**THE TEXAS STAR**

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Neva Fairchild, Editor

From Your President Chris D. Prentice

First Vice President Report Michael Garrett

Second Vice President Report Jan Gray

Secretary Secrets Mary Alice Gary

Tales from the Treasurer Sheila Derrick

Keepin’ it Cool! Jan Gray

Advocacy Committee Report Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Auction Committee Update Sara Freeman Smith

2024 Conference/Convention Highlights Peggy R. Garrett

Member Morale Committee Report Jan Gray

Nominating Committee Report Michael Garrett

2024 ACBT Sales of Candidates

2024 Candidate for ACBR Directors

A Win for Our Blind and Low Vision Voters Elanor Coldwell

Texas Lighthouse Series: ETLB Mary Witherspoon

Braille Revival League of Texas Neva Fairchild

Library Users of America- Texas Gayle Metoyer

Alamo Council Update LouAnn Williams

Austin Council Update Marcus Manning

Beaumont Council Update Cynthia Julun

Dallas Area Council Update Mary Witherspoon

El Paso Council Update Eleanor Coldwell

Fort Worth Council Update Jan Gray

Houston Happenings Michael Garrett

[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.]

**Points from the President**

By Chris Prentice

Greetings friends and ACBT folks! We are now in the midst of summer. As you read this column, our 2024 Conference is just a few short weeks away! It is time to register and make your final plans to come join us in Houston. Many great things are in store for attendees. I certainly hope to see you there. If you do come, please plan to stay until the very end on Sunday morning. That morning, we will have our annual awards breakfast followed by our annual business meeting and elections. Bring your friends and family. Everyone can find interesting things to hear and do at our gathering.

If you have friends in the Lubbock or Amarillo areas, please let me know. We are in the initial stages of attempting to reorganize ACBT chapters in both of these cities. We have had chapters in both of these communities in the past, but both were dissolved in later years. We would also like to look at new chapters in other areas in Texas if we can find enough interested folks who want to participate in each area.

Stay safe, stay cool and stay in touch!

**First Vice President’s Report**

By Michael Garrett

This is my final article to you as Chairman of the ACBT Membership Committee. I will be completing my third term as your First Vice President and must pass the baton to the next elected officer.

Throughout my tenure in this position, I have had the distinct pleasure of working with a phenomenal group of ladies who served on the Membership Committee. Always helpful, always supportive, always willing to think outside of the box, it was always our intent to inspire, inform and educate with the hope that our offerings would cause others to gravitate to ACBT. We tried to introduce topics that would not only be thought provoking, but entertaining as well. I applaud this group of ladies because, in my opinion, they represent the best of what an ACBT member should be, working together for the good of the organization.

No, we didn’t accomplish all we wanted to, but not because of a lack of effort. We always wanted to make our members feel welcomed and valued. In terms of new chapter development, getting the word out across the state and membership outreach, there are still challenges and opportunities waiting to be seized upon. I am quite confident that your Membership Committee will continue to build upon what has been put forth and do exceedingly much more.

I look forward to the next era in the life of ACBT membership development and I pledge to continue working behind the scenes to support and lend a helping hand wherever I’m called to serve. As important as membership development is, there are other opportunities within the grasp of ACBT that will enhance the lives of our members and other Texans who are blind or have low vision. That means to me that we must continue to keep working to fulfill our motto:

ACBT: Advancing the Cause of Blind Texans!

**Rocking and Rolling with the 2nd VP**

by Jan Gray

Well, it is that time of year again; when your fundraising committee is hard at work to present fun fundraising activities for all who attend the conference. My committee has really worked hard on finding great prizes for all the games at the Carnival in the Dark. Yes, we are presenting another carnival, by popular demand and we have added four new games. We think you will like them. Also, we won’t have a prize table as all the prizes will be at the games, so you will get your prize when you play or win the game. WE had so many positive comments on the Escape room, so it will be back as well. If you participated last year, please don’t give anything away, as Freedom Scientific is sending the same one this year. The cost for the carnival is $15 and the Escape room is $25. We hope if you did not get a chance to participate last year that you will be able to join us this year as it is a fun experience. This year our raffle includes two packages that for your $10 raffle ticket you will have a chance to win. One package includes a Meat Package from Kansas City Steaks and a $50 Surprise, total value $400, and the BIG package includes an I robot Vacuum, an Alexa Show 8, smart plugs, a labeling wand and possibly a surprise. Both are great packages, and we hope you will purchase your tickets. The winners will be announced at the banquet on Saturday night, and you do not have to be present to win. Good Luck! Hope to see you all at the conference!

