**THE WHITE CANE BULLETIN**

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



## November - December 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 can not find a way to submit your article, call Greg and he will be glad to assist you.

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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).

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) 877-1512 or E-mail: salbenjamin@comcast.net

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**President’s Message: November-December 2016**

**By James Kracht**
I want to devote this month's message to a reflection on gratitude. Florida's citizens just shook hands with one of the worst, biggest, and most widespread hurricanes that I have witnessed in my 40 plus years living in Florida. Hurricane Matthew was an immense and very powerful storm that certainly could have left many of us living along Florida's East Coast homeless or facing the most severe property damage or personal injury imaginable.

Your president and his family were most fortunate and are safe. I will finish checking with our officers, but I am confident that our FCB family will stand united and reach out to our members who may not have been as lucky as our officers were.

Yes, these hurricanes carry a tremendous amount of inconvenience. There is the need to shutter up if you can – and bring in belongings and personal property that may be outside of your home. One must make sure to have necessary medicines and medical supplies, and shop for food, water, batteries, a radio or TV, and maybe a source of emergency power. In some cases, one may – after securing his or her home – be faced with the additional challenge of having to evacuate to a shelter or go to the home of a friend or family member.

While I was fortunate to achieve the closure of my shutters with a little bit of sighted assistance from my wife, I recognize that many of our members do not have the luxury of sighted assistance, let alone the availability of shutters.

In listening to the round-the-clock news broadcasts, I was pleased to note that on 4 or 5 occasions, I heard government officials urging members of the population with disabilities to call their local sheriff if they needed transportation to a shelter. I have never before heard that suggestion.

I recently spoke with one of our members who lives in a harder-hit coastal community in central Florida. They did evacuate and tried to go to a shelter, but it was full, so they went to stay with friends. I'm anxious to hear from any of our members who did go to a shelter during Matthew's trek up the coast. Did you get the help you needed? Were workers helpful and accommodating? What would have made your shelter visit work better for you?

I write this message realizing that it has been a long time since we visited the question of emergency preparations and the impact of hurricanes in Florida. There was a posting on the ACB leadership list that our neighboring state to the north had an inaccessible government website with regard to hurricane preparation.

With our board meeting approaching, we need to hear from you about your problems, your successes, your needs, and what or where FCB'S advocacy efforts might be needed and directed in the area of emergency preparation and services.

Please communicate with me directly, or with Paul Edwards as Resolutions chair. Paul can be reached by email at edwards.paul955@gmail.com.

I was pleased to hear that one of our members received a knock on his door from a neighbor offering to put up his hurricane shutters. Additionally, after more than 40 years in Florida, I was pleased to receive a FEMA call with a number dedicated to providing assistance to persons with disabilities, and hoping to develop a Cadre, FEMA's Disability Integration, which is working to set up a community and state partnership in this disaster response and recovery efforts. Matthew Starr and John Daly from FEMA state that, "Our mission is to ensure that all disaster survivors, including Floridians with disabilities, receive equal and accessible services, programs and information from FEMA and community-based disaster relief organizations." I will be participating in a conference call with FEMA and other disability services providers in the next few days.

While we have much to be thankful for, and while we can point to increased awareness of the needs of our community, we need to use our experiences from this storm to help us better educate state and local officials about existing shortfalls or negative experiences in emergency preparations and hurricane survival. A phone call or a visit to your local municipality or county hall individually or as a group may provide vital education and changes and adjustments to policies and practices so as to better serve the needs of members of our communities who are visually impaired.

By the time this issue of the WCB is published, our Board meeting at the International Palms Hotel in Orlando will be imminent, taking place November 4th through 6th. I am looking forward to seeing those of you who can make it to Orlando.

Let us also be grateful that on November 8th, we can and we must all take part in this extremely important presidential election and vote. Every vote matters and every vote counts. And, yes, after many years of grass roots advocacy efforts, we as Florida's voters who are blind and visually impaired can cast our ballots privately, independently, and in many instances, verifiably. We are not done with preserving and protecting our rights, but we truly have come a long way. Part of our job to achieve fully accessible voting is to exercise the rights we have attained. Please vote on or before November 8th. Then, it is critically important that every one of you go on the FCB website and complete the Florida Voter Survey, which our Second vice-president has developed so that we can obtain an accurate depiction of our individual voting experiences.

Finally, let me wish each of you and your families a merry Christmas, a joyous holiday season, and a happy and healthy 2017. It’s been a good year for FCB, and I submit 2017 will be even better.

Jim Kracht, President

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Presidential Proclamation: Blind Americans Equality Day, 2016**

**By Barack Obama**

A Proclamation

Each day, blind and visually impaired Americans contribute to our society, refusing to allow anything to hold them back. In order to ensure more Americans with disabilities can continue participating fully in our country, we must each do our part to promote equal opportunity for all. On Blind Americans Equality Day, we reaffirm the inherent dignity of every human being and recommit to forging a future in which all Americans, including those with visual impairments, can pursue their full measure of happiness.

