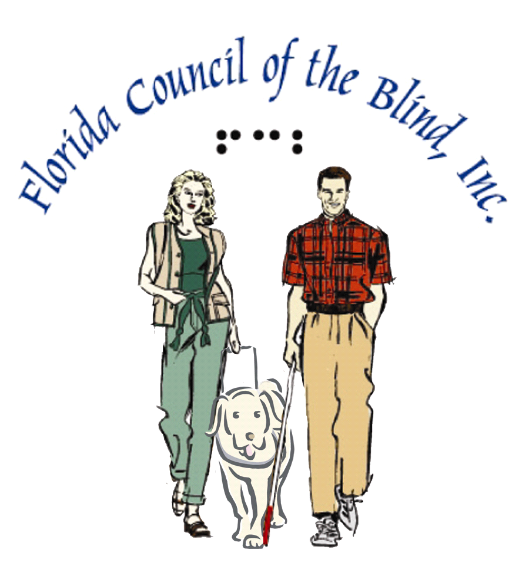
**THE WHITE CANE BULLETIN  
  
Florida Council of The Blind, Inc.**



**March – April 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](mailto: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](tel:%28727%29%20543-9807), and he will be glad to assist you.  
  
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## Letter from the President

## March 2016

## Looking Toward the Future

Good day, FCB members and friends:

It is hard to believe that 2 years ago, I was elected to serve FCB as its president. When I announced that I would seek the Presidency of FCB, I made it clear to the group that I was only seeking office for a 2-year term.

This 2-year term will expire this May. We have accomplished a lot, but there is still much to do.

Along the way, we have helped Florida vendors keep their vending machines, invested considerable energy in and received some great results in accessible voting, pushed forward on accessible prescription labeling, and worked with the accessibility of Publix and other websites. Internally, FCB has dealt with some significant internal issues, including replacing our CPA who passed away last year, selected a new WCB Editor, and we handled some challenging local chapter issues as well. We have seen a new chapter join the organization. We have also done some successful fundraising events, including the Florida Hurricanes team breaking records in raising money for the ACB Brenda Dillon Walk last summer, and our newest fundraising event – the Blind Bunny Ball Drop, which will take place at the end of March. We have significantly rewritten parts of our Policy Manual, and in compliance with the recently enacted requirements of state law, FCB has adopted a comprehensive conflict of interest policy. It’s been a busy and a full 2 years. Our success can only be attributed to the advocacy of you – our members, our actively involved and hardworking committees, and our Board and Executive Committee have given me tremendous efforts, support, assistance, and encouragement throughout my term. To all of you, I express my sincere appreciation and gratitude.

After careful reflection, and with my family's continued indulgence, support, and help, I will again run for the President's office of FCB in May 2016. I thank all of you for the opportunity to serve, and I hope I can count on the support of each and every one of you in the May election, and, if elected, throughout my next term as FCB's President. There is much work to do, and together I believe we can continue working to improve the quality of life for Floridians who are blind or have low vision.

Thank you.

Jim Kracht, President

**Jim Kracht’s Election Message  
March 2016  
Yes, we are all advocates!**

In my last column, I highlighted changes in our environment and work place that are the direct result of advocacy accomplishments; many of which FCB members played a direct part in achieving. Because of these changes, things are much better for people with disabilities than they were 25 years ago.

When I was asked to participate in an advocacy presentation at the upcoming President's meeting in Alexandria VA this month, I asked myself, ‘Who really are the advocates?’ Yes, each and everyone of us is an advocate, and we have been successfully advocating since we pleaded for our first diaper change or bottle of milk. It follows that each and everyone of us can and must take part to advocate in the ongoing battle for change to improve the quality of life for all of us.

As I write this column, I'm again preparing for my annual trip to Capitol Hill for the ACB legislative lobbying adventure. I remember the trepidation and angst I had last year – my first time – worried about meeting with Congressional aides to push ACB'S legislative imperatives. Yes, I have argued in this state's highest court, and lobbied State Senators and House members, city and county commissioners and the like, but I was still nervous and concerned. Would I say the right thing? Would I get "the ask" correct? Would I make an acceptable appearance? Yes, apprehension and nervousness are normal and natural. I submit, though, that the more you get out and face this situation, like others in your life, the easier it is and the more natural it becomes. Maybe it’s too practical and too "down to earth", but I submit that it’s fine, and its normal to be nervous.

The value and benefits of being prepared in my opinion cannot be overstated. Its necessary to cross the t's and dot the i's as you make ready for whatever your lobbying venture might be. Being prepared is invaluable. That means you know your subject, "your ask", and the reasons therefore.

