**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 R. Garrett

Greetings ACBT Members, Supporters & Friends!

We are only halfway through the year and ACBT has been extremely busy and has accomplished a great deal Already this year. Our committees have been “Connecting, Communicating and Collaborating “to keep us informed, updated, educated and entertained!

* The advocacy Committee kept us informed during the 87th Legislative session and we supported several bills that were important to people living with vision loss with a focus on voting issues!
* The Constitution & Bylaws Committee, along with the Voting Task Force and President organized a Special Conference that met to update the Constitution & Bylaws to allow virtual voting.
* The Membership &Member morale Committees helped keep our members connected and informed as well as entertained. The first ever “Mass Chapter Meeting” was a huge success.
* The Transportation Committee held sessions to keep us updated on autonomous vehicles and what people who are blind or visually impaired really think about them.
* The Scholarship Committee has been busy preparing and disseminating scholarship applications for the 2021 year and are now reviewing applications to select winners.
* The Fund-Raising Committee has tempted our “sweet tooth” with its “Yun Raiser” and now are teasing us with a drawing for a “Ultimate Griller Package” with the winner to be drawn during the Banquet.
* The Public relations Committee has been actively working with Committees to ensure that programs and activities are promoted on all areas of ACBT’s social media!
* The Web oversight Committee, after months of diligently working many hours, has completed upgrading the ACBT website. Check it out at [www.acbtexas.org](http://www.acbtexas.org)!
* The Newsletter Committee has been actively soliciting interesting and informative articles for each issue of the Texas Star as you will see as you read this issue!
* The Conference/Convention and the Auction Committees are full speed ahead planning the 43rd annual Conference/Convention and a great auction scheduled for August 26-29, 2021!

Like a “well-oiled wheel”, ACBT is rolling along to achieve the mission and vision of the organization. I extend my thanks and appreciation to those Committee members who continue to give of their time talent and treasure to make a difference for all Blind Texans! I encourage other ACBT members to consider serving on at least one Committee for the 2021-2022 year!

**From the Membership Committee**

by Michael E. Garrett

Well, it is that time again! We are gearing up for our annual American Council of the Blind of Texas (ACBT) Conference/Convention. Can’t you feel the excitement? Aren’t you waiting with great anticipation? Aren’t you eager to discover the practical and functional information that will be passed along to all our members? August 26 thru 29 will be here before you know it.

One of the perks of being an ACBT member is our state Conference/Convention. Each year shortly after our state gathering, the ACBT Conference Committee begins preparing for the next event. Many hours are spent planning, discussing, researching, calling, and coordinating so that the next Conference/Convention will be a huge success. This is all done with you, our members in mind.

It is unfortunate that we will not be able to meet in person again this year. But, the same amount of energy has been expended to make sure there will be something for everybody at our virtual event. There are some exciting sessions planned, from our special interest affiliates to practical technology uses, and from a report from our state agency to exhibits and our auction.

If you’ve been keeping up with the ACBT Membership Committee’s Informative Calls, you will have noticed that we have tried to bring you topics of interest in order to show individuals the broad range of activities, occupations, hobbies and interests that blind and visually impaired people are involved in. This year’s state Conference/Convention should represent the culmination of our efforts. As members, you play the major role in what we want to present. Later in the year, the Membership committee has other things that it hopes will be of interest to you, our members, and those whom we hope to encourage to become members.

All done with you in mind!

**Summer Fun!**

by Kevin Ratliff

Greetings from the Fundraising Committee! I hope that everyone is enjoying the warmer, well very HOT weather! We are pleased to announce the 2021 ACBT drawing/raffle! This year’s prize is an Ultimate Grilling Package. The package contains the “Power Smokeless Grill”, an “Omaha Steaks” deluxe variety Package, and a “Saltlick BBQ” sauce Gift Pack with four flavorful sauces. Tickets are $10 each. You can purchase chances to win with your [online registration](https://acbtexas.org/conference/2021-conference-registration/) for the ACBT State Conference and Convention. Once your registration and payment confirmation are received, you will receive a confirmation email containing your entry verification and ticket numbers. The drawing will take place and the Winners will be announced at the ACBT 2021 Conference during the banquet on Saturday evening, August 28, 2021. The winner does not need to be present to win.

Enter for your chance to win this fabulous prize today!

**Secretary Secrets**

by Mary Alice Gary

The year is half over already. Wow, how time fly’s now-a-days. Is anyone else having trouble keeping up with today’s fast pace? So many Zoom meetings and classes. At least some events are now being scheduled in person with limited attendance. Hopefully, soon, most will be face-to-face.

Here are a few important virtual events and resources you will not want to miss. The ACBT Conference/Convention will take place virtually from August 26 thru 29, 2021. Do not forget all Officer positions and 2 Director positions are up for election this year. Elections will be held during the Sunday morning Business Meeting on August 28, 2021, at 10:00 AM. I would appreciate your support again this year, as I am running for re-election as Secretary.

To stay informed about ACBT and ACB happenings and not miss an event, you may wish to join the following two Lists. For ACBT, subscribe by sending an email to this link: [ACBT+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:ACBT+subscribe@groups.io) (that’s the plus symbol after the ACBT). With the new list, you can actually reply just to the sender or everyone. To subscribe to the ACB Community Events Group List, just email your request to [Community@acb.org](mailto:Community@acb.org). The daily list includes all the topics, times, links and call-in information to participate in any of the calls.

Don’t forget about using your Alexa device to listen to ACB Radio, now ACB Media. Just ask Alexa to “Enable ACB Media”. She will prompt you to select stream 1 through 10. You can check out what the new channels or streams are called at: <https://www.acb.org/alexa-skill-update-6-28-21>.

Remember, Keep Smiling! 😊

**Tales from the Treasurer**

by Sheila Derrick

Hello everyone! I trust each of you will join in and support the second ACBT Virtual conference/convention planned for August 26 – 29, 2021 as ACBT celebrates its 43rdd annual event. Please read more in this newsletter about the programs, workshops, social events, entertainment, and our auction.

As our Constitution and By-Laws have now been amended to allow for a virtual business meeting this year, our rules for voter certification will apply. The deadline for the treasurer to receive dues 45 days prior to the conference/convention was July 11, 2021.