More than two decades ago, one of the most comprehensive civil rights bills in our history, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), was signed into law. Ever since, the ADA has helped reduce discrimination and promote equal access to classrooms, workplaces, and transportation - and it is imperative that we build on the significant progress we have made for individuals living with disabilities. Because the unemployment rate is more than twice as high for Americans with disabilities, my Administration has worked to improve employment opportunities, including within the Federal Government where we are leading as a model employer. Last year, we hosted the White House Summit on Disability and Employment, which provided resources to help employers hire more individuals with disabilities. And through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, we expanded access to critical services for many individuals with disabilities, including those who are blind or visually impaired, so that they can pursue high-quality employment opportunities. People with disabilities deserve to live their lives in their communities and raise their families, and earlier this year we hosted a Forum on the Civil Rights of Parents with Disabilities because every family, including those headed by people with disabilities, deserves the chance to reach for a future of ever greater possibility.

Our Nation must continue to promote equal opportunity and the right of all Americans to live full and independent lives. This begins early on - we must ensure that any child with a print disability can access the tools they need to pursue an education. That is why we have worked to provide appropriate materials and services, including Braille and Braille literacy instruction, in schools. We are investing in technologies that provide visually impaired students equal access to the general education curriculum. We are also working to make the websites of Government agencies and private companies more accessible to anyone with a disability - an effort which remains an important priority. And I have encouraged the Senate to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled, which will broaden access to a new world of knowledge for these individuals.

Disability touches us all, and together we can strive to ensure that all blind and visually impaired individuals face no unnecessary barriers to success. By providing equal access to resources and technologies and giving everyone the chance to make of their lives what they will, we can continue to advance opportunity and prosperity for all our people.

By joint resolution approved on October 6, 1964 (Public Law 88-628, as amended), the Congress designated October 15 of each year as "White Cane Safety Day" to recognize the contributions of Americans who are blind or have low vision. Today, let us reaffirm our commitment to being a Nation where all our people, including those with disabilities, have every opportunity to achieve their dreams.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 15, 2016, as Blind Americans Equality Day. I call upon public officials, business and community leaders, educators, librarians, and Americans across the country to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand sixteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-first.

Barack Obama

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FCB STATE & CHAPTER AWARDS**
**By Sheila Young**
Dear FCB members and friends,

This year, the FCB Awards Committee is desirous of honoring all members who deserve recognition for their devotion to improving the lives of the blind and visually impaired community.

Our committee is dedicated to keeping submissions confidential, and the recipients will be announced at our state convention, which will be held in Orlando in May of 2017.

Please take a look at our awards listed on the [fcb.org](http://www.fcb.org) web site, and consider a submission honoring those who take time out of their day, whether it is a member, organization, or a person in the community who blesses your life with their service to us.

The committee accepts all submissions, and the absolute deadline for entries is March 1st, 2017.

If you wish to submit a letter for an award, please e-mail it to sheilayoung125@att.net. If you have any questions regarding our awards or system, please feel free to contact one of our committee members.

Thank you for taking time to honor the people who assist in making life better for us!

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**The Pinellas Council of the Blind Is on the Move!**

**By Kathleen Warth**

Once again, this year it is time for elections of officers in November. With that being said, as the out-going president of the Pinellas Council of the Blind, I have been thinking about all the things this chapter has been doing in our community to make life a little better for others, including people who may or may not have sight or a vision problem of any kind. The list is pretty long as it turns out: and most of the things PCB does and represents have very little to do with me as President.

November is a time when we count our many blessings and get ready for a new year of activity in our chapter. I would like to just say thank you to my officers and committee chairs for their strong support and understanding these past two years. You have made my job as president so easy and so gratifying. Each one of you has used your time, talents, and treasures to enrich the lives of others, and we are grateful for your service.

Our chapter was started in the 1980s with the help of Bertha Spinks and her chapter in St. Petersburg. Linda Faust and myself met there and realized we both wished we had a chapter to join that wasn’t an hour-long bus ride away. We started asking people we saw with a white cane or a guide dog if they would like to start a chapter of FCB. We hung out at the Channel Markers Center for the Blind when we had some free time in order to meet people. Sharon Youngs worked in the Low vision clinic there. She said she couldn’t help us out because it might appear that she supported one group of the blindness community over the other. After pestering her for about a year, she decided it was the best way to get rid of us, and she finally said she would help. The first few meetings were held at tables in the Sunshine Mall where we just talked about what we were told we had to do, and tried to figure out how to do it. We had five people who said they wanted to join, and three of us had to be officers. Then we drew up a constitution and took it to an FCB Board of Directors meeting in Tampa where we were chartered as the Upper Pinellas Council of the Blind – or UP-FCB (later changed to PCB). The only regret I have in helping to form our chapter is that over the years: our charter has been lost. But the spirit certainly has not been lost.