Third, the only real way to solve concern or uncertainty that you might have in performing your advocacy mission is to just do it. Advocate, use your words to deliver your message, not those of someone else, be yourself, keep it simple and be prepared. Read or study beforehand. Know your issue and be comfortable with it before you set out in your advocacy role. Your audience may have questions. You can try to anticipate those, but if you can't answer them, don't be afraid to say, "I will have to look into that and get back to you with a phone call or an email later." It’s much better to do that than give out wrong information or guess.

Fourth, expression of gratitude is extremely important in the lobbying process. When you are leaving the meeting or teleconference, be sure to thank your audience for their time and attention to your issue. If you can follow that up with a written thank-you e-mail or letter, it is equally important. You can include your contact information again, and extend an offer to be available to get additional information or answer questions as they arise.

Finally, sometimes going alone increases one's trepidation and worry. If that's the case, take a partner. Its good to have company – you can encourage, support, and evaluate each other. A team approach really can be a lifesaver, especially for those who may be new to advocating for FCB and ACB issues.

Every issue is important, but not all of them can become FCB or ACB issues. Nevertheless, your issues are important, and they do matter. Talk about them with others, think about how you might propose and promote a solution, and be assured that you can advocate for change to meet your concerns, especially since you have been doing it since you were born.

Just the other day, I was in a meeting sitting next to a gentleman that has been coming to FCB chapter meetings for several years, but he has not been really active. He told me of a problem he has with a state-administered Department of Education test which is not being fairly or properly administered to blind and visually impaired students. Its a perfect issue for FCB, and it gave me an opportunity to strongly encourage him to both attend the upcoming convention and to contact the chair of our Resolutions Committee to work on drafting an FCB resolution to take before the membership addressing this unfair and inequitable situation. You never know when articulating an issue or concern might open the door for further action.

As I complete this article, the Convention Committee is busy putting finishing touches on arrangements at the convention hotel, the Convention Call, and the program. Hotel reservations can now be made. The Committee has a great Thursday night social and barbecue planned. Friday will be Committee and special interest presentations, workshops, and seminars followed by our annual Awards Dinner. Saturday morning will focus on a voting panel, and breakout sessions that will feature online banking from the Technology Committee, accessible labeling and bar code identifiers by Envision America, a membership committee discussion led by our visiting ACB Board member Sara Conrad on how to attract and keep younger members, and an update on the progress of Vanda Pharmaceutical in addressing the non-24-hour sleep disorder. Invitations have been extended for Saturday afternoon's Town Hall meeting. We then anticipate provocative sessions with some of our special interest affiliates.

In short, we are expecting a truly great, exciting and rewarding convention in Jacksonville, May 12th through May 15th. We invite you to come and join in and participate to make it even better.

Then, after all the fun and games, you can vote in the slate of officers that will be elected to lead FCB for the next 2 years. I am truly looking forward to seeing each of you in Jacksonville in May. I hope you can attend, but if you can't, we will do our best to stream as many presentations as possible.

Respectfully Submitted

Jim Kracht, President

**FCB Convention 2016**

**By Sally Benjamin**

The convention committee is working hard to bring you a great convention this year. Jim has shared some of the program with you, so now I want to update you on hotel information. If you are planning to attend the 2016 FCB convention in May, you must make your room reservations no later than April 12, 2016. The phone number to call is: 904-396-5100, and state that you are with the Florida Council of the Blind Convention. This year, the convention hotel is the Lexington Hotel & Conference Center Jacksonville Riverwalk Hotel located at 1515 Prudential Drive, Jacksonville, Florida, 32207. Room rates are $89.00 per night plus tax. This special rate includes breakfast. Please encourage your friends and chapter members about our great FCB Conventions and the wonderful memories they make for all of us. Reservations must be cancelled 72 hours in advance to avoid being charged one night’s room and tax.  
  
We hope to see you at the convention in May!

**Greg Lindberg (Man of Many Talents) in the Spotlight**

**By Sila Miller**

Hello FCB Members, friends, and White Cane Bulletin Readers. Meet Greg Lindberg, the new Editor of our White Cane Bulletin! It was my privilege to get to know Greg just a bit during our recent phone call. After much phone tag, he agreed to carve out a little time from his busy schedule for me. Thanks much, Greg! You are a delightful interviewee and a true rising star! I can’t wait to read the next edition of the WCB and look forward to getting to know this multi-talented but humble young man better!   
  
Born August 26, 1986 in Palm Harbor, Gregory John Lindberg is the youngest child of David and Marsha Lindberg. “Yep, I’m 29 years old now so I’ve got my ‘big 30’ coming this year, which I’m not looking forward to,” bemoans Greg. “Oh would you just shut up!” was my unpitying retort! And we laughed and were off to a great beginning!  
  
