**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.]

**From the President**

by Peggy Garrett

Greetings, ACBT Members, Friends & Supporters!

Yes, spring has finally sprung and not a moment too soon! I pray that each of you has recovered from the winter storm and are enjoying this warmer weather!

ACBT members are busy preparing for upcoming activities. The mass chapter meeting is scheduled for May 15th and is promising to be an opportunity for Chapters to highlight their accomplishments and acknowledge members who are making a difference in their chapter and the community.

We have scheduled a Special conference for June 5th to ensure that ACBT’s Constitution and Bylaws are updated and in line with Texas Business Code for Nonprofit Corporations to allow us to vote and hold elections. Only ACBT members who meet the eligibility guidelines will be allowed to vote, and I encourage each member to register and participate. Please watch the list, email and snail mail for announcements and updates for the Special Conference.

As the legislature is in session, there are several bills to be voted on that will affect people with disabilities. The ACBT Advocacy Committee continues to share information with members about these bills, including when and how to contact your legislators. Taking a few minutes to contact your State Representatives and Senators to let them know the issues that concern you, and other people with disabilities in the state, can make a difference for all blind Texans as well as people with other disabilities!

As we are still in this Pandemic, I hope that each of you will take the necessary precautions to stay safe and well. We have come this far by helping and caring for each other, so let’s continue to keep in touch. Until we can meet in-person again, stay safe, stand tall and keep moving forward, and we will get through this together!

**From the Membership Committee**

by Michael E. Garrett

One of the advantages of being a member of ACBT is the fact that you have access to a number of people who share your disability, blindness. That means you have about 288 colleagues who can identify with many of your life’s experiences. Some of us have been blind or visually impaired all our lives, while others lost vision later in life. Whatever the case, there is someone who just might want to share their experience with you and encourage you to keep moving forward.

As we continue to move forward in 2021, look for notices from the Membership Committee that will encourage you to join informative calls designed to inspire, uplift, and motivate you to get the most out of your life. Living while blind can be a unique experience. Find out what others do and take note of the things that you could possibly do. Does this sound exciting? Stay tuned!

ACBT: Advancing the Cause of Blind Texans-

**Get Involved, Spread the Word!**   
by Kevin Ratliff

Here are three ways to support The American Council of the Blind of Texas!

1. Smile, you’re shopping on Amazon.com! 😊🛍  
   AmazonSmile is a great way to support ACBT while you shop for those must-have items. AmazonSmile has the exact same low prices, vast selection, and convenient shopping as the Amazon you know. AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of all eligible purchases to The American Council of the Blind of Texas when you shop. Support your favorite charity with every eligible AmazonSmile purchase from your phone or web browser.

[www.smile.amazon.com/ch/76-0154367](http://www.smile.amazon.com/ch/76-0154367)

1. Yum-Raising with See’s Candy! 🍫  
   Family, Friends, Members, and supporters, Treat yourself to the yummiest candy on earth AND support ACBT at the same time! Shop our online store for YUMMY Candies for gifts or for yourself, and to help us raise money for our great organization!

<https://www.yumraising.com/secure/americancot_acbt_sweet_treats5/candy?h=Kev_Rat1864&c=ot2570>

1. Facebook Giving!   
   The donate Button on the ACBT Facebook app or website is a quick way for people to donate to our organization without leaving Facebook. You can also create Birthday fundraisers on Facebook. Just search for and choose The American Council of The Blind of Texas as the designated nonprofit, and your Facebook friends can donate to ACBT in honor of your birthday.

Please help spread the word about our fundraising efforts. We want each of these fundraising campaigns to be a huge success.

**Tales from the Treasurer**

by Sheila Derrick

Hope this finds everyone well and safe. I want to thank all the treasurers and membership chairs who worked hard to send in accurate and timely membership lists. An extra big thanks to the chapters and special interest affiliates whose lists and dues arrived ahead of the deadline. Please remember, new and late renewing members cannot be sent to ACB until after May 1, 2021. Members added to ACB between May 1st and June 3rd will not be counted toward the ACBT members when votes are allocated for the national convention. If a member, added during that time, attends the ACB national convention, they may cast one individual vote. No additions, deletions, or changes can be made to ACB membership from June 3, 2021 until the end of the 2021 convention. ACBT membership will remain open beginning April 1, 2021.

ACB certification was completed on March 31st. ACBT certified 289 members including 3 Life Members. This is 3 less than we certified last year but considering how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted all our lives, this is excellent.

I hope everyone read our Second VP’s article earlier in this issue of the Texas Star. He listed information on the latest ACBT fundraising project, See’s candy. It’s simple to order using our unique link and ACBT will make 20% on the candy portion of our orders. There will be another auction this year during the 2021 conference/convention. The auction is our single largest fundraising event, and everyone’s participation is appreciated. Watch for more information about the auction on our website, acbtexas.org, and later in this edition of the Texas Star.