Today we meet on the second Saturday of each month (nine times during the year to conduct business). During the summer and Christmas, we have social gatherings. The Christmas party is our big event, of course, along with our summer picnic. We try to have two pizza party/auctions to raise money for these events at some point during the year. Some years, we just have regular meetings right through the summer if there is a lot to be done. We have an ice cream social at Strachan’s in Dunedin once a year as well. Our social committee makes all the arrangements for things such as these and even live performances and boat trips. Our members are active on issues like transportation, pedestrian safety, and voting issues. We work to promote Project Insight, White Cane Safety Day, Braille literacy, and the Randolph-Sheppard Act.

At every meeting, we ask our members to bring a “can for the community” or a $1 donation if they are able. These are taken to a local food bank. The cash is collected until we have about $100 and then is sent to Feeding America or whichever organization the chapter selects.

We also hold a 50/50 raffle at our meetings so that we have petty cash on hand to pay for our guest speakers’ lunches if they would like to stay for the business portion of the meeting.

We started a New Vision support group, which meets the second Thursday of each month at the Pinellas Talking Book Library from 10 a.m. to noon each month. The group has a speaker at each meeting, and it is primarily for families and individuals struggling with visual impairment and sight loss issues.

We even have an advocate at large who tackles issues for us on a state, county, and city level and keeps us informed on these matters. He lets us know when we need to get involved and when we do not.

This year, I am very excited about an event our chapter has taken up with regard to White Cane Safety Day on October 15th. I think the flyer pretty much covers the details concerning this undertaking – which you can read at the end of this article.

But what it doesn’t say is that this chapter of the Florida Council of the Blind is and has always been an active, moving force in Pinellas County. And it’s not because of any one person or group – and not because one person runs the whole show. It’s because of each and every one of our members who has stepped up to the plate and said they are willing to help, to do; to make, to call, to write a note, to give a ride, to welcome a new person, to make a motion, to second a motion, to debate pro and con and vote for what they want to see this chapter do. These are the ones who make our chapter of the Florida Council of the blind – the Pinellas Council of the Blind – special. I am incredibly proud to have been and always be a part of this tremendous group of people.

LOW VISION EXPO FLYER

Life doesn’t stop when you lose your vision. The Low Vision Expo is designed to educate blind or visually impaired individuals, their families, friends, potential employers and the community about the latest resources, aids, technology and services available in Pinellas County. There will be information and demonstrations for all ages.

The event kicks off with an introduction, followed by the White Cane Safety Day Walk and several speakers. Nearly 30 exhibitors will then showcase their products, services, and organizations.

Exhibitors will feature:

• Latest vision magnification equipment

• Latest access technology & demonstrations

• Services to enhance independence

• Talking Book demonstrations

• AutoMARK Voter Assist Terminal demonstrations

• Guide Dogs

October 15, 2016

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Evans Hall – Chapel on the Hill

12601 Park Blvd.

Seminole, FL 33776

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**GOCB Update

By Martha James**
GOCB participated in another annual White Cane and Guide Dog Safety Day. There was a panel of Orange County and Orlando police officers, transportation officials, and representatives from Lighthouse of Central Florida discussing “Navigating our Community with Dignity.” Many things were learned from the meeting held on October 13th at the downtown Orlando Central Library, which is located at 101 Central BLVD. We were informed of many Audible Pedestrian Signals that will be installed around Orlando, and the talk of a mobile app, which you will be able to download and use on your smartphone to pay for transportation costs. We were also informed as to how citations are given out to drivers as well as pedestrians who are not observing the White Cane Law. Prior to the White Cane event, the chapter celebrated another successful Dine and Donate on October 5, at Tijuana Flats. Many members attended with their guests. Asli Goncer’s music kept the festivities lively. The hot sauce raffle was once again a big hit as well.

Our chapter has a couple of busy months coming up. Starting in November, the chapter will participate in the midyear board meeting. To round out the year, the chapter will hold its annual Christmas luncheon on December 3 at the home of Gary Sinclair, which is located at 7202 Knottypine Ave, Winter Park, FL 32792. Just in time for Christmas, a jewelry party is scheduled for December 10, from 2 to 5 p.m. at the home of Gary Sinclair.

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 respectively.

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**Sarasota Council of the Blind Updates**
**By Karen Christie**
As I sit writing this column, I find it hard to believe that it is already fall. The summer seemed to go so fast, and now the business meetings are back in session. Our Council of the Blind’s September meeting was held on the 12 at Denny’s restaurant. President Rick Wilkinson told us how he attended the annual conference and convention, which took place in Minneapolis this year. He reported that there were many exhibits on the latest technology and informative meetings as well as fun places to tour.

For September’s meeting, our speaker was Gary Speidel, paratransit manager for Sarasota County. He told our group about the Ride Right service, which is the service one can call if you need a ride to a doctor’s appointment, a trip to the grocery store, a commute to your job, etc. Gary’s talk provided useful information, such as how to apply for the service, and he also was ready to answer questions if anyone wanted to find out more about Ride Right. He also heard remarks from members of our group describing past trips and any concerns they may have had with the service. Gary was patient, letting our group know that Ride Right’s goal is to get people in and out of the vehicles as quickly and safely as they possibly can. He said that they would continue to do their best so that everyone is in and out and brought to and from their destinations in as timely a manner as possible.

