

THE TEXAS STAR

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Neva Fairchild, Editor

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[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 ACBT! We have made it into a brand new year with new challenges and opportunities staring us directly in the face. Since most of us are either blind or low vision, it could be quite easy to act like we do not see these challenges and opportunities; however, I would encourage each one of you to prepare to embrace these matters with unbridled courage and relentless determination. The ways of our country these days are not making things any easier for folks with vision impairments.

Upcoming. Remember that statewide and national primary elections are coming up quickly. March 5, 2024 and early voting will commence the two weeks prior to that date. The law requires at least one accessible voting machine be present at each polling place at every election. Additionally, the ACBT Spring Board Meeting will take place in Houston on April 27, 2024 at our conference hotel. This is an in-person board meeting. I encourage each chapter and special interest affiliate to assure representation at this meeting.

As this new year begins, please talk up ACBT and its affiliates to all your blind or low vision friends and family. When we have more folks pulling the rope, it is much easier to get the ox out of the ditch! I do not own an ox, and I have no interest in buying one at any point in the future.

First Vice President's Report

By Michael Garrett

Wow! What a year! It's hard to believe we closed the door on the year 2023 and we are embarking on a new year. Yes, 2024 presents us with some challenges, but, I believe, with each challenge, there is a corresponding opportunity. The challenges are ongoing, especially those that we constantly encounter as people who are blind or visually impaired. But the opportunity to address the issues, to be involved in the process, to seek solutions, to make our voices heard is something in which each member of ACBT can participate.

In 2024, your Membership Committee hopes to continue to provide you with informative, entertaining and even some thought-provoking events designed

to whet your appetite for more. The ultimate goal is to pique your interest and inspire each member to get involved in the movement. Everyone has something unique to add to the movement. Each member offers something important which can enhance their own situation and could provide an example that others can follow.

As an organization, ACBT wants the best for all our members. The great state of Texas, the place we call home, has vast resources and we must tap into them to make our lives better. Make the most of your membership by staying informed and joining us in our efforts to improve the lives of all Texans who are blind or visually impaired.

ACBT: Advancing the Cause of Blind Texans!

Rockin and Rolling with the Second VP

By Jan Gray

The Fund-Raising committee has been hard at work planning for the 2024 Conference/Convention. We are also working to reinstate the See's Candy Fund Raiser before Valentine's Day. The most I can divulge is that this year for our drawing at the Conference, participants will have an opportunity to win one of two great packages. Our committee meetings are full of creative and innovative ideas designed to be fun and successful for the Conference. You will need to read the STAR for details as the time draws closer. If you have any requests or suggestions, please contact me at jan.gray1950@gmail.com or call me at 817-232-4295. Keep Rocking and Rolling! !

Secretary Secrets

By Mary Alice Gary

Happy New Year to all and I hope y'all have a happy, healthy, safe, prosperous, and rewarding 2024. Sharing time gathering with family and friends to create new memories OR a new tradition or carry on some old ones, is what the Season means to me. As Texas doesn't want to supply any snow, my childhood tradition of making a snowman on Christmas Day is out of the question! 😊 So, creating new ones is a must. Either way

however you celebrated, enjoy, relax, and don't forget to take a "me" minute" or two.

The ACBT Board held their annual Budget and Finance Business Meeting on December 19, 2023 to approve the 2024 Budget. Houston is the destination for the 2024 ACBT Spring Board Meeting on the 4th Saturday in April and the ACBT Conference Convention in August. Also, the ACBT website is currently undergoing some minor reconstruction, so please bear with us until it has been finished IN early 2024.

Begin 2024 by receiving timely information pertaining to current ACBT events, activities, advocacy updates and other 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. ACB National conducts many informative events daily. 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 Zoom App. Stay in Touch and join both! I do.

Wishing y'all a Happy New Year and Remember to Keep Smiling! 😊

Tales from the Treasurer

By Sheila Derrick

It is now time to prepare your membership lists for delivery to me along with your member dues by February 15, 2024, or as soon as possible for those with meetings on the 3rd Saturday. Please help by sending ONLY information for members who have actually paid their dues for 2024. 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, in a word document, or an 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, and 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, and life member of both \$0.00. Please remember to include life members with updated information on your list even though you may not be submitting any dues for them.

