**THE TEXAS STAR**

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**From the President’s Desk**

By Peggy Garrett

Greetings ACBT Members & Supporters!

This will be my last Texas Star article as President of ACBT as I have decided not to run for a third term. I am humbled and truly honored that the ACBT membership elected me to fill this position. Over the last four years, there have been some struggles, challenges, and some exciting events! The good news is that through it all, ACBT members have been there for each other and have truly made a difference!

We have lost many ACBT members some to COVID and others to age or health issues. Some of these members were charter members and some for close to forty years. Their contributions were appreciated, and they are truly missed. Still, even during the pandemic, being virtual allowed us to also gain some great new members who are already contributing their time and talents to keep ACBT strong.

Because of the COVID pandemic, ACBT held a Special Conference to update the Constitution & Bylaws to allow virtual voting. ACBT then held its first ever virtual Conference/Conventions! I became the first ACBT President/Conference/Convention Coordinator to organize and preside over these two events! While it was challenging, it was also exciting because it was new and despite the fact that we couldn’t be in-person, we were still able to get together virtually!

I want to thank each ACBT member who helped to make both the virtual 2020 and the 2021 Conference/Conventions successful! As the saying goes “It takes a village to raise a child”, it takes all of us to keep our organization moving forward, always being at the table making our voices heard and fulfilling the mission and goals of our organization! We couldn’t have made it happen without your support, time and effort.

This year’s Conference/Convention Theme: A Guiding Light through the Darkness” really says who we are and the role we play in making a difference in the lives of people who have lost some or all of their sight. Those of us who have been living without sight for a while know that life doesn’t stop when the doctor says “You are going blind and there’s nothing we can do”! Fortunately, we were able to make the right connections to get involved with an ACB Chapter or Affiliate and learn a new way of life with little or no sight. As ACBT has provided a guiding light in the darkness for us, we must continue to be that guiding light for the many people who are losing their sight!

It has been an honor to have served this great organization in this capacity! Even as I step down from the position in a few weeks, I plan to continue working to support the mission and goals of ACBT and making a difference for all blind Texans!

**First Vice President’s Report**

by Michael Garrett

The ACBT Membership Committee is excited that the board has voted to hold the 2022 Conference and Convention in person. Be assured the board proceeded with an abundance of caution and to the best of our ability, every protective measure will be taken to ensure the safety of each attendee. But our excitement stems from the fact that we will be together once again! We can’t wait to see old friends, renew acquaintances and build new relationships.

The pandemic has forced us to look at life differently. While times have changed, the principles by which we govern ourselves remain intact. Even though we may have to do things a little differently, we still need each other. We’ve lost some members and our membership numbers are down. However, we cherish each member we still have. Our goal remains to enrich the lives of each member by sharing information designed to strengthen and build each other up.

We endeavor to continue broadening the theme you see in each of these articles which is simply that as a member, you are highly valued. In addition, you are a part of something big, from your local chapter, to this state affiliate, all the way to our national organization. So, reach out to others and tell everybody that there is an organization in Texas called

ACBT which is Advancing the Cause of Blind Texans!

**Second Vice President’s Report**

By Kevin Ratliff

The Fundraising Committee hopes that everyone is enjoying Summer and the scorching hot temperatures that the season brings to Texas every year! Take advantage of the wonderful weather that we have and join us for the ACBT 2022 Walk for Success. “Get up and get moving!” is the ACB fitness theme this year, and we are promoting that mantra with our state Walk-a-Thon. Start collecting supporters and pledges today! You can sign up for the walk when you register for the State Convention. The Entry Fee is $20. The walk will take place Saturday Morning at 7 AM at the Ditmar District Park. Check the Conference Registration page for more information.

Another opportunity to “Get up and get moving” is the Welcome to Austin, Friday Evening Social and Dance, taking place on Friday evening at the state convention. This event is hosted and sponsored by the Austin Council of the Blind, with DJ Kevin on the ones and Twos! 😊 Come get your groove on, (That means Dance), and meet up with old friends and make some new ones at the Welcome to Austin Social and Dance!

We also have a wonderful griller package for the Raffle/Drawing this year! The package includes an indoor-outdoor Smokeless Grill, a Griller Package from Omaha Steaks, and an assortment of sauces from SaltLick BBQ. Tickets are $10 each, and you can purchase chances/tickets with your conference registration. Purchase your tickets for the Drawing today!