**Secretary Secrets**

by Mary Alice Gary

Can you believe it’s already July? And what a hot steamy one it is! Is anyone else having difficulty trying to beat this heat? For those of you who couldn’t wait for summer to return, more power to you. I, myself prefer cooler weather, where if you get a chill there is always a light sweater or jacket you can grab.

In case you haven’t heard, the ACBT website is up and running. Somehow a little bug ate some of our stuff, but it was caught. A huge “Thank you” to Mr. Dagle, Peggy Garrett and anyone else who assisted. Registration is now available online for the 2024 ACBT Conference/Convention. Oh, yeah, the dates for the ACBT Conference are August 22 – 25, 2024 with the Pre-Conference Board Meeting from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM on Thursday, August 22, 2024. And don’t forget to stick around for the Sunday Morning Business Meeting so you can cast your vote for the ACBT Officers along with two Director positions. Yes, that’s right, elections for your ACBT Officers are this year and I would greatly appreciate your vote.

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 (that’s the plus symbol after the ACBT). With the list, you can reply just to the sender or to everyone. To subscribe to the ACB Community Events Groups List, just email your request to 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 Media Network. Just ask Alexa to “Enable ACB Media”. She will prompt you to select stream 1 thru 10. You can check out what the channels or streams are called by going to the ACB website at [www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org).

**Tales from the Treasurer**

By Sheila Derrick

I hope everyone is planning to meet in Houston for the 46th annual ACBT Conference/Convention this August 22-25, 2024 at the Marriott Westchase Hotel. Please read more in this issue of the Star about the workshops, social events, and by request, an expanded Carnival in the Dark and another chance to test your wits in the Freedom Scientific Escape Room.

As our Business Meeting with elections will be in-person this year, our usual rules for voter certification will apply. The deadline for the ACBT treasurer to receive member dues is 45 days prior to the conference/convention which was July 8, 2024. 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.

**Keepin’ it Cool**!

By Jan Gray

Today it is 103 and I am trying to think cool! Perhaps you would like to know some fun facts about ice cream. I found these interesting. Ice Cream is a $13.4-billion-dollar business in the United States, and according to the International Dairy Association the average American consumes 48 Pints of ice cream each year.

The U.S. is the world’s largest consumer of ice cream. Did you know that ice cream dates back to 4000 BC. When nobles along the Euphrates River built ice houses to help take the edge off the Mesopotamian summers. They cooled the wine and sold it with snow.

The Tang Dynesty made iced desserts and drinks using milk from the water buffaloes. The First lady of Maryland served ice cream in 1744 and George Washington bought a mechanical ice cream maker for his plantation in 1784. Thomas Jefferson served ice cream at least 6 times while in the White House and James Madison served Strawberry ice cream for his inaugural dinner. The first ice cream parlor was started in 1844 in New York. The first crank freezer was invented in 1851. The 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair served the first Waffle cones. Now we can’t forget popsicles. They were invented by an 11-year-old boy in Oakland California in 1905 and he got the patent on them in 1923.

The most popular flavors of Ice cream are in this order, Vanilla, Chocolate, butter pecan, Strawberry, and Neapolitan. There are some unbelievable flavors that include lobster, bacon, dill pickle, turmeric and basil, and my favorite, Dr. Pepper. Happy Eating and stay cool!

**Advocacy Committee Update**

**Standing Up for Equal Access**

by Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Advocacy is a continuous cycle of educating for equal access. Although it appears to be a daunting task to speak or stand up for what is right when there is opposition on every hand, it is the moral duty of a citizen with different abilities to make their struggles known if change is to come. Simply complaining has not proven to be a tool toward greater access or success. It is very likely that you are not alone in daily experiences of having to determine whether you should make others aware while letting them know how you feel and how particular barriers may be limiting your sense of accomplishment. Joining with others and working together for a worthy cause could prove to be rewarding for the masses. Once we realize that it’s not just about us, we can become empowered to see beyond the challenges we face. At times it takes collaborative efforts to support positive change. At other times, you will be surprised to know that as you consider others, your load becomes lighter. Seeing beneath the surface is key.