Greg’s dad, David Jr. is a physician, specializing in Internal Medicine. Marsha is a nurse with a passion for helping others. “Both my parents are very supportive. They’ve pushed me and helped me so much to get to where I am today,” says Greg. Greg grew up with an older brother, David III. “He’s given me guidance, both literally and figuratively throughout my life whenever I’ve needed it. We have a very close relationship. He was working in the corporate world for a few years and thought, ‘Y’know, this is not what I want to do—I don’t like this. I want to go into education—maybe teach.’ So he quit his job and went back to school. I give him a lot of credit for that. He’s currently obtaining his Ph.D. in Mathematics at the University of Florida,” Greg proudly says. “I can’t say enough about my family’s support and being there for me when I’ve needed them.” Greg is an animal lover. Lily, a 10-year-old ball of joy Maltese, completes the Lindberg family circle.  
  
Greg enjoyed a busy and challenging childhood, joining a bowling league when he was only six and beginning piano lessons around the same age. He played for several years, enjoying bluesy-jazz type pieces until it became “uncool” to play the piano, and his musical interest segued into guitar. “I kind of got out of it when I was in high school—thought it really wasn’t the most cool thing to play the piano,” Greg sheepishly confesses. “I kind of regret that in a way. But, then again, it has benefited me in learning the guitar and being able to really enjoy that now,” he reasons. Recently Greg performed in a few recitals, playing and singing such greats as “American Pie” by Don McLean, “Margaritaville” by Jimmy Buffett, and “Brown-Eyed Girl” by Van Morrison. He continues to be a bowling enthusiast, sometimes joining members of his Pinellas Council chapter for a game at a local bowling alley.  
  
Greg has partial sight—he describes as “kind of like tunnel vision – like looking through binoculars. I’m very fortunate. I know there are people out there with no vision. Mine’s pretty stable. I use a white cane for travel,” he explains. Greg was diagnosed about four years ago by a specialist at the University of Florida with Leber’s Congenital Amaurosis (LCA) following a battery of tests including genetic assessment with his parents. “I always thought I had Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP),” says Greg. LCA is a term given to a group of diseases caused by mutations or changes in one of a number of genes. These diseases are rare genetic eye conditions that appear at birth or in the first few months of life. The extent of vision loss varies from person to person, but it can be quite severe. The gene mutations lead to failure in function of the photoreceptor cells (rods and cone cells that receive light), ultimately causing cell degeneration. The extent of degeneration depends on the type of LCA. For some types of LCA, the vision (or lack of vision) remains stable. By early adolescence, various changes in the retinas of patients with LCA become readily apparent.  A variety of pigmentary (color) changes can also occur in the retinal pigment epithelium (RPE), the supportive tissue underlying the retina. Sometimes, pigmentary changes are similar to another retinal degenerative disease known as Retinitis Pigmentosa—likely the reason for Greg’s initial misdiagnosis. Symptoms of LCA include nystagmus (involuntary jerky rhythmic eye movement), photophobia (sensitivity to light) and slow pupillary response to light.  
  
Throughout school, Greg sat near the front of the class and some of his teachers would copy what was on the blackboard for him. “I had a vision teacher who would help me, as far as accommodations—getting large print textbooks. I remember having to go to Kinko’s and copy my own textbooks to make them large print—that was quite an adventure—probably exactly what copyright law is designed to prevent,” he chuckles. “But, that’s when I just had to do what I had to do!” Greg takes full advantage of the wealth of adaptive alternatives available. He uses an Acrobat Close-Circuit TV (CCTV) and a Mac laptop with speech and magnification. “I like to think I was born in the best time because of all the technology out there. It’s just really neat. And as far as my job goes, that’s just a breeze with the help of adaptive technology,” Greg states.  
  
Greg attended Palm Harbor University High School and graduated in 2005. He was involved with PHUHS’ Mu Alpha Theta organization, a group of math-minded students. Mu sponsors an annual math competition, and Greg did quite well in that area. “My brother, being a math whiz, kinda pushed me in that direction,” says Greg. “So we’d go to different math competitions, and here I am, more the writer type in this math club. That was kind of interesting. But I did fairly well—I don’t know if I ever won any trophies but it was a nice outlet, and I met some friends that way.”   
  
Greg’s sincere passion is writing. “Early on, it was kind of the fiction type writing—just writing short stories—nothing that deep or complicated. Then probably when I was in high school and getting into college, I was more interested in journalism and, y’know, storytelling, and writing about actual people—more of a non-fiction type writing,” Greg relates. “So that’s what actually convinced me to go into journalism—what I actually studied in college.”   
  