This year’s Dine and Donate Fundraiser will be hosted at the Texas Land and Cattle, 5510 S I H 35 in Austin. Dine at the restaurant for lunch and dinner on Thursday and Friday during the convention, and a percentage of all receipts that have our promotional flyer attached will be donated to ACBT. Texas Land and Cattle is a great restaurant with great food, and I hope that you will plan to eat at least two of your meals at the restaurant while attending convention.

In closing, remember to pick up your yummy treats from See’s Candies using the ACBT Store.

ACBT Store Front Link:

<https://www.yumraising.com/secure/americancot_acbtx_sweet_treats54/candy?h=Kev_Rat1864>

**Tales from the Treasurer**

By Sheila Derrick

I hope all of you who can, will join together in Austin to support the 44th ACBT in-person Conference/Convention planned for August 25 – 28, 2022 at the Austin Southpark Hotel. Please read more in this newsletter about the programs, workshops, social events, entertainment and our two auctions.

As our Business Meeting with elections will be only in-person this year and our usual rules for voter certification will apply. The deadline for the treasurer to receive dues 45 days prior to the conference/convention is July 11, 2022. New or late renewing members whose dues are paid to the ACBT treasurer 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 with this understanding.

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 is 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.

**Secretary Secrets**

by Mary Alice Gary

Gosh, it’s already July! How time flies when you’re busy as a bee! Does anyone else wonder where the past six months have gone? I hope everyone enjoys what’s left of summer.

Here are a few important dates and events you may not want to miss. First, you can now reserve your hotel rooms for the ACBT Conference by calling the Austin SouthPark Hotel at 512-448-2222 or clicking on this

[**Book your group rate for ACBT Conference/Convention - 2022**](https://www.marriott.com/events/start.mi?id=1648654927543&key=GRP)

**Reservations must be done by July 25, 2022 to receive the $99 plus tax ACBT room rate.**

Next, the dates for the ACBT Conference/Convention are August 25 thru 28, 2022. Don’t forget all Officer positions are up for election this year. Elections will be held during the Sunday morning Business Meeting on August 28, 2022 at 10:00 AM. I would appreciate your support again this year, as I am running for re-election.

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.

Oh, and don’t forget about using your Alexa device to listen to ACB Radio, now ACB Media Network. Just ask Alexa to “Enable ACB Media”. She will prompt you to select stream 1-10. 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! 😊

**ACBT: A Leading Light Through the Darkness**

By President Peggy R. Garrett

The 44th annual Conference/Convention of the American Council of the Blind of Texas is being held at the Austin Southpark Hotel. After two years of virtual events, we will be back in-person.

We know that COVID is still in our midst and that some of our members are not yet comfortable to attend large functions. Of course, we understand and respect your decision not to attend this year. The hotel doesn’t require masks, however, we encourage attendees to wear a mask when attending sessions and to continue using hand sanitizer as protective measures for both yourself and those around you!

The Conference/Convention promises to provide a wealth of information, including opportunities for hands-on examination of the latest in both high and low technology, legislative updates, enhancing your employability, building your leadership skills and much more. The Hospitality Room will be available to provide snacks and time for socializing. Friday evening will provide entertainment, dancing to music by DJ Kevin Ratliff!

The opening session is on Saturday afternoon and the banquet is on Saturday evening and features a silent auction. The Sunday morning breakfast will be followed by a presentation from ED Serna giving updates from TWC. The business meeting and elections will complete this year’s Conference/Convention.

I look forward to greeting you in Austin as we celebrate being back together again!

**Auction Committee Update**

by Sara Freeman Smith

It’s time to get ready to get your “Super Shopping Groove” on for two fantastic Auctions in August! Yes, you heard about it and now read on to get the details. Our big auction will be held virtually using the Zoom platform on Sunday, August 21st, starting at 6 PM CDT. You will need to register to participate in the virtual auction & The deadline is Wednesday 8/17 /22, at 7 PM. You will receive a Zoom link when you register. This auction will be on ACB radio as well.

The second and smaller auction is in person and will be silent (no auctioneer), held on the evening of our banquet on Saturday, August 27, beginning at 6:30 PM. All items will be displayed before and during the banquet. A Silent auction allows a person to record the bid and continue to outbid their competition until the auction closes and the winner is announced. It is very easy, walk up to the display tables, review the items, and provide your name & bid to the representative to track your bid. All winners will be notified at the end of the banquet, and you will be required to pay that night. No registration is required since all bidders will attend the banquet.

We have some wonderful prizes that include retail & restaurant gift certificates, jewelry, a wine basket, a smart television, a designer backpack, clothing, a handmade Afghan & baby blanket, food goodies and much more!