Join us as we make contact with legislators prior to the next session of the Texas Legislature in January of 2025 to ensure that they are aware that we would benefit from having equal access to the absentee ballot, desire to witness more older adults with vision loss having the opportunity to participate in the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Senior Keys To Independence Program through the provision of additional funds, and work to prevent fraud related to service animals. Ask us about additional opportunities to advocate concerning other meaningful issues.

Committee members are: Melanie Brunson, Peggy Garrett, Mary Witherspoon, Michael Garrett, and Kenneth Semien, Sr. is the Chair.

Contact us by dialing 409-866-5838 or send email to Semien.k@outlook.com

**Auction Committee Update**

by Sara Freeman Smith

Guess what time it is?  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 18starting at 6:00 pm CDT, This is just before and leading into the week of the State Conference in Houston(8/22-25). You will only need to register to participate in the virtual auction if you do not register to attend the conference. & The deadline is Friday, August 16 by 5 pm. You will receive a Zoom link after you register. If you register for the conference , you will automatically receive a link for the Virtual Auction.

The second and smaller auction is in person and will be silent (no auctioneer) starting on Saturday afternoon after the luncheon , August 24th. The auction will open at 1:30pm. All items will remain on display during the afternoon & the bidding closes at 6:00 pm before the banquet starts.
The items will be removed, bidding sheets will be picked up and winners will be announced during the banquet. A Silent auction allows a person to record their 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 will be required to pay that night, as in previous auctions. No registration is required since all bidders will attend the banquet.

We have some wonderful prizes that include retail gift cards , a wine basket, a 5-year JAWS or ZoomText license, a laptop computer, jewelry, designer fashion, food goodies and much more!

Remember, a portion of the proceeds will go to our scholarship fund 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. See you there and happy bidding!

**2024 Conference/Convention Highlights**

By Peggy Garrett

Hopefully, by the time you read this article you will have already made your hotel reservations, registered for the 2024 ACBT Conference/Convention and registered with METROLift! If not, there is still time, but you want to get on this really soon as you don’t want to miss the upcoming deadlines! Of course, you certainly don’t want to miss the event!!!

If you have been reading your email, you will know about the great sessions and other activities that are taking place during the Conference/Convention, but here is a short list of some of the programs and activities:

* ACBT Board meeting: Thursday, August 22, 2024, 4:00 PM
* Presentations from the special Interest Affiliates-Guide Dog users of Texas, Braille Revival League-Texas, Library Users of America-Texas
* Friday Tours: Federal Reserve Bank & Dunham Bible Museum (Limited to the first 25 people who register for each tour)
* Exhibit Hall: Friday & Saturday
* Escape Room: Friday & Saturday
* Luncheon & Opening Session: Saturday, August 24, 2024, 11:30 AM
* Annual Banquet: Saturday, August 24, 2024: 6:30 featuring keynote speaker, Tricia Waechter, Blind Girl Designs, Silent Auction and several drawings and a dance featuring the CC Rider Band after the banquet!
* Annual business meeting: Sunday, August 25, 2024, including elections. 9:00 AM

Questions? For more information, contact Peggy Garrett, Conference/Convention Coordinator, prcgarrett@sbcglobal.net.

The Houston Chapter looks forward to welcoming you to Houston in August as we celebrate the 46 annual conference/Convention of the American Council of the Blind of Texas!!

**Member Morale Committee Report**

by Jan Gray

The Member Morale Committee is privileged to be tasked with finding the Ed and Linda Bradley First Timer award and the Who’s Who Among Blind Texans (both an ACBT member and a non-member) recipients each year. We are delighted to find such deserving people among the blind community in Texas. I would love to tell you who these award winners are for 2024, however, you will just have to come to the conference/convention in Houston to find out.