On Tuesday, September 20, nine members of the Chapter met with the Sarasota Board of County Commissioners. The Commission chamber was filled as a White Cane Awareness Proclamation was read out and presented. Following the proclamation, the council members in attendance walked a half-mile to a restaurant for breakfast, carrying their white canes.

Amanda Tolson of En-vision America spoke to us at our October business meeting. She demonstrated both the ScriptTalk and ID Mate devices for the visually-impaired. The ID Mate is a barcode reader that allows you to scan and identify products containing a barcode. It doesn’t actually read the price of the product, but it tells you if it’s a can of soup or tuna, for instance. Though some may have felt it was rather pricy, it did seem like it would be a helpful tool to have.

The ScriptTalk is a medication identifier. This is a small device upon which you place a bottle of pills, and it will read which medicine it is, how much you should take, the doctor who prescribed it, etc. If you’re only wanting to know certain information on the label (for example, the doctor’s phone number), you can make it read only that part of the label. The ScriptTalk comes in handy, especially so that no one has to rely on other friends or family members to tell them about their personal information regarding medicines. It is available at some, but not all, local pharmacies.

October 15 is White Cane Awareness Day. In an effort to educate the public, we will pass out literature about our chapter at the downtown farmer’s market and distribute the ever- popular bookmarks imprinted with the White Cane Law.

As you can see, it’s been a busy time for the Sarasota chapter, and next month will be as well. At November’s meeting, our yearly dues will be collected, and new officers will be elected.

On behalf of everyone in our Council, we hope you spread the word about the importance of white cane awareness – both on White Cane Awareness Day and every day! With everyone’s help, we can make a difference in our community.

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**4 Handy Tips For The Visually Impaired**
**By Greg Lindberg**
Thanks to an FCB member who wishes to remain anonymous, I decided to compile a brief list of some simple tips you can use around the house and in your daily life if you have low vision or are totally blind. I’d love to make this a regular feature. So, if you have any useful tips, feel free to send them to me at glindberg@gmail.com for future issues of the WCB.

1. Organize your cash bills: Yes, there are money readers and apps that identify money, but sometimes it’s easier to simply organize your bills for easy access. For example, put all dollar bills in one part of your wallet, $5 bills in another part, $10 bills in a different pocket, etc. You could also use paper clips to separate bills. Put one clip on your dollar bills, two on your fives, etc. Or, you could even put a clip on the top of certain bills and a clip on the right side of other bills for easy distinguishing.

2. Use clothespins to hold things together: Clothespins are great for holding clothes together, but there are far more uses than just clothing items for them. For example, you can use them to hold trash bags together to make sure nothing falls out of a large bag. You can hold several cables together with clothespins so that you don’t trip over all the wires many of us have behind our computers, TVs, stereo systems, and other electronics. In the kitchen, clothespins can hold a loaf of bread or other food items together so you don’t misplace smaller food items when you’re snacking or preparing a meal.

3. Put tape on kitchen appliances: If you have a microwave or an oven, put pieces of tape on some of the buttons to help you feel where certain buttons are. Perhaps you could put tape over the “5” button on your microwave. That way you can feel that there are 3 buttons above this row, a button to each side of the “5” button with the tape, 3 buttons below this row, and then the zero button. Of course, you can also put tape on the “power” button and any other buttons you wish to use regularly. The same goes for buttons on an oven. You just may need some visual assistance in getting the tape on the right buttons.

4. Use audio recording: In today’s world of technology, audio recording is readily available on countless devices. From smartphones, to iPads, to portable digital recorders, you can record almost anything wherever you are. For instance, if you need to record someone giving you a phone number or street address, just dictate it into your recording device, or record the person delivering the information. You can also record instructions and directions when you need to have them. Audio is such a handy form of media for anyone with low vision.

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**Instructor – Counselor – Servant – Example: Kati Ottman Lear In The Spotlight**
**By: Sila Miller**
"I have a twin brother named Kurt," begins Kati. "My mom didn't know that she was going to have twins. She went to the doctor on Halloween, and the doctor said, ‘I do believe you're going to have twins.’ My mom looked at him like he was crazy, and the next day, she had us." Enthralled by Kati’s story, I asked, “Are you and Kurt identical or fraternal twins?” “Gotcha!” she quips. “You have no idea how many people ask us that. We aren't identical because we have different body parts.”

Kathryn Ann Ottman-Lear and her older twin, Kurt, were born on November 1, 1953, two months and a week early in Cleveland, Ohio. They grew up with an older brother, Bill. Tragically, their mother passed away when the twins were only four, leaving them to be raised by their maternal grandparents, Martin (Bud) and Margaret Ottman.