Remember, a portion of the proceeds will go to our scholarship funds for students. Watch your emails for more info or visit our website ([www.acbtexas.org](http://www.acbtexas.org)) for more details in early August. Call Sara Freeman Smith at 713-882-3000 or Gayle Metoyer at 281-794-2012 with any questions.

**ACBT Constitution and Bylaws Committee Report**

By Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Below you will find several proposed amendments to the ACBT Constitution that will be presented to the members in attendance of the ACBT Conference/Convention on Sunday August 28, 2022, for consideration of adoption. Additionally, everyone is encouraged to submit proposed bylaw amendments by 9:00AM on Friday August 26, 2022. Send proposed bylaw amendments to: semien.k@att.net

**Proposed changes to ACBT Constitution**

Submitted by Neil Finley, Member At Large

Article III, Section C, Paragraph 3:

Current:

3) Any member of another state affiliate may not be a voting member of the ACBT.

Proposed:

3) Any member of another ACB State Affiliate may not be a voting member of the ACBT.

Proposed Amendment:

Article V, Section D: Before voting takes place on any item of business in any meeting, all potential voters must be certified. Members whose dues are postmarked at least forty-five (45) days before the beginning of the conference/convention shall be certified by the Treasurer as eligible voters.

(If this amendment is accepted, subsequent sections will be renumbered.)

Submitted by Chris Allen, Member, Dallas Chapter

If approved, this amendment will become section F of Article IV, and subsequent sections will be renumbered.

**Proposed amendment:**

Article IV

F. Disclosure of membership in other blindness membership

organization:

1. Any person who is nominated for an officer or board member position, or declares an intention to seek such a position, with the ACBT, its chapters, or affiliates, must at the same time disclose in writing any affiliation with another blindness membership organization as well as whether any currently held leadership position in said organization might pose a conflict of interest. If a person is nominated from the floor, the disclosure must be read at the same time as their bio. This disclosure must include: how long theperson has been a member of another blindness membership organization, whether they are currently an active member, and whether they currently hold any leadership position in the organization. The disclosure should not exceed one page in length. A candidate’s disclosure shall be read along with their bio at the ACBT convention, or the chapter or affiliate meeting when elections are being held. Candidates may be asked to explain in more detail the nature of their association and whether they believe there could be any conflict of interest if they are elected. It will be up to voting members when they cast their vote to decide whether a candidate who is affiliated with another blindness membership organization is fit to hold office.
2. Failure to make a full and candid disclosure at the time their name has been placed in nomination at the convention could result in removal from office. If it is discovered in the course of the convention that the person did not make a full and accurate disclosure, they can either be removed from the ballot by a two-thirds vote of the members present, or if they have already been elected to office, they can be removed using the following procedures. If this should happen more than thirty (30) days before a regularly scheduled ACBT conference, the president will call a meeting of the Board of Directors according to Article V for the purpose of determining if the person in question needs to be removed from office. The charged person will have the right to give their side of the issue and present any supporting documentation. If at the conclusion of the hearing, the board decides there is enough evidence to remove the person from office, a two-thirds vote of the board members present is required to remove them from office. If appropriate, Article III, Section F may be invoked.
3. The constitutions of ACBT chapters and affiliates should be in compliance with this section.

**Proposed amendment:**

Article IV

L. Confidentiality Agreement

1) Every elected officer and board member, whether elected

or appointed by their chapter or affiliate to the ACBT

board, shall sign a confidentiality agreement stating that

they will not share business matters that are discussed in

ACBT board meetings or meetings held between the officers of chapters and affiliates with anyone outside the ACBT organization.

2) Any officer or board member who breaches this

confidentiality agreement is subject to removal from office.

If the breach of confidentiality is discovered within thirty

(30) days prior to the ACBT convention, the issue will be

presented as an item of business at the convention, and

the membership will determine whether the charged

person should be removed from office. The charged

person has the right to speak to the charges and offer

any supporting documentation. A two-thirds vote of the

members present is required for removal from office. If

the breach has occurred during a time when the

convention is not in session, the president will call an

emergency board meeting to determine if the charged

person has violated the confidentiality agreement. The

charged person will have the right to speak to the charges

and offer any supporting documentation. A two-thirds vote

of the ACBT Board of Directors is required for removal

from office. The charged person shall retain the right to

vote in this matter. If appropriate, Article III, Section F

may be invoked.

3) The boards of ACBT chapters and affiliates, if they have

such a confidentiality requirement in their constitutions,

may adopt their own procedures so long as they do not

conflict with the Constitution and Bylaws of the ACBT.