New or late-renewing members paid for after that date will not be certified to cast a vote at the business meeting. New members may continue to be added throughout the summer and fall but they will not be eligible to vote at the conference election.

For each new member I will need the following information: first and last name, street address, city, state, zip code, home and cell phone numbers, e-mail address, vision status (totally blind/ vision impaired or fully sighted) and their publication formats. The Texas Star is available by email, audio CD and large print. We do encourage all members with email access to please select the email format. The Braille Forum from ACB is available in Braille, cartridge for DAISY player, large print, and email. Each of these newsletters are published quarterly. For statistical purposes only ACB and ACBT are requesting the following demographics: age range, gender, and ethnicity. This information is voluntary.

New member information and dues should be mailed to: Sheila Derrick, ACBT Treasurer, 309 Paloverde Lane, Fort Worth, TX 76112-1122. Dues to ACBT are $7.00 for chapter members, $3 for chapter junior members, $10 for at-large members and $2 for special interest affiliate members.

**2021 Conference/Convention Update**

by Peggy R. Garrett

The 43rd annual Conference/Convention of the American Council of the Blind of Texas presents a rare but wonderful opportunity for the organization. The opening session of the 2021 Conference is the 44th anniversary of ACBT as the affiliate was chartered on August 27, 1977! Join the opening session on Friday for a special birthday celebration!

Our second virtual Conference/Convention is shaping up with some really great sessions and presenters. We are pleased to have David Trott, Treasurer of the American Council of the Blind as our national representative this year. He will be our banquet speaker as well as presenting a session on leadership.

The Saturday evening auction is filling up with items you won’t want to miss! Don’t forget that we will hold the business meeting on Sunday morning, which will include our election.

The cost of Registration is only $25.00 and includes all sessions as well as a chance to win a door prize. You can register online at <https://acbtexas.org/conference/2021-conference-registration>.

Registration will close at 7:00 PM on August 15th. An additional $10.00 will be added for registrations postmarked after that date.

We look forward to you joining us as we celebrate our 44th anniversary during our 43rd annual Conference/Convention of the American Council of the Blind of Texas!!

**Proposed Amendments to the ACBT Constitution and Bylaws**

by Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Although, we are holding a virtual 43rd Annual ACBT Conference/Convention, we are able to conduct business as usual due to the fact that members gathered on June 5, 2021 for a Special Conference via zoom in order to adopt new practices through the process of presenting a constitutional amendment that passed unanimously and now presents the privilege of us informing you that on Sunday August 29, 2021, we will gather to hold elections and include members in the process of considering adoption of the proposed amendments placed below during the business meeting. These are presented here and we will have a first reading on Saturday August 28, 2021 as directed by our president and a reading will take place prior to voting on the next day. You have several opportunities to consider your position. We look forward to greeting you at the upcoming conference/convention.

Notice on proposed amendments to the ACBT Bylaws:

Proposed Bylaw amendments must be submitted to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee by 9:00AM on Friday August 27, 2020 to be presented on Sunday August 29, 2021. Refer to contact information at the end of this article.

Begin Proposed Amendments to the Constitution:

**Proposed Amendment to Article IV, Officers**

Submitted by Neil and Cindy Finley

(If approved, this amendment would be placed between sections “b” and “c,” and subsequent sections would be renumbered accordingly.)

No two people who are related by either affinity (marriage) or consanguinity (blood) may serve at the same time as elected officers or directors of the American Council of the Blind of Texas. Also, no two people living at the same address, regardless of relationship, may serve at the same time as elected officers or directors of ACBT.

**Proposed amendment to Article IV, Section C:**

Current:

C. No more than three (3) members from a single chapter shall be eligible to serve concurrently on the board, not including actual Chapter and Affiliate representatives who are designated to serve

on the Board by their Chapters and Affiliates.

Proposed:

C. No more than two (2) members from a single chapter shall be eligible to serve concurrently on the board, not including actual

Chapter and Affiliate representatives who are designated to serve on the Board by their Chapters and Affiliates.

**Proposed Amendment to ACBT Constitution**

Submitted by Peggy R. Garrett

Current:

Article VI Amendments

A. This constitution may be amended at any annual or specially called conference/convention by a vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting after having been submitted, in writing, to the members at least thirty (30) days prior to the voting on said amendment. Any proposed amendment to this constitution must be submitted in writing to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee no later than one hundred twenty (120) days before the beginning of the annual conference/convention.

Proposed:

Article VI Amendments

A. This constitution may be amended at any annual or specially called conference/convention by a vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting after having been submitted, in writing, to the members at least thirty (30) days prior to the voting on said amendment. Any proposed amendment to this constitution must be submitted in writing to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee no less than ninety days (90) days before the beginning of any annual or specially called conference/convention.

This concludes the proposed amendments for the upcoming conference/convention. Thanks to all members of the committee for their time and efforts.

Contact Committee Chair, Kenneth Semien, Sr. with questions or comments by calling 409-866-5838 or send an email to [Semien.k@att.net](mailto:Semien.k@att.net)

**Nominating Committee Report**

by Michael E. Garrett

The election to be held at the 2021 Conference/ Convention are fast approaching, albeit with a little different twist. This year, for the first time, we will be voting virtually. Nonetheless, this remains a significantly important process that every member can participate in, as it determines the direction of our organization. The leaders you choose represent the face of ACBT.

All candidates must be familiar with the duties of, and relating to the office being sought, as stated in the ACBT Constitution and Bylaws, as well as having read the entire Constitution and Bylaws. Since we did not hold elections in 2020, all officer positions are up for election. In addition, we will also follow our normal procedure in odd numbered years by electing two members to the Board of Directors. The Nominating Committee presents the following 2021 slate of officers and Board of Directors candidates:

President: Peggy R. Garrett

First Vice President: Michael E. Garrett

Second Vice President: OPEN

Secretary: Mary Alice Gary

Treasurer: Sheila Derrick

Board of Directors: Lou Ann Williams

Of Course, nominations can be made from the floor; However, you must have talked to the person being nominated to be sure that the individual is willing to serve and fulfill the duties of that office. Keep in mind that to adequately fulfill the duties of an officer or director, an individual must have been an active participant in the affairs of ACBT and knowledgeable about the policies, practices and procedures that govern our organization. Also, he or she must have a bio which can be read during the elections process. The candidate’s bio should consist of a brief introductory paragraph telling who they are, the office being sought and why they are running. In addition, answers to the following questions must also be presented.