Kati and Kurt’s eye condition is Retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), a potentially blinding eye disorder that primarily affects premature infants weighing about 2-and-3-quarters pounds or less that are born before 31 weeks of gestation. “I wanna say that also applies to my mental condition, but nobody will believe me,” jokes Kati. According to the National Eye Institute, ROP was first diagnosed in 1942. Several complex factors may be responsible for the development of ROP. The eye starts to develop at about 16 weeks of pregnancy when the blood vessels of the retina begin to form at the optic nerve in the back of the eye. The blood vessels grow gradually toward the edges of the developing retina, supplying oxygen and nutrients. During the last 12 weeks of a pregnancy, the eye develops rapidly. When a baby is born full-term, the retinal blood vessel growth is mostly complete (the retina usually finishes growing a few weeks after birth). But if a baby is born prematurely before these blood vessels have reached the edges of the retina, normal vessel growth may stop. The edges of the retina (the periphery) may not get enough oxygen and nutrients. Scientists believe that the periphery of the retina then sends out signals to other areas of the retina for nourishment. As a result, new abnormal vessels begin to grow. These new blood vessels are fragile and weak and can bleed, leading to retinal scarring. When these scars shrink, they pull on the retina, causing it to detach from the back of the eye.

An ROP epidemic occurred in the 1940s and ‘50s when hospital nurseries began using excessively high levels of oxygen in incubators to save the lives of premature infants. During this time, ROP was the leading cause of blindness in children in the U.S. In 1954, scientists funded by the National Institutes of Health determined that the relatively high levels of oxygen routinely given to premature infants at that time were an important risk factor, and that reducing the level of oxygen given to premature babies reduced the incidence of ROP. With newer technology and methods to monitor the oxygen levels of infants, oxygen use as a risk factor has diminished in importance.

The Ottman twins began school in a class with other blind students where, in addition to regular school subjects, they were taught Braille, slate and stylus, and other skills specific to people with little or no sight. In fifth grade, Kati and Kurt were main-streamed into the general student population. They enjoyed an all-American childhood. "After we got done with middle-school, Grandpa retired and we moved to Sarasota, Florida," Kati says.

In Florida, the kids enrolled at Riverview High School where they attended all but their 11th-grade year. The Ottmans learned about a summer program offered by the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind (FSDB) in St. Augustine. During the summer following their sophomore year, Kati and Kurt attended the program, both enjoyed it, and finally talked their grandparents into letting them attend FSDB for their junior year of high school. "We both wanted to get specific instruction on orientation and mobility, me in cooking and Kurt in woodworking and those kinds of things," explains Kati.

The year 1972 brought high school graduation and enrollment into Florida State University (FSU) in Tallahassee, Florida for the Ottman twins. Kati's major was in Visual Disabilities Rehabilitation Teaching, while Kurt originally chose to pursue a major in history. He later changed his course of study to Visual Disabilities. In 1976, following college graduation, Kati took a job at the then-Lions Industries for the Blind, now Lighthouse of the Palm Beaches where she taught for a year. "I worked primarily with older blind people. But after a year, I felt like I needed a little more counseling training because so much of teaching is listening and counseling, and I was only in my 20s," Kati relates. So, it was back to FSU where she obtained her Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling.

After completing graduate studies, Kati served an internship at the Rehabilitation and Conklin Centers in Daytona Beach, Florida. When the Conklin Center opened for service in 1979, it was the only organization in the United States whose adult services were devoted exclusively to the vocational rehabilitation needs of adults who were blind with coexisting disabling conditions. In a pioneering collaboration between the Conklin Center and the Florida Division of Blind Services (DBS), the Conklin Center was established with the goal of helping adults who are blind with coexisting disabilities to become employed, live independently, and be in control of their lives.

The Rehabilitation Center for the Blind is a place where people who are visually impaired or blind can reside temporarily while they learn to lead productive, self-sufficient lives. The program incorporates instruction in a variety of independence skills, as well as case management, including home management, cooking, cleaning, personal care, labeling, orientation and mobility, Braille, access computer technology, adaptive equipment and devices, college prep, job readiness, home repairs, adaptation to blindness, and many other skills that contribute to independence and the confidence to seek the highest level of employment possible.

Following her internship, Kati was hired fulltime at the Conklin Center teaching adult basic education that included Braille, abacus, and math, as well as other adult academics. There, Kati shared a common wall and thermostat with a co-worker who would frequently come in to adjust the setting as he was always too hot. Soon, she and Mark Howard Lear would share much more! Before long, Kati transitioned to the Rehab Center where she also taught basic adult education.

“Mark and I got married on July 4th, 1981,” reflects Kati. “We left our reception in red, white, and blue outfits on a decorated tandem bike. The bike had streamers, beer cans, and playing cards in the spokes. Before we left on our honeymoon, a relative set off a firecracker in the parking lot.”