Chair, Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Members:

Melanie Brunson, Alamo Chapter

Sheila Derrick, Fort Worth Chapter

Neil Finley, Member At Large

Michael E. Garrett, Houston Chapter

Mary Alice Gary, Alamo Chapter

Chris D. Prentice, Austin Chapter

**Nominating Committee Report**

By Michael E. Garrett

By the time you read this, we will be in full ACBT Conference/Convention mode. Elections will be forthcoming and hopefully everyone will participate. This is an important process as it determines the direction that our organization will take in the future. The leaders you choose will 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. In addition, each candidate must have read the entire document which comprises the Constitution and Bylaws.

This being an even numbered year, all officer positions are up for election. The Nominating Committee presents the following slate of candidates running for officer positions in 2022:

President: Chris D. Prentice

First Vice President: Michael E. Garrett

Second Vice President:

Secretary: Mary Alice Gary

Treasurer: Sheila Derrick

Note: For the sake of transparency, Michael Garrett (currently serving as Nominating Committee Chairman) will relinquish that duty after this post. The President will appoint another member to oversee the elections process.

Of course, nominations can be made from the floor, but you must have talked to the person being nominated and be sure that said person is willing to serve and fulfill the duties of that office. Keep in mind that in order to adequately fulfill the position of an officer, an individual must have been an active participant in the affairs of ACBT and be familiar with 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 and may have up to two speakers on their behalf. The bio should be comprised of a brief paragraph telling the assembly who they are, then which office they are seeking and why they are running. 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 it is necessary for change to take place in an organization’s policies and procedures?
6. What do you see as the biggest challenges facing ACBT over the next 2 to 3 years and how would you help manage those challenges?

Below are the bios received within the specified time requirement.

**ACBT Nominating Committee Questions and Answers**

**Submitted by Chris D. Prentice**

For the past six months, I have served as an Assistant District Attorney for Hockley and Cochran counties in northwest Texas. I am presenting myself as a nominee for the office of President of ACB of Texas. I have been involved in ACB and its local, state and national affiliates since 1991. During 25 of the past 27 years, I have spent time on the ACBT Board of Directors as a Chapter Representative, Vice President, President, Past President and Board Member. I have many years of experience as an advocate for people with disabilities, especially people with visual impairments. My answers to the questions are as follows:

1. What are your reasons for seeking this office? I believe my years of experience on the ACBT Board, as well as leadership in two different local chapters and the American Association of Visually Impaired Attorneys gives me an extremely healthy perspective of our organization. My experiences as a former employee of DARS and TWC will also be quite helpful.
2. What experience and expertise can you bring to this office and ACBT? In addition to my experience with ACBT, DARS and TWC as noted in my response to question #1 above, I have also held positions of leadership in other volunteer organizations. I also have a great deal of experience with vocational rehabilitation services.
3. What actions would you take to help ACBT fulfill its mission and achieve its goals? It is critical that ACBT move forward from the crippling effects of COVID19 and motivate our members to once again advocate for themselves and others with visual impairments. The leadership of ACBT must motivate and inspire our members to reach out to others with visual impairments to seek the absolute best for themselves in life.
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. I believe the programs that have been started should continue, especially our annual auction, amazon smile and dine and donate. More importantly, ACBT should take aggressive strides toward engaging a grant writer and even potentially even seek opportunities to engage a Director of Development. ACBT needs to think bigger when it comes to fundraising and not expect our membership to raise the majority of our funding.
5. do you feel it is necessary for change to take place in an organization’s practices and procedures? At times, flexibility is critical to the successful growth of any non-profit organization. ACBT is no different.
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? The average age of ACBT is going up every year. We must find a creative and effective way to add younger people to the mix of our membership without ignoring the needs of our older members. ACBT must invest time and effort in cultivating new younger and older members to be active leaders in our group. We can only be as active as our individual members provide the life blood, the hands, feet and mouths for the work of our beloved ACBT.

**ACBT Nominating Committee Questions and Answers**

**Submitted by Michael Garrett**

I am Michael Garrett. I am currently serving as First Vice President of ACBT and I am seeking to serve another term in this position. Per our guiding documents, if elected, this would be my third and final term as your First Vice President. I believe it is crucial at this point in time that we have continuity in our board and I’d like the opportunity to continue serving our members.

