**THE TEXAS STAR**

**Vol. 30, No. 2 April 2022**

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 Your President**

By Peggy Garrett

Greetings, ACBT!

So, what is really going on? There is a whirlwind of activity going on in every direction I turn these days, especially in ACB/ACBT!

ACB’s Community List offers a “wide variety of daily activities with something for just about everybody; ACB is busy preparing for the national Convention, and many ACBT members are participating in preparing for the big event, while also working on the ACBT Conference/Convention. ACBT Committees and Chapter activities are busier than ever. With so many ways to join in, there are numerous opportunities for everyone to get involved.

Did you know that April is national Volunteer Month? What a perfect time to find your niche to showcase your talents and hobbies as well as give of your time to assist in ongoing programs!

So, if you are not already volunteering in some area of the organization, now is the time to get involved. Remember that volunteering has mutual benefits! As you give of your time, talents and share your experiences, your interactions will increase your knowledge in many areas, provide new experiences and new acquaintances and friends! Best of all, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are making a difference in the lives of other people and helping to make our organization stronger!

For more information on how you can get involved, contact President Peggy Garrett at 832-242-4941!

**Secretary Secrets**

By Mary Alice Gary

Hello all!

Are you ready for warmer weather Anda chance to spend more time outside? Spring is definitely in the air. The birds can be heard singing in the morning along with the hum of the bees hard at work doing what bees do. Even the fresh fragrance of flowers can be noticed, especially if there is a light breeze. So, grab a cup of coffee or tea and sit back, relax, and enjoy a few moments outdoors, while the milder weather lasts.

Speaking of Spring, the ACBT Spring Board Meeting was held virtually, via Zoom, on April 23, 2022. And, with that being said, if you haven’t already heard, the 2022 ACBT Conference/Convention will be held in-person in Austin, April 25 thru 28, 2022. Yes, we will be gathering at the South Park Hotel. I do not know about you, but I cannot wait to visit with everyone again! 😊 It has been such a long time. Updates will be posted in the Texas Star and on the ACBT Groups List.

Gosh, you have not signed up for the ACBT Groups List yet? Well just follow these few steps and you will be done. Send an email to: ACBT+subscribe@groups.io, (that is the plus symbol after the ACBT). The announcements will arrive directly in your Inbox! All ACBT happenings, Committee events and activities are announced here. It will only take a few seconds.

Remember, Keep Smiling! 😊

**Tales from the Treasurer**

By Sheila Derrick

Thank you to all the treasurers and membership chairs who worked hard to send in accurate and timely membership list. 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, 2022. 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 then 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 2022 convention. ACBT membership will remain open beginning April 1, 2022.

ACB certification was completed on March 15th. ACBT certified 259 members including 4 Life Members. This is thirty-three less than we certified last year but considering how the COVID 19 pandemic impacted all our lives for two years, this is not unexpected.

There will be an auction this year during the 2022 conference/convention. The auction is our single largest fundraising event, and everyone’s participation is appreciated. Watch for more information on our website, acbtexas.org, and in the next 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. Note: The Texas Star is ***NOT*** available in Braille.

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

**THE FORGOTTEN ONES**

By Larry Johnson

The number of older Texans facing vision loss is growing exponentially. No longer can we ignore the demographics. More than 600,000 Texans over the age of fifty-five are currently classified as legally blind and this number will increase by 60% over the next 15 years.

We can talk about more statewide agency collaboration, about working smarter and more efficiently. And that is helpful and important. But the reality is that the State Legislature needs to be made aware of and persuaded that more funding, (a lot more funding), is needed to assist Older Texans who experience vision loss to be able to live independently and remain in their homes.

Presently, there are just sixteen full-time trained specialists with the Texas Workforce Commission’s Older Blind Independent Living program to serve older Texans statewide who desperately need these services, let alone the projected additional number of older persons who will experience vision loss as more and more “Baby Boomers” join this population.

The American Council of the Blind of Texas must make this a priority issue and develop strategies on how to make it an issue of imperative importance for the 2023 Texas Legislature.

**ACBT’s Advocacy: Taking Action to A New Level**

By Kenneth Semien, Sr.