This year member Morale is presenting a workshop at the conference called ”Expanding New Horizons”. It will be an interactive workshop that is designed to expand your outlook and your horizons. We hope you will join us! Our What’s on your Mind calls will be taking a break in July and August but will be back in September. If you are in need, please don’t hesitate to call Jan Gray at 817-232-4295, and if I cannot answer your questions, I will refer you to one of the other committee members. Hope to see you all at conference!

**Nominating Committee Report**

By Michael Garrett

As you read this document, you undoubtedly are preparing for the upcoming ACBT 2024 Conference/Convention. You also realize that one of the most important events taking place at the convention will be the elections process. The individuals who seek and who are elected to hold offices are extremely crucial in determining the future direction of our organization. The individuals 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. It is expected that each candidate seeking a position has read the entire document which comprises the ACBT Constitution and Bylaws.

This being an even numbered year, all officer positions are up for reelection. The First Vice President has termed out meaning a new candidate must be elected to fill that position. All other officers are eligible for reelection.

In addition, due to resignations and appointments, there are three partial Bord of Directors positions which need to be filled. Two of the positions have three years remaining for those terms and the third has one year left. The Nominating Committee presents the following slate of candidates:

**President:** Chris Prentice, second term

**First Vice President:** Kenneth Semien Sr., first term

**Second Vice President:** Jan Gray, second term

**Secretary:** Mary Alice Gary, no term limit

**Treasurer:** Sheila Derrick, no term limit

**Board of Director:** Alfredo Perez, (appointed) running to finish three-year term

**Board of Director:** Kevin Ratliff, running to finish three-year term

**Board of Director:** Vacant- 1 year remaining

Of course, nominations can be made from the floor. However, it is advisable that you have talked to the nominee and that person is qualified and is willing to serve in the position being sought. Keep in mind that in order to adequately serve as a member of the ACBT board, candidates must have been actively involved in the affairs of ACBT and familiar with the practices, policies and procedures that govern our organization. In addition, such nominees must have a short bio which can be read before the assembly during the elections process, and they can have up to two speakers on their behalf. The bio should be comprised of a short paragraph telling who they are, the office being sought and why they are running.

Answers to the following questions must also be provided.

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 will you take to assist ACBT’s effort to fulfill its mission and achieve its goals?
4. Fundraising is crucial in keeping any nonprofit alive. Name two possible fundraising projects and tell how you would contribute to their success?
5. When do you believe it is necessary for change to take place in an organization’s policies and procedures?
6. What are the biggest challenges facing ACBT over the next 2 to 3 years and how would you help us overcome those challenges?

**The 2024 ACBT Slate of Candidates:**

**2024 Candidate for ACBT President: Chris D. Prentice**

Since 11/15/21, I have served as an Assistant District Attorney for Hockley and Cochran counties in northwest Texas. I am presenting myself as a nominee for re-election as President of ACB of Texas. As most know, I have been involved in ACB and its local, state and national affiliates since 1991. During 27 of the past 29 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. I also have a quality relationship with TWC VR leadership.
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? 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. Over the past almost two years, I have fielded numerous phone calls from folks who could be potential new members. I believe putting forth more effort to get new chapters in areas where chapters once existed is vital, especially for the older blind and visually impaired of Texas.
4. Fundraising is critical to assure any nonprofit organization stays alive. Therefore, name two fundraising ideas and tell how you would help make them a success for ACBT.

I believe the programs that have been started should continue, especially our annual auctions and vehicle donation program. I am also firmly behind the fundraising efforts at our annual conference. I am also in the beginning stages of working with TWCVR on a potential opportunity for service and fundraising. I still like the idea of an experienced grant writer to assist us as well.

1. When do you believe it is necessary for an organization to change its practices, policies, and procedures? Any organization must be willing to make necessary changes at times; however, those changes must not negatively impact the primary mission of the organization. This is true with ACBT.
2. What do you see as the major challenges for ACBT over the next 3 years and how would you help manage them? The median age of ACBT continues to rise. It is imperative that ACBT grow its reach to both the young and the old in Texas. 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 time and energy to accomplish our goals both now and, in the years, to come.