1. I want to continue serving because as we move forward, there are a number of issues that confront us. We must build on the foundation which has been laid for us by previous ACBT leaders and board members and endeavor to keep ACBT relevant and broaden its scope in the community.
2. What I bring to the board is my professional background as an investment analyst and a long history of over 25 years of serving in leadership positions in this great organization in a number of capacities at the local, state and national levels. My experience includes serving in all of the executive board positions at the local level with exception of Treasurer; serving on the ACB board, in addition to chairing the Scholarship Committee, serving on the MMS and Auction Committees and chairing the Thrift Store Board; and serving in a number of roles in ACBT, such as being on the PR, Scholarship, Advocacy, Investment and Nominating Committees.
3. As I mentioned, there are a number of issues facing us today. As individuals who are blind or visually impaired, we are witnessing a growing number of people suffering from vision loss. When that happens, it is a life changing event. As we strive to help these individuals reach independence and achieve equality of opportunity, I will endeavor to continue being a source of information and refer folks to the most appropriate services.
4. Fundraising is indeed an important pillar for the success of any nonprofit organization. ACBT is no exception. To that end, I’d like to see us continue to build on the corporate relationships we have developed. I pledge to make myself available to further cultivate those existing relationships with our current sponsors and to seek out other corporate sponsor relationships. Such relationships will serve as opportunities to broaden the scope of activities that ACBT can be involved in and increase the number of blind Texans we can serve.
5. Change is inevitable in any organization. Over the past two years, ACBT has shown that it can be flexible and exhibited the ability to adapt to changing situations as we kept moving ahead during the pandemic. By doing so, we’ve learned some things about ourselves; we’ve learned some things about our fellow members and now we know how strong we can be even in the face of adversity.
6. We continue to face some daunting challenges. As our population grows older and the number of individuals suffering from vision loss continues to increase, we absolutely must continue to advocate for expanded services for Older Individuals who are Blind. On the other end of the spectrum, it is important that we make sure that our transition aged students are getting the most that the state, and us, can offer in terms of education and mentoring.

**ACBT Nominating Committee Questions and Answers**

**Submitted by Sheila Derrick**

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

am seeking re-election to that post in 2022. When I was elected in 2012, I succeeded Neil Finley, who had held the post for 12 years. After the election, I promised Neil that I would try to follow in his steps for the next twelve years. The 2022 to 2024 term will complete those 12 years and I hope that during this term someone will express an interest in the position and begin learning the job requirements. Over the past 10 years the scope of the position has grown in several interesting and challenging directions. I am a member of the Fort Worth chapter 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.

1. Volunteering has always been an important part of my life but, due to medical issues, I have been more confined to home. 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 fifth term as ACBT treasurer, my sixth term as Fort Worth treasurer and my ninth year as Conference/Convention treasurer and registrar.
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 letters to state and national representatives. 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.
4. Unfortunately, I am not a creative, out of the box thinker and have difficulty presenting new fundraising ideas. I do wholeheartedly participate in all of the ACBT fundraisers including the ACB MMS program, AmazonSmile, Conference auction, and our current See’s Candy campaigns. As we move forward in the next two years to attract project specific donations, I will work to provide the demographic statistics and other organizational data as may be required by future funders.
5. This year I feel ACBT needs to focus less on itself, including overconcentration on membership numbers and potential cost of the conference/convention. Concentrating on meeting the needs of those in the blind/low vision community should return as our top priority. Following two years of pandemic induced isolation, ACBT has survived relatively unharmed. Our membership numbers are down slightly but our financial situation is stable. We should be thankful for our current situation.
6. The next several years, as the world resolves into a “new normal” will test ACBT’s resilience and adaptability. In order to meet the needs of our existing members and attract new ones, we will need to continue to embrace new technology, such as Zoom meetings and hybrid conferences, while maintaining traditional means of outreach for those who prefer it. We learned a lot in two years of virtual only conferences and now we need to build on that base and continue moving forward.

**ACBT Nominating Committee Questions and Answers**

**Submitted by Mary Alice Gary**

Hello fellow ACBT members. For those who don’t already know who I am, my name is Mary Alice Gary and I currently hold the position of Secretary for ACBT. In order to continue as Secretary, I am seeking your support by asking you to cast your vote in my favor during Elections.

In 2014, when I was first elected to this position, I had no clue what I was doing! Some may call me foolish, but I actually enjoy the tedious task of transcribing the Minutes. It also gives me the satisfaction of knowing I’m assisting, in a very small manner, by volunteering and helping ACBT achieve its goals. Also, I still can learn so much more from my peers on the ACBT Board.

