

THE TEXAS STAR

Vol. 31, No. 1

Neva Fairchild, Editor

January 2023

From Your President

First Vice President Report

Second Vice President Report

Secretary Secrets

Tales from the Treasurer

New Year's Resolutions

Advocacy Committee Update

Ride the Waves to Better Accessibility with ACBT

Nominating Committee Update

The Braille Revival League of Texas

Library Users of America- Texas

Alamo Council Update

Austin Council Update

Dallas Area Council Update

El Paso Council Update

Fort Worth Council Update

Houston Happenings

Non24 Symptoms

Chris D. Prentice

Michael Garrett

Jan Gray

Mary Alice Gary

Sheila Derrick

Jan Gray

Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Peggy Garrett

Michael Garrett

Michael Garrett

Gayle Metoyer

Shelley McMullen

Marcus Manning

Mary Witherspoon

Eleanor Coldwell

Jan Gray

Michael Garrett

Shauna Jatho, RN

[Note: Articles printed in The Texas Star are submitted by the subscribers and are not necessarily reflective of the membership as a whole. The articles express only the opinion of the author.]

Presidential Points

By Chris Prentice

Happy New Year to everyone in ACBT! Now that we have entered fully into 2023, let's consider what is to come? I want to point out four things that come from your membership in ACBT. (A) First, be ACTIVE in ACBT locally, on committees and statewide with our activities and fundraising efforts. (C) Next, CONTRIBUTE to your local chapter and to ACBT, with your time, thoughtfulness and money where possible. (B) Third, BRING your friends, blind, low vision and fully sighted to your local chapter gatherings.

Encourage them to become a part of our organization! (T) With efforts from all of us, we can TRANSFORM ACBT into a great, growing and thriving organization that seeks to serve all blind and low vision folks here in Texas. This is a time for new beginnings; so let us all determine to be ready to give more of ourselves to the cause of ACBT. We have accomplished many great things in our past; however, there is so much more to do in our future. LET'S GO!!!

Congratulations to our newest members of our Board of Directors. Our new Second Vice President is Jan Gray from our Fort Worth Council. Our new Board Member is Catherine Perez from the El Paso Council. These ladies will do a great job on our Board!

First Vice President's Report

By Michael Garrett

Greetings ACBT family! After a whirlwind 2022 that allowed us to witness some different experiences, we are gearing up for a brand new year with new opportunities. A number of us gathered in Austin at our first in person state Conference/Convention since 2019. It was good to see members that we hadn't been with in a long time and get to meet some new attendees.

Now, we get to plan for the 2023 festivities which are scheduled to be held in San Antonio. As we make those plans, your Membership Committee will continue to try to keep you, our members, informed and provide activities that you can participate in, not only for gaining new knowledge, but also

for fun and entertainment. We will continue to work with other committees to bring you alerts, activities and other information as it comes to us.

We need your participation and support as we try to share information and attract others to join our organization. Each of us is a reflection of what ACBT stands for. If what I witnessed at the last convention was the real thing, we have much to build on. Our members were welcoming, helpful and openly embraced our new attendees. Let's build on those attributes to remain an inclusive, active and caring organization.

ACBT: Advancing the Cause of Blind Texans.

Second Vice President's Report

By Jan Gray

Thank you to all of the board for your confidence in my abilities to tackle this job. I hope that I can live up to your expectations in the coming year. I am excited to take on this challenge and I hope I can count on all of ACBT to assist me or offer suggestions. Officers cannot accomplish anything without the help of the membership. By next month, we should be announcing a fund raising project, so watch for the announcement. Thanks to all . Remember, if we work together, we will make a difference!

Secretary Secrets

by Mary Alice Gary

I hope everyone stayed warm and had a wonderful Holiday season and a very Happy New Year with family and friends. When the cold weather arrived, I was just east of Denton and it was actually colder than Chicago at the time! It sure made it feel like Christmas and winter were upon us finally. Now if only enough snow had fallen we could have all made snow angels and a Frosty. 😊 No, I'm not kidding.

As for ACBT updates, here goes. The Annual Budget Meeting was held on December 13, 2022 and the ACBT Board members approved the 2023 Budget. It was announced that San Antonio would be the destination for the 2023 Spring Board Meeting and Conference. Normally the Spring Board

Meeting is held in April but because of the Fiesta Activities, it will be held on May 5, 2023, the first Saturday in May instead, with the Conference being held the last weekend in August. So, mark your calendars and plan to attend in 2023.