**2024 Candidate for ACBT First Vice President: Kenneth Semien, Sr.**

Greetings ACBT members, I am Kenneth Semien, Sr. of Beaumont and it is an honor to announce my candidacy for ACBT First Vice President for the term of 2024-2026. As a person who experienced vision loss as an adult, I have a great appreciation for the knowledge gained throughout my

membership since 2005, while serving as ACBT President from 2012-2018, ACBT Second Vice President from 2011-2012, and the President of Beaumont Area Council of the Blind since its inception in 2009.

Moreover, serving on the ACB Board of Directors from 2021 to current has broadened my awareness and ability to view a future filled with possibilities. Getting to know and hear from members around the nation has afforded me the privilege of offering ideas for solutions and connect energy with words in support of and the emergence into a greater organization. I have demonstrated commitment throughout every assignment placed in my trust and promise to serve well as I move forward.

I would appreciate receiving your vote on Sunday, August 25, 2024. You are encouraged to ask additional questions that would secure your vote for me as First Vice President of ACBT by sending e-mail to semien.k@outlook.com or call (409) 866-5838.

1.  What are your reasons for seeking this office?

I have been interested in serving as First Vice President for some time now. I believe in membership and appreciate the fact that, if elected, I would chair the membership committee. I promise to bring unique and innovative strategies to this assignment. It will be my privilege to work with members who may have never served on the committee previously, as we place an emphasis on recruiting, retention, enrichment, and engagement. It’s imperative that we reach out to those who may have left for some reason in an effort to inform them of new programs and opportunities. I look forward to bridging the gap between younger and older members, while promoting collaboration and inclusion.

2.  What experience and expertise do you bring to this office and to ACBT?

Having served for a number of years, I will bring knowledge, experience, and creativity with a commitment to introducing proven strategies for success. I am quite familiar with our members, and will work to get to know them better. I look forward to working towards identifying new members, and new chapters for the American Council of the Blind of Texas. I will carefully consider including at least one more special-interest affiliate.

3.  What actions would you take to help ACBT fulfill its mission and achieve its goals?

It will be my pleasure to continue advocating to enhance the quality of life and promote independence for all Texans who are blind or have low vision. My goal will be to support ACBT financially through funding streams that will secure a bright future for the organization. I also desire to collaborate with other officers and board members to develop winning strategies for success. I am a thinker and a worker with dedicated service to ACBT.

4.  Fundraising is critical to assure any nonprofit organization stays alive. Therefore, name two fundraising ideas and tell how you would help make them a success for ACBT.

I believe in purpose driven fundraising, therefore I will work to support our scholarship program through advertising and promoting what we have to offer students who are blind or have low vision. This endeavor will secure funding and special contributions from cities in which we have chapters and connections. Another area that I feel support should be given to is possible convention stipends or identify a way to subsidize cost for members facing financial hardship or limited income. This can be done by direct donations, taking a designated portion from areas that we commonly budget for, but don’t always utilize. I also am hoping that we can join together to identify funds apart from our members that support educational events. I will do my best to identify sources of support.

5.  When do you believe it is necessary for an organization to change its practices, policies, and procedures?

I believe that all organizational practices and procedures should be considered for revisions on an annual basis. Moreover, it would be advantageous to consider trends that may become obsolete as the membership and leadership team changes.

6.  What do you see as the major challenges for ACBT over the next 3 years and how would you help manage them?

I feel that the greatest challenges will be for ACBT to acquire necessary equipment to remain on the cutting edge with technological advances as well as solidifying a commitment to provide the level of accessibility to meet the needs of our members. I will perform research, seek to identify and integrate the skills and abilities of our membership, and form alliances with organizations and entities placing an emphasis on the needs of persons who are blind or visually impaired.