1. For the past 8 years, my fingers have been diligently flying across my keyboard creating Minutes for the ACBT Board to review and approve. On the State level, I continue to serve on several Committees, Transportation, Membership,, Scholarship, and a few others. I have worked with Committee members creating announcements for various Committee “Informative calls” and helped with the dissemination of the material. Locally, I currently serve as President of the Alamo Council, but have also served as First Vice President, and Secretary. The Alamo Council has also collaborated with other organizations on the “White Cane Awareness” Planning Committee in San Antonio.
2. Whenever I come in contact with any type of barrier, be it physical or technological, I try to find a way to help make it accessible to people who are struggling with vision loss if
3. Possible. When moving about the community I continue to advocate, educate and assist if necessary. And, when the moment presents itself, I tell people about our great organization.
4. Fundraising has always been challenging, especially since ACBT is scattered around the state. One option could be to look into finding a person who writes and finds grants. Another could be to hold a second smaller auction or a drawing for a larger ticket item and advertise it on social media.
5. In order for any organization to grow, it has to continually evolve and re-evaluate its procedures and policies to meet the needs of today’s society. With as fast paced as it is, without continuously reviewing ACBT’s strategies we may fall behind.
6. A major issue for ACBT is Getting people to engage in activities and events sponsored by ACBT. A larger social media presence may be a way to solve a portion of the problem. Our “Informative Calls” have caught the attention of quite a few people, so we should continue to use the calls as a tool to possibly attract prospective sponsors and members.

**Rayfield Wright**

By Jan Gray

Last October, I took an unexpected trip and found myself spending 6 days in the hospital and a couple of weeks in rehab. While I was in rehab, I had the pleasure of meeting and talking with Rayfield Wright, a very famous former Dallas Cowboy Tight End. He wheeled himself right up to where I was sitting and began talking while we were waiting for our group to go to dinner. After telling me his name, the first thing he asked me was if I knew who he was. I am not the most knowledgeable person when it comes to football, but I remembered he played for the Cowboys during the 70s. We talked about what brought both of us to rehab and then I asked what he had done after leaving the NFL. He told me about his non-profit organization to help troubled kids, and how he had traveled all over the world talking to kids. I also learned that all his children had graduated from college and had good jobs. He was funny and yet quietly confident about his accomplishments. It was an enjoyable 20 minutes. I learned afterwards that the nurses had mentioned to him that I was blind. His room was across the hall from mine, and e told me that he noticed that most of the time the nurses walked out of my room laughing. When I left rehab, he was sitting outside of his room, and he said good-bye to me. Rayfield died April 7 of this year. I have thought about our meeting often, and I feel blessed to have had the conversation with him. I think that my attitude towards the nurses and therapists impacted our encounter. We never know when others are noticing how we respond to our circumstances. Although we may have challenges in life, when we maintain a positive attitude, we influence more people than we could ever know. .

**Braille Revival League of Texas**

by Michael Garrett

The Braille Revival League of Texas (BRLT) will come together at the annual ACBT Conference and Convention. This year we will promote the use of braille in a fun and participatory game activity. Come and join us for this entertaining and learning opportunity. You may even have a chance for some surprises. You never know what you might find when you explore fun and games with BRLT.

And for all of our experienced and early learners, we still say:

*READ MORE BRAILLE*!

**Library Users of America-Texas**

by Gayle Metoyer

Greetings LUAT members and friends:

I hope everyone is enjoying this hot summer weather and staying hydrated!

Well, it is almost time for our annual ACBT Conference/Convention. It will be held in person this year in Austin on August 25-28. I hope many of you all will join us. As usual, we will have our annual LUAT meeting on Saturday, August 27 at 9 a.m. Please check your program upon arrival for the location. We are doing things a little different this year. We will have our business meeting prior to the conference. It will be on Wednesday, August 10 at 7:30 p.m. via the Zoom platform. At this meeting, we will be electing officers as well as addressing any other business that we may have. You will receive an email with the details when the date gets closer.

At our in-person meeting on August 27, we will have a program that I think you will enjoy. Jacqueline Owusu from the Talking Book program will be there to give us updates from the Talking Book Program as well as the National Library Services(NLS). As a special treat,we will have one of the Talking Book narrators there. His name is Ed Lunning, Voice Actor, Volunteer Narrator & Former Associate Professor Saint Edwards University.

Hopefully, it will be a voice that you may recognize!

The only business that we may conduct at our meeting on August 27 is the payment of dues. Please be prepared to do that at the meeting. However, if you like, you can mail in your payment to the following address:

7806 Chaseway Dr.

Missouri City, TX 77489

Attn: Michael Garrett

I am looking forward to seeing you all in August!