Start 2023 by receiving timely information pertaining to current events, activities, advocacy updates and other ACBT issues and news, all you have to do is subscribe to the ACBT Group list. Just send an email to:

ACBT+subscribe@groups.io (that's the plus symbol after the ACBT). You can actually reply just to the sender or everyone which ever you choose. Keep your response private or let everyone know what your thoughts are. ACB National conducts at least a dozen events every day. Most can be heard on various ACB Media Channels using your Alexa device. Just ask Alexa to "Open ACB Media". You may also wish to subscribe to the ACB Community Events Group List to receive daily emails listing all the happenings for that day. Subscribe by sending an email request to Community@acb.org. The daily list includes all the topics, times, links and call-in information to participate. You don't necessarily need a computer or the Zoom App. Stay in Touch and join both! I do.

Tales from the Treasurer

By Sheila Derrick

It is now time to prepare your membership lists for delivery to me by **Feb. 15, 2023 (for those with meetings on the 3rd Saturday, as soon as possible)** along with your member dues. Please help by sending **ONLY** information for members who have actually paid their dues for 2023. We encourage all members with email access to request publications by email.

For each member, I need: full name, address, home and cell phone numbers, email address, vision status (blind/visually impaired or fully sighted), Texas Star format (email, large print, or audio CD-The Star is **NOT** available in Braille) and Braille Forum format (email, Braille, large print, or NLS Daisy player cartridge). Membership lists can be sent by paper or electronically in word document, or excel spread sheet.

Again, this year ACB and ACBT are requesting demographic information on our members for use in grant writing and other funding applications. The additional statistics are

- AGE RANGE: 13 to 20, 21 to 40, 41 to 59, and 60 +
- GENDER: male, female or other
- ETHNICITY: Caucasian (white), African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian-American or other

Dues are as follows:

- Chapter Members: \$7.00
- Special Interest Affiliate members: \$2.00
- At-large Members: \$10.00
- Junior Members: \$3.00
- ACB Life Member: \$2.00
- ACBT Life Member: \$5.00
- Life Member of both: no dues required

Please remember to include life members on your list even though you may not be submitting any dues for them.

Mail dues and/or membership lists to: Sheila Derrick, 309 Paloverde Lane, Ft. Worth, TX 76112-1122. My email is sjderrick212@hotmail.com and my phone is 817 507-3964. Please contact me, if you have any questions.

New Year's Resolutions

By Jan Gray

Each year, before or after January 1, lots of people make resolutions, but according to experts only one-third of people actually achieve those resolutions. There are three important reasons for this failure: 1. The goal is not your idea, but one that you perceive that society wants for you, 2. The resolution is too vague, and 3. The goal is not realistic. Resolutions, like SMART goals, should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and Time sensitive. Make a realistic plan for accomplishing your goals and set up rewards for the progress you make. Remember that life may present

obstacles for you to overcome, and if you plan for them, you can overcome them . If you cannot stay on course everyday, don't give up. Remember each day is a new opportunity to begin again. Goals can be short term, but should be realistic an achievable. Remember most resolutions have to do with changing bad habits, or creating good ones, and habits are not changed overnight. If you get off course don't chastise yourself, but remind yourself that you have learned a lesson that will help you eventually achieve your goal. If this resolution is important to you, don't let anyone else dissuade you from your convictions. Now that you know what the experts say about resolutions, I hope it helps you to achieve yours, as for me I am going to resolve to be among that one-third of the population that accomplishes their goals.

Advocacy Committee Report

by Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Please allow me to begin by introducing the ACBT Advocacy Services/Legislation Committee for 2023:

- Chair: Kenneth Semien, Sr., Beaumont Area Council
- Melanie Brunson, Alamo Council
- Michael Garrett and Peggy Garrett, Houston Council
- Mary Witherspoon, Dallas Area Council

As we await the release of the 2023 Legislative Imperatives from the American Council of the Blind (ACB), we place an emphasis on the virtual ACB DC Leadership Conference scheduled for March 4-7, 2023, on the zoom platform. Registration for the Leadership Conference opens on Tuesday, January 31st and will cost \$25. Sessions will include ACB's Presidents' Meeting and Legislative Seminar, along with a Fireside Chat on Sunday, March 5. During the following week, there will be an in-person component with a separate price. If interested, request more information by sending an email to: semien.k@outlook.com

Additionally, the 118th Congress convened on January 3, 2023 and we will soon receive a list of all members, which contains contact information in order for us to plan legislative meetings.

The 88th Texas Legislature convened on January 10, 2023 and we are gearing up for legislative action days during the month of March.