Please 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, New Avenues

by Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Happy New Year from the ACBT Advocacy Services/Legislation Committee! It all starts here for our advocacy efforts for 2024. As in past years, we begin looking at areas of interest and how to approach the powers that be to gain support for our concerns. During our January committee meeting, we will determine the 2024 Advocacy and Legislative Priorities and share those as soon as possible on the ACBT group email list. Subscribe to the list by sending a blank email message to: acbt+subscribe@groups.io.

The American Council of the Blind (ACB) DC Leadership Conference will be a hybrid event held from March 1-5, 2024. ACB's Board Meeting, Presidents' Meeting, and Legislative Seminar will take place at the Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. Capitol Hill visits occur on Tuesday March 5, 2024. The schedule of events is as follows:

- **Friday, March 1:** Afternoon Tour (TBD) and Evening Open House at the new ACB Office in Alexandria, Virginia
- **Saturday, March 2:** ACB Board Meeting (9:00 AM – 5:00 PM ET) & Evening Welcome Reception
- **Sunday, March 3:** Presidents' Meeting (including luncheon) & Evening Dine Around in Pentagon City
- **Monday, March 4:** Legislative Seminar (including luncheon)
- **Tuesday, March 5:** Attendees may visit Capitol Hill to meet with their representatives.

The 2024 ACB Legislative Imperatives, otherwise known as the top issues negatively impacting the lives of Americans who are blind or have low vision will be announced during the early part of 2024, and ACB will hold special meetings during February 2024 to ensure that members are introduced to and given the opportunity to participate in a discussion to gain a better understanding of each imperative. Meeting dates will be announced in advance. A list of the 118th Congress, second session with contact information will be made available sometime in January of 2024 for those who plan to visit our nation's Capital or wish to schedule virtual meetings with their respective members of Congress. Registration for the DC Leadership Conference will open during mid-January 2024. The in-person registration fee is \$95, if registered by Monday February 5, 2024, and \$125 on or after Tuesday February 6, 2024. The deadline to register is Friday February 23, 2024.

In-person registration includes participation in the event, Saturday March 2, 2024, evening reception, luncheon meals on Sunday March 3, 2024 and Monday March 4, 2024. The fee for virtual participation is \$25 and the deadline for registration is Friday February 23, 2024.

To register for the conference, visit members.acb.org. Log into your account or create an account by clicking the "Create an Account" button. If you have an account but can't remember your username and/or password, please call our Minnesota office at 612-332-3242 or our Virginia office at 202-467-5081.

Once you have logged in, visit the "DC Leadership Registration" link at the top of the page, read through the instructions and hit the "Begin with

Preferences" button. To register by phone, call our Minnesota office at 612-332-3242 or our Virginia office at 202-467-5081. Hope to meet you there.

Thanks to Melanie Brunson, Michael Garrett, Peggy Garrett, and Mary Witherspoon for serving on the ACBT Advocacy Services/Legislation Committee. Make contact by sending email to: semien.k@outlook.com or dial 409-866-5838.

Conference/Convention Update

By Peggy R. Garrett

The 46th annual Conference/Convention of the American Council of the Blind of Texas is scheduled to be held in Houston!

The site is the Marriott Westchase Hotel located at 2900 Briarpark Drive Houston, TX 77042. This is the same hotel where the Conference/Convention was held in 2018.

The hotel is located just off the Sam Houston Toll Way for easy access from both Bush Intercontinental and Hobby airports and is situated equal distance from each airport. The hotel does not offer an airport shuttle at this time.

The Marriott Westchase hotel is in the rapidly growing and fashionable Westchase Business District of West Houston and sits adjacent to the Carillon Shopping complex featuring a collection of specialty shops and restaurants.

The hotel is minutes away from the popular Galleria Mall in Uptown Houston – offering complimentary shuttle service to hotel guests – subject to availability.

The Conference/Convention is scheduled for August 22-25, 2024. The room rate is \$109.00 + 17% tax=\$127.53 (1-2 people per room). An additional \$10.00 is added for one or two additional people per room.

Stay tuned for more information as the Conference/Convention Planning Committee is busy organizing an event you won't want to miss!

Constitution & Bylaws Committee

By Peggy R. Garrett

From time to time, both the Constitution and Bylaws may need to be updated to ensure that they reflect the most efficient guidelines for the organization. To that extent, ACBT members are encouraged to review the organizations documents and to be familiar with each one. The Constitution & Bylaws Committee is accepting proposed amendments at this time.