1. What are your reasons for seeking this office?
2. What experience and expertise can you contribute to this office and ACBT?
3. What actions would you take to assist ACBT in fulfilling its mission and achieving its goals?
4. Fundraising is fundamental to keeping any nonprofit organization alive. Therefore, name two possible fundraising events and tell how you would personally contribute to the success of these events.
5. When do you feel that 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 two to three years and how would you help ACBT manage those challenges?

Below are the bios received by the Nominating Committee within the specified time requirement.

**Candidacy for President 2021**

Peggy R. Garrett

7806 Chaseway Drive

Missouri City, Texas 77489

I am writing to inform the Nominating Committee that I am seeking to complete the second year of my second term as President of ACBT.

I would like to serve the second year of this term. It is my desire to serve in this capacity to help ensure that the mission and goals of the organization are implemented.

In addition to serving on the ACB Membership Committee since 2005 and serving as Chair of the Multicultural Affairs Committee (MCAC) since 2003), I was appointed last year to serve on the Information, Resource & Peer Support Committee (IRPS).

I served on the Board of the Library Users of America as Secretary for 6 years and on the board for 4 years and first Vice President of the Alliance On Aging With Vision Loss as first VP for 4 years and currently completing a 2-year term on the Board.

I have served in the Houston Chapter as 2nd Vice president, 1st Vice President and President as well chaired the Fund Raising, Membership, Public Relations/Outreach, Nominating and Christmas Party Committees.

I have served on the ACBT Board for the past ten and a half years: four years as the HCB Chapter Representative, four years as First Vice President and almost three years as President. My ongoing experience on the ACBT Board combined with serving at both local and national levels and in other organizations and on other boards have helped to equip me to serve in this capacity.

Prior to serving on the ACBT Board and Over the past six and a half years serving on the Board, I have worked diligently to make sure that ACBT continues to be a part of the decision-making process in the state that affects all blind Texans. I feel that it is imperative that ACBT collaborates with other agencies and organizations who are advocating for the same issues as ACBT.

Along those lines, I am currently serving on Alliance of and for Visually Impaired Texans (AVIT), working closely with the Coalition of and for Texans with Disabilities (CTD), Vision Loss in Older Adults Working Group and Houston financial inclusion Working Group.

I also work closely with Texas Talking Book Program, active member of American Association of Retired People (AARP) as an advocate for older individuals and the Texas League of Women Voters.

* Since 2012 I have served on and worked closely with the ACBT Fund-Raising Committee. While it has been difficult to find ways to raise substantial amounts of funding for ACBT, I continue to work closely with the 2nd Vice President/Fund Raising Chairperson and seek new avenues to raise funds to improve the financial status of the organization. I will continue seeking opportunities through sponsorships, corporation and individual donations, personal donations and the annual ACB Brenda Dillon Walk/Run through the Texas Trailblazers Team.

I also monitor the Network for Giving Program to obtain ideas for additional fund-raising opportunities and ways to improve current fund-raising strategies.

* It is necessary for organizations to review practices and procedures frequently to ensure that they are up to date with changing laws that govern the organization’s 501 (C)(3) and tax exemption status.

As experienced by the inability to conduct business and hold elections last year due to holding the first ever virtual Conference/Convention, it became necessary to update the ACBT Constitution/Bylaws to incorporate this process.

* As the world around us is constantly changing, especially where the internet and social media are concerned, it is necessary to review policies regarding our website and social media outreach to ensure that the organization is using the most accessible technology to ensure ease of use for all people who are blind/visually impaired.

Other documents should be reviewed periodically and changes made as necessary to keep the organization current and to allow the business of the organization to be conducted in the best manner.

* While fund raising remains a challenge, I feel membership is an equally challenging issue for ACBT. In recent years we have lost many of our long-time members to death or chronic illnesses. These were members who worked diligently over many decades to raise funds, implement programs and services, provide peer support and advocate on many issues important to all blind Texans.

In addition to these losses, many of our current members are not stepping up and getting involved in the business of the organization. I will continue working closely with both the Membership Committee and the Member Morale Committee to encourage greater member participation.

In addition to increasing member participation, I will work with Chapters to develop stronger recruitment strategies with a focus on younger members.

I am currently working on a mentoring program that will be available to all Chapters that will hopefully increase retention of new members.

**Candidacy For First Vice President 2021**

Michael E. Garrett

7806 Chaseway Drive

Missouri City, Texas

I am Michael Garrett, and I am seeking to complete the second year of my second term as ACBT First Vice President. On a professional level, I am a retired Investment Analyst with 27 years of experience with JP Morgan Chase. We have a large family consisting of 5 children, 12 grandchildren, and 4 great grandchildren. Over the years, I have been active both in the Greater Houston community and my church.

--I am seeking this office because I want to continue serving the members of ACBT. We’re at a critical juncture in this state and as an organization, ACBT holds a special place in the great state of Texas. We represent a significant number of people who are blind or visually impaired all across the state. I believe our members, and others, must make our voices heard regarding the issues that confront us daily as blind and visually impaired Texans. I’d like to continue working with this board and other team members to expand on the efforts we’ve begun.

--I have been a member of ACBT for 30 years. I have served on the board in a number of capacities and on committees under several presidents. Over the years, my committee assignments have included PR, Resolutions, Constitution and By Laws, Advocacy, Scholarships, Investments, Nominating and Membership. At the national level, I have served on the ACB Board, on the Investment Committee, chaired the Scholarship Committee worked on the management committee of ACB Radio, and currently serve on the Auction Committee, the MMS Committee and chair the thrift store board. I have served in several capacities in my local chapter including all officer positions except Treasurer, Advocacy Committee Chairman and now hold the office of Secretary. With this experience, I have seen ACB and ACBT in various stages including times of struggle and in periods of prosperity.