The 2023 ACBT Legislative Priorities are as follows:

- Fraud Prevention Regulations Related to Service Dogs
- Equal Access to the Absentee Ballot
- Increase Funding for TWC Older Individuals who are blind (OIB) Program
- Enhance services for TWC Older Individuals who are blind (OIB) Program.

Join in on our ongoing advocacy efforts as we seek to make a positive impact on the lives of Texans who are blind, visually impaired or have low vision. Many of our efforts impact the lives of Texans with various disabilities. We welcome your email, phone calls and ideas related to effective advocacy strategies. Reach out to us by dialing 409-866-5838 or send email to: semien.k@outlook.com .

Ride the Waves to Better Accessibility with ACBT

By Peggy Garrett

The Conference/Convention Committee is busy planning the 2023 ACBT Conference/Convention.

The Committee Chose: “Riding the waves to better accessibility with ACBT” as next year’s theme! The 2023 event will be the 45th annual Conference/Convention of ACBT and is scheduled to be held in San Antonio at the Doubletree by Hilton San Antonio Airport Hotel.

Located at 611 NW Loop 410, San Antonio, TX 78216, the hotel was the site of the 2014 Conference/Convention but was then the Hilton San Antonio Airport Hotel. The hotel offers complimentary self-parking in the parking garage, Complimentary internet service in guest rooms and meeting space, complimentary business center, fitness center, outdoor pool and on-site restaurant, The hotel is located less then 2 miles from the San Antonio

International Airport and just a few blocks from the North Star Mall, advertised as one of the largest malls in Texas; it hosts a variety of restaurants!

The Conference/Convention dates are August 24-27, 2023. The room rate is \$102.00 plus tax.

Stay tuned for updates as we hope to meet you all in San Antonio in August 2023!

From the Nominating Committee

By Michael Garrett

It seems as if we just held elections, but it's already time to think about 2023 and who will be willing to step up and serve ACBT in a leadership position. This year two Board of Directors positions will be up for election. Since one of the Directors has been appointed to an officer position, that spot has also been filled by appointment. Both incumbents must run for reelection.

However, if you or someone you know would like to run for a Board of Directors position, you may submit your name or the name of the person who intends to run. Be sure that person is qualified and willing to serve. Each candidate must submit a biographical sketch to the Nominating Committee. Of course, candidates can run from the floor. Again, such persons must be qualified and be familiar with the position being sought according to the ACBT Constitution and Bylaws. Persons running from the floor must also have a short bio which can be read before the convention assembly. The bio should consist of a short paragraph telling why you are seeking a particular office and answers to the questions which have been prepared by the Nominating Committee. Please limit your bio and question responses to 2 pages in Aerial font, 16-point.

Below are the questions which need to be answered and submitted to the Committee:

1. What are your reasons for seeking this office?
2. What experience and expertise do you bring to this office and to ACBT?

3. What actions will you take to help ACBT fulfill its mission and goals?
4. Fundraising is vital in keeping any nonprofit alive. Name two fundraising events and tell how you will contribute to the success of these events.
5. When do you feel it is necessary for change to take place in an organization's practices and procedures?
6. What do you see as the biggest challenges facing ACBT over the next two to three years and how will you help us overcome them?

All bios and answers must be submitted by May 31st, 2023 either by email or post marked by May 31st if sent by regular mail. All submissions must be typewritten; no handwriting allowed. Send all submissions to: megarrett4443@sbcglobal.net or mail to:

Michael Garrett
7806 Chaseway Drive
Missouri City, Texas 77489.

ACBT: Advancing the Cause of Blind Texans!

The Braille Revival League of Texas (BRLT)

By Michael Garrett

At BRLT we can't emphasize enough how important we believe braille is in the lives of individuals who are blind or have low vision. To that end, we are embarking on several projects to call attention to braille not only as a means of literacy, but also as a means of independence and entertainment.

We began the year with a membership drive, welcoming back members who took time off and encouraging new members to join. Anyone who wants to help us promote the use of braille in all appropriate situations is welcome. We celebrated Louis Braille's birthday by making a presentation to the students at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI). We will collaborate with LUA of Texas to promote and celebrate National Library Week. We will sponsor an essay contest this year and the winners will be announced at the 2023 ACBT Conference/Convention in San Antonio.

Stay tuned for other BRLT announcements. In the meantime,
READ MORE BRAILLE!

The Library Users of America-Texas

by Gayle Metoyer

Greetings LUAT members and friends:

Happy 2023!! I hope this year gives you some free time for reading. We would love for you to subscribe to our list so that you can share your favorite readings with us. To subscribe, please send a blank email to luatx+subscribe@groups.io.

