**THE WHITE CANE BULLETIN**

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



## May - June 2017

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

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

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Those much-needed contributions, which are Tax-deductible, can be sent to the Florida Council of the Blind treasurer, Linda Jacobson, at 2915 Circle Ridge Drive, Orange Park, FL 32065.

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

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

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

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**

As I sit here in my recliner at 6 o'clock on a Friday morning, I reflect upon another Easter and Passover being upon us, and the state of affairs of the world and this country. But I promise to keep politics out of this message. Let me devote this month's message to giving you a status report of our organization and its business.

I wonder how many of you realize all that goes into making our convention happen each year. Let me begin by thanking our Convention Coordinator, Sally Benjamin, and the Convention Committee for all of its hours planning and organizing our convention. They receive incredible help from Kati Lear. Kati mailed the Convention Call recently. Online registration is up. Please remember that you must make your hotel reservations directly with the Lexington Riverwalk Hotel and Conference Center in Jacksonville before May 2nd to take advantage of our $85 per night room rate, which includes breakfast. We are looking forward to seeing many of you in Jacksonville June 1st through June 4th, especially our first-timers.

The Florida Legislature is considering a voting bill that would permit the use of accessible voting machines by all Florida voters. SB 1160 must pass to guarantee that voters who are blind or visually impaired can vote on the same voting equipment as what sighted voters use. While it is scheduled on the Senate Judiciary Committee's April 19th calendar, as of now, there is no companion bill in the House. This is not a good sign.

On the state level, we have been asked to sign off on an endorsement of legislation that condemns hate crimes against Floridians, including persons with disabilities. There was a mini state ADA bill that has been introduced that seems like an attempt by the state to preempt what is already regulated by the federal government.

As a follow-up to our legislative lobbying trip to Washington, FCB members have been asked to contact Florida's U.S. Senators. We are requesting them to introduce companion legislation to the Cogswell-Macy Act, H.R. 1120. This bill pertains to the special education needs of deaf, deaf-blind, and blind children. Each of you can assist in advancing this legislation by contacting Senator Marco Rubio's Tampa office at 813-287-5035. If you would prefer to e-mail your request, please send it to Shauna\_Johnson@rubio.senate.gov asking that your message be forwarded to the proper staffer at the Washington, D.C. office. Please ask Senator Rubio to consider sponsoring a companion Senate Bill to H.R. 1120, the Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act.

I am pleased to report that just before Congress's Easter recess, the Medicare Low Vision Aids Demonstration Project legislation was reintroduced in this session of Congress as H.R. 2050. The introducing sponsors were Rep. Carolyn Maloney (Democrat, NY), Rep. Gus Bilirakis (Republican, FL), and Rep. Steve Cohen (Democrat, TN). As with the Cogswell-Macy Act, ACB and FCB have been lobbying for passage of this legislation for several years. We appreciate any and all support our members can give to these efforts. For questions, please contact either myself or Debbie Grubb, who is our Legislative and Public Education Chair.

In response to our first attempt at Structured Negotiations, Publix has announced the release of a talking prescription label program idea. The Executive Committee has just unanimously rejected a strong-handed self-serving settlement offer from Publix. I'm not optimistic about further positive developments from Publix, but hopefully I can report more at our convention.

Spring is in the air. We have the FCB raffle and the auction at convention to look forward to again this year. Please help our annual budget by selling raffle tickets for your chapters. Raffle proceeds also benefit FCB. Leslie Spoone, like usual, is running a tight ship and has put together an exciting auction. Similarly in the spirit of fundraising, once again, the ACB webpage is up for the Florida Hurricanes walk team. I urge all of you to please reach into your pockets and help support the Hurricanes so that we can exceed last year's great performance. Our budget and FCB'S continuing advocacy projects need your help in making our participation in the Brenda Dillon ACB Walkathon successful. You can find a link to the Florida Hurricanes webpage on the ACB website, or donate at this link: <https://acb.donorpages.com/2017ACBWalk/JamesKracht/>.

Again, I am looking forward to seeing many of you at the Convention in early June.