Greg’s post-secondary experience began with St. Petersburg College where he obtained his Associate of Arts degree. Then it was on to the University of South Florida (USF) at the St. Petersburg branch for the major stuff where he obtained both his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in journalism. During college, Greg worked as the Sports Editor for The Crow’s Nest, the student newspaper at USF St. Petersburg. “I’ve always been a really big sports fan, always enjoyed following and watching. So that was kind of a dream job to be able to write about sports,” says Greg. Not only did Greg love the work, but he also enjoyed a few of the job-related perks, not the least of which was getting into the Press Box at the Tampa Bay Buccaneers’ stadium where some of the USF games were played. “Yeah, to be able to get in that press box and have that experience was pretty cool too,” recalls Greg.  
  
While still attending college, Greg interned with AARP (American Association of Retired Persons), **a non-profit, non-partisan membership organization** for people age 50 and over. “I was there for about a year. I was a communications intern for them in their St. Petersburg office. That kind of opened my eyes to what I really wanted to do in my career,” says Greg. “Writing and communications work, marketing, public relations—kind of how all that ties together—crafting messages to communicate the goals of an organization—being able to write feature articles about some of their members and press releases. Looking back, I have a lot of fond memories, and it was a good experience. it was my first introduction to the real working world so to speak.”   
  
Following the AARP internship, Greg did some freelance writing from home. “Honestly, I just had a real tough time finding work,” admits Greg. “I went through a ton of interviews. Gosh, probably 12 or 13. After about a year, I finally landed an unpaid internship—actually with my current employer, 1-800Accountant. At the time, I’d had my Master’s for over a year and I thought, ‘My gosh, do I really have to work for free and build my resume?’ And here I’d felt like I could just go out there and get a great job and move out and just have this great life! Come to find out, it’s a lot harder than that. It was quite a tough pill to swallow. But looking back, I’m very glad that I took that internship because almost four years later, here I am—still with 1-800Accountant, and I’ve been with the company the longest now in my office of 60 people.”   
  
1-800Accountant provides accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping, consulting, audit protection, and other business services to new and existing small businesses. Greg is the Editor-in-Chief for the company. “Basically, I manage all our website written content (anything from articles to blog posts). I do press releases for different news items and features about the company. I manage all of our social media pages (Facebook, Twitter, LinkdIn, and Google plus). I write copy for a lot of our email campaigns, especially now, during tax season. It’s kind of a busy time of year to get new clients and find people to prepare taxes for,” explains Greg. For the last year, Greg has also managed a copywriter, overseeing her work and providing outline and direction for her.

“There are a lot of people out there—they look at someone walking in with a white cane  for an interview, and they’re not sure what that person can really do and how that person would fit into the organization,” reflects Greg. “I mean, I had one experience where I did not mention my vision in the phone interview and then went in for the actual face-to-face interview. The guy actually got pretty upset—was very flustered, taken aback, asking, ‘Can you see anything? How can you see a computer?’ So that experience really kind of taught me, ‘Woe!—hopefully there’re not too many people out there like this, but obviously, there are some. And, hey, maybe I should approach this a little differently.’ Now, if I have an interview, I’ll definitely mention my vision in the phone interview. I know that is kind of a controversial thing—y’know, Do you mention that? Should you? Should you not disclose? But I think you really just have to let the person know that hey, this is what I’ve got, and if you don’t wanna hire me because of that, lets end it right now. If not, bring me in and give me a chance.”

Greg’s first contact with FCB was in 2005 when he was a senior in high school. “I actually received a scholarship for $500.00,” recalls Greg. “Then, about three years ago, I was doing some research online and typing things into Google and stumbled across the Pinellas Council of the Blind. I called up the president at the time (Florence) and she really sold me on it. I’ve definitely built some relationships within the group, and they kind of found out about my writing skills and asked if I’d be the Secretary. I’ve always looked for places and groups where I could fit in and really connect with others. And I thought, hey, what a great opportunity! I wish I’d have found it earlier.” Greg hit the ground ready to work. He was elected Secretary of the Pinellas Council of the Blind, an office he’s held for just over a year and writes their monthly newsletter. At the beginning of this year, Greg also accepted the Editorship of the White Cane Bulletin and looks forward to filling that role.   
  
“I thoroughly enjoy beep baseball,” says Greg. “I mean the whole experience—the camaraderie of being able to play baseball and not having to see the ball, being able to just hear it.” Greg wants to get a beep ball team going and is currently investigating ways to raise money for the necessary equipment, a fairly expensive proposition. “Baseballs generally run about 50 bucks apiece, and beeping bases can run around a couple hundred apiece,” he reckons.  
  
Greg is proud to have done some advertising work for the Blind Matters Radio Show and was a guest co-host on one of the shows. “It was a very cool experience to have my voice and perspectives heard by visually impaired listeners around the world,” he says.  
  