Proposed amendments to the Constitution are due 90 (ninety days prior to the opening of the annual Conference/Convention. The deadline to receive amendments to the Constitution is May 24, 2024. This will allow the Committee time to review all submissions as proposed amendments to the Constitution will be printed in the July issue of the Texas Star. The propose amendments will be read during opening session at the Conference/Convention on Saturday, August 24 and presented to be voted on during the annual business meeting on Sunday, August 25, 2024.

Proposed amendments to the Bylaws must be submitted to the Committee Chair via email by 9:00 AM on Friday morning, August 23, 2024, and will be presented to be voted on during the annual business meeting on Sunday morning, August 25, 2024.

Constitution & Bylaws Committee:

Peggy R. Garrett, Chair
Melanie Brunson
Sheila Derrick
Michael Garrett
Mary Alice Gary
Chris Prentice
Kenneth Semien Sr.

Member Morale

By Jan Gray

The Member Morale Committee has added some new members to our committee this year Chris Allen and Daina Ashton, and they are such an inspiration. In November our What's on your Mind: Let's Deal with it, Call

informed us about the Be My Eyes AI application. Sandhya Rao and Brad Snyder, from iBug were the moderators. Thanks so much for your comprehensive program. It was great and we are grateful to have such knowledgeable people that can answer all the questions that were asked. Our December call featured talking about special and or crazy Christmas gifts. We had some new voices on the call. Thanks to everyone who participated. Member Morale is going to host a session at our Houston Convention in August, so stay tuned and we will let you know more!

From the Nominating Committee

By Michael Garrett

It's not too early to begin thinking about who will take on leadership positions in ACBT during the 2024 elections process. This year, all officer positions will be up for election. The President has served 1 term and is eligible for two more two-year terms. We will need to replace the First Vice President's position as he has served three consecutive terms. The currently seated Second Vice President is eligible to serve three full terms. Of course, there are no term limits on the Secretary or Treasurer's positions.

If you or someone you know has an interest in serving in any of these positions, you may submit your information to the committee. Be sure that all potential candidates are qualified and willing to serve. Each candidate must present a biographical sketch to the Nominating Committee. Of course, candidates can run from the floor. Again, candidates must be qualified and familiar with the position sought according to the ACBT Constitution and Bylaws. People nominated 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 Committee. Please limit your bio to no more than two pages in Aerial font 16-point. Below are the questions which need to be completed and submitted to the Nominating 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 personally take to assist ACBT in fulfilling its mission and achieving its goals?
4. Fundraising is vital to keep any nonprofit organization alive. Name two fundraising projects and how you will contribute to the success of these projects.
5. When do you feel it is necessary for change to take place in an organization's policies and procedures?
6. What do you see as the biggest challenges facing ACBT over the next 2 to 3 years and how will you help us overcome them?

All bios and answers must be submitted by May 31, 2023, either by email or postmarked by that date if sent by regular mail. All submissions must be typewritten, no handwriting, please.

E-mail submissions to Michael Garrett at megarrett4443@sbcglobal.net or mail to:

Michael Garrett
7806 Chaseway Drive
Missouri City, Texas 77489

Memories

By Jan Gray

As I reflected on Christmas and the New Year recently, my mind was filled with memories of Christmas past. In 1955 my brother got a Monopoly game for Christmas. I could only watch while he and his friends had so much fun with it. I could not play, he said because I could not read. I could hardly wait until I learned to read and I too could play. Sure enough, that day came and over the years my brother and I and all of our friends spent many happy and tumultuous hours playing this game. As we became adults, I played this same game with my daughters and grandsons. Then it sat in a box. About six months ago I got the board out and with the help of my youngest daughter, we mounted it in a picture frame, with some of the money, deeds, chance and opportunity knocks cards. We took a picture of the tokens and a house and motel and included it in the picture frame. It now hangs in my office, and each time I view it I am reminded of those happy times, and childish arguments and camaraderie that existed while

playing. From this game I learned about finance, greed, what an eviction was, and how to lose, and I learned about honesty. After I learned to read well and was allowed to read the instructions, my brother became a more honest person. We spent many hours with our friends playing and sometimes games continued for days. Sometimes arguments would erupt and become rather heated, and my Mom would step in and say that if we couldn't settle it, the game would have to be ended. Each time I view my new picture, it brings a smile to my face, and a tear to my eye, and makes me feel truly blessed for having been able to experience the magic of that old board game.

As we enter 2024, my wish for everyone is that you too can have such special experiences that bring a smile to your face, and a tear to your eye When you are reminded of them in the future.