Respectfully,

Jim Kracht, President

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**2017 FCB Annual Convention**
By Kati Lear

GET READY, JACKSONVILLE – HERE WE COME!

Our Florida Council of the Blind state convention dates this year are Thursday, June 1 through Sunday, June 4. We will be staying at the Lexington Riverwalk Hotel and Conference Center. The address is 1515 Prudential Drive; Jacksonville, FL 32207. To make your room reservation, call (904) 396-5100 or toll-free (877) 539-7070. Room rates are $85 per night plus tax. You will be given complimentary breakfasts for each night that you are at the hotel. Your room reservation must be made on or before May 2 to get the $85 rate. If you make your reservation after May 2, the room cost goes up significantly.

The Convention Calls have been mailed to you, and online registration is now open. The convention registration fee is $25. The meal cost for the barbecue, awards dinner, and the FCB banquet are $35. If you buy the three dinners as a package, the cost is $95. Your convention checks must be post marked by midnight on May 25 to get the $25 convention registration discount. Online registration will also close at midnight. Registration at the door will be $35.

If anyone needs assistance in filling out the online registration, please give me a call at (800) 267-4448. I’m looking forward to seeing you in Jacksonville.

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**GOCB Update**
By Martha James

On April 8, the GOCB once again hosted a fun night of trivia. Everyone received a free drink, and the VFW women’s auxiliary once again graciously provided food. The silent auction provided plenty of items to bid on. Thanks go out to Leslie Spoone for collecting the auction items and prizes. Thanks also to everyone who participated in making this an evening to remember.

First place went to the Lovin' Spooneful, second place went to Jack of All Trades, and third place went to The Green Machine.

On May 3, the chapter will participate in another Dine and Donate event at Tijuana Flats. Asli Goncer’s music will help keep everyone in a festive mood.

The annual FCB state convention will be held from June 1 to June 4. This year, it is being held in Jacksonville. On June 10, the chapter’s annual award and scholarship luncheon will be held at Perkins.

In addition, for those with computer and Internet access, GOCB is on Facebook. You can find us on Facebook by typing in “GOCB.”

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**Pinellas Council Update**
By Greg Lindberg

The Pinellas Council of the Blind has gotten off to a rockin’ start in 2017! We installed our new officers in January. Eugene Batke is our new president. Grant Downey remains as our vice president, as do Sharon Youngs as treasurer and yours truly as secretary. Hal Knight is our new membership secretary. Our officers and members have big plans for the coming years. We now have 64 members.

At our March meeting, we had a guest speaker named Chris Gabbard from a store called the Low Vision Center in Clearwater. The store offers a huge selection of products for the visually impaired, including video magnifiers, OCR devices, and even stickers with raised bumps that feel like Braille to put on a microwave, oven, or any other household item to improve its ease of use. You can find the store online at magaids.com.

In April, our chapter held a picnic at Eagle Lake Park in Clearwater. In addition to holding a brief council meeting, we enjoyed burgers, hot dogs, baked beans, chips, and the famous Grandma’s Cookies. Hal Knight provided a variety of music from all eras, and I played a few tunes on my acoustic guitar, including “Margaritaville” and “Wild Thing.” A special thanks goes out to the volunteers who helped prepare and serve the tasty grilled cuisine.

Because of how successful it was last year, we’re already laying the groundwork for our second annual Low Vision Expo coming up in October. Last year, we had a few hundred people attend the expo, which consisted of guest speakers and a large area of vendors from all around the state. It was almost like a mini convention for us. More information will follow on this in an upcoming edition of the White Cane Bulletin.

I should also mention that two of our members, Barb Jachim and Carol Osmar, have been instrumental in our New Vision support group. Several of our members meet at the Talking Book Library in Clearwater on the second Thursday of every month. This group is for anyone dealing with vision loss issues and those looking for resources, but all are invited to attend. The group has continued to grow over the past year, and we’d love to see other chapters hold similar separate meetings like this as a platform for more topics to be discussed.