“Never give up on your dreams,” advises this dynamic young man. “Always work hard and you should be rewarded for it at some point. Surround yourself with positive people, but also people who are smarter and more experienced at things than you are. Soak up their knowledge and advice.” True words of wisdom all would do well to heed.   
  
One of Greg’s fervent dreams is to be the Editor-in-Chief of a well-known company where he can have his hand in all communications and writing aspects of the company in terms of editorial decisions. “I'd love to be surrounded by other talented writers, designers, and communications experts who are skilled at communicating the goals of an organization to the public,” he shares.   
  
Not even 30 yet with a Masters, a great job, lots of talent, and a desire to share it with others, you’ve got the world at your feet. Here’s betting you won’t stay single long and that you’ll more than realize your dreams! Thank you, Greg, for sharing your time and talent with me and with FCB. Say, in this day and age of electronic writing, what does one get a writer in place of a Montblanc pen?

Greg welcomes contact and may be reached at: (727) 543-9807 or by email at: [glindberg@gmail.com](mailto:glindberg@gmail.com). His website is [www.greglindberg.net](http://www.greglindberg.net).

P.S. Thank you, Florence Pincus, for telling Greg about FCB. Thank you, Kathy Millican, for telling Greg about the need for an Editor for the WCB. What an asset!

**Poetry Corner with Shelley Sawyer**

Dear Readers,   
  
I am finally back with the Poetry Corner. I am not sure why I have been absent, but hopefully I am back to stay. Because it is March, this one is for all who are Irish, as well as for all of us who feel that we have at least a partially Celtic soul.   
  
**The Wearing of The Green   
  
Version by Dion Boucicault (1820-1890)**  
Oh! Paddy, dear, and did you hear  
The news that's going round,  
The shamrock is forbid by law  
To grow on Irish ground.  
Saint Patrick's Day no more we'll keep  
His color can't be seen  
For there's a bloody law agin'  
The wearing of the green.  
  
I met with Napper Tandy  
And he took me by the hand  
And he said "How's poor old Ireland?  
And how does she stand?"  
She's the most distressful country  
That ever you have seen,  
They're hanging men and women there  
For wearing of the green.

Then since the color we must wear  
Is England's cruel red  
Sure Ireland's sons will n'er forget  
The blood that they have shed.  
You may take the shamrock from your hat  
And cast it on the sod,  
But 'twill take root and flourish still  
Tho' underfoot 'tis trod.  
  
When the law can stop the blades of grass  
From growing as they grow,  
And when the leaves in summer time  
Their verdure dare not show,  
Then I will change the color  
I wear in my caubeen,  
But till that day I'll stick for aye  
To wearing of the green.  
  
But if at last our color should  
Be torn from Ireland's heart,  
Her sons with shame and sorrow  
From the dear old sod will part.  
I've heard a whisper of a country  
That lies beyond the sea,  
Where rich and poor stand equal  
In the light of freedom's day.  
  
Oh, Erin! Must we leave you,  
Driven by the tyrant's hand?  
Must we ask a mother's welcome  
From a strange but happy land?  
Where the cruel cross of England's thralldom  
Never shall be seen  
And where in peace we'll live and die  
A-wearing of the green.

**January/February Updates from the Sarasota Council of the Blind  
By Karen Christie**

Our first meeting for this year was held January 11, 2016 at Denny’s restaurant. As I sit writing this column, I am finding it hard to believe that another year has just begun. Unfortunately, though, this meeting began with President Rick Wilkinson relaying the news that the technology instructor at the Mana-Sota Lighthouse, Jimmy Jones, passed away unexpectedly on January 2. We learned that he had suffered a stroke shortly before Christmas, and it had seemed as though his condition was improving. Jimmy taught computer classes at the Lighthouse, and he was also in charge of the book club meetings held there as well. In fact, everyone who knew Jimmy really well could tell you what an avid reader he was. I had the pleasure of knowing Jimmy, and he was a kind man who also had a great sense of humor. His wife, Vickie, is the receptionist at the Lighthouse, and she has also been the singer of holiday favorites at several Christmas parties for our council. She always seems to have a positive outlook on life, and her bubbly personality can brighten anyone’s day. Our condolences go out to Vickie and the rest of her family, and we will always remember Jimmy’s determination to never let his visual impairment get the better of him. He was also a firm believer that everyone else he knew who had visual impairments could overcome their obstacles, never letting their vision boundaries prevent them from living their lives to the fullest.  
  
Our speaker for January’s meeting was Jonathan Carter from the Sarasota Fire Department. He talked to our group about basic safety information, such as the importance of having a fire extinguisher and how it works. He emphasized how important it is to have working smoke detectors in the house. He also discussed such topics as how to prevent kitchen fires, as well as what you must do should a fire start at your house. The meeting was informative, and taught us a lot about fire safety and prevention.  
  