We are holding our business meeting virtually since we did not have it at the conference last August. The meeting will be held via Zoom on Tuesday, Jan. 24 at 7 p.m. The details will be sent to the LUAT list later. Please be prepared to vote for the officers and discuss any other business affairs.

National Library Week will be April 23-30 2023. This will be a good opportunity to promote library services and librarians in your local community.

As Always, Happy Reading!!

Alamo Council Update

By Shelley McMullen

First, on behalf of the Alamo chapter I'm wishing you all a happy, healthy, prosperous New Year!

We ended 2022 with an awesome Christmas party. Thanks to the great planning of Elizabeth and James Hanna. We had a white elephant gift exchange, feasted on good food at the Longhorn Café along with the greatest unhealthiest desserts you can imagine.

At our January meeting new officers will be installed. Congrats to the following hard-working folks:

- President: Mary Alice Gary
- First VP: Shelley McMullen
- Second VP: James Hanna
- Secretary: Joe McMullen
- Treasurer: Kevin Dunlop
- Assistant Treasurer: Thomas (Gene Williams)

Last, we hope to continue to update and modify our Constitution and bylaws in 2023. We will, of course, also continue to focus on recruiting new members to the Alamo Council.

Most of all, we look forward to hosting the annual ACBT conference/convention in August

Austin Council Update

By Marcus Manning

Happy new year ACBT from the Austin Chapter! Cheers to each and everyone of you, those people who you hold dear and all that you do and will touch through the love you speak and the life that you live.

In this, our capitol city, we have enjoyed a beautiful end of the year as a chapter in 2022. We hosted a table offering Austin ACBT Braille and large print pamphlets and Austin chapter sports bottles at a White cane day that was well attended by blind people and friends of blind people all over the greater Austin Metropolitan area. Rosario Manning, was our lone representative networking with all visitors to the table and exchanging information, adding several people interested in more information about getting involved with our Austin Council. We also held an election and elected Antoinette Cervantes as an Austin chapter board member. Mis Cervantes served our chapter as a board member and an officer while working toward completing her Bachelors degree. Which brings us now to another opportunity to raise our glasses or at least an ACBT round of applause! After completing her internship at Criss Cole rehabilitation center ,

On December 6th Miss Antoinette Cervantes graduated with her Bachelor's degree in orientation and Mobility.

We ended the year at our fun interactive Christmas party where we all were able to enjoy ourselves with new guests and new members. Christmas cheer was shared by our chapter contributing \$500 to the blue Santa organization and \$200 to the Bryant family, a local family with 2 blind parents.

Our first activity of 2023 is still in the planning stages, but we know that it will be focused on Braille awareness.

Dallas Area Council of the Blind (DACB) Update

By Mary Witherspoon

Joy and celebrations describes the winter activities of DACB. In November, we celebrated the elections of officers which include Ted Harper as President, Chris Allen as First Vice President, Linda Riddle as Secretary and Larry Thacker as Treasurer. The office of second vice president remains open.

Christmas party coordinator Dorothy Johnson and five of her friends (known as the "Johnsonettes") created a joyous luncheon and show in December. Elvis sang both gospel and Christmas tunes to ring in the season. Julie Herbert with West Coast University and her daughter provided sighted guide to all throughout the event and chapter friend Greg Petit helped everywhere needed.

In his first year of membership, Al Rodriguez was named DACB member of the year. Chris Allen says "Al was instrumental in securing Envision Dallas as our regular meeting place and Al has used his social media skills to promote DACB on Facebook by live streaming some events." Al was also the inspiration behind DACB's October taco extravaganza fundraiser which was a tremendous success. Congratulation to Al – we celebrate you with this honor!

For the New Year, President Harper says “We’ll review what worked well in 2022 and meet 2023 head-on!” Find up-to-date information on DACB activities at dallasacb.org. The Dallas Chapter wishes our ACBT family a great start to joy and celebrations for this New Year!

El Paso Council Update

By Eleanor Coldwell

The El Paso Council of the Blind has a home! Thanks to a generous citizen, we have been offered some office space in which to hold our meetings, but there are other big plans in the works. We hope to offer independent living skills to anyone who is blind or visually impaired. Member George Zavala has volunteered to teach technology classes and member Gema Cenicerros has offered to teach Braille classes. We have been given access to a kitchen, so we hope to teach kitchen safety and cooking techniques. We are starting out slowly, but hope to expand our services as we see the need, and expand our resources. We are grateful for this opportunity, and we are prepared to put our noses to the grindstone and do some major fundraising so that we can continue to offer important skills to BVI individuals in an area of West Texas that has no Lighthouse or similar sources of assistance.