I am happy to report that we as an organization stepped up to the advocacy plate as we engaged in informational preparation meetings. Debbie Grubb, Legislative Cheerleader of Florida Council of the Blind, joined us for the energetic Legislative Pep Rally that strongly contributed to more of our members getting involved and learning about the legislative process.

We joined together for legislative meetings and other forms of communication with offices of members of Congress during the 2022 ACBT Legislative Action Days, from March 16-18, 2022. Furthermore, ACBT members registered and participated in the American Council of the Blind (ACB) Legislative Seminar on March 14-15, 2022. We learned about various advocacy efforts and became more enlightened concerning the ACB Legislative Imperatives listed below.

* Exercise and Fitness for All Act
* Medical Device Nonvisual Accessibility Act
* Website and Application Accessibility Act
* Communications and Video Accessibility Amendments Act
* Medicare Demonstration of Coverage for Low Vision Devices Act

Visit [www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org) for more details or to request a copy of the background concerning each imperative by using my contact information at the bottom of this article.

Special thanks to Betty Huffman for planning and leading a group meeting with the office of Congressman Lloyd Doggett in representation of the Austin Council. In addition, let us cheerfully applaud Michael Garrett, Peggy Garrett, Neva Fairchild, Mary Witherspoon, Chris Allen, and Melanie Brunson for their powerful testimonials shared during our group meeting with the office of Senator Cruz. Several of our members listened to this meeting to witness a legislative meeting in progress. This experience could very well lead to greater participation next year.

Contact committee Chair, Kenneth Semien, Sr. with any advocacy related concerns by sending an email to: semien.k@att.net or by dialing 409-866-5838.

**Auction Committee Update**

By Sara Freeman Smith

The State Conference Auction Committee is off & running! Now that it has been decided that the 44th Annual state Conference & convention will be held in person in Austin at the SouthPark Hotel from August 25 - 28, 2022, we are now soliciting donations. we are excited to announce a new process for this year’s auction.

On a positive note, we appear to be coming out of the Pandemic as a result of it, the last two year’s virtual auctions were our most successful events ever! We gained broader audience exposure and participation outside of Texas as well. As a result, the committee decided that this year we needed to change and will have two auction events, the primary auction will be held virtually prior to the conference and a small silent auction the evening of the banquet. The primary auction will be held virtually on Sunday, August 21 at 6pm CDT using the Zoom platform. A smaller group of auction items will be available for a Silent Auction held Saturday evening, August 27 at the hotel.

The committee will send out emails in April to the Chapter leaders, affiliates and vendors requesting donations for the auction now that a location has been determined. so do not wait for the last minute. Since our main auction will be virtual again, it will be just like last year with an auctioneer and pictures/descriptions of each item donated.

The committee encourages everyone to begin planning and soliciting early for donations within their local community. The committee has set a deadline of Friday, July 15, 2022, 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 their description and approximate value. Since the primary auction is virtual with a few items on display at the hotel for the Silent Auction, many donations may be kept by the donator until awarded to the highest bidder & can be sent direct to the winner. We look forward to having some great items and lots of fun this year as we welcome ACB members from across the US on the auction on Sunday, august 21st.

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

**ACBT is Going to Austin!**

By President Peggy R. Garrett

Yes, the 44th annual Conference/Convention of the American Council of the Blind of Texas is being held in-person -in Austin. After two years of Zooming, we are holding an in-person event this year! The 2022 Conference/Convention is scheduled to be held at the Austin Southpark Hotel (formerly the Omni Austin Southpark Hotel) on August 25-28, 2022.

The theme this year is “ACBT: A Guiding Light through the Darkness.” The Planning Committee is working diligently to organize an event you will not want to miss! Activities will kick-off with the Board meeting on Thursday evening, sessions will be on Friday and Saturday along with the luncheon and banquet and the awards breakfast and business meeting on Sunday morning. Of course, we look forward to the exhibit hall and all that it offers on both Friday and Saturday.

The hotel is located at 4140 Governor’s Row, Austin 77844.

The room rate is $99.00 plus 17% tax. You may begin making reservations either online at: [Book your group rate for ACBT Conference/Convention - 2022](https://www.marriott.com/events/start.mi?id=1648654927543&key=GRP)

Or call the toll-free number 1-888-874-2883 or 1-888-236-2427. Be sure to tell the reservationist that you are registering for the ACBT Conference/Convention to ensure that you get the group rate. The deadline to reserve a room and get the group rate is July 25, 2022.