Our meeting for February was held on Monday the 8th at Denny’s restaurant. Our speakers for this month were Susie Wilburn and Alison Aldridge from Southeastern Guide Dogs. Susie works in the admissions department, while Alison works in the graduates department, overseeing students and their guide dogs who have graduated from the class. Susie told our council how Carson, her guide dog, is her “freedom” and how he has changed her life. She informed us about everything ranging from the Juno walk (where instructors from the guide dog school come to the student’s house to walk around the neighborhood, and mimic the moves of a guide dog so they can see how slow or fast the person walks) to when the user has had their dog for so long and what to do once it’s time for the dog to retire. Susie admitted that having a guide dog is a big responsibility, but that Carson has truly changed her life, and he has given her the independence she never would have had otherwise.  
  
After the speakers left, President Rick Wilkinson informed us that starting March 15, SCAT Plus, the Sarasota-based door-to-door transportation service used by most Council members, will no longer be in operation in its current form. We should have more information to follow about that this change after our March meeting.   
  
At next month’s meeting, we will hear from speakers who will come and talk about roundabouts and other important traffic issues of special interest to the visually impaired. We look forward to hearing all they’ll have to discuss with our council.

**“Blind and Beyond” Radio Show Coming Soon  
By Sheila Young**

There is a new radio show on the horizon! Be watching for “Blind and Beyond,” a new radio show for the blind, visually impaired, and sighted persons who are interested in learning about the world of the visually impaired, including the delights and challenges of how they live.

The show premieres Sunday, April 3, 2016 from 7 to 9 p.m. on 1680 AM radio in Orlando, Florida. It can also be listened to on the web at www.wokbradio.com. Some of the same voices you heard on the “Blind Matters Radio Show” will be heard on this new show! So please set your calendar and join us for a great new show! The program will be fun and informative with music, interviews, trivia, and prizes. We look forward to hearing from all of you!

**Greater Orlando Council of the Blind   
By Martha James**

GOCB began its February meeting with its annual bake sale. Thanks to Amos and Elizabeth Bouyer and Sarah Brown for organizing it. Thanks also to everyone who helped set up, those who brought baked goods, and those who bought them. Our chapter has been offered a unique opportunity to participate as part of an inclusion day at Albin Polasek Museum and Sculpture Gardens of Winter Park. Some members will visit later this month to get an idea what is involved.  
  
March will get off to a good start with our dine and donate on March 23rd at Tijuana Flats located at 7608 University Boulevard, Winter Park, 32792. Asli Goncer will keep the festivities lively with her music.  
  
Our chapter will be preparing to host another trivia night on April 9, 2016. Once again, it will be held at the VFW at 3500 South Goldenrod Road, Orlando. The cost is $25 per person or $150 for a table of six players. The cost includes one free drink. GOCB would like to challenge other chapters to join us for a fun night of trivia. Let’s see which chapter can come out on top. A portion of the proceeds go to FCB. Thanks to the women’s auxiliary for graciously providing food again this year. The silent auction, which was popular at the last trivia night, will be part of this year’s event as well.  
  
In addition, for those with computer access, GOCB is on both Facebook and Twitter. You can find us on Facebook by typing in “GOCB” and follow us on Twitter @GOCB\_FL. GOCB invites all readers of this newsletter to like and follow us on these social networks respectively.

**Tech Corner – From The Technology Committee**

**Free Internet calls: Are they a viable alternative to you when it comes to paying long-distance fees.?**

**By John Richards**

If you have a house phone with only local service, most likely you are unable to justify the cost to upgrade to a plan that offers long-distance calling. Why pay for it when you can use a free service over the internet?

Google Voice is a free web-based service. A Google Voice app is also available for Android and IOS platforms, which allows one to make free phone calls over the internet to the U.S. and Canada. First, you will need an internet connection. The easiest way to get started is to create a Gmail account. If you already have one, you can download the app to your mobile device and log in. To use the web-based service on your PC, go to <http://www.google.com/voice> and log in. Follow the on-screen prompts for setup. Information is available on the web to help you get started placing free calls.

When you set up Google Voice, you can use your house phone to work with the app or the web-based program. You will dial the number you wish to call from the dialer in the app. Your house phone will ring, so then pick it up and talk to the party you dialed. If you should select a mobile phone, rates for the cell phone will apply. This works but defeats the purpose of free calling. If you have unlimited cell minutes, then you really don’t need to use Google Voice with that phone. If you use an Android or Apple tablet or an IPod Touch, then use your home phone with Google Voice. During setup, you can select your area code, and you will be given a phone number. When you use the Google Voice dialer to place a call and you select your house phone to be the phone you will use to speak to the party you are calling; Your Google Voice number will pop up on your caller ID when you place your outgoing call. You can talk for 3 hours, and you will then be disconnected. However, you can call back and talk for another 3 hours before you are disconnected again. For now, it is free. You never know when they will start charging or the app will be discontinued. Use it and take advantage of it while you can.