There still seems to be some confusion about which newsletter is available in which format, so they are listed below.

**Texas Star:** Large Print, Audio CD, or email. The Star is NOT available in Braille.

**Braille Forum:** Large Print, Braille, cartridge for NLS player and email.

**Advocacy Matters in Texas and Beyond**

by Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Members of the ACBT Advocacy Services/Legislation committee began the year planning to participate in the legislative process as we introduced our 2021 Legislative Priorities to the 87th Texas Legislature that convened on January 12, 2021. Our priorities are: Enhancing services to the Older Blind independent living program (OIB) within the Texas Workforce Commission; Working to increase funding to the OIB Program and obtain equal access to the Absentee Ballot. We shared resolutions with legislators in an effort to give them the opportunity to better understand how these priorities make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities, especially those who are blind. ACBT members joined our Advocacy and Legislative Action Days scheduled for February 23-25, 2021, by making phone calls and sending email messages to their respective State Representatives and Senators. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was limited access to the Texas Capitol. Prior to COVID-19, we would have been given the privilege to participate in hearings to share our position on areas of interest to Texans who are blind or visually impaired.

Texas legislators filed voting bills that place greater limits on access to polling sites, Ballot Drop boxes, reducing voting methods and restricting access to curb side voting and more. Representative John Bucy filed HB 3874 in support of Texans with disabilities receiving the early voting ballot via email. There are more bills set to work against all we have gained through the years. Our partners are the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities; League of Women Voters; REV UP Texas; Texas Civil Rights Project; Disability Rights Texas and our most recent partner is Jennifer Harris of JWH Communications. Our efforts will continue until the session ends in late May.

In addition to all the action that took place in Texas, The American Council of the Blind (ACB), held its annual DC Leadership Conference from February 21-23, 2021, which included the annual ACB Legislative Seminar. This weekend was filled with presenters from disability related governmental agencies and a wide variety of organizations. If interested, all of these sessions were recorded and are available on the ACB website, [www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org). The 2021 Legislative Imperatives that we focused upon when communicating with members of Congress during our Advocacy and Legislative Action Days are as follows:

* Secure Independence for Seniors

and Medicare Beneficiaries

* Exercise and Fitness for All Act
* Disability Access to Transportation Act

Chair, Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Desk: (409) 866-5838

E-mail: [Semien.k@att.net](mailto:Semien.k@att.net)

Committee members are: Chris Allen; Melanie Brunson; Will Burley; Kyle Delk; Michael E. Garrett; Betty Huffman and Jason Jones

**ACB –Texas Auction Committee Update**

by Sara Freeman Smith

The State Conference Auction Committee is off & running!  The committee sent emails to Chapter leaders and supporters and received immediate responses from some of them.  We are excited to report that we have received prize commitments from several chapters   and individuals, so don’t wait until the last minute. The committee will send out invitations in April to a wide variety of vendors to participate with a donation to our virtual State Conference.  Since our conference will be virtual again, it will be just like last year, with an auctioneer and pictures and descriptions of the items donated.

The committee encourages everyone to begin planning and soliciting for donations early within your local community. The committee has set a deadline of July 15, 2021, for confirmation details and/or receipt of all items by that date. Only handmade, new or items in their original packaging will be accepted for the auction, along with a description and the approximate value. Since the auction is virtual, many donations may be kept by the donator until awarded to the highest bidder so they can be sent directly to the winner. We look forward to having some great items and lots of fun this year as we welcome not only Texas members, but also ACB members from across the US to participate in the auction.

If you have any questions, please contact the Co-Chairs Gayle at [metoyer903@comcast.net](mailto:metoyer903@comcast.net) cell-281-794-2012 or Sara at [sarafreemansmith@aol.com](mailto:sarafreemansmith@aol.com) cell- 713-882-3000.

**ACBT 43rd Annual Conference/Convention**

by Peggy Garrett

The 2021 ACBT Conference/Convention is scheduled to be held virtually August 26-29, 2021. The Planning Committee is working with the assistance of the ACB Radio staff to provide an event that will inform, educate, and entertain attendees with sessions being streamed on ACB Radio!

The pre-Conference/Convention Board meeting will be held on Thursday from 4:00-7:00 PM but will not be streamed. A Special Conference is planned for June 5th to update the current Constitution & Bylaws to allow business to be conducted virtually, including elections. Pending the Special Conference vote, the annual business meeting will be held on Sunday August 28, but will not be streamed.