Library Users of America-Texas

By Gayle Metoyer

Happy New Year! Now is the time when we all set those infamous resolutions and they may only last until about March. How about looking into some resources that can last you longer than a year? The Talking Book Program can help with that. Did you know that they have many resources that may be beneficial to you? Every year they have braille calendars that you can get free of charge. They also have other resources for additional braille calendars as well. If you do not have a money reader or know of someone who needs one, you can also call the Talking Book Program to obtain one or get one replaced that does not work anymore. Beginning in October, they also have accessible games that you can check out like the books. Please call 1-800-252-9605 to access any of these resources.

It is time to pay our dues for the current year. The LUAT annual dues are \$15.00. You can send payment to the following address:

7806 Chaseway Dr.
Missouri City, TX 77489
Attn: Michael Garrett, LUAT Treasurer

Happy reading and resourcing!!

Braille Revival League of Texas

By Neva Fairchild

Do you believe braille is important to people who are blind or have low vision? If you answered “Yes”, you are invited to join BRLT. We believe braille is literacy. We promote the use of braille. We support all who want to learn braille at any age. Become a BRLT member in 2024 and work with us to revive braille in Texas!

Meet the BRLT Board for 2024!

President: Neva Fairchild: First year

Vice President: Karen Thomas, Second year

Secretary: Denise Colley, First year

Treasurer: This election was tabled until our next meeting.

Immediate Past President: Michael Garrett First year

Director: Karen Eitel, Second year

Director: Kenneth Semien Sr., First year

Director: Larry Johnson, First year

Our activities in 2023 included:

- A virtual webinar presented to over 40 students at TSBVI
- Braille letters of encouragement to TSBVI Braille Challenge participants
- Braille letters of congratulations to TSBVI graduating seniors
- A panel discussion at the conference on Learning Braille at Any Age

To join BRL of Texas, send \$15 to:

BRLT

1406 Wilshire Blvd.

Austin, TX 78722

RANDOLPH-SHEPPARD VENDORS OF AMERICA® SAGEBRUSH 2024 NATIONAL BEP TRAINING CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

With the Theme "Sagebrush 2024: Teaming up to Tackle the ins and outs of Randolph-Sheppard business", the RSVA® Sagebrush National BEP Training Conference begins on Monday, February 12 with Sagebrush registration at 5 pm and the welcome reception at 7 PM. The conference ends on Friday, February 16 with our special "You don't have to see it to tee it" golf outing.

The seminar sessions cover topics from business and entrepreneur related topics, technology updates, using AI for business, as well as specific Randolph-Sheppard facility information and updates. Registrants have the opportunity again to earn Continuing Education credits - please spread the word.

With so many unique events and conversations, expect to enjoy the conference!!! The conference will be held at the Golden Nugget Hotel in downtown Las Vegas, a Four-Star Conference Center. Room reservations must be made directly with the hotel. NOTE: Special Sagebrush room rates apply Monday, February 12, 2024, through Saturday, February 17, 2024. Since Monday is overflow from the Super Bowl, the rate is slightly higher that night. There are much higher rates if you wish to stay at the Golden Nugget before Monday, February 12. Rates differ from tower to tower. A fee for one night's stay will be charged when you register for your room. For hotel reservations, please call 1-800-331-5731. When booking reservations over the phone, it is essential to give the group code:

GSRSV24 to ensure the group rates and other amenities are applied. To book online: go to

<https://goldennugget.reztrip.com/ext/promoRate?property=1115&mode=b&p m=true&sr=843490&vr=3n>

All who attend the event in person and register by January 1 will have their name entered into a drawing for a free in person registration for the 2025 event. Conference updates will be placed on the RSVA® website: www.randolph-sheppard.org. For further information or to receive the

registration form for the conference, contact RSVA® by email: rsva@randolph-sheppard.org or call 303-963-5153.

Adventures from the Alamo Council

by Mary Alice Gary

I hope everyone had a wonderful and relaxing Holiday Season and enjoyed their time with family and friends. This past quarter, the Alamo Council celebrated “White Cane Awareness Day” in October, held our Officer elections in November and enjoyed our annual Christmas party in December. Gifts were purchased by our Elf LouAnn and delivered by our Santa (Gene) in his red pickup truck, to the BVI school children within our local Districts. Requests ranged from basic needs such as socks or shoes to toys, electronic calculators for school, and adaptive games, headphones, and tactile items. A big “Thank You” goes out to all who donated their time, energy, funds or items to fulfill the wishes of the children and who made this year’s event as successful as previous years.