Fort Worth Chapter News

By Jan Gray

Fort Worth was busy last quarter. In October we met in-person at the Library and enjoyed getting together again, November brought us a virtual visit by ACBT President Chris Prentice, and in December we had a delightful Christmas luncheon and gift auction. We had a great time teaching kids in ESC 11 to make Christmas wreaths from beads at a tactile fair. We had about twenty blind children that came to our booth. It was great! We were invited to participate in another craft event for blind children, to be held at the Lighthouse, in January. We are looking forward to an interesting and eventful New Year. Everyone here in Fort Worth sends Best Wishes to all for a prosperous and happy New Year!

Houston Happenings

By Michael Garrett

The Houston Council of the Blind was in full stride during the fourth quarter of 2022. We participated in three White Cane Safety Day celebrations. One of those was cosponsored by HCB along with all of the blindness related consumer organizations in the greater Houston area. That event was the first ever WCSD celebration completely organized, sponsored and led by blindness organizations and was considered to be the most highly attended of the three with more than 300 people present.

We continue to be heavily involved with our local transportation agency, providing constructive input and asking tough questions. We have dealt with some education and accessibility issues. We continue to receive a number of calls from individuals requesting information and referral help. As a result of this service, we have gained a few new members.

In November, we held elections. Gayle Metoyer remains in the office of president. Other officers and board members include:

- First Vice President: Noelia Dillingham
- Second Vice President: Cuqui Soto
- Secretary: Michael Garrett
- Treasurer: Foster Brown
- Director: Craig Randle
- Director: Dwight Zerangue
- Director : Denise Colley

We held our annual Christmas Party where we enjoyed a catered meal and service recognitions were acknowledged. We also held our annual virtual auction, enlisting the participation of shoppers from around the state and across the nation.

HCB: Helping, Caring, Building

Non-24 Symptoms

By Shauna Jatho, RN

Non-24 Hour Sleep Wake Circadian Rhythm Disorder is a serious chronic disorder.

For people who are blind or visually impaired and unable to perceive any or enough light, the body clock and sleep-wake cycle can become out of sync with the 24 hour day-night cycle.

People who have Non-24 experience a constant daily shift in the times when their body expects to sleep and be awake, creating periods when they may be awake at night and want to sleep during the day.

Without enough or any light cues, individuals living with Non-24 may experience the following symptoms:

- Trouble falling asleep and/or staying asleep during the night
- A strong urge to sleep during the day or a tendency to fall asleep unexpectedly
- Sleep patterns that are different from those of most other people they know

These symptoms may greatly affect the quality of your life. If you'd like to host a Non-24 educational presentation with your local chapter/support group, please contact me.

To learn more about Non-24, contact:

Shauna Jatho RN, Clinical Nurse Educator: 202.538.0396

NON-24

a circadian rhythm disorder

American Council of the Blind of Texas

The ACBT Board of Directors is comprised of 5 elected Officers, 4 Directors, an Immediate Past President, and an appointed representative from each Chapter and Special Interest Affiliate. The appointed representatives are selected by their respective Chapters or Special Interest Affiliates. Directors are elected for staggered 4-year terms. Below is a listing of all the state officers and elected board members along with their contact information.

ACBT State Officers:

President:

Chris D. Prentice
(806) 283-8227
cprentice61@att.net
Local Chapter: Austin Council

First Vice President - Membership Chair:

Michael E. Garrett
(281) 438-9665
megarrett4443@sbcglobal.net
Local Chapter: Houston Council

Second Vice President - Fundraising Chair:

Jan Gray
(817) 232-4295
Jan/gray1950@gmail.com
Local Chapter: Fort Worth Council

Treasurer - Finance & Budget Chair:

Sheila Derrick
(817) 507-3964
sjderrick212@hotmail.com
Local Chapter: Fort Worth Council

Secretary:

Mary Alice Gary
(915) 269-2119
ma-gary@att.net
Local Chapter: Alamo Council

Immediate Past President - Constitution & Bylaws Chair:

Peggy R. Garrett
(281) 438-9665
prcgarrett@sbcglobal.net
Local Chapter: Houston Council

ACBT State Directors:

Board Member:

Louann Williams - Director
(210) 884-7778
la.lozano.williams@gmail.com
Local Chapter: Alamo Council

Board Member:

Foster Brown
(832) 469-1817
brownfoster@gmail.com
Local Chapter: Houston Council

Board Member:

Catherine Perez
(915) 224-9402
Kperez@epcblind.org
Local Chapter: El Paso Council