Sessions will include updates from the Texas State Library/Talking Book Program, a presentation by a representative from the Toastmaster’s Bureau, increasing your independence, technology to assist you around the house, enhancing your leadership skills and updates from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). There will be virtual exhibitors on Friday and Saturday. The banquet is scheduled for Saturday evening and the evening will climax with the annual auction, filled with lots of exciting must-have items!

The registration fee is $25.00. Registration will be offered online with paper registration forms only being mailed upon request. Registration will begin on June 15th and end on August 15th. Stay tuned for updates!

**Important Notice from Your Constitution and Bylaws Committee**

by Kenneth Semien, Sr.

The proposed amendments placed below are presented in an effort to modify the ACBT constitution and allow us to conduct business when meeting in-person or virtually. By members considering and adopting these amendments on June 5, 2021, during the virtual ACBT Special Conference, ACBT will be able to conduct business as usual during the virtual 43rd Annual Conference/Convention scheduled for August 26-29, 2021. Please make plans to join us for both of these events. You will notice that the current/original language will be shared first, then the proposed language will follow. At the bottom of this article, you will notice the deadline to submit proposed amendments that will be considered for adoption during the annual conference/convention.

**Original:**

**ARTICLE V**

**CONFERENCES/CONVENTIONS AND BOARD MEETINGS**

A. Conference/Convention Notice: A written notice of any annual or special conference/convention shall be given to the membership no less than thirty (30) days prior to the conference/convention.

B. Quorum: A majority of voting members registered at any conference/convention shall constitute a quorum for conducting business.

C. Board Meetings: A majority of the Board of Directors shall

constitute a quorum for conducting the business of the Board of Directors.

D. Meetings: The President or a minimum of five (5) members of the Board of Directors may call, by written notice, a meeting of the Board. The Board of Directors shall meet at least once between conferences/conventions.

E. Except as otherwise provided in this Constitution and ACBT’s Bylaws, Robert’s Rules of Order, most current revision, shall govern all proceedings of conferences/conventions and meetings of the Board of Directors.

**Proposed:**

**ARTICLE V**

**CONFERENCES/CONVENTIONS AND BOARD MEETINGS**

1. Conference/Convention Notice: A written and/or electronic notice of any annual or special conference/convention or meeting shall be given to the membership no less than thirty (30) days prior to the conference/convention or meeting. If applicable, such notice shall include instructions for joining a virtual meeting. The Board of Directors has the authority to schedule annual or special conference/convention events or specially called meetings.
2. If an in-person conference/convention or meeting is not possible or feasible due to unforeseen circumstances, a conference/convention or meeting of the members of ACBT may be held using virtual communications technology including telephone conferencing, or other suitable technology, such as videoconferencing, the internet, or any combination of these means in accordance with state code.
3. Quorum: A majority of voting members registered and in

attendance at any conference/convention or meeting shall constitute a quorum for conducting business.

1. Meetings of the Board of Directors: The President or a minimum of

five (5) members of the Board of Directors may call, by written notice and/or electronic means, a meeting of the Board. The Board of Directors shall meet at least once between conferences/conventions. In the event an in-person board meeting is not possible or feasible, the board meetings may be held using virtual communications technology including telephone conferencing, or other suitable technology, such as videoconferencing, the internet, or any combination of those means in accordance with state code.

1. Quorum for Board Meetings: A majority of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum for conducting the business of the Board of Directors.

F. Except as otherwise provided in this Constitution and ACBT’s Bylaws, Robert’s Rules of Order, most current revision, shall govern all proceedings of conferences/conventions and meetings of the Board of Directors.

Note: All proposed amendments to the ACBT constitution to be considered during the annual conference/convention must be submitted 120 days prior to the first day of the conference/convention. The deadline is April 27, 2021. Call Kenneth Semien, Sr. at 409-866-5838 with questions and submit proposed amendments to: [semien.k@att.net](mailto:semien.k@att.net) .

Proposed amendments to the ACBT Bylaws should be submitted as soon as possible, however we will accept them until 9:00 AM Central on Friday August 27, 2021.

Committee members are: Melanie Brunson; Sheila Derrick; Neil Finley; Michael E. Garrett; Mary Alice Gary and Chris D. Prentice.

**Calling for Nominations to Honor Extraordinary Texans!**   
by Kenneth Semien Sr.

Nominate a deserving individual for the 2021 Who’s Who Among Blind Texans Award by July 13, 2021.

For the twelfth consecutive year, the American Council of the Blind of Texas will honor several individuals who are blind or visually impaired for their special contributions made in support of enhancing the quality of life for Texans. In 2020, we began recognizing one ACBT member and one non-member with this special honor.