2024 will begin with our newly elected Officers being sworn in during our January Meeting. The new Officers are President Shelley McMullen, 1st Vice President LouAnn Williams, 2nd Vice President Maria Moreno, Secretary Joe McMullen, Treasurer Kevin Dunlop, Assistant Treasurer Gene Williams, and Immediate Past President Mary Alice Gary. President McMullen will also serve as the ACBT Chapter Representative. Thank you all for your willingness to serve as the 2024 Officers.

On a final note, I personally would like to thank all the Alamo Members for their support and dedication to the Alamo Council of the Blind. Because of all your hard work, perseverance and patience, the Alamo Chapter was host to an awesome ACBT Conference Convention, plus we participated in various events around San Antonio advocating and educating individuals and businesses around our fine city. Let’s keep the momentum going in 2024.

Happy 2024 from the Austin chapter

By Marcus Manning

I must share that we ended our year together with a beautiful Christmas celebration which was well attended by members, some blind women and men that I had not met prior to the event and some blind people that I have not seen in quite some time. Together we enjoyed a magnificent Texas barbecue meal, played games some of which included gifts and door prizes. We also chose 2 families in the Austin area that have a blind family member to gift with \$200.00 in gift Cards. Each of the families attended with their spouses and children and received their gifts with joyous smiles and statements of gratitude.

At the meeting prior to the celebration, elections were held and decided in this way:

- Kevin Ratliff was reelected President
- Marcus Manning Vice President
- Antoinette Cervantes Secretary
- Margarine Beaman Treasurer

At the meeting, we also determined funding and which 3 members we would be sending to the ACB leadership conference in March 2024.

Exciting ideas for activities will be implemented and enjoyed this year. Early on all community members will be called to a dominoes tournament. This will surely be an event of learning and fun for some and hopefully generate interest for those people who are not yet members. I envision a year of plenty for all, and together we will get out into our communities and explore more, find ways to serve and give more and do more.

Cheers to us and our unity as chapters, affiliates and as the ACBT family and cheers for us doing, responding, inviting, valuing, and encouraging so much more in 2024.

Beaumont Council: A Garden Makes Heroes

By Cynthia Julun

There is a garden that makes heroes, some say.
A search is on for heroes even today.
How? When? Why? Are questions some have asked.
That real quest for truth at last unmasked.
How? That mystery which was whispered to me.
It's strange how challenges set a hero free.
Getting strong this way not good for some!
They take the good and bad as they come.
When, in the garden, is the answer to seek.
It is in the garden heroes learn to be meek.
Learning one's place is the missing link.
It's not what you see but how you think.
Why, in the garden, is a question so fair.
That is when it is learned that He really cares.
Accepting limits is so humbling too.
Not mine will, but thine will, I must do.
There is a hero in us all you must know.
Spend time in the garden and it really show.
Unseen when all is going so well.
Now let your life be a show-and-tell.

Author:
Warren Julun

Dallas Area Council of the Blind Update

By Mary Witherspoon

2023 closed with celebrations and 2024 starts with a "blast from the past" meeting location. In November, DACB celebrated Carol White with the Member of the Year Award. President Ted Harper says "Carol has earned more thanks than we'll ever be able to adequately render. As one of the chapter's most consistent members, she has come out of retirement to act as the chapter's secretary. Not many folks are aware she was once the ACBT secretary. Thank you, Carol White." Next, Mary Witherspoon led small teams in a Holiday Craft activity. With instructions for making candy

cane ornaments with beads and pipe-cleaners, teams worked and laughed. Mary tossed out fun questions to get to know each other. The first debate question was “what is the best pie for Thanksgiving”. Boisterous arguments ensued. Member Paula Muysenberg says “I do love fun conversation starters. It was a challenge to talk and not lose track of which color bead I had just put on the pipe-cleaner!” A second question was if people could go anywhere for Christmas, where would it be? Says Ted, “Who knew my group wanted to spend time in Switzerland!” Members took home ornaments with the colors in the correct order!

DACB held a party luncheon at Olive Garden in December. Says Ted, “It’s the only time I can legitimately run around wearing an elf hat delivering presents. Social interactions like this allow members to build working relationships.” 16 members and guests enjoyed the fun. In 2024, meetings will be at Denny’s on Central Expressway near Meadows Road. Carol says, “we met there 15 or 20 years ago but outgrew the space”. We are right sized for the private room these days. Follow us at dallasacb.org to keep in touch!