--As a part of fulfilling our mission and goals and serving in this position, I believe we have an ongoing responsibility to recruit, retain, engage and inform our members. Throughout my first term, we have endeavored to do just that by broadening our out reach and working collaboratively with other committees to engage our members and attract others. I also want to continue my efforts in the advocacy issues that ACBT is involved in by continuing to develop relationships and inform our state legislators of our needs. This also presents an opportunity to encourage our members to speak up about the issues which are important to them.

--Fundraising is the life blood of any nonprofit organization. Over the past several years, we have developed some key corporate relationships. I will endeavor to continue to build on these and expand our reach in order to inform others about what individuals who are blind and visually impaired can do. We also must continue to look among ourselves and discover the expertise within our ranks and somehow seek to monetize that experience. For example, there are those within ACBT who have some unique skills and talents. The question becomes, how can we encourage those members to lend those skills and talents to the organization to improve our funding resources?

--Change is inevitable. We live in a technologically driven society where change happens constantly and rapidly. We must be flexible enough to embrace change, while at the same time remaining true to our core principles. Every change is not always beneficial, but we must make changes that benefit all of our members.

--ACBT has some daunting challenges facing it. It is imperative that we seek out and develop qualified, committed and compassionate individuals who will step up and take on the leadership reins of ACBT. We also must continue to be vigilant in developing corporate partners to maintain sound financial footing. It is my desire to continue to do my part in these crucial efforts. In addition, we are developing a mentoring program designed to recruit and retain new and existing members.

**Candidacy For Secretary 2021:**

Hello there! It’s me again. Your current Secretary, Mary Alice Gary. Since 2014, I have graciously held the office of Secretary for the American Council of the Blind of Texas and would like to continue serving in this capacity. To Accomplish this, all I am asking is for you to cast your vote for me during the 2021 Elections being held during the Conference/Convention in August. I would greatly appreciate your continued support.

On the state level, since 2018, the ACBT President has appointed me to Chair the Transportation Committee, while also allowing me to continue serving on Membership, Scholarship, and Constitution and By Laws, while still transcribing and disseminating all documents related to ACBT Board Meetings. If you subscribe to the Groups List, you are well aware of all the “Informative Calls” both the Transportation and Membership Committees have conducted over the past few years. All Committee members are very active behind the scenes working on various projects to keep ACBT members informed and entertained.

As an Alamo Council of the Blind member, I currently serve as First Vice President and Chair the Constitution and By Laws Committee. Covid has slowed down many of our projects but we are now working with the “White Cane Planning Committee” to possibly hold a virtual, if not in person, celebration this year. If an opportunity presents itself, as I move around the community, I continue to educate and advocate when it comes to blindness issues and making San Antonio a more blind friendly community.

1. Remaining as Secretary would allow me to continue serving ACBT and working to advance our goals. I also enjoy being an active member in our organization.
2. Since 2014, I have performed the duties of ACBT Secretary and finally got the hang of it. I have worked on several Committees and assisted with creating announcements for “Informative Calls”. Disseminating Minutes to the ACBT Board and announcements on the Groups List are other tasks I’ve performed as Secretary.
3. When traveling around San Antonio, or anywhere, for that matter, as we come in contact with uninformed individuals, we should educate and possibly even advocate, them about blindness issues. Doing this in a positive manner, may help bring about change one person at a time.
4. Fundraising is always an obstacle for any organization. One idea a few years ago was to publish an ACBT recipe book, possibly on Amazon. I for one am always looking for digital format materials. Other organizations have raffled big ticket items and brought in a significant amount of funds.
5. Change needs to occur when participation and growth level off or decline. The difficulty comes in figuring out what the root of the problem is. Leaders need to listen, understand and be willing to make the changes for the betterment of the organization once the reason has been determined.
6. Sustaining Membership has always been the most difficult part of ACBT. Continuing to work on the Membership Committee and collaborate with other Committees to brainstorm on new ways to attract members, is just one of the ways I can help.

**Candidacy For Treasurer 2021:**

I’m Sheila Derrick, ACBT treasurer for the past six years and I

am seeking re-election to that post in 2021. I am a member of the Greater Fort Worth Area chapter, of which I have been a member since 2009 and the treasurer since 2010. I am also active on the following ACBT committees: Annual State Conference/Convention, Membership, Fundraising, Credentials, Constitution and By-Laws and chair of Finance and Budget. I look forward to continuing to use my skills for the benefit of ACBT and the challenge of balancing budgets and maintaining accurate financial records.

1. Volunteering has always been an important part of my life but, due to transportation difficulties since moving to Texas, I have not been as active as I would like. This position affords me the opportunity to use my skills and give to an organization that has a vital role in supporting the blind community while allowing most of the work to be done at home.
2. I have 30 years of basic bookkeeping experience through my employment as a medical practice office manager. Currently I am serving my fifrth term as ACBT treasurer, my sixth term as Fort Worth treasurer and my ninth year as Conference/Convention treasurer and registar.
3. In addition to participating in the work of the above- mentioned committees, I support the legislative projects of ACB and ACBT with phone calls, emails, survey responses, and occasionally letters to state and national representatives.
4. I also participate in community events to increase awareness of ACBT and our mission of increasing independence and equality for all people with vision deficits.
5. Unfortunately, I am not a creative, out of the box type of thinker and have difficulty presenting new fundraising ideas. I do wholeheartedly participate in all of the ACBTT fundraisers including the ACB MMS program, AmazonSmile, Conference auction, and our current See’s Candy campaign. I actively solicit donations of funds and items for the conference. As we move forward in the next two years to attract project specific donations, I will work to help provide the demographic statistics and other organizational date as may be required by potential funders.
6. When an organization strays from its mission statement or begins to place too much emphasis on only one part of its programs, then it is time to re-evaluate its practices. All human interactions come with differences of ideas, but the goals of the organization should always be the anchor for the direction the group pursues. Our biggest challenge is reaching new members, both young and old. The Youth Advantage Program enjoyed an impressive beginning. There have been struggles and challenges since then due to the ever-changing policies and commitments of TWC. ACBT has currently placed the Youth Advantage Program on hold, but I hope it will become viable again in the future.