Special Call for Proposed Amendments to the

**ACBT Constitution and Bylaws**

By Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Once again, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee encourages all members to join us in our work to ensure that our Constitution and Bylaws are supportive of the most efficient operation of our organization. Obtain your personal copy of the organizational governing documents and become familiar with the content in an effort to consider necessary revisions. Get your copy by visiting [www.acbtexas.org](http://www.acbtexas.org). Proposed amendments to the Constitution will be accepted until May 26, 2022. All proposed amendments to the Constitution will be placed in the July issue of the Texas Star and presented to members in attendance of the ACBT Conference/Convention for consideration and adoption on Sunday August 28, 2022. Proposed Bylaw amendments must be submitted to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee by 9:00 a.m. on Friday August 26, 2022, to be presented on Sunday August 28, 2022.

Committee members are, Sheila Derrick, Melanie Brunson, Neil Finley, Michael E. Garrett, Chris D. Prentice, and Mary Alice Gary. Send all written proposals to Chair, Kenneth Semien, Sr., semien.k@att.net. If there are any concerns in regard to the ACBT Constitution and Bylaws you would like to discuss, feel free to send an email message or call 409-866-5838. I look forward to hearing from you.

**Member Morale Committee Update**

By Jan Gray

The Member Morale Committee is collaborating with the Membership Committee on the first in a series of calls recently announced on our listserv. We are excited and hope that we will have lots of participants. The first support call will be held on April 28 at 7 PM CDT. Each committee will be taking turns hosting this series of calls. If you are having difficulty with vision loss or with figuring out how to accomplish something, perhaps we can encourage and share some ideas with you. We will not discuss medical, religious, or political problems. It is strictly a peer support group. Our first meeting will be by conference call (605-475-400 access code 222855)

We are accepting nominations for Who’s Who among Blind Texans. We select one person who is an ACBT member and one person who is not a member. This year, The First Timer Award can go to a member who has attended a virtual conference, but not a face-to-face conference. Keep these awards in mind as the time grows nearer to the conference. Qualifications for these awards will be posted on our website.

From the Nominating Committee

By Michael Garrett

The ACBT Board of Directors has met and decided to hold the 2022 conference/convention in person. This means that our elections will be held during the event. Since this is an even numbered year, all officer positions are up for election. The Second Vice President has served his position for the full term and the office must be vacated and filled by a new officer.

That being said, it’s time for you or someone you know to seriously consider stepping forward and taking on a leadership position in ACBT. You may submit your own, or the name of someone you know as a candidate for an office. If you would like to recommend someone for an officer position, please make sure that person is qualified and really wants to run. Anyone seeking a position on the ACBT Board must submit a biographical sketch. Of course, nominations will be taken from the floor; and again, that person must be qualified and willing to serve and fulfill the duties of the office sought. He or she must also have a bio that can be read before the conference attendees during the elections process.

The bio must consist of a brief opening paragraph stating the office being sought followed by answers to the questions which have been prepared by the Nominating Committee. Please limit your responses to two pages arial font, 16-point. It is also imperative that each candidate be familiar with the office being sought as stated in the ACBT Constitution and Bylaws. Below are the questions to be completed and returned to the Nominating Committee.

1. What are your reasons for seeking this office?
2. What experience and expertise can you bring to this office and ACBT?
3. What actions would you take to help ACBT fulfill its mission and achieve its goals?
4. Fundraising is vital to keeping any nonprofit organization alive. Therefore, name two fundraising projects and tell how you would 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 believe are ACBT’s biggest challenges over the next three years and how would you seek to help manage those challenges?

All candidate bios and answers must be submitted to the Nominating Committee no later than May 31, 2022, if sent via email, or postmarked by May 31, if sent by regular mail. All submissions must be typed- no handwriting allowed.

Please send via e-mail to:

megarrett4443@sbcglobal.net

Or mail to:

Michael Garrett

Nominating Committee Chairman

7806 Chaseway Drive

Missouri City, Texas 77489

Please keep in mind that we must elect officers who are willing to serve diligently for the American Council of the blind to make it a more effective and successful organization, and to help us fulfill our motto: ACBT: Advancing the Cause of Blind Texans.