“Around 1983-84, the center began working with Apple computers. I got interested and took classes thru Nova University,” says Kati. “I learned everything from word processing to basic computer programming. I do not like computer programming. I would not want to get a job doing that,” she emphatically declares. “But, I wanted to learn about computers and how they worked.”

Kati took classes toward an Education Specialist degree while pursuing a working knowledge of computers. “When I was in college, I went through school—all blind people did at that time—using a tape recorder, Braille writer, readers, and a typewriter. We didn't have all this wonderful, fancy equipment. So when I was taking classes, I learned how to use the Versa Braille. It looked like a shoebox. We'd write the information down, and it was saved onto a cassette tape. I'd use that to take notes in my classes. I remember one day, my teacher said, ‘Kati, what'd I just say? You write everything down that I say.’ So I read it back to him, and the whole class started to laugh. That began my love of technology,” proclaims Kati.

With the phasing out of the Police and Fire Dispatch Training Program came Personal Computer and Assistive Technology training. “My first computer that I taught on had two 5-and-a-quarter floppy drives,” chuckles Kati. “Then we transitioned to small hard drive computers. It just got better and better—we began using 3-and-a-half floppies. We did a lot of computer training for job placement in customer service, and I traveled all around the state with Greg Luther in the mid-‘90s,” Kati reminisces. “Then we began the Medical Transcription program and had it for 10 years. After that program ended, I continued to teach computers. About four or five years ago, they built a new building—the Technology Center – and put all the technology teachers in one place. MTTL (Manderfield Technical Training Laboratory) basically stood empty for a year. They tore it down about a year and a half ago,” says Kati, a bit of nostalgia in her voice. The Manderfield Technical Training Laboratory was the training site for hundreds of individuals with blindness and visual disabilities for many years. Understandably, it represents a milestone in the hearts of many, offering the path to self-sufficiency and independence.

After 27 years as a technology instructor, something she dearly loved, Kati was ready for a change. Upon the retirement of Amy Williams, a longtime Braille instructor, Kati saw that opportunity and began teaching Braille, a position she held until her retirement in the fall of 2015.

“So I retired and was doing alright, but I felt like I needed a purpose. I went to the FCB convention in Jacksonville. While I was reading the program, I saw that Sally Benjamin was retiring, and her job was being advertised. I said to myself, ‘That looks really cool. I think I'd like to apply for that.’ And I did, and I got the job, which I'm really thrilled about,” Kati says, zeal ringing through loud and clear. Kati began as Florida Council of the Blind’s Administrative Assistant on June 15th. She answers the Project Insight line and takes care of various other FCB-related duties—everything from general correspondence to providing resource information. “I'm enjoying working from home in the mornings from 8:00 – 12:00, and I have my afternoons to basically do whatever I want—go out to lunch with friends, work out, swim, read books. Sometimes, I truly veg out and just take a nap,” confesses Kati. “I figure that's ok, cause I'm semi-retired—I can have a nap if I want one!”

Kati’s first encounter with a dog was less than ideal and resulted in a long-lasting fear. “When I was a little girl, my family visited with friends at a lake,” begins Kati. “They had a happy, exuberant lab who came over and knocked this little 4-year-old girl over who didn't know it was going to happen. Later, Kurt got a big, calm yellow lab from Seeing Eye, Nibblet. He was just as friendly as he could be, and he taught me not to be afraid of dogs.” From there, Mark and Kati decided to raise a guide dog puppy for Southeastern, and Jazmin came into their lives. “We thought maybe if I had a puppy from the beginning and it grew up with me, I wouldn't be afraid,” explains Kati. “At the same time, we got an 18-month-old dog from the Humane Society. I gradually learned to not be fearful of dogs, and then I went to Southeastern Guide Dogs and got Hunter, a black Labrador in 1991. Jasmin didn't make the dog guide program and came right back to the Lear pack. Sometimes things just aren't in the cards,” Kati matter-of-factly says. “So when I came home with Hunter, we had three dogs. Within a year, we went from a no-dog family to a three-dog family,” she chuckles. “Then, when Hunter retired, we still had the three dogs and I came home with Kate, a sweet little black lab. I used to say, ‘Your job, Kate, is to keep those guys young.’ And she did a good job! We were known as the "K Girls". After Kate retired, I got Sofi who’s now 10 and recently retired. Now I work with Cameron. He’s a smart boy. He’s lying here on the bed chewing his bone. Both he and Sofi are yellow labs. And, I love them all dearly,” concludes Kati.

Kati and Mark are longtime members of the Halifax Council of the Blind chapter.

"I am the helper—I'll do pretty much anything I'm asked to do. My favorite committee was the Entertainment Committee. I like organizing parties and fun activities. I'm the party girl,” says Kati, a smile in her voice. “But, when I don't understand something, I'll speak up and ask questions for clarification because I know if I don't understand, somebody else will be having the same problem.”