For more information on free internet calling services, go to: <http://freebies.about.com/od/computerfreebies/tp/free-internet-phone-calls.htm>

**A Sighted Person's View of Technology for the Sight-Impaired  
By Joyce Davidson**

About 15 years ago in Cleveland, Ohio, my husband, Bill, and I discovered a store that carries visual aids for low-vision customers. Just like many specialty stores in other states, they offer magnifiers, large-number playing cards, big wall clocks, and wearable gadgets. We bought several items there, and they made reading somewhat easier for him. Now that his vision has clouded and he can no longer identify the shapes that pass in front of him, I am eager to learn about new technology that will allow him to be less dependent upon others.   
  
The first important breakthrough for Bill came from a suggestion from an intern for Dr. Bowden, who led Bill to the Eye-Lab at the former Florida Community College of Jacksonville. The college offered transportation to computer classes and sent a representative to our home to stick bumps on the stove for Bill to be able to turn burners on, showed Bill how to pour coffee, and gave us other helpful ideas. The best item they introduced to him was the Enhanced Vision Machine so that he could write a check and see it on the screen above him. The next boon for us was his acceptance by the Veteran’s Administration and a glaucoma specialist. The third help in coping with his progressive blindness came from the Clay Council of the Blind. Speaker Greg Bing, from what is now the Vision Education and Rehabilitation Center at Florida State College of Jacksonville, presented an update last month about recent advances in technology. In recent years, the strides made in providing aids for the sight-impaired have been phenomenal, and most of the products are offered on the internet. Stores such as Verizon, Sprint, Walmart, Target, and Best Buy stock many of them.  
  
Greg started off explaining about talking software and Apple’s screen reader and voice over IPad. He said LG has many styles of wireless and Bluetooth hands-free headsets that work with smartphones but also can be paired with an IPhone and IPad at the same time. He recommends the LG Tone Pro HBS 750. It’s easy to learn. A person can hit a button, talk into it, and send a text message by saying the receiver’s name. The alert is a vibration, and the set is light. The newest set is 1.9 ounces. The 750 starts at $35.00, but different models cost more based on increased hours of reception. The newer and more expensive models have mixed reviews. Some customers prefer the older, cheaper ones.   
  
Greg reviewed a couple of Apple’s devices. Their phone is the best for quality, but the less-expensive Samsung Galaxy 6 is good, too. The Apple wWtch requires Bluetooth to be functional in getting messages or reading and must be connected to a smartphone. It’s fine for text messages and probably will be updated. Android watches connect to Wi-Fi. There are touch screens and additions that help with magnification, reading, and voice activation. Video magnifiers in different sizes – portable to desktop – magnify with a camera that projects images on a screen and increases or decreases them, has high-color contrast and sometimes spoken text. If built-in software isn’t adequate, more programs are designed to magnify, highlight, and even speak the contents, like ZoomText, which is meant for users with some vision. There is a high-quality keyboard by VisiKey Wireless Enhanced Visibility for any computer, including Mac OS and Windows XP through 10. It has large, white-on-black print after plugging it into a USB port. The exRead from Carson transforms the TV into a reading aid by projecting the material on the TV. If only screen magnification is needed, a 2X tool attaches to a computer monitor screen and becomes a protector and a privacy shield which fits 15 inch and 17 inch flat screens for $50 and $60. Jaws reads texts for the user, and Dragon Naturally Speaking utilizes speech recognition to create documents, reports, or messages simply by speaking after programming it to an individual’s voice. It is especially helpful after a writer has unfortunately zapped a long manuscript and has to redo it.  
  
Other brands as well as additional products are listed on Amazon from inexpensive aids to those costing hundreds of dollars. Even pricy items are worth purchasing if they give help or enjoyment to people who can use them for work or pleasure. Amazon also lists other sources for items they don’t sell. The American Federation of the Blind has information about tools a poorly-sighted person can use to help him become more independent. There are special timers, automatic door lockers and light control, talking clocks, and the dame of all gadgets—Echo. Amazon is improving Echo regularly so that the black cylinder responds from its built-in audio system with answers to more questions than ever. When Alexa is activated by her name, a request for Willie Nelson brings forth many of his songs. If the temperature report is needed, Alexa will give the local news and weather of the day. In the future, Alexa may be able to dance, too, or maybe incriminate the user, because all of the requests she hears end up on the computer.   
  