**2024 Candidate for ACBT Second Vice President: Jan Gray**

 My name is Janet Gray, but everyone calls me Jan. I am originally from Colorado and was the first blind student in my school district to graduate from a public high school. I attended Rocky Mt. Baptist College, Metro State, and Denver Community College in Colorado and Tarrant County College in Texas. My major at first was early childhood education and in Texas I majored in Computer science. Boy have computers changed since then. I participated with the USO in Denver and was selected as a delegate to the National USO Conference. From there I was selected to be on the Planning Council for the 1975 National USO Jr. Hostess Conference that was held in Memphis Tennessee. I have lived in Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and in 1980 my family and I moved to Texas. Since I have been in Texas, I have been on the PTA Board while my children were in school and in 1993, I became a part of the executive board for the Saginaw Train and Grain Festival. I served as entertainment chair for the next 7 years and for 2 years after as a co-chair, consultant for the festival. While in this position I selected, booked, and scheduled entertainment on three stages for the 2 Days of the Festival. The third stage was a children’s stage and had entertainment appropriate for the kids. The festival saw between 10,000 and 15,000 people during the two days. I have managed my own business for the last 30 years. I joined ACBT in 2011 and since that time I have served on the Scholarship, public relations, and the newsletter committee. I am currently chair of the Member Morale committee and have served there since 2021. I am President of the Ft. Worth Chapter of ACB,and was appointed in 2022 as the Second VP for ACBT. Last year I was elected to the position of Second VP , I also serve on the

Auction committee.

1. Since being appointed to this position, I have really enjoyed serving in this capacity and would like to try for at least one more term.
2. My experience in working with different community projects has given me the experience to realize how important entertainment can be to the success of a conference. Last year the fund raising committee came up with new ideas that made our Friday night entertainment become very successful. We also brought in the Escape room which in addition to making money, was a hit among participants.
3. In addition to participating in advocacy issues, I also represent ACBT at other community events in Ft. Worth.
4. Fundraising is indeed important, but before an organization can be truly successful in fund raising, they must have specific projects that can be advertised as the recipients of the funds that are being raised. If ACBT wants to raise large sums, we need to be looking into a professional grant writer, and initiating projects that can be beneficial to the visually impaired population.
5. Any organization should embrace change, and when we begin to lose members or fail to increase our membership, we need to look at the practices of that organization to see if we are keeping up with the times. As the population changes, we too as an organization need to evolve in order to more effectively serve our members.
6. The biggest challenges that I see for our future is attracting and maintaining new members and learning to embrace changes around us. Unfortunately, just because something has worked for several years doesn’t mean that something new should not be tried. We are all guilty of trying to maintain the status quo, but if we are to grow, we must reach out and try new things.

**2024 Candidate for ACBT Secretary – Mary Alice Gary**

Greetings to All! It’s me again, your ACBT Secretary Mary Alice Gary. Yeah, it’s that time, for me to introduce and tell you all about myself and ask for your vote and continued support.

1. Most of you already know I’ve been the ACBT Secretary since 2014. My fingers diligently fly over my keyboard recording the Minutes from numerous Board meetings, collect documents from said meetings and disseminate all documentation to the ACBT Board as requested. You’ve also seen my numerous emails announcing various “Informative Calls” for a few of the ACBT Committees. I’m currently serving on the Membership and Scholarship Committees. Locally, with the Alamo Chapter, I work on the Membership, Scholarship, Fundraising and Constitution and By Laws Committees. The Alamo Council is also participating in the White Cane Planning Committee for the 60th Anniversary Celebration.
2. As I am seeking the Secretary position, it shows that I am detail oriented and enjoy the challenge of transcribing lengthy recordings. Over time, I have managed to refine my skills and continue to accurately report the meeting information to the ACBT Board.
3. Some ACBT goals can be met by members actively participating in various Committees on both the state and local levels. Members can also assist in breaking down barriers within the community for individuals experiencing vision loss. 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 become more difficult in recent years. One idea would be to advertise our annual Auction on more social media outlets. ACBT might want to hold another auction around the Holidays to increase revenue. Offering a fundraiser at a different time than the Convention may attract a larger audience.
5. Any organization can become stagnant if it doesn’t evolve with the changes in society. Listening to what grabs people’s attention and implementing some of the suggestions may draw in new members and keep ACBT moving forward.
6. Increasing membership and fundraising are always the biggest challenges facing ACBT. The “informative calls” continue to pique interest in our members and non-members. Offering more educational calls related to technology, hints for around the house and other hands-on related topics could possibly increase attendance and help us grow.