Huge bowling enthusiasts, Kati and Mark bowl every Saturday from September through April. “We go to lots of blind bowling tournaments and really enjoy that. It’s a great social sport,” Kati says. When asked if she uses any adaptive assistance to compensate for her lack of eyesight, Kati responds, “The American Blind Bowling Association frowns on using bumpers (gutter guards sometimes used at little kids’ birthday parties and the like) but I do use the hand rails.” A hand rail goes from the approach to the foul line and serves to orient a person who can't see. Additionally, the Lears enjoy walking, swimming, socializing and eating. “We basically want to stay active,” clarifies Kati. “I also like to cook when I have time.”

“I really believe we were put here to serve,” Kati shares. "Always be true to yourself and treat other people like you'd like to be treated.” Great advice for anyone and from her upbeat, positive, involved, and caring demeanor, she clearly takes those words to heart.

Thank you, Ms. Sunshine, for sharing your life and your story with FCB. Thank you for teaching hundreds of us about technology, and thank you and Mark for your no-nonsense advocacy efforts on behalf of us all.

Kati welcomes contact and may be reached at (386) 763-3836 or floridacouncil@comcast.net.

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**Poetry Corner**
**By Shelley Sawyer**
Dear faithful reader,

This year is flying by, and it is almost Holiday time once again. Here is a Thanksgiving Hymn for you. Most – if not all of us – grew up singing this one. I remember singing it in chapel at Thanksgiving during my early school years. What lovely poetry there is to be found in hymns! If we allow them to do so, when we read the words, they give us pause to find a moment’s peace in the chaos, craziness, and often total madness that we seem to be surrounded by in the world these days. There is some craziness to come yet this year, so buckle up tight. That is all I will say about that. In the meantime, Happy Thanksgiving, a Very Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year to each of you, dear reader. Enjoy this hymn, which is a favorite of mine.

Just to give you a head’s up, I will be making a slight change in my column next year, so stay tuned. Enjoy.

Come, Ye Thankful People, Come

Words by Henry Alford, 1810-1871

1. Come, ye thankful people, come,

raise the song of harvest home;

all is safely gathered in,

ere the winter storms begin.

God our Maker doth provide

for our wants to be supplied;

come to God's own temple, come,

raise the song of harvest home.

2. All the world is God's own field,

fruit as praise to God we yield;

wheat and tares together sown

are to joy or sorrow grown;

first the blade and then the ear,

then the full corn shall appear;

Lord of harvest, grant that we

wholesome grain and pure may be.

3. For the Lord our God shall come,

and shall take the harvest home;

from the field shall in that day

all offenses purge away,

giving angels charge at last

in the fire the tares to cast;

but the fruitful ears to store

in the garner evermore.

4. Even so, Lord, quickly come,

bring thy final harvest home;

gather thou thy people in,

free from sorrow, free from sin,

there, forever purified,

in thy presence to abide;

come, with all thine angels, come,

raise the glorious harvest home.

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**Mixed Visions: A Poem In Dialogue

By William Grignon**
HIM: I can do it.

HER: I know you can.

HIM: Don’t rush me.

HER: I’m not doing anything.

HIM: I used to be able…

HER: Well, things change…

HIM: What the hell…

HER: You missed something…

HIM: I know, I know, just wait…

HER: We have to go…

HIM: It’s this stupid thing…

HER: Do you need some help?

HIM: What, I’m now helpless?

HER: I didn’t say that.

HIM: You didn’t have to.

HER: Maybe not helpless, just touchy.

HIM: Well, it’s no fun…

HER: I didn’t say it was…

IM: Damn it!

HER: Can I help?

HIM: Yeah, you can shoot me.

HER: Don’t tempt me.

HIM: Forget it – here!

HER: OK…

HIM: Happy now?

HER: You’re an idiot.

HIM: just one more thing I can’t do.

HER: Add it to the list.

HIM: Boy, that’s supportive.

HER: I’m not joining your pity party.

HIM: It seems to be the only party in town…

HER: We have to go.

HIM: Did you see where I put that other thing?

HER: What, am I your maid?

HIM: Well, you’re so all-fired up to help.

HER: I’m just trying to get things done.

HIM: I could have done it.

HER: Sure, but we didn’t have all day.

HIM: Are you sure you want to go?

HER: Well, if I don’t drive, how are you getting there?

HIM: I could walk.

HER: With your cane skills?

HIM: I could hitch.

HER: With that sour puss?

HIM: Why do I feel like a bag of dirty laundry?

HER: Probably because you think of yourself as a bag of dirty laundry.

HIM: Do you have the address?

HER: I thought you had it.

HIM: Oh, great.

HER: I can’t do everything.

HIM: Who’s asking you to?

HER: Do the math…

HIM: It seems the more you do, the less I can do.

HER: And the less you think you can do, the more I have to do.

HIM: You’re a regular rescuing angel.

HER: And you’re a big fat spoiled brat.

HIM: Great, now you’re my mother?

HER: No thanks, I need a man.

HIM: Sorry, I left my manhood in my other pants…

HER: You lost your eyes, not your-

HIM: It doesn’t feel that way…

HER: I can’t take much more of this.