Technology is great, especially tools which are not difficult to program. Maybe they should be delivered with a six-year old child to set them up. As for Bill, his companion is the talking book machine and tapes from The Daytona Library, but he’s open to more suggestions that come along constantly.

**A Sighted Person’s Guide to Helping the Blind and Visually Impaired**

**By Sharis Coleman-Derr**

The most important thing to know about helping a blind or visually impaired person is to give them choices when assisting them. I’m not talking about the average person who can drive with corrective lenses, but those of us who need special devices just to read our mail, check e-mail, or even just to walk around. While the degrees of a person’s blindness may vary, it is important to know that each one of these people wants to have as much control of their lives as any sighted person may have. Sometimes a sighted person may wish to assist a blind or visually impaired person without knowing the best way to do so – and may actually cause more harm than help.

First, when help is offered by a sighted person, the blind or visually impaired person must determine if the help is offered in a spirit of kindness and not offered from pity or a sense of duty. Very often, our families consist of many sited people, and we are outnumbered as blind or visually impaired persons. This can be a problem if our sited family members feel that they are obligated to help us with some task. Either they will just do the task for us, without giving us a chance to choose how we would like to go about doing that task, or they will try to assist us but they will get frustrated when we take too much time to complete the task.

Sometimes as blind or visually impaired people, we need special accommodations to achieve our goals, but this does not mean that we want to be treated like special people. What I mean is that we may need help to get from one place to another or to do any number of things, but that we don’t want to be patronized. It’s true that our visual impairment makes life difficult, but getting the wrong kind of help can make it even harder.   
  
I believe that we all have some type of disability, and it would be wrong to judge us strictly because we have a harder time doing some things. A lot of times, our families feel it is their duty to help us by doing for us the tasks we cannot do or have trouble doing by ourselves. Sometimes we like for others to assist us by driving us somewhere or reading our mail for us. But other times, we would like to have a say in how others help us. I don’t want other people to just do everything for me because then my sense of dignity and independence is gone. Sometimes all that is needed is a little guidance – maybe just offering sighted guide to a blind or visually impaired person to help them reach their destination or perform some task. For example, when a blind or visually impaired person asks you to assist them in acquiring a glass of punch, don’t just assume that means that now you must go and get the punch while they just sit there. Maybe that is what they want from you, but quite possibly, they mean that they would like you to help them find the table with the punch on it and help them serve themselves. This second form of help is much more dignified, and the blind or visually impaired person will feel more grateful because you took the extra time to assist them with their request.  
  
For this very reason, most of our families just do the things we ask for us in order to save time and energy. But then we don’t get the opportunity to choose how these tasks are done. If we could see, we would certainly have the option of doing these tasks by ourselves, and therefore, we would be able to do them how we want. But because we cannot see, or our vision is limited, it very often follows that our choices get limited as well. This hinders us more than not being able to see!

When our choices are limited, we feel more dependent and more helpless. Our inability to see as we would like makes us feel inferior to other people because we don’t get to do things the way we would like to do them. There are many frustrations that come with having to change or adapt the way we do things because of our vision, but that doesn’t mean we should have to put up with the limitations our sighted friends, family, and people in general create for us. It is difficult to determine just how much your blind or visually impaired friend or family member is – and how capable they are at performing certain tasks. Therefore, it is necessary to ask them what type of help they need. Maybe they want you to drive them to the store, but they can still find everything they need, or maybe they do need your help in the store. These limitations can be avoided if we all remember two things.

1. For the blind or visually impaired person to clearly state what kind of help they need.

2. For the sited person assisting that individual to be receptive to their specific needs and to do just what is asked and no more and no less.

It is hard sometimes to just sit back and watch while we try to figure things out ourselves and not to offer more assistance then we desire, but equally in my experience, it is hard for us to ask for the kind of assistance we require. Sometimes the reason we end up resenting those who help us is partly due to the fact that we aren’t very clear about the type of help we want. We may say, “ I would like some punch,” but fail to explain that we would like to have help finding the table the punch is on.

I believe compassion is always important when trying to assist someone with a disability; however, doing everything for that person may actually cripple them further. There are those people who do not have any compassion at all, and both extremes are very bad. The reason I’m writing this article, is to provide some idea of just what kind of help may be beneficial or detrimental to us as blind and visually impaired people. I hope this article will be able to show sighted people everywhere how to give just the right amount and type of help required to assist those of us with disabilities – without creating resentment from placing limitations upon us.

It is essential to give from a sense of compassion – and, above all, to consider the disabled person’s wishes when assisting them. May we all live better by applying this rule. Above all else, may we breathe deep and seek peace with every moment of our lives.

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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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