Our further challenge is reaching the ever-increasing population of Texans with vision loss due to macular degeneration and other age-related eye diseases. As the COVID-19 pandemic allows the return of in-person gatherings, representation of both our local chapters and ACBT at as many community events as possible is necessary to spread our message. Word of mouth is the best means of advertisement. I hope we will also continue to use our Zoom platform to expand our presence in the blind community.

**Candidacy for ACBT Director 2021:**

My name is Lou Ann Williams, and I am a member of Alamo Council of the Blind in San Antonio. I wish to be considered for an ACBT Director position. Presently I am serving in a Director position and this is the last term I am able to run for.

I was born in Lake Charles, LA prematurely, and as a result have Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP). At the age of two, my father was transferred to Little Rock AFB.

Grades K-12 were attended at the Arkansas School for the Blind. There I gained academic knowledge, life skills, and the importance of volunteering. After high school, I received a B.S.E. in Elementary, Special Ed., Early Childhood Ed. and a Masters In Special Ed. from the University of Central Arkansas. I am also a Certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired.

Teaching experience includes teaching at the AR School for the Blind and teaching in a preschool program for visually impaired students in San Antonio, TX. My last employment was working in an office of a Petroleum Engineer in San Antonio.

I am married to Thomas E. (Gene) Williams, USAF, Ret. We have 3 grown children, two granddaughters and one grandson. Alamo Council of the Blind has been part of my life since the late 1990’s. Positions held have included President, Vice-President and Secretary as well as serving on various committees.

I have held several board positions, for various organizations, over the years. These organizations include, San Antonio Independent Living Services, America Association of Blind Teachers, Guide Dogs of Texas, Inc., and Guide Dog Users of Texas

1. In the past I have been asked to consider running for various officer positions on the State level and I turned the opportunities down, due to the fear of public speaking. I was originally appointed to a board position to finish a term. I’m now completing a full term. I wish to step up and run for a final full term and hopefully serve ACBT in a positive manner.
2. It is my hope I will be capable of drawing from past experiences, knowledge, as well as shortcomings, from serving on boards of other organizations as well as the ACBT Board. I am an up front type of team player. If I perceive a problem I will strive to find an answer.
3. ACBT has a great mission. I will do my best to spread the word of what we do. Being visible in our communities is very important in educating and advocating in a positive manner. Many Teachers of the Visually Impaired don’t know about our organization and what our mission is about. I would like to see more of them, as well as Orientation and Mobility instructors become aware of our organization and become members. They in turn can help spread the word to students and families they work with.
4. Nonprofits struggle to gain the funds they need to progress with their goals and ACBT is no exception. I will work with others to come up with a sustainable cash flow. When preparing questions for the last run for the board position I mentioned the Amazon Smile program that helps non-profits. Hopefully ACBT will continue with that program. Personally I enjoy shopping on Amazon and a portion of those buying dollars can continue to go to help ACBT. We can work together to fine another similar program that ACBT can participate with to bring in additional funds.
5. Careful consideration must be taken when changes are made to practices and procedures of an organization. If they are not in alignment with the National organization or our mission, then changes could be considered. Just, as it is important for Local Chapters to be in alignment with the State level. Changes should not be made just to accommodate a desired personal situation or desire.
6. The biggest challenges facing ACBT are the need for funding and increasing membership. We must work together as a team, with open lines of communication and analyze what has worked in the past. We must strive to implement those things and plan for new ways to improve the future together.

**Calling for Resolutions**

by Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Members should let their voices be heard by submitting resolutions (a written narrative of clauses containing details concerning the initiation of or enhancements to a program or services) in regard to issues affecting Texans who are blind or visually impaired. Resolutions have the ability to direct our advocacy efforts and legislative priorities for the biennial legislative session. Members in attendance at 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 9:00AM Central on August 27th.

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

**Auction Committee Update**

by Sara Freeman Smith

Guess what time it is? It’s time to get your “Shopping Groove” on for a fantastic Auction on Saturday, August 28th! If you were thinking about donating an item or two, but ran out of time, you are in luck! The Auction Committee needs to hear from you NOW! We have extended the deadline for two weeks until Saturday, midnight July 31st to allow you time to get us the detailed description and picture of the items. We are accepting donations from organizations, businesses, and individuals. Only handmade (cooked or crafted), new or items in their original packaging will be accepted for the auction along with their description, picture, and approximate value. Since the auction is virtual, you can keep your donations and send the item directly to the winner after the Auction.

We have received some really great donations so far, but we need your donation to make it complete! Remember, we will have Texas members and ACB members from across the US to participate in the auction. Let’s make this year the best Texas Auction ever!

We need to hear from you no later than July 31st at midnight! If you have any questions, please contact the Co-Chairs at [auction@acbtexas.org](mailto:auction@acbtexas.org) or call Gayle at cell-281-794-2012 or Sara at cell- 713-882-3000

**Texas Legislative Session Spawns Creative Advocacy Efforts**

by Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Members of the ACBT Advocacy Services/Legislation committee and other ACBT members participated in the legislative process as we introduced our 2021 Legislative Priorities to the 87th Texas Legislature that adjourned on May 31, 2021. Our priorities were: 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 in on our Advocacy and Legislative Action Days held in February, by making phone calls and sending email messages to their respective State Representatives and Senators.

We made some progress by taking steps that we had not made previously, such as preparing a Voting Op-ed, being featured in newspaper articles in Texas and on the national level. We also participated in collaborative efforts with the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD), REV UP Texas, Disability Rights Texas, Texas League of Women Voters, the Texas Civil Rights Project, the Alliance of and for Visually Impaired Texans (AVIT) and Jennifer Harris of JWH Communications.

The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD) conducted weekly Raise Your Voice sessions through their Advocates Program and a number of individuals who are blind or visually impaired joined in these virtual sessions beside others with various disabilities.

Our efforts will continue throughout the special session called by Texas Governor, Greg Abbott, which began on Thursday July 8, 2021. ACBT’s board of directors agreed that we should sign on to a Voting Integrity Statement being presented by over 25 disability related nonprofits to all legislators in support of voting equity for Texans with disabilities.

