we all know, October is White Cane Awareness Month, so on Saturday, October 10, some of our council's members worked at the SCB booth at the local Farmers' Market. There, they distributed brochures and sold T-shirts and safety lights to those who were interested in supporting our group. Our council webmaster, Andrew Sanchez, was there from eight to twelve taking pictures. Perhaps one of the highlights of this event was that Raqi Gomez, our recording secretary, brought her brailler with her. If people wanted to have their names written in braille, Raqi brailled their names onto bookmarks that were handed out. These bookmarks were special, since the White Cane Law was written on them in print, and they also showed a picture of a white cane. A good turnout of people stopped by the booth.

On Wednesday, October 14th, our group celebrated White Cane Day. Our members gathered in downtown Sarasota at the 5 Points intersection. A demonstration took place where Mayor Shaw wore special glasses that simulated poor vision conditions such as macular degeneration, and had the opportunity to walk with a white cane, crossing the five intersecting streets. There, Mayor Shaw read the White Cane Safety Day proclamation. In addition to the mayor, twenty-two people, including council members and employees of the Manasota Lighthouse, turned out for the event, which the mayor declared to be an "eye-opening" experience.

On Thursday, October 15th, four members of the Sarasota Council of the Blind attended the Venice White Cane Day breakfast at the Burgundy Square Café. At the breakfast, there was a reading of the history of the White Cane Safety Day Law.

On October 17th, some members from our council attended the Sun Fiesta Festival in Venice. This was a craft fair which also included food and a parade. Since the Venice chapter of the FCB was manning a booth there, the Sarasota council helped them out this year. Our chapter passed out literature as they had at the Sarasota farmers' market, but there, they also had bookmarks with the braille alphabet on them. Many people stopped by the booth, and people young and old were intrigued by the braille bookmarks.

Reading this month's column demonstrates that this has indeed been a busy time for our Council!

Information and updates on the Sarasota Council are now available on our new website, created by our webmaster, Andrew Sanchez. The URL is www.SarasotaBlind.org, and our twitter "handle" is @FCBSarasota.

In closing, I would just like to express condolences from our council in memory of Patti Land. It was evident through each issue of the White Cane Bulletin that she took great pride in her job as editor. Our hearts go out to her family and friends.

# Sarasota Council of the Blind Updates II

# by Karen Christie

Our November meeting for the Sarasota Council of the Blind was held on Monday, November 9th.

Sadly, we learned that Sherrill Cleland, one of our group's members, had passed away on October 26th at the age of 91. His obituary was read at the meeting, and, although we were saddened by his passing, we were inspired by hearing of the numerous accomplishments and achievements he had attained during his lifetime. Sherrill was a World War II veteran who had been awarded both the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart for his service to our country. He earned both his Master's degree and a PhD at Princeton University, and, among other positions, Sherrill was President of Marietta College during the 1970s and 80s. In his later years, as a member of our group, he brought a sense of strength and wisdom to our chapter. He will be greatly missed.

We elected officers for 2016. Remaining in their prior elected positions are:

 President — Richard Wilkinson

 First Vice President — Elliot Benowitz

 Second Vice President — Ruth Book

 Treasurer — Arlene Harris

 Membership Secretary — Virginia Rempelakis

 and Recording Secretary — Raquel Gomez.

Additionally, Rick Wilkinson gave his report after having attended the Mid-Year Board meeting in Jacksonville in October.

In other business, it was learned that the always-enjoyed Council Holiday Party would once again be held at Lake House West on Monday, December 14 from noon to 2 PM.

As I finish writing this, I have just returned from attending the Council Christmas party/luncheon at Lake House West. A special thanks goes out to our member Ruth Book, who resides at the Lake House and helps make this event happen each year. It's a perfect way to celebrate the season with friends while enjoying a delicious meal in beautifully-decorated surroundings.

On behalf of our Council Chapter, we wish you all a Happy and Healthy New Year!

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# Handy Telephone Number References

Project Insight: (800) 267-4448

Bureau of Braille & Talking Book Library: (800) 226-6075

Division of Blind Services, State Office: (800) 342-1828

American Council of The Blind: (800) 424-8666

 (Available 3:00 to 5:30 P.M. EST Monday-Friday only)

ACB Legislative Hotline: (800) 424-8666

(Available evenings 8:00 P.M. to 12:00 Midnight EST and weekends 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. only)

AT&T Disability Services: (800) 872-3883

 Press 00 and speak with your long distance carrier,

 or Florida only: (800)982-2891

BellSouth Disability Services: (800) 982-2891

 (From anywhere)

Social Security: (800) 772-1213

 (24-hour voice and touch tone accessible

- THE END -

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