**2024 Candidate for ACBT Treasurer: Sheila Derrick**

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

am seeking re-election to that post in 2024. 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. My 2022 to 2024 term fulfilled that promise and now I hope to continue in this capacity for another term. Over the past 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. Also, I am 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 allows me to use my skills and give to an organization that has a vital role in supporting the blind community while allowing me to work from home.
2. I had 30 years of bookkeeping experience through my employment as a medical office manager. Currently I am serving my sixth term as ACBT treasurer, my seventh term as Fort Worth treasurer and my twelfth year as Conference/Convention treasurer and registrar. During these years I have learned more about non-profit organizations, their tax requirements and IRS regulations than I knew there was to learn.
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 the ACBT fundraisers including the ACB MMS program, ACB Wolk-a-Thon, Conference auctions, and the Carnival in the Dark. 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 membership numbers and cost of conference and more on to meeting people where they are by experimenting with new ways of attracting them. In other words, finding new events and activities that will pique interest in learning more about ACBT.
6. The next several years will test ACBT’s resilience and adaptability. In order to meet the needs of our existing members while adding 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 have learned a lot in the past 4 years and now we must build on that base and continue moving forward.

**2024 Candidates for ACBT Directors**

**Alfredo Perez**

I am 53 years old, born and raised in El Paso ,

Moved to Houston in 2001, returned in 2013,

I am married to Kathy Perez and we currently have

5 rescue dogs and 1 cat. My son lives in Dallas

And my daughter lives in Bryan Texas.

I am visually impaired, my retina in my left eye

Is completely detached and my vision is

About 75% in my right eye. Diabetic related.

I’ve been diabetic for over 20

Years, I’m happy to say it is currently controlled.

I am very involved in EPCB, I have served as

treasurer 4 years ago then elected vice president,

however I became president due to the elected

president not being able to serve due to his

employment obligations and restrictions. I

served 2 terms due to the COVID situation and

I am the current vice president.

My passion is the council and have dedicated

Myself along with Kathy to do the greater good

And share/ spread the word of EBCB.

Kathy is my world and I often say she saved me

and my best friend Behr. Behr is my 12 year old

mixed breed small dog, always with me and my

Strongest supporter. He passed January 2023.

Behr became diabetic then blind, he attend the

ABCT conference in 2022 with us, he was in his

Red wagon, some may remember.

I don’t speak about myself, rather I see the good

In everyone around me, I offer my full support

And share my want for them to succeed in

Anything they want to work hard to achieve.

I am a quiet person but I really get going when

I see a white cane, I always have my EPCB

Brochures with me and I offer my full attention

And want to help in any way I can.

I am at peace in my life and avoid negativity,

Stress, and feed off of positive vibes.

I gravitate towards all individuals that are smarter

Than me, more successful than me, and wiser

Than me. I have to feel that I can learn something

From an individual, I need to be challenged.

People usually learn that when I say “done” it will

Get done with my full attention. I am very loyal,

Trustworthy, and want the best for everyone I meet

And cross paths with.

1. My reason for seeking this office is to take my next step in serving the blind and visually impaired community. I wish to participate in proposing and voting in furthering the ABCT. I wish to represent El Paso and do so proudly.
2. The experience and expertise I bring to this office and ABCT is a degree in positively, motivation, full support, a solid record of new ideas and fundraising opportunities.
3. The actions I would take to help ABCT fulfill it’s mission and goals is my dedication , ability to listen, and full involvement. My main action is to have a plan with a beginning , middle, and end result.
4. Fundraising is a fantastic opportunity to network and introduce our chapters to new and all walks of life. One successful way is by our community markets. We purchase a table or spot, sell our homemade baked goods. Quality products made with our best regards and always with a brochure and a smile. Another fundraiser is our large print and Braille material that we distribute to our family, friends, coworkers, doctor offices, to anybody and anywhere. It’s a letter with our mission statement a reason for our cause and a thank you. Very convenient with a QR code for cash app, credit card, debit card , pay pal. Ideas are always welcome, encouraged, and appreciated.
5. I believe it’s always necessary to change and evolve to grow. Communication between new younger members and current mentors can bring new exciting ideas and challenges. I good clean debate may be the road for practices, procedures, and policies. Involvement, knowledge and the want to grow as a council in the most positive way can be a reason to see other viewpoints. Vote and be heard.
6. The main challenge now and in the next 3 years is membership and involvement. We need new and younger VI and blind individuals to carry on the councils and input to the ADA.