**Scholarship Committee Report**

By Stephen Kerr

It is amazing how quickly time flies. The 2021-22 school year is starting to wind down. That means the window to accept applications for our three American Council of the Blind of Texas scholarships is now open.

The American Council of the Blind of Texas awards scholarships on an annual basis to deserving students who will be entering college, currently attending a college, university, or enrolled in a trade school or technical program.

The objective of our ACBT scholarship program is to provide opportunities for blind and visually impaired students to pursue their goals through higher education and help pave the way for a better quality of life for blind or visually impaired individuals.

The 2022-23 ACBT scholarship application is now online through June 15, 2022.

Qualified students must be legally blind, maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade point average, and be a Texas resident. A completed application and all required supporting documentation must be received by June 15, 2022.

The process for applying has never been easier. Scholarship applications are 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:

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

Please email questions or requests for further information regarding scholarships to:
Stephen Kerr, ACBT Scholarship Committee Chair
scholarships@acbtexas.org
Phone: 512-925-9080

We wish all students the best of luck as they pursue their educational goals.

**Get Movin’ with Transportation**

By Mary Alice Gary

Mark your calendars! On May 3rd at 7:00 PM (Central), the Transportation Committee will be holding the first of possibly two Informative Calls with an awesome guest speaker knowledgeable in this field. As the travel season begins, the topic will consist of all things related to Airports and Airplanes. Whether you travel with a cane or guide dog, this call is for you! Join us to learn what the responsibilities of the airport and carriers are, along with what your responsibilities are as a consumer.

If you prefer to travel by bus or train, a second call is in the works for some time in mid to late June. The topic will cover the dos and don’ts related to all parties when using these modes of public transportation. Watch for updates and future announcements on the ACBT Groups List.

As you can tell, your Transportation Committee has been busy trying to ensure our members have the tools they need to travel during the summer safely with less frustration and fewer headaches. Thank you, Chris Allen, Consuela Bates, Cynthia Julun, Gayle Metoyer, and Ted Harper, for all the hard work and dedication to making this a successful Committee.

Happy and Safe Travels!

**We Are Just Like Everyone Else**

By Chris Allen

Those of us who are blind or visually impaired often notice that we are treated differently than everyone else. Sometimes, that is good. For example: when someone tells you that it is safe to cross a street, or someone may ask if you need assistance finding something. Then, there are other times when being treated differently makes us feel isolated and awkward.

I want to focus here on the many ways in which we are exactly the same as our sighted friends and families. We are people who lead very normal lives, for the most part. Most of us can do many things for ourselves, and we take pride in being able to function as independently as possible.

The truth is people who are blind or have low vision have the same issues as everyone else. We get upset when something threatens to derail our day, like a leaking dishwasher or some other annoyance. Blind people come in all shapes and sizes. Some are outgoing and friendly while others are reserved and not very communicative. Blind people can be cliquish just like our sighted counterparts who tend to gravitate to those who are just like them. There are blind people who are brilliant and there are blind people who possess average or below average intelligence.

Blind people are a microcosm of society. we come from different races, ethnic backgrounds, and sexual orientations. The only difference between us and the rest of society is that we do not possess the gift of sight. Otherwise, we are just like everyone else.

**The Braille Revival League of Texas**

By Michael Garrett

The Braille Revival League of Texas (BRLT) celebrates the return to an in person ACBT Conference and Convention this year! This is exciting on several fronts, but most notably because it will allow us to offer fun and informative activities. We are made up of some very knowledgeable and innovative members who will come up with some entertaining, inclusive, and informative games and activities.

Stay tuned for more information related to this year’s BRLT program.

I would be remiss if I did not mention our interview with Michael Hudson of the American Printing House for the Blind related to the history of braille. We presented that interview in observance of Louis Braille’s birthday in January. If you missed it, you missed a treat. Braille, in its many iterations, has evolved over the years. Today, we have a system that is used and accepted throughout most of the literate world. We at BRLT continue to encourage and promote the use of braille for those who are blind or have low vision as a necessary and essential tool for independence and sometimes, just plain fun. Access the recording at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/6tg24pe5rgqh55j/BRLT%20Louis%20Braille%202022%20Celebration%20Video.mp4?dl=0> to learn lots of interesting facts about braille that you never knew.