I hope this article has given you some insight into a chapter of FCB that I’m so proud to be part of, and I hope more chapters out there will contribute updates to the White Cane Bulletin. I know many of you within FCB are doing great work and have come up with some innovative ideas for fun events, worthwhile fundraisers, creative advocacy projects, and plenty of other happenings in your local areas. So, let’s start sharing more of them with the rest of FCB!

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**Sarasota Council Updates**
By Karen Christie

Our Sarasota chapter held its March meeting on Saturday the 11th at IHOP restaurant.

Following the approval of the February minutes, and a brief reading of the treasurer’s report, the meeting turned to new business.

President Randy Reed brought up the topic of accessible television options as offered by the local Comcast provider. Our vice-president, in particular, praised the talking remote feature, which enables visually-impaired customers to choose a TV station using one’s voice, not by the usual method of pushing buttons.

Randy next discussed the subject of guest speakers. While up until this point he has made the arrangements for our group’s speakers, he is encouraging council members to participate in suggesting topics and speakers for future meetings.

Our guest presentation for the day was made by Wendy O’Steen, a representative from Vanda Pharmaceuticals, who came to speak to our group about the condition known as Non-24 Sleep/Wake Disorder, often abbreviated and commonly known as “Non-24.” Non-24 is a condition that affects mostly individuals who are totally blind. It results in their inability to set their body clock, which in sighted people is based on the light/dark periods of every day. Hence, a person with this disorder may be wide awake during the night and sleepy during the day. Unfortunately, as one might imagine, this can cause problems when it comes to work schedules and in personal relationships. Due to certain rules and regulations, Ms. O’Steen was not at liberty to talk to our group about treatment options that are available, but it was quite interesting – and to some, a bit of a relief – to hear that they are not the only ones struggling with this unique vision-related disorder.

Our April meeting was held on Saturday the 8th at IHOP restaurant.

After the March minutes were read and the treasurer’s report had been given, it was brought to our attention that two of our Council members had recently been hospitalized. We wish them both a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing them at the May meeting.

The first topic of discussion was voter accessibility. While absentee ballots are an option to be considered, president Randy Reed also encouraged our members to look into the use of specialized equipment available for use at local polling stations.

Next up was a conversation concerning the upcoming FCB convention, which is to be held in Jacksonville at the beginning of June. A good number of Council members (at this time about 20) plan to attend. The possibility of charter bus transportation to the event was discussed.

A planned guest speaker from Orcam, a company that manufactures artificial vision devices, was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting. Thankfully, Andy Reeves, COO at the Lighthouse of Manasota, which serves the visually impaired in Manatee and Sarasota counties, stepped in to talk to the group.

We look forward to our next meeting on May 13. This will be the last meeting before we break for summer vacation. However, as usual, our business meetings will be replaced by “Meet and Eat” get-togethers throughout the summer.

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**Blind Services In Florida**

By Roanna Bacchus

About Me

In today's society, individuals with visual impairments encounter many difficulties. I was born in February of 1990 in Boston, Massachusetts. As a toddler, I attended the Early Intervention Program at the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts. After Early Intervention, I went to a pre-school in Boston where I was exposed to a wide variety of activities. I am a recent college graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of Central Florida.

About Florida

Florida is located in the southeastern part of the United States. Orlando offers world-class attractions, such as Disney World, Universal Studios, and the Holy Land Experience. Currently, Orlando has a population of about 250,000 people. St. Augustine is one of Florida's historic cities and the oldest city in the nation. Florida is known for its orange crop that is produced each year.

Braille

Unfortunately, Braille menus are not available at many of the restaurants here in Central Florida. Braille signs are available in many restrooms in the public schools and other facilities. The Lighthouse of Central Florida (LCF) provides Braille classes on a regular basis, and the Braille Association of Mid-Florida is one of the agencies that transcribes printed materials into Braille. I am planning to start a small business that will provide Braille menus to local restaurants that do not have them.