One more year under our belts, and we wish all of our ACB members an even better 2024. We are kicking off our year with a new slate of officers. Presiding will be Ms. Gema Cenicerros, President, Mr. Alfredo Perez, Vice President; Mrs. Kathy Dahlgren Perez, Treasurer, and Mr. Mike Garcia, Secretary. Our new Board members are Ms. Cynthia Marrugo, Mrs. Mary Carmen Antillon and Mrs. Eleanor Coldwell. We will be meeting in a new venue for 2024, as our building's lease was not renewed due to the building's owner expanding his property. By the time this Newsletter arrives, we will be housed in our new home. Stay tuned: good things are happening. Happy 2024, and Happy Valentine's Day!

El Paso Chapter News

By Eleanor Coldwell

One more year under our belts, and we wish all of our ACB members an even better 2024. We are kicking off our year with a new slate of officers. Presiding will be Ms. Gema Cenicerros, President, Mr. Alfredo Perez, Vice President; Mrs. Kathy Dahlgren Perez, Treasurer, and Mr. Mike Garcia,

Secretary. Our new Board members are Ms. Cynthia Marrugo, Mrs. Mary Carmen Antillon and Mrs. Eleanor Coldwell. We will be meeting in a new venue for 2024, as our building's lease was not renewed due to the building's owner expanding his property. By the time this Newsletter arrives, we will be housed in our new home. Stay tuned: good things are happening. Happy 2024, and Happy Valentine's Day!

"Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light." -- Brene Brown

Greater Fort Worth Chapter News

By Jan Gray

Greetings to all! We finished up our year with a successful drawing for a gift certificate from Justin Boots, and a restaurant package. It was won by a person in San Antonio, and as a Chapter we also were winners as we have money for our scholarship program. This year for our Christmas party, we had a potluck dinner with ham, turkey, and all sorts of sides. We also had our gift exchange auction, which is always entertaining. We were honored to have a special guest, Neva Fairchild and her husband Jim who participated in the festivities with us. Our elections will be held in January, and you all know how those things go. We are anticipating many great and good things for our chapter in 2024, and our wish for all ACBT is for great and good things in the coming year.

Houston Happenings

By Michael Garrett

The Houston Council of the Blind (HCB) finished 2023 working hard to stay relevant in the community. We participated in a number of activities in the area.

We began last quarter attending and cosponsoring White Cane Safety Day events. We were among a number of exhibitors at the TWC White Cane Day event. We then cosponsored the Houston Community White Cane Safety Day Celebration where there were approximately 250 participants. We also exhibited at the semiannual U of H Downtown Health Fair which focuses on services for people with disabilities.

For our service project this year, we contributed 61 bags containing toiletries, toys and snacks to children at the Ronald McDonald House of Houston. We held our annual Christmas party where there were about 70 members and friends present. At that event, our new slate of officers for 2024 were sworn in. They include Peggy Garrett President, Noelia Dillingham First Vice President, Cuqui Soto Second Vice President, Michael Garrett Secretary, Foster Brown Treasurer, and board members Joe Meta, Thomas Morrison and Denise Colley.

To top off the year, we held our annual auction, which was quite exciting and successful, with participants from around the country. We continue to serve on the local transportation advisory committee and stay abreast of other activities throughout the greater Houston community. The call volume of people needing information and referrals continues to grow.

HCB: Helping, Caring, Building!

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 (2022-2024, First Term)
(806) 283-8227
cprentice61@att.net
Local Chapter: Austin Council

First Vice President - Membership Chair:

Michael E. Garrett (2022-2024, Third Term)
(281) 438-9665
megarrett4443@sbcglobal.net
Local Chapter: Houston Council

Second Vice President - Fundraising Chair:

Jan Gray Appointed (2022, First Term)
(817) 232-4295
Jan.gray1950@gmail.com
Local Chapter: Fort Worth Council

Treasurer - Finance & Budget Chair:

Sheila Derrick (2022-2024, No Term Limits)
(817) 507-3964
sjderrick212@hotmail.com
Local Chapter: Fort Worth Council

Secretary:

Mary Alice Gary (2022-2024, No Term Limits)
(915) 269-2119
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Local Chapter: Alamo Council

Immediate Past President - Constitution & Bylaws Chair:

Peggy R. Garrett (2022-2024)
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Local Chapter: Houston Council

ACBT State Directors:

Board Member:

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Local Chapter: Alamo Council

Board Member:

Alfredo Perez, Director (2023 Appointed, First Term)
Local Chapter: El Paso Council

Board Member:

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Local Chapter: Austin Council