So, as is our motto: READ MORE BRAILLE!

**Library Users of America-Texas**

By Gayle Metoyer

For some of us, Spring has sprung! For others, they are looking for warmer days. Spring is always a good time to do some spring cleaning and some self-care. Why not read some books that will motivate you to do just that! How about a book on exercise? We could start with Yoga and meditation and move up to walking and running. Another good way to enjoy Spring is by reading books about gardening. You may want to grow plants in a container. There are good books on that topic as well as many others. Whatever you decide, have a relaxing Spring, and get out and do something fun. You can go outside with a good book and read while enjoying the sunshine!

April is the month we celebrate National Library Week. The actual week was April 3-9. This week was designed to encourage everyone to support our local libraries and their workers. You can contact your local library and see what they have planned for this month. Most libraries have braille books, audio books, and audio movies. There are very likely numerous book clubs in your area that you can join. They are a great opportunity to meet other people who love to read and for you to learn about books that you have not read but might enjoy.

Happy reading!

**Bluebonnets**

By Jan Gray

Every year, in March and April, Texans are blessed with the spectacular sight of bluebonnets. They grow along the highways, and across the fields. There are bluebonnet trails and festivals. The flower resembles a pioneer woman’s bonnet. In the language of flowers, the bluebonnet stands for voraciousness and imagination. They were the hands-down winner for the official state flower of Texas, over the cotton bowl and the prickly pear cactus flower.

Across the state, there are six varieties of bluebonnets. There are many legends about the bluebonnet. Here is my personal favorite.

The natives had endured a great flood, followed by a terrible drought and a bitter winter of sleet and ice. The people were starving and were devastated by disease. The medicine men had sung incantations, danced nonstop to the tom-tom drums, and the warriors had cut their flesh, to no avail. Finally, the Great Spirit spoke to the medicine men telling them that in order to atone for their selfishness, they must present a burnt offering of the tribes most prized possession. Listening, at the far back of the Council fire, was a young girl who held her beloved doll in her lap. The doll was dressed in a soft deerskin dress, had long horsehair braids, and a beautiful headdress made with feathers from the Blue Jay. Her heart was heavy as she knew what she must do. In the night, she crept from her teepee, and scooping up a coal from the fire, climbed the nearby hill. There she gathered sticks and started a small fire. Then, she held the doll high and offered her to the Great Spirit. Next, she threw the doll into the flames where it was hungrily devoured. When the ashes cooled, she scooped them up, and turning North, South, East, and West, she let the wind scatter them. In the morning, the tribe awoke to the sight of blue flowers on the hillside. The fields were fertile and green. They knew the Great Spirit had forgiven them. The young girl was forever known as, “she who loves her people.”

**Alamo Council Update**

By Shelley McMullen

First, I hope all of you are well and that you are returning to an active, somewhat normal life. Hopefully, this pandemic will soon become a thing of the past for all of us.

As for the Alamo Council, we are delighted to be meeting again in person, with lunch and socialization time afterwards, at the Longhorn Café. We offer a conference call format as an option for those who are more comfortable in that setting.

Our president Mary Alice Gary has continued her dedication to manning our ACB information telephone line. As a result, we have a plan to train sighted staff in nursing homes, rehab facilities etc. We would provide this training in return for a donation to our chapter.

Our other major event this year was participating in the 24th annual Low Vision Expo, held on Saturday, April 2, from 9 AM to 1 PM. The location of the event was the Embassy Suites Hotel Brook City Base. We had a table at the event, manned by several members of the chapter. We provided information about our chapter, distributed brochures and answered questions from attendees.

Be happy and healthy. Enjoy the beautiful Spring weather and all nature has to offer.

**Beaumont Area Council Update**

By Cynthia Julun

The Beaumont Area Council of the Blind has been covering material, which would assist individuals with enhancing their quality of life. One topic was money management tips that work, such as: benefits of preparing and utilizing a budget, saving up to purchase big ticket items, and if possible, putting away funds for emergencies that may occur. Another topic was, being heart healthy. Suggestions given were regular visits to your physician and maintaining health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. In addition, eating a healthy diet, avoiding foods that have lots of sodium, and drinking plenty of water contribute to a healthy lifestyle. Stress releases negative endorphins into the bloodstream, which is bad for the body. Reduce stress as much as possible from your life. Meditating and listening to music are good methods to manage stress. Lastly, exercise at least thirty minutes a day. Walking and dancing are good exercises to get your heart rate up. Let us look inside of ourselves and discover what changes we need to make to improve our quality of life.