School for the Blind

The Florida School For The Deaf and Blind (FSDB) is located in St. Augustine, Florida. This educational institution provides a variety of services to deaf and visually impaired students throughout Florida. Blind students may also be mainstreamed into the public school systems in their respective counties. Many teachers of the visually impaired travel to schools within their respective districts to provide services to visually impaired students.

Mobility

My family and I live in a remote suburban area that does not have a bus stop. I use a cane to get around outside of my home when I am in the mall or another area. I take my white cane to church each Sunday. Without a car or the use of public transportation, Floridians are not able to move freely throughout the state. Orientation and mobility instructors do go to different communities to show residents how to travel independently around their homes, workplaces, and other areas of interest.

Guide Dogs

Guide Dog Users of Florida (GDUF) is an affiliate of FCB. The affiliate serves as a way for guide dog users around the state to stay current on the latest issues affecting those with service animals. It also provides fellowship for guide dog users to share information and experiences, in addition to advocacy assistance and education. GDUF meets at the annual FCB state convention.

Also, the Florida Association of Guide Dog users, a division of the National Federation of The Blind (NFB), works to promote the rights of guide dog users in Florida. During the NFB's national convention, FLAGDU works with a local company to provide pet food that can be delivered to the hotel for guide dog users. They also encourage their members to educate the public about their rights as guide dog handlers.

Some people have not had good experiences with guide dogs when using ride-sharing services, such as Uber and Lyft.

I do not currently own a guide dog due to the fact that I live with my parents. I am still working to improve my mobility and cane skills so that I can own a guide dog at some point in the future.

Public Transportation

Access Lynx is the service that many blind people use for their public transportation in Central Florida. Due to issues such as unreliability and random pickups, I choose not to use Access Lynx to get around Orlando. Ride-sharing companies such as Uber and Lyft also offer their services to disabled Floridians. Taxis and the SunRail train system are also options for transportation. My family prefers to provide transportation for me rather than having me travel alone.

Access Technology

Local Lighthouses and vision rehab centers around the state provide courses in access technology for the blind. The Florida Division of Blind Services (DBS) refers its clients to other agencies that can offer technology training in and outside of the workplace. Engineers are often sent to the homes of clients to install computer software, such as Jaws and ZoomText, on home computers. Many visually impaired people in Florida – including myself – own note-takers with refreshable Braille displays that have been purchased by our state agency.

Employment

The Lighthouse provides job training to blind people in Central Florida. The Lighthouse also offers a course called Ability To Market, which provides opportunities to help clients hone interviewing skills and other job-related components. The Center for Independent Living provides employment services to disabled citizens in Central Florida. Career Source of Central Florida links people with disabilities to any jobs that are available to them.

Rehabilitation Agencies

The Rehabilitation Center for the Visually Impaired is located in Daytona Beach. This is a place that provides blind people with the opportunity to learn the necessary independent living skills that will allow them to succeed in their daily lives. The NFB and FCB also have chapters in Florida that provide scholarships that allow blind students to attend their national and state conventions. The Florida Division of Blind Services provides many of the services available to blind Floridians. Local Lighthouses provide courses in Braille, access technology, cane travel, and daily living skills that will allow clients to increase their independence.

I hope this article gave you a glimpse of the services available to blind people in Florida. I love living here despite the summer heat and rain. My family and I have lived here for 22 years.

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**Poetry Corner**
By Shelley Sawyer

Greetings Dear Reader,

This one is for the incurable romantic, for the one who is happily in love, for the one who believes everyone should be happily in love because it is spring, for the one who loves poetry by Robert Burns, or the one who just loves a sweet love song. Believe it or not, I fall into all of those categories. Enjoy.

Red Red Rose

By Robert Burns

My love is like a red, red rose

That’s newly sprung in June:

My love is like the melody

That’s sweetly played in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,

So deep in love am I,

And I will love thee still, my dear,

Till all the seas go dry.

Till all the seas go dry, my dear,

And the rocks melt with the sun,

And I will love thee still, my dear,

While the sands of life shall run.

And fare thee well, my only love,

And fare thee well a while

And I will come again, my love,

Though it were ten thousand mile.

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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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