HIM: What, you’re going to skip out?

HER: This isn’t what I signed up for.

HIM: Well, I’m sorry life sucks the big one.

HER: It doesn’t have to.

HIM: Easy for you to say.

HER: I’m going.

HIM: Are you coming back?

HER: It depends…

HIM: On what?

HER: I think you know…

HIM: If you stay, I promise-

HER: No more promises.

HIM: What if…?

HER: Nope.

HIM: How about…?

HER: Stop!

HIM: OK… OK…

HER: I’ll be back…

HIM: Hey, did you see the remote?

HER: Are you for real?

HIM: Just kidding…

HER: I’m out of here.

HIM: Are you coming back?

HER: It depends…

HIM: I think we already went through this mulberry bush.

HER: Later…

HIM: I love you.

HIM: I love you!

HIM: I wish I was dead…

HER: Nice…

HIM: I thought you had left.

HER: maybe I have…

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**1ST ANNUAL SOUTH BEACH JAZZ FESTIVAL: DECEMBER 7-11: DIANE SCHUUR, RAUL MIDON, DR. ED CALLE & MAMBLUE, AND MANY MORE!**

“Each musical performance will showcase the artistry of at least one person with

a disability. The sheer talent of the artists will promote the festival’s dual goal,

to entertain, and to define others by ability rather than disability.”

The First Annual South Beach Jazz Festival (www.sobejazz.com) will take place throughout various venues on Miami Beach December 7 through December 11, with of the events free and open to the public. Performances will take place at the Colony Theatre, on stages set up throughout Lincoln Road, at Hotel Astor and Rare.

Presented by Power Access, the South Beach Jazz Festival is an event unlike any other, “Each musical performance will showcase the artistry of at least one person with a disability,” according to David New, who conceived the event. “The sheer talent of the artists will promote the festival’s dual goal, to entertain, and to define others by ability rather than disability. The festival is all about bringing our community together through the universal sound of music.”

Now age 46, David lost his sight 15 years ago and was rendered paralyzed from the waist down for two years. Since that time, he has been a steadfast advocate for people with disabilities, especially with his ongoing efforts with the City of Miami Beach. Through his Miami Beach-based companies, Ability Explosion, Access Now and Power Access, David has worked tirelessly to raise awareness of people with disabilities, including the “Dining in the Dark” and Biz-Ability events.

The South Beach Jazz Festival presents 16 jazz artists over the course of four days, with performances produced by KCC Productions. The Colony Theatre and Rare will host ticketed concerts, with free performances on stages at Euclid Circle and 1111 Lincoln Road. Information and tickets are available at www.sobejazz.com.

Following is the event lineup:

Wednesday, December 7

Opening VIP Cocktail Party (By Invitation Only), featuring The Lenard Rutledge Ensemble

Thursday, December 8

8 pm The French Caravan, Hotel Astor, 956

 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach

Friday, December 9

8 pm Raul Midón Trio, Colony Theater, 1040

 Lincoln Road, Miami Beach

Saturday, December 10 – Euclid Circle, Main Stage

1 pm Dr. Ed Calle Jazz Ensemble

2:45 pm Ricky Williams Quartet

4 pm Oriente

5 pm Mike Gerber Trio

6 pm Luis Mario Ochoa Ensemble

8:15 pm Karina Iglesias & The Nu Thang

9:45 pm Felipe Lamogila, featuring Afro-Cuban Beats

Saturday, December 10 – 1111 Lincoln Road Stage

1:00 pm The French Horn Collective

2:45 pm Rolando Grooscors Ensemble

4:30 pm Wendy Pedersen Quartet

Sunday, December 11

11:30 am Jazz Brunch, with Reuben Hoch Chassidic

 Jazz Project Rare, 4101 Pine Tree Drive,

 Miami Beach

4 pm Diane Schuur & Dr. Ed Calle’s Grammy Award Winner Mamblue Big Band

 Colony Theatre

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT! The public is invited to support Power Access and Ability Explosion so that more programs and events can be presented to create awareness of the needs of people with disabilities. Raffle tickets to win a $500 gift certificate from Lululemon are available for purchase on the website (www.sobejazz.com) for $5 each, or three for $10. The drawing will be held on December 12, and all proceeds benefit Power Access, Inc. and the South Beach Jazz Festival. In addition, a GoFundMe page has been set up where people can make donations – www.gofundme.com/sobejazz.

Sponsors for the event include 1111 Lincoln Road, 8025 Promo, Ability Explosion, Access Now, Atlantic Broadband, City of Miami Beach, Curro Industries, Elite Tent, Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, Jameck Development, Kersten Communications, Lincoln Road Business Improvement District, Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce, Miami Dade Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, Outfront Media, Power Access, Segafredo, South Beach Animal Hospital, Spris, WDNA, Whole Foods and WLRN.

For further information on tickets, sponsorship or volunteer opportunities, go to www.SoBeJazz.com or call (786) 607-JAZZ.

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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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