**Member Morale Committee Update**

By Jan Gray

Member Morale has started a Support Group on the fourth Thursday of each month at 7 PM. We call it “What’s on your Mind, Let’s Deal with It”. We hope everyone can join us at one time or another. The call in Number is 732-434-3627. We have collaborated with Membership on the Dress to Impress presentation.

**Get Movin’ with Transportation**

by Mary Alice Gary

Now that summer has arrived it’s time to be out and about. Here’s are some tips for surviving your adventure. Whether moseying around a Farmers Market or just taking a leisurely stroll in the park or your neighborhood or maybe jetting off to some far away location, you may want to stash a coupled of these items in your to-go sack. No matter where you go sunscreen, a brimmed hat, wipes or sanitizing lotion or spray and a water bottle are a must along with a pound of patience! Oh, yeah, and don’t forget the smile on your face. If attending an evening event, you may also want to bring something to keep the pesty mosquitoes away.

Our committee is always working on finding various issues and topics that members are interested in learning about dealing with transportation. If you would like to submit a suggestion, just contact any of the Committee members.

At this time, I would also like to thank all the Transportation Committee members for their hard work and dedication to this Committee. Thank you to Chris Allen, Conswella Bates, Cynthia Julun, Gayle Metoyer and Ted Harper for all you do.

Until next time Happy Travels! 😊

**Austin Council Update**

By Marcus Manning

The Austin chapter is excited: The reason is the season!

ACB family and friends gathered to share and learn, to democratically determine our officers, collaborate and implement plans and to recognize and celebrate innovation, our advocacy efforts and who we are as an organization. The Austin chapter of ACBT has been meeting at local community libraries collaborating on old and new business for several months. We have also maintained a remote connection to chapter members who are unable to attend our direct in person meetings. We have also participated in and connected with interested Austinites at a community walking event. We are all so excited for this convention season. Several members of our chapter traveled to our national ACB convention in Omaha Nebraska and those who could not, attended virtually. I spent 3 days determining my agenda and you all know we had a week full of information, entertainment, exercise fun and spending time with ACB family and friends.

Later this summer, our ACBT convention will be in Austin and the Austin chapter looks forward to welcoming you in on opening night to our welcome to Austin party. Come and enjoy our DJ, snacks and feel free to stomp off a piece of the dance floor for yourself. We all are sure to have a wonderful time celebrating, shaking our bodies, and toasting who we are ACBT!

**Beaumont Council Update**

By Cynthia Julun

The Beaumont Area Council of the Blind spent its April 2022 meeting discussing socialization. We defined extravert and introvert. Afterward, some of the members commented regarding which category they believed they would fit into. We also talked about the negative and positive aspects blind or visually impaired individuals deal with in a social environment. Prior to the end of the meeting, we played a game of anagram using the words extravert and introvert. The next meeting, we had a guest speaker who remarked on National Parks and Preserves that people who have permanent disabilities can visit free. The speaker specifically spoke on the Big Thicket National Preserve. We learned about the national disability access pass, which is a lifetime pass that disabled individuals can obtain from a national park or preserve for no fee. However, if this pass is received through the mail or ordered online there is a fee. There are also certain criteria that must be met. During our third meeting we focused on accessibility and independent living skills. We discussed audio descriptive movies, the pen friend, and the American Council of the Blind (ACB) community calls. A conversation ensued regarding the use of bump dots to label a stove and other items. Braille labels can also be used to mark items such as can goods, washing machines, and dish washers. Using a check writing guide to write checks and using a liquid indicator to inform persons who are blind or visually impaired when their glass is full. Lastly, we talked about applications such as Be My Eyes as being beneficial to assist with identifying items, colors, or reading a prescription label. Happy summer to you all.

**Dallas Area Council Update**

By Mary Witherspoon

The second quarter of 2022 DACB focus seems to be described by the words “Fellowship” and “Food”! A pretty good combination for the 30 paid members on the roster as of June. In April, DACB met at a new location for fellowship at Envision Dallas’ community room. A pause during the business meeting allowed folks to debate what types of pizza to order for the post meeting meal. Pepperoni was quite popular. LOL.