The Who’s Who Among Blind Texans Award promotes and acknowledges positive contributions made to the State of Texas and local communities by people who are blind or visually impaired and reside in Texas. We place an emphasis on contributions that are made through advocacy, education, outreach, public awareness, and other meaningful volunteer efforts. Each recipient will become a member of the prestigious ACBT Honor Society and receive special recognition during the ACBT Conference/Convention Banquet on Saturday, August 28, 2021, in the "Who's Who Among Blind Texans" Honor Showcase of The Texas Star newsletter and the ACBT website. Family members, friends, or organizations witnessing any individual meeting the above criteria are encouraged to submit nominations. Each nomination should contain the nominee’s full name, phone number, email, and home address, as well as a one- or two-page description of the nominee's contributions. Nominations must be computer generated in a text file or Word document and sent by email to Kenneth Semien Sr., Member Morale Committee Chair at semien.k@att.net. All questions or special requests can be presented by email or call 409-866-5838. We look forward to receiving all nominations by July 13th.

**Nominating**

by Michael Garrett

On March 22, 2021, the ACBT Board of Directors met and decided that this year’s annual Conference/Convention will be held virtually, as it was in 2020. However, the President has called for a special conference to be held on June 5, 2021, the purpose of which is to update our constitution and bylaws to allow us to conduct business virtually in compliance with state provisions. That being said, we look forward to holding elections at this year’s conference/convention.

As mentioned in the January article, there will be two board positions up for election. Both current position occupants have served their full terms and cannot run again. Since we didn’t hold elections in 2020, all officer positions will be voted on. In order to keep us on track, the officer positions will also be voted on in 2022. The Second-Vice President’s position has been filled for its full term and will be open this year.

If you, or someone you know would like to take on a leadership position in ACBT, now is the time to make your wishes known. You may submit your name or someone else’s as a candidate for an office. If you submit someone else’s name, please make sure that person is qualified and is willing to serve. All individuals seeking a position on the ACBT board, must present a biographical sketch. Of course, nominations can be made from the floor; and again, that person must be qualified and willing to serve and fulfill the duties of that office. Also, he or she must have a current bio which can be read in the presence of convention attendees during the elections process. The bio should consist of a brief introductory paragraph which includes the office you are seeking to be elected to, followed by answers to the questions which have been prepared by the Nominating Committee. Please limit your bio and question responses to two pages in Arial font, 16 point. It is also imperative that each candidate be familiar with the office being sought as defined in the ACBT Constitution and Bylaws.

Below are the questions to be answered and submitted to the Nominating Committee:

1. What are the reasons you are seeking this office?
2. What experience and expertise can you contribute to this office and ACBT?
3. What actions would you take in assisting ACBT to fulfill its mission and achieve its goals?
4. Fundraising is fundamental to keeping any nonprofit organization alive, therefore, name two fundraising projects and tell how you would personally contribute to the success of these projects.
5. When do you believe 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 would you help manage these challenges?

All candidate bios and answers must be submitted by May 31, 2021 or postmarked by May 31, 2021 if sent by regular mail. All submissions must be typewritten; no handwriting allowed. Send email submissions to: [megarrett4443@sbcglobal.net](mailto:megarrett4443@sbcglobal.net)

Or mail submissions to:

Michael Garrett, Nominating Committee Chairman

7806 Chaseway Drive

Missouri City, TX 77489

Please keep in mind we must elect officers and board members who are willing to work diligently for the American Council of the Blind of Texas to make it a stronger, more effective organization and help us fulfill our motto:

ACBT: Advancing the Cause of Blind Texans.

**Your Resolution, Your Voice**

by Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Members should let their voice be heard by submitting resolutions (a written narrative of clauses containing details concerning the initiation of or enhancements to a program or services) regarding issues affecting Texans who are blind or visually impaired. Resolutions can direct our advocacy efforts and legislative priorities for the biennial legislative session. Members in attendance of the annual conference/convention gain the privilege of playing a vital role in whether a resolution is adopted. All resolutions must be submitted by Friday August 27, 2021.

If you have an idea for a resolution or have developed it beyond the idea stage, please make it known as soon as possible. Send computer generated resolutions by email to semien.k@att.net. We look forward to receiving your submission and will offer support when necessary. All resolutions will be presented to the membership on Sunday August 29, 2021. Questions should be communicated to Kenneth Semien, Sr. by using the email address listed above or by calling (409) 866-5838. Remember, we must receive your submissions by August 27th.

Committee members are: Melanie Brunson; Michael E. Garrett; Jason Jones; Chris D. Prentice and LouAnn Williams

**ACBT Scholarship Committee Report**

by Stephen Kerr

As chairman of the ACBT Scholarship Committee, I am excited to announce we are now accepting applications for the 2021-2022 school year.