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

**Get Movin’ with Transportation**

by Mary Alice Gary Chair

It is finally summer! Time to get movin’ and enjoy the many beautiful sites this great country has to offer. Now that restrictions are easing and people are anxious to leave their homes, the ACBT Transportation Committee has just the thing you need, and it may help you save a few bucks along the way.

Ever heard of the “America the Beautiful: National and Federal Lands Interagency Pass”? Well, neither had I until I was traveling about and drove up to the entrance of the Petrified National Forest. As our car came to a stop the Ranger saw my white cane and asked me if I had a “National Park Pass”? He explained I could receive discounts and, in some cases, free admission into most National Areas, not just Parks. The Ranger was kind enough to complete my form right then, and into the park we drove at no cost. Just inside, we stopped at the visitor’s center to inquire about “Audio Devices”. There was a CD available for purchase which could be played as you drove thru the park. The cost at the time was under $10. As entrance to the park was free, I considered my purchase a small contribution to the Park Service. I’ve utilized my pass at a beach in Corpus Christi, The Arch in St. Louis, and the caves at Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico. AS we are not planners, any place with the word “National”, I present my pass and ask if it’s accepted at the facility. Don’t forget to inquire about audio descriptive devices. Some parks are equipped with them. It never hurts to ask!

Don’t have one? First, the applicant must have a permanent disability or be a Veteran, documentation required. To check if you qualify, or complete an application, click or copy the link (you may need to hold the CTRL + click), then scroll down to access pass:

<https://www.nps.gov/olym/planyourvisit/national-parks-and-federal-recreational-lands-pass.htm>

Oh, and by the way, there’s a free APP called UNIDESCRIPTION which describes and offers navigation tips of U.S. national Parks and other Public Places. Check out Hadley.edu for the Podcast about the App.

Happy and Safe Travels from the Transportation Committee, Gayle Metoyer, Paula Muysenberg, Ted Harper and Bill Gary. Thank you, members, for all you do.

**Time for Self-Care – Excerpts from Research Experts**

by Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Self-care is not synonymous with self-indulgence or being selfish. Self-care means taking care of yourself so that you can be healthy, you can be well, you can do your job, you can help and care for others, and you can do all the things you need and want to accomplish in a day.  
  
If you think you’ve been hearing more about self-care now, you’re right. One indicator: According to Google Trends, the number of searches for “self-care” has more than doubled since 2015.

Paula Gill Lopez, PhD, an associate professor, and chair of the department of psychological and educational consultation at Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut, says the need for self-care is obvious. “We have an epidemic of anxiety and depression,” she says. “Everybody feels it.”  
  
Self-care is part of the answer to how we can all better cope with daily stressors, explains Kelsey Patel, a Los Angeles–based wellness expert and the author of the forthcoming book Burning Bright: Rituals, Reiki, and Self-Care to Heal Burnout, Anxiety, and Stress. It’s work stress. It’s the stress of trying to keep up with the pace of daily life, which technology has hastened more than ever (just think how many emails come flooding into your inbox each day). “People are feeling lonelier and less able to unwind and slow down, which makes them feel more anxious and overwhelmed by even the simplest tasks,” Patel says.

What Is Self-Care, and Why Is It Critical for Your Well-Being?  
Several organizations and researchers take a health-oriented approach when defining self-care. The World Health Organization defines self-care as: “the ability of individuals, families, and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider.”

According to this definition, self-care includes everything related to staying physically healthy — including hygiene, nutrition, and seeking medical care when needed. It’s all the steps an individual can take to manage stressors in his or her life and take care of his or her own health and well-being.

**Web Oversight Committee**

by Foster Brown

We are petitioning for new members that are familiar with using WordPress to create webpages, forms, etc. If you have some extra time and would like to share your expertise with us, it will surely be appreciated. Meetings are monthly on the 2nd Thursday of each month from 7 to 8pm. We mainly communicate by email. Come join us!

Over the last few months the WOC has created the following forms: scholarship application form, special conference registration and annual conference/convention registration form. We appreciate everyone who assisted us in testing these forms before they went live. Thank you.

We have also coordinated with the fundraising committee on a couple of their fundraising events. The See’s Candy fundraiser was posted to the website back in April. (People cannot get enough of those English toffees.) The second event is for the virtual raffle that will take place during our next virtual ACBT conference/convention. Tickets may be purchased via the registration link. You may purchase as many tickets as you like.

**Alamo Council Update**

by Mary Alice Gary

Hola! From the Fiesta City! Yes, it’s finally Fiesta time in San Antonio. Everywhere you go, Fiesta medals are being scooped up by collectors and yep, the Alamo medals are going fast. Elizabeth and James Hanna are doing an awesome job selling them at various Fiesta Medal events around town. Anyone wishing to purchase a medal, for a mere $10, can do so by contacting any Alamo member.

President Roser and myself are once again participating in planning the City’s White Cane Awareness Day. Tentative plans have us gathering on the City Hall steps on October 15 2021. More details will follow, as they are finalized.

The Alamo Chapter is taking July off to relax and allow time for members to participate in the National Conference. During the August 14th meeting, Scholarship winners will be announced. Applications can be found at [www.acbsatx.org](http://www.acbsatx.org) or emailed questions to [info.acbsatx@gmail.com](mailto:info.acbsatx@gmail.com) or by phone at 210-492-4420. The deadline is July 31, 2021.

Until next time, stay happy, healthy and safe.

From all your friends from Alamo Council of the Blind! 😊

**Austin Chapter Report**by Marcus Manning

Cheers ACBT members, it is the most wonderful time of the year, time for national and state convention. Here is a snapshot of what we have got going on as we approach our virtual gatherings. We have recently awarded 2 scholarships to 2 remarkable students who are currently attending TSVBI. We are offering scholarships for blind students attending school and college, applications are to be turned in no later than July 15. The assistive technology grant is also still taking applications. If you are aware of any qualified applicant, direct them to our website. Remember we are working to improve possibilities and opportunities for all blind people.