May’s business meeting was suspended in favor of the annual summer picnic and scholarship fundraiser. Members and guests totaling 38 people enjoyed Envision Dallas’ outside atrium for summer fun and a lively auction. “It was incredible”, says DACB member Al Rodriguez. Al is an Assistive Technology Trainer at Envision who recruited family members including young daughters Emmy (9) and Valerie (5) to make sure plates and cups were full. Al’s co-worker Amando Ortiz and Amando’s wife were chefs at the hot dog grill. Envision’s Services Manager and a Human Resources team member joined in the fun. Al says, “seeing so many happy members enjoy the Dallas facility was fantastic”. Al’s technological expertise allowed DACB to live-stream the event on Facebook as officers shared DACB’s mission and activities. For notice of future live-stream events, check in often to “like” the page <https://www.facebook.com/dallasacb>.

June’s meeting included discussions around planning a Taco Dinner and Scholarship Fund Auction coming in October plus conversations of what members would enjoy for the December holiday event. Will traditional turkey and trimmings be the meal? Or something different? If it involves food and fellowship, DACB will show up in full force to have fun!

**El Paso Council Update**

Eleanor Coldwell

We have been busy with 3 projects this summer. First is our Fathers' Day Raffle in which the lucky winner was awarded the opportunity to have a custom-made ice cooler decorated to his liking.

Our second project was in partnership with our Region XIX Education Service Center where we taught our area's BVI students how to cook a snack, how to use free apps on their smart devices, how to access their favorite books through the Texas Talking Books program, and how to grow their own Jack-O-Lanterns.

Our 3rd on-going project is planning our White Cane Safety Day Celebration in partnership with the El Paso Community College. Our initial meetings have been surrounded by energetic, enthusiastic people who are looking forward to presenting an educational and fun filled event for our community.

***Too Early for Jack-O-Lanterns?***

Not if you want to grow your own! The El Paso Council of the blind has partnered with Master Gardeners' Student Education Program to teach 42 BVI students from ages 8 to 18 how to plant a pumpkin seed that, when carefully treated, should grow several pumpkins by October, if the seeds are planted in July.

If you'd like to try it, just place a pumpkin seed in a small plastic bag with a moist paper towel. This should sprout your seed which can be transferred to a pot and allowed to mature outside.

Whether you want a Jack-O-Lantern, or a pumpkin for your pies, bread, or cookies, this would be a fun way to go about it.

Happy Fall!

**Fort Worth Council Update**

Jan Gray

Ft Worth has been busy with the Summer Fun Cookout Package, and I am pleased to report that the response was beyond our wildest expectations. We were able to give our scholarship winner a $1500 scholarship this year and we now have seed money to start off our next year’s scholarship. On June 4 , we met at Trinity Park and had barbecue sandwiches from Risky’s Barbecue. Everyone had a great time, and it was good to meet in person. We decided to give our scholarships out at the end of March, so that they could be announced at graduation ceremonies, giving us some publicity. We are pleased to announce that the winner of our raffle was Sara Freeman-Smith. A Huge thank you to all who purchased tickets, It was decided to donate a basket from the Virgin Olive Oiler for the ACBT auction. Our meeting in July will be virtual. Sheila and Jan are both on the White Cane Day committee and they gave a report on the progress for White Cane Day. Although we are small, we keep advancing.

**Houston Happenings**

by Michael Garrett

Houston Council of the Blind (HCB) is staying busy in the Greater Houston community. During the last quarter, we were visible at a number of activities. Several of our members participated in the Foundation Fighting Blindness Vision Walk. A number of us attended the viewing of portraits of Barack and Michelle Obama at the Museum of Fine Arts. We participated in the celebration of National Library Week. We were exhibitors at the University of Houston sponsored Transition Student Symposium. We also exhibited at the HAVIN Insight Expo. For a social gathering, we were well represented at the Motown Review and More concert held at Miller Outdoor Theatre.

We continue to hold our meetings virtually, but we are cautiously moving toward hybrid gatherings beginning in August. In addition, we are in the midst of planning for upcoming events as we serve on other committees and collaborate with other organizations.

HCB: Helping, Caring, Building!

**American Council of the Blind of Texas**

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

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prcgarrett@sbcglobal.net    
Local Chapter: Houston Council   
  
**First Vice President - Membership Chair:**

Michael E. Garrett   
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**Second Vice President - Fundraising Chair:**

Kevin D. Ratliff  
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Local Chapter: Austin Council   
  
**Treasurer - Finance & Budget Chair:**

Sheila Derrick   
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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.   
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Local Chapter: Beaumont Area Council 

**ACBT State Directors:**

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Louann Williams - Director   
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**Board Member:**    
Jan Gray

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Local Chapter: Fort Worth Council

**Board Member:**    
Foster Brown

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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)

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* Cigna (Star Sponsor)

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

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

409-866-5838