While the educational landscape continues to change due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, our objective at ACBT hasn’t changed. We hope to provide opportunities for blind or visually impaired students to pursue their goals through higher education.

Last year was the first time we took the application process online, with overwhelming success. We had over 40 applicants; by far the most we have ever received.

Besides being legally blind, candidates wishing to apply for an ACBT scholarship must fulfill the following requirements:

* Be a current resident of the state of Texas.
* Maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0.
* Attend or plan to attend a college, university, or technical school in the upcoming fall semester.

The Scholarship application is available on our website. All supporting documentation can be downloaded, filled out and emailed to our committee, including official transcripts.

Here is the link to our online application:

<https://acbtexas.org/resources/scholarships/>

The deadline for entries is June 15, 2021. I would personally like to recognize the members of my committee for their dedication to the important work of ACBT. Michael Garrett, Mary Alice Gary and Eleanor Coldwell have been working with me for several years. They put in a lot of time assisting me by reviewing applications and interviewing candidates, and I could not do it without them.

Also, special thanks to Paul Hunt for being a big help in developing the online application again this year. It has made the process easier for both the committee and the candidates.

If you know of any students you believe would qualify to receive a scholarship, please feel free to share this link.

If you have any questions, or are experiencing problems with the application, feel free to email me at: [scholarships@acbtexas.org](mailto:scholarships@acbtexas.org). You may also call me at (512) 925-9080.

**Get Movin’ with Transportation**

by Mary Alice Gary

Did everyone enjoy the “Informative Call” on February 2, about Autonomous Cars? Wow, Mr. Hwang did a fantastic job reporting results from completed surveys gathered from people in Austin and Houston with various degrees of vision loss. If you missed the call, email [ma-gary@att.net](mailto:ma-gary@att.net) and I will gladly send you the recording and accompanying articles from Mr. Hwang.

Now, if that wasn’t enough, Mr. Ron Brooks, of ACB and Accessible Avenue continued the Autonomous Vehicle conversation with a follow-up call on April 6, 2021. He has been involved in the Transportation Field for 27 years and is currently working in this up-and-coming field. Mr. Brooks graciously agreed to share what he knows about this emerging form of technology with us. Just Imagine! One day walking to your garage, getting into the car and telling the car to go to the gym! Wow! Is it almost here?

Have an idea for an Informative Call? Just contact any of the Transportation Committee members: Gayle Metoyer, Paula Muysenberg, Ted Harper, and Bill Gary. Thank you, members, for all you do.

Until next time, Happy and Safe Travels!

**Breathing Better**

by Superior HealthPlan

Deep breath in, deep breath out.

It’s a phrase we’ve all heard before, but sometimes breathing easy isn’t that simple. Having asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), usually caused by smoking, are the [two most common respiratory conditions in the U.S.](https://www.nm.org/conditions-and-care-areas/pulmonary/asthma-and-copd)

So, what can you do to keep your lungs healthy?

The best way to manage asthma is to come up with an asthma management plan with your doctor. You and your doctor can develop this plan together, allowing you to control your asthma and not have your asthma control you. People with asthma should avoid triggers and take medication(s) to prevent symptoms. Keep your lungs clear by taking asthma medicine at the earliest possible sign of an episode.

Learn more ways to keep your asthma at bay, [here](https://www.aafa.org/asthma-prevention/).

Another way to keep your lungs healthy is to stop smoking. Smoking is linked to most lung diseases, including COPD and asthma. As soon as you quit, your body begins to repair the damage caused by smoking. Speak to your doctor to learn what local resources are available to assist with smoking cessation.

Check out these [additional tips](https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/i-want-to-quit/how-to-quit-smoking) that can help you quit smoking.

No matter what steps you take to keep your lungs healthy, the most important thing is to make sure you put yourself and your own health first.

So, let’s take a deep breath in and a deep breath out.

**It’s Spring! Time to Have Fun Outdoors…**

by Eleanor Coldwell

Here's a fun idea for an eye-catching container of plants. Its name is almost self-explanatory...the "Thriller", the "Filler", and the "Spiller". This container garden calls for the planting of 3 different kinds of plants. In the center is "The Thriller", a tall plant you will set either in the center or the back of the container, depending on whether it will be placed against a wall or with space all-around. The "Filler" will be a medium sized plant that will fill up most of the container. The "Spiller" will be a plant that hangs gracefully over the sides of the container, such as ivy or potato vine. Be sure your container has plenty of good drainage and place your container where you will want it to sit before filling it with dirt. Fill it 2/3 full of planting soil before putting your plants in, then fill with the rest of your potting soil. Enjoy your new conversation piece!