**Dallas Area Council Update**

By Mary Witherspoon

The word for our first quarter of 2022 is “new”! Returning officers on our board include President Ted Harper, Second Vice President Paula Muysenberg and Treasurer Larry Thacker. New to the board are: First Vice President Chris Allen and Secretary Raymundo (Rey) Anthony. Can you say four new members? Chris reveals that “three of our new members were recruited by Rey. Three also moved to the area recently.” March was our first in-person meeting in two years at a new (to us) restaurant.

Now add an “s” to new and you get “News”! Ted shared a report about DACB on a March 5 Resources Zoom meeting sponsored by the DFW Chapter of Foundation Fighting Blindness. Groups and suppliers across the metroplex described how they each support individuals with vision impairments so that all could be aware of the other organizations in the area. Ted explained, “This was a wonderful way to raise awareness about our chapter.”

Another newsworthy project was a March 21 presentation to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) District Two blind specialty focus group. After years of networking with a TWC supervisor on behalf of the Scholarship Committee, Chris and Ted were invited to introduce DACB’s activities and programs to the focus group. Chris stated, “during this virtual meeting we stressed both the advocacy and social benefits of being an ACB member nationally, at the state level and locally.” Ted added, “We received good questions about both our scholarship and our technology grant programs.”

**El Paso Chapter Update**

By Eleanor Coldwell

It was 1933, in El Paso, Texas, and she had just graduated from Austin High School when she was involved in a traffic accident and became blind. What was going to become of her? Anita Lee Blair met the challenge head-on and eventually became the first blind woman to be elected to the Texas State Legislature, championing the cause of people with disabilities. With the help of her guide dog, Fawn, she attended college, earning her Master of Social Sciences from Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy (now The University of Texas at El Paso) in 1951. Just one year later, she became a State Representative.

As a State Legislator she supported the remodeling of the Texas School for the deaf, raises in teacher pay, and supported a bill that allowed women to serve on juries.

When she went to Austin, with her guide dog Fawn, she carried with her a 30-pound dictation machine, as well as a map of the Capitol in Braille. She was one of only three women in the State legislature at that time. She served on the school districts committee and the Public Lands and Education committee. She co-authored a bill to make jail time mandatory for drunk drivers. She served only one term but continued to be politically active until her death at age 93 on August 23, 2010.

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

**Fort Worth Chapter Update**

By Jan Gray

Greetings from Cowtown! In March, we participated in a virtual meeting with the Foundation fighting Blindness to share information about our chapter with people from across DFW. In April, we participated in a local health fair and the Region 11 Technology Olympics. At our meeting on April 2, we discussed the Book” Almost Like a Song “. Aprils’ meeting was held via conference call, but we discussed possible places to meet in person in the near future.

**Houston Happenings**

By Michael Garrett

The Houston Council of the Blind (HCB) continues to be visible in the greater Houston community. Through our collaborative efforts and other initiatives, we have been active in social, advocacy and informative activities. Some of those include contacting a representative of Achilles, a health and fitness organization that partners with people with disabilities in walking, running and other athletic endeavors. Several of our members toured the Houston Holocaust Museum to experience its audible guided tour. We are partnering with the major blindness organizations in the greater Houston area to sponsor this year’s White Cane Safety Day Celebration. President Metoyer has made committee assignments and we have begun working on our given tasks. The Transportation Committee dealt with an advocacy issue with our local transportation agency. The Advocacy Committee formulated plans and projects for the year. Other committees have also been active in contributing to the success of the organization, especially the Fundraising and PR Committees.

HCB: Helping, Caring Building!

**American Council of the Blind of Texas**

The ACBT Board of Directors is comprised of five 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
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)**

**2021/2022 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)

Our affiliated health plans and our parent organization are leading a national effort to reduce social barriers, drive change and improve lives.

* Texas Central Partners, LLC (Keynote Sponsor)

Developing the new and accessible Texas high-speed train line connecting North Texas & Greater Houston.

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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.

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