We are participating in White Cane Day by having a booth. We will be giving away loads of Austin Council SWAG. If you want to learn more about what we are doing, if you want to get more involved in any aspect of what we are doing, or if you have ideas or concerns, come to office hours at 2:00 in the afternoon of every second Saturday of every month, currently on the zoom platform. Well, let’s all enjoy our national and state conventions and yes, in August we will have the opportunity to see each other once again. We are scheduled to begin meeting face to face again in August. We will notify you on the exact place.

**Beaumont Council Update**

\by Cynthia Julun

The Beaumont Area Council of the Blind has been preparing members for emergencies and or hurricanes by providing information and resources. A Chaplin attended our April meeting and gave information regarding Advance Directives, Medical Power of Attorney, Power of Attorney, and Living Wills. To obtain more information or to find out where to locate this documentation contact the Beaumont Area Council of the Blind. Individuals should consider having these forms prepared in advance so that families will not be caught in a dilemma. Next, one should consider keeping a bag packed in the event of a sudden hospital stay or evacuation. If a person must leave immediately, they will not have time to search for things. Therefore, you should have extra cash on hand. Along with extra medication. If a power outage occurs, you should have a manual can- opener, flashlights, batteries, water, and non-perishable food. If possible, have several power banks to charge your cell phone. Also, if you have diabetes and you are insulin dependent, keep a small, insolated, cooler on hand for your medication. When it comes to Hurricanes and evacuating you need to discuss this issue with your family members to ensure that there is a plan in place. However, if you do not have a way of leaving you should consider registering with 2-1-1. Our President set up a call-in telephone number for BACB member so that they can keep us informed about their safety and well-being. Have a happy and safe summer.

**El Paso Council Update**

By Eleanor Coldwell

The El Paso Council of the Blind will hold their first in-person meeting in July at the home of treasurer, Alfredo Perez. And his wife, Kathy. Immediately following our meeting we will celebrate with a potluck picnic in their backyard, where we'll play games, have an auction and eat great food.

Board member Rosa Lopez has obtained a $4,000 grant from the El Paso Borderplex Texas Workforce Solutions. They will assist with technology equipment, digital marketing, and web development in order to help us recruit members and improve our on-line presence through digital technology. We are looking forward to working in partnership with them.

"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

The Fort Worth Chapter is springing forward to meet the summer with hope and enthusiasm. We are learning about our members and their special talents at our meetings, as we spotlight a member at each meeting. In June we had our first face to face meeting at Mama Mia’s Grill. We honored Ed Henderson, our past President for his service to the Ft. Worth Chapter. The food was great, and everyone enjoyed the outing. We decided to meet in person every other month until we can locate a permanent place to meet. In July, we will be announcing our scholarship winners. We are continuing to be a active part of the planning committee for White Cane Day in Fort Worth. Summer 2021 shows great promise for amazing things to come for the Fort Worth chapter.

**Houston Happenings**

by Michael E. Garrett

The Houston Council of the Blind continues to make strides toward visibility throughout the Greater Houston area. One of the hallmarks of our chapter is its willingness to collaborate with other blindness organizations. To that end, we participated in the HAVIN Expo. HAVIN is a local area organization consisting of representatives from virtually all the blindness groups in the surrounding area. We also participated with our LUA of Texas affiliate in the celebration of National Library Week.

In May, we celebrated National Laughter Day with a presentation of Yoga Laughter. HCB was excited to be a part of the first ever ACBT Mass Chapter Meeting where our skit was judged second among chapter presentations.

As covid restrictions are eased, we now have access to our office at the West Gray MultiService Center. In addition, we are gearing up for the upcoming White Cane Safety Day Celebration to be held in October.

HCB: Helping, Caring, Building.

**THE BRAILLE REVIVAL LEAGUE OF TEXAS (BRLT)**

by Michael E. Garrett

The Braille Revival League of Texas is looking forward to the 2021 ACBT annual Conference/Convention. We hope our program this year will be as informative as we believe last year’s was. We will lead off with our special guest who is none other than Paul Edwards, President of our parent organization, the Braille Revival League (BRL). Mr. Edwards is a long-time member of ACB (having served as its president) and, he is an avid braille reader. Not only is he a voracious braille reader, but he is also a strong supporter of braille. He will talk to us about things going on with braille and what BRL is doing to promote braille both in education and everyday living.

We will then have a Braille Product Corner and we’ll follow that up with a short business meeting.

We invite you to come and join us for what we believe will be a delightful beginning to our 2021 Conference/Convention. In the meantime…READ MORE BRAILLE!

**Library Users of America-Texas**

by Gayle Metoyer

Greetings LUAT members and friends:

Even though things are opening up, we are still holding our ACBT Conference/Convention virtually again this year. It will be held August 26-29. Our business meeting will be Friday, August 27 at 10 a.m. We will be electing new officers for the next year. If you are interested in running for a position, please contact me or any other officer. The officers are as follows:

Gayle Metoyer-President

Peggy Garrett-Vice President

Glenda Boerne-Secretary

Michael Garrett-Treasurer

We will also have Dina Abramson from the Texas Talking Book program as our guest speaker. She will give us updates on the Talking Book program as well as news about the National Library Service (NLS). Please mark your calendar to attend our business meeting to get involved with your local affiliate. We would love to have you!

Happy reading!

**Refreshing treat for Hot Summer Days**

by Eleanor Coldwell

Raspberry Frost

From:  Women's Circle Home Cooking

1/2 cups raspberries

1 pint vanilla ice cream

1 1/2 cups cold milk

Sugar

In a bowl, mix raspberries and half of the ice cream. Beat until well blended. Add milk and beat until frothy. Sweeten to taste. Pour into four 8-ounce glasses. Top with remaining ice cream and serve.

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

**Caregiving from a visually impaired Person’s Perspective**

by Chris Allen

In trying to decide what I wanted to write about in this issue of the Texas Star, it suddenly hit me…I had the perfect topic right in front of my face. Recently, my mother underwent her 2nd knee surgery within one year. I thought I was prepared, based on my previous experience taking care of her, but I could not have been more wrong.