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

**Living Alone During the Pandemic**

by Chris Allen

We have all struggled with the challenges that the pandemic has presented, but it has been especially difficult for people who live alone and have little or no sight. I want to give a special thanks to the 4 people I interviewed for this article. They are all members of ACBT. The following is a sampling of their responses to 2 questions I asked them.

Question one: what challenges have you faced living alone during the pandemic, and how have you overcome those challenges? All of the people I interviewed faced similar challenges. one of the biggest hurdles for all of them was grocery shopping. 3 of the respondents have adapted to this challenge by ordering their groceries online or through apps on their smart phones. The other person I spoke to said that members of his church had volunteered to do his grocery shopping. Another challenge for all the people I interviewed was finding new ways to stay connected with others. All of the respondents are now accustomed to using Zoom in order to participate in a variety of activities including ACB community calls, which many of them found to be very beneficial.

Question 2: is there any advice or words of encouragement you can share with others dealing with similar experiences? All of the respondents said that there are plenty of ways to stay active and involved. The people I interviewed prove that it is possible to be resilient even during a pandemic.

**Health & Wellness forum:**

**Non-24 Circadian Rhythm Sleep Wake Disorder**

by Vanda

Question: What is Non-24-Hour Disorder?

Answer: Non-24 is a serious, chronic disorder that's very common in people who are mainly totally blind but also affects those with visual impairments. It causes nighttime sleep difficulties and a wide range of daytime difficulties, including an overwhelming urge to sleep during the day, which may lead to decreased function at work and/or school, as well as complications in one's social life.

Question: How long has Non-24 been around / Is this a new disorder?

Answer: Non-24 is not a new disorder. The existence of circadian rhythms across species has been recognized for millennia. It wasn’t until the 1940s however, that scientists documented the circadian rhythms in humans as running longer than 24 hours, including the timing of the sleep/wake cycle. It was also demonstrated that bright light treatment can effectively shift and reset the internal circadian clock to keep rhythms in line with the 24-hour day. The first reports that sleep disturbances may be related to circadian rhythms in people who are totally blind occurred in 1948.

Question: Can we process this light any other way than through our eyes, like our skin?

Answer: No, light through the retina in the eyes is required for circadian alignment to the external environment.

Question: How is it different than insomnia?

Answer: Insomnia is generally defined by problems going to sleep, staying asleep, or both. Insomnia can have a predictable pattern and can be commonly caused by stress or anxiety. Insomnia is a true sleep disorder vs N24 is a circadian rhythm disorder (cyclical = meaning symptoms come and go)

Question: I follow a routine every day, will I be able to prevent Non-24 and control it if I, have it?

Answer: A steady routine is a component of good sleep hygiene; however, this may not promote the synchronization of the circadian rhythm.

Question: Are there other activities such as exercise I can do to reset my master body clock?

Answer: Light is considered the primary time cue for the resetting of the master body clock to the light-dark cycle of the environment.

If you are struggling with sleep, know someone who is and/or would like your doctor educated, please contact Shauna Jatho RN, BSN clinical nurse educator on Non-24 at 202-538-0396 to learn more.

**The Braille Revival League of Texas (BRLT)**

by Michael E. Garrett

When I was just a chubby young tike, I had fairly decent vision. That vision allowed me to read print. But when I parted the doors of the School for the Blind in Austin, a whole new world opened up for me. I was just excited about having all of my books in large print, but one of my teachers would introduce me to something that would change my life forever. You know what that was? It was braille, of course!

I found that the more braille I learned, the more things I could read. I could finish reading assignments in the dorm even when the lights were turned off. And in a college Speech class, which required eye contact when presenting, I was able to do that rather easily since my notes were in braille.

I use myself as an example to say, the Braille Revival League of Texas (BRLT) encourages braille literacy and champions the use of braille in as many tasks as possible. You’d be amazed at the independence and increased confidence braille can bring into your life.

With that said, we encourage you to:

READ MORE BRAILLE!

**Library Users of America-Texas**

by Gayle Metoyer

Greetings LUA of Texas members and friends!

I hope everyone survived the winter storm and is ready for some Spring weather! April is the official beginning of our season and we celebrate National Library Week this month. The week is Actually April 4 to 10 2021. By the time you read this, this will have passed, but you can still celebrate by getting involved with your local library. The first thing you can do to get involved is to get a library card. This card will give you access to many of the services that your library offers. This week allows us to promote our local libraries and their workers. You can check with your local library to see if they have any accessible books. Most of them have audio books, braille books, and some even have an Accessible Center. In the Accessible Center, you may find scanners and even screen readers. You can usually use these services free of charge if you have a library card.

You can also check to see if you have a radio reading service in your area. This service can turn print info into an accessible format for you. For instance, you can get a textbook, or a recipe book put on a CD or sent to you via email. I have used this service for an instruction manual.

You can also join some local book clubs. The Talking Book Program has one at the state level. However, your local library may know of some local book clubs that you can join.

I live in the Houston area. We held a National Library Week Celebration. We invited our local library, a local book club, The Talking Book Program, and our local radio reading service. You can start planning for 2022! It is never too early to start a reading plan!

I hope you enjoy the nice Spring weather and have a chance to catch up on some reading.

**Spring Cleaning - Don't Just Do Windows!**

by Eleanor Coldwell

It feels so good to accomplish some serious spring cleaning. But, before you sit down and pat yourself on the back, there are a couple of other things you should think about that will help to keep you and your loved ones safe in case of fire.

The Red Cross recommends that we check our smoke alarms at least once a year. Spring is a good time to remind yourself of this. Designate a day each month, like the first or last day to check your smoke alarms. Change their batteries every spring. On a monthly basis check if the alarm is in working order by pressing the test button.

Don't have a smoke alarm? Call your local non-emergency number. Some fire departments give out smoke alarms for free or at a reduced cost. Next, check the lint filter in your dryer. There is a special brush that can help you clean out the lint around the dryer drum. Also, pull out your dryer and vacuum the dryer vents and around the floor where the dryer sits. Lint is flammable, so these actions will help reduce fire hazards in your home. NOW you can pat yourself on the back, confident in the fact that you have a clean and safe home.

**Alamo Council Update**

by Mary Alice Gary

Greetings from the Alamo City! 😊 A Huge “Congratulations” to President Larry Roser for 25 years of service with the Alamo Branch of the National Social Workers Association. Great Job Larry! We wish you all the best.

Just a friendly reminder, Scholarship applications can be found on our website for qualified applicants. For any questions, please contact LouAnn Williams using one of the methods listed below.

Our meetings will continue to be held via Conference Calls on the second Saturday of each month at 11:00 AM and lasting for about 90 minutes. Anyone wishing to attend, or looking for more information about the Alamo Council of the Blind, can reach us in any of the following ways: website [www.acbsatx.org](http://www.acbsatx.org), email [info.acbsatx@gmail.com](mailto:info.acbsatx@gmail.com) or by phone at 210-492-4420.

Until next time, stay happy, healthy, and safe. From all your friends from Alamo Council of the Blind!

**Beaumont Area Council of the Blind**

by Cynthia Julun

Beaumont Area Council of the Blind, Inc. had the honor of becoming a chapter of the American Council of the Blind of Texas on January 16, 2010. As of this year, under the leadership of President Kenneth Semien, Sr. our chapter has assisted those with and without visual challenges for 11 years through various activities and functions. We normally would have had an event to celebrate our anniversary, but because of the pandemic we were unable to do so. Nevertheless, we played a fun and boisterous game of Family Feud via conference call. The latest thing that Beaumont Area Council of the Blind, Inc. has done is to start a Destiny Scholarship Fund. We are thankful for all the support we have received to make this endeavor a success. We would like to take this time to thank our president and let him know that we appreciate all that he does to keep the chapter going. He takes the time to research and ensure that we have an insightful meeting each month. He makes his members feel special by having the member of the month. He also recognizes their birthdays every meeting. He has previously taken his members to lunch one at a time to get to know them. President Semien, Sr. we do not have enough time or space to list all that you do. Therefore, we will just say, “thank you for your effort, service, and time”. You have earned a gold star!

**El Paso Council of the Blind**

by Eleanor Coldwell

The El Paso Council of the Blind is still meeting through the Zoom platform, and we are all feeling comfortable with this form of gathering.

In February we had 3 guests attend our meeting, and they have decided to join our chapter. We're happy to welcome Ms. Gema Cisneros, and Mr. and Mrs. Anderson.

In February we were saddened by the news of the passing of one of our former members, and former Vice President, Isaac Valencia. Isaac was a member of the Lions Club and spent many happy volunteer hours mentoring BVI children in the San Elizario ISD, a suburb of El Paso. His beloved guide dog, Fonda now lives with Isaac's father.

EPCB is in the process of developing a beautiful web page to increase our Internet presence. It is being developed by Mr. Joey Acosta and EPCB's Technology Committee: Rosa Lopez, Mike Palomar, and Elias Torres. It should be up and running by mid-April.