My mother’s surgery was successful, but unfortunately she had some serious complications that occurred after her surgery. After a prolonged hospital stay, she came home quite weak and less able to care for her own needs than ever before. One of the biggest frustrations for me as a caregiver was not being able to help her track when and if she took her medicine. I would set reminders on my phone for when she was supposed to take a medication, and either she would ask me if it was time or I would remind her. Later, however, she would ask me if she had taken her medicine, and I would say that I could only assume she did. The problem was that I could not be sure she took the medicine. I needed control of and access to information on the labels of her medication, but I didn’t have it.

There were many days where I felt completely overwhelmed and alone. I was often exhausted and had no back up on a regular basis. My advice to those of you who are caregivers is to find someone you can talk to: a family member, a good friend, a support group or a therapist. Working out solutions to issues related to caregiving with the help of another person who is blind or visually impaired might also help by offering ideas you are too caught up in the moment to think of.

**The Importance of Positive Self-Talk**

by Will Burley

The way that you treat yourself in your own mind has a lot more significance than most people give it credit for. There are times when people might self-abuse or say nasty mean things to themselves out of habit, but the consequences of this are much farther reaching than they believe. In the next few paragraphs, you will be reading about the importance of positive self-talk.

1. **It Can Help You to See Yourself**

When you look at yourself in the mirror, what do you tell yourself? This might be the first time you've really ever had to think about that question, but it’s one that you should be aware of, and how you answer will make a difference to yourself on a daily basis. Whenever you tell yourself something really negative, you’re repeating powerful mantras that can influence everything about your self-esteem and how you see yourself in the world.

Unfortunately, it's generally going to be a skewed view if it’s always bathed in negativity. This makes it impossible for you to be able to be aware of yourself completely and it blocks you from being open to others.

When you spend your time saying uplifting things about yourself, you’re going to get a more complete picture of who you are. This isn’t saying that you should avoid dealing with things you consider to be faults. It just means you see a lot more than those things alone.

1. **It Gives You More Confidence**

Allowing yourself to see yourself completely helps to boost your confidence. That's because you are directly acknowledging the things that are good about you instead of focusing on the areas where you feel that you fall short. If you like, you can actually write them into a physical list. Reflect on each aspect, and think about the times in your life where those attributes have helped you to overcome something or solve a problem.

You’ll probably be amazed how many ways you've been able to get past things using your own natural talents. If you've come this far on what you know now, then imagine how well things can go when you’ve continued to learn and improve yourself. Try to see where you will be in the future based on these positive things you’ve discovered.

1. **It Helps You See a Positive Future**

Now that you know that you have some great qualities, you can see how they might be able to help you in the future. Are you a fast learner? Do you solve problems quickly? Having a better outlook will always make it easier for you to see yourself making accomplishments in the future. As you go through life, meet the objection of your inner critic with confident self-talk. Tell that part of your mind to be quiet. Do whatever you need to do to move past monetary doubts.

Another great exercise you can do is to make a vision board or mind map. It helps to have visual or intellectual representations of the things that you want to attain at some point. A new career, home, or vacation can be a long-term goal that you work towards. Just be sure to write down that you know you can get to those things somewhere along the way.

1. **It Helps Reduce Stress**

Positive self-talk is also really important because it helps you to keep your stress under control. Stress can be paralyzing, but it doesn’t have to be. When you start to feel overwhelmed, pull out a sheet of paper and write down the things you want. Put in a few easier goals that you know you can achieve in the short term, and put all of your energy into crushing those goals. Make sure that you are realistic in the ones that you select.

Getting a few little things done and crossed off of your list can do wonders for how you feel about the attainability of your goals. Just know that you have to take it all one day at a time. Cross 2 or 3 things off your list, and return to some of your bigger goals. You’ll find yourself to be more relaxed, and feeling ready to tackle bigger goals.

1. **It Helps You Maintain Control Over Emotions**

It’s also important to remember that things won’t always be perfect. There can be all kinds of little snags that can push back your timeline for completing things. It’s important to stay level headed though, because when you spin out of control emotionally, things will begin to suffer. Use positive self-talk to remind yourself of how resilient you truly are. Find inspiration in the progress that you’ve made to date. The more practice you have learning to control your emotions, the more success you will have. Just be sure to remain patient and kind to yourself, and you will get there.

How has positive self talk helped you? I would love to read your thoughts on the ACBT email list.

**Family Stories**

by Jan Gray

In 2015, I attended a workshop that taught me about the importance of recording family stories. Unless you are using the story for historical documentation, the exact dates are not important. The important part is the incident itself and the observations of the storyteller. From that workshop I began writing down the stories my mom would tell. Not only was it good for my mom to tell her stories, it also helped me to understand the experiences that shaped who she was. By 2017, my mom became unable to recount any more stories. Thankfully, I still have those she told because I wrote them down, and now, when I want to remember her life or those of our relatives, I can go back and access them whenever I would like. If you have a family member or friend who is getting older and or forgetful, I highly recommend that you write or record those precious stories for future generations to enjoy.

**Labor Day Fun**

by Eleanor Coldwell

The first Labor Day parade took place in New York City in 1882. The day became a national holiday when President Grover Cleveland declared the 1st Monday in September should be set aside to honor the country's labor force.

This 3-day weekend has spawned some unique celebrations across America. Here is a list of some activities: Toilet paper unrolling race; frog jumping, nail pounding and other competition; eating contests; Old Timers' Breakfast for seniors; children's tricycle races; and mud volleyball games. In Utah, there is "The Running of the Balls" where contestants can adopt a golf ball for $5 (the money goes to charity). All the adopted balls are then released into the street, and the first ones to reach the finish line win gifts for their owners. Want more fun? How about a go cart Grand Prix, or perhaps the following: rubber chicken chucking, ugliest dog contest, packing as many people as possible into a mining car (maybe not during COVID), cow muffin BINGO? For an entry fee, you can purchase a number and watch a cow wander around in a field painted to look like a BINGO card. If the cow relieves itself on your number, you are a winner!

So, in addition to the parades, fireworks display, live music and carnivals, there are plenty of other options that are hilarious and fun. What will you do this Labor Day?

**Health and Wellness Forum**

by Amerigroup

See two attached documents.

**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)

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.

* Vanda (Star Plus Sponsor)

Non-24-Hour Sleep-Wake Disorder

* 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