**ACB Fort Worth**

by Jan Gray

At our meeting on March 6, we set aside our bi-laws and held elections. Since our elections are normally held in October, we agreed to limit this term of office to 18 months, so we can get back on schedule. Our new officers are: Jan Gray, President; Veronica McGuire, 1st Vice President; Anthony Paolucci Jr., 2nd Vice President; Sheila Derrick, Treasurer; Heidi Swan, Secretary; and Edgar Henderson, Chapter Representative. We are looking forward to the mass Chapter meeting in May. We re-vamped our Scholarship letter and limited our applicants to a10 county area. We will be participating on the committee for White Cane Day this year. We are in hopes of being able to meet in person by this summer, but until then, we are having well attended virtual meetings.

ACB Ft. Worth is embarking on a fundraising project. It is a Singing Telegram service. The cost is $25, and can be paid by using PayPal or Cash App. All proceeds will go to the chapter’s scholarship fund. If you have a birthday, anniversary, or a holiday wish to send to someone special by phone, please contact Jan Gray at 817-232-4295 or sheila derrick at 817-507-3964.

**Houston Happenings**

by Michael Garrett

The Houston Council of the Blind (HCB) is still working hard to maintain its visibility within the Greater Houston Metropolitan Area. Over the first three months of this year, we continued to hold our monthly meetings virtually. We continue our work with our local transportation agency, as that remains a major focal point in Houston. Several of our leaders meet with paratransit management fairly regularly. At our March meeting, several paratransit representatives joined us to address some issues and inform us of upcoming changes.

Our technology team continues to keep us informed about new products and provides helpful hints on how to care for our technology devices. In addition, we have access to a number of trainings to help us become acclimated to both new and old technology.

Several of our members also participated in the recently held Carolyn Garrett Youth Leadership Conference. This event is held each biennium and is cosponsored by ACBT and the Texas Workforce Solutions.

This quarter has seen our prayer list grow significantly. A number of our members (or their families) have been exposed to COVID-19, suffered from other health issues, or passed away. We lost one of our long-time members, Ed (Doc) Bradley back in January.

We continue to try to keep in touch with all of our members.

HCB - Helping, Caring, Building

**From My Patio**

by Jan Gray

With all the problems we have experienced this past year, it is important for us to find a place where we can enjoy the world around us. Although I can no longer see the birds in the trees, I can hear the songs they sing and their chatter as they converse with each other. I can smell the freshly cut lawns of my neighbors, feel the breeze, and smell the mint I have in a hanging basket on my patio. When the neighbor’s dogs bark, I can identify them all and where they live. The sound of children’s laughter and sometimes arguments echo around. In my neighborhood, I have musicians who live nearby, a young drummer to the west and a saxophone player to the east. I can tell the saxophonist is older because of the music he plays, and the drummer, I am sure, has to practice while his folks are at work. Although I cannot see these things, I feel connected with them because of familiarity.

Overhead, an airplane whisks passengers to exotic places, while the train whistles remind me that freight is moving by rail. Sirens remind me that someone is having a worse day than I am. What sounds and smells can you experience from your patio?

**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:**

Peggy R. Garrett

(281) 438-9665  
prcgarrett@sbcglobal.net    
Local Chapter: Houston Council   
  
**First Vice President - Membership Chair:**

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

**Second Vice President - Fundraising Chair:**

Kevin D. Ratliff  
(512) 826-1619  
kevin.ratliff512@gmail.com   
Local Chapter: Austin 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:**

Kenneth Semien, Sr.   
(409) 866-5838  
[semien.k@att.net](mailto:semien.k@att.net)  
Local Chapter: Beaumont Area Council 

**ACBT State Directors:**

**Board Member**:   
Chris D. Prentice - Director   
(806) 283-8227  
cprentice61@att.net    
Local Chapter: Austin Council   
  
**Board Member:**    
Louann Williams - Director   
(210) 884-7778  
la.lozano.williams@gmail.com    
Local Chapter: Alamo Council

**Board Member:**    
Jan Gray

(817) 232-4295

jan.gray1950@gmail.com

Local Chapter: Fort Worth Council

**Board Member:**    
Foster Brown

(832) 469-1817

brownfoster@gmail.com

Local Chapter: Houston Council

**American Council of the Blind of Texas, Inc. (ACBT)**

**2021 Partners for Success Honor Society**

Honoring companies that have made a substantial contribution in support of ACBT achieving its annual goals and objectives.

* Amerigroup (Premiere Sponsor)

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* Texas Central Partners, LLC (Keynote Sponsor)

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* Vanda (Star Plus Sponsor)

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* Superior HealthPlan (Star Plus Sponsor)

Transforming the health of the community, one person at a time.

* Cigna (Star Sponsor)

A global health services company dedicated to improving the health, well-being, and peace of mind of those we serve.

Contact Kenneth Semien, Sr. for additional information regarding our Partners for Success.

[semien.k@att.net](mailto:semien.k@att.net)

409-866-5838