I help manage these challenges daily by having the literature on me at all times, speaking to my doctors, talking to other abilities out there such as dialysis clinics, social workers, the VA. Offering support as a group or individually. I often see that it’s the same small group of the councils providing the ideas, prep, function, clean up. The challenge there is to be able to approach and try different ways of getting the non involved involved. Are you more hands on, are you more behind the scenes, asking what are you willing to start your needed and appreciated involvement. The reward of helping out is so much gratifying.

**Kevin Ratliff**

I, Kevin Ratliff, am thrilled to announce my candidacy for a Board of Directors Seat with The American Council of the Blind of Texas (ACBT)!

As a proud member for the past 20 years, I'm deeply invested in ACBT's future and excited about the next 30 plus years of this incredible organization.

My commitment runs deep. I've held numerous positions within the Austin Chapter and ACBT itself. Notably, I served three terms as the 2nd Vice-President of ACBT and currently hold the position of Chapter President for the Austin Council of the Blind. Additionally, I served three terms as Secretary for the Blind Pride International Special Interest Affiliate on the national level. I actively participate in various national and local ACB committees.

Through these experiences, I've gained invaluable knowledge, a strong understanding of ACBT's mission and goals, and an unwavering belief in the positive impact we make.

Professionally, my dedication to the blind community extends beyond ACBT. For 15 years, I served the State of Texas. Starting at the Texas Department of Health and Human Services as a Texas Works Advisor, I transitioned in 2013 to my current role as an Assistive Technology Instructor at the Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center for the Blind.

My formal education in Music, Technology, and Special Education further strengthens my ability to serve ACBT. I'm eager to leverage my knowledge and skills to continue advocating for the blind community. I look forward to the opportunity to represent you on the ACBT Board.

1. I believe very deeply in the stated mission and goals of this great organization, and I would very much like an opportunity to work with the ACBT board and committees to move ACBT forward toward greater membership growth, financial stability, and overall success.
2. Most of the knowledge and skills that I bring to the board comes from my extensive work with The American Council of the Blind, both locally as well as nationally. I have served on various committees and held many board positions and offices, from President of my local Chapter and 2nd Vice-President of ACBT, to Board Member and Chapter Representative. In addition, through my current work, I have gained a deeper understanding and appreciation of policy and procedures, which will also benefit me as a board member.
3. I will continue to work on developing outreach and educational programs for ACBT, like Braille Camps, Tech Camps, and blindness focused seminars to connect with blind Texans. There are still so many blind and visually impaired people in our communities that have not heard our message, who don’t know that we exist, or what we stand for. There is so much work to be done in this area. I look forward to work on strategies to reach those who might need us and educating our neighbors and local communities about the great and important work we do in ACBT.
4. Grants are possibly the best and most lucrative source of funds. While I don’t have a great deal of experience in this area, I am willing to work with those who have grant writing experience, and to seek out those who understand and have expertise in the grant application process. Another possible fundraiser is a dining in the Dark event, which could be held in one of the cities where ACBT has a local chapter. I have helped organize several successful Dining in the Dark events for my local chapter. We have raised over $5000 at these events.
5. Stagnant membership growth is a strong indicator that an organization's practices and procedures might need reevaluation. Informative workshops, social events, and camps are fantastic ways to spread awareness about ACBT and attract new members. However, to foster and sustain growth in the organization, we might also consider these additional strategies:

Gather member feedback: Understanding why current members stay or leave is crucial. Surveys and focus groups can provide valuable insights.

Offer ongoing engagement: Go beyond one-off events. Create opportunities for members to connect regularly, build relationships, and feel a sense of belonging.

Develop targeted programs: Cater to diverse member interests. Offer workshops, mentorship programs, or social activities that address their specific needs.

1. One of the greatest challenges facing ACBT is financial stability and growth in membership. I will work with ACBT leaders and other community leaders to seek out and secure grants as well as other fundraising programs to support and fund ACBT’s projects. Also, we must continue to work on outreach and education. It is imperative that we find ways to reach the youth and young adults. I will help develop socials and other fun activities that will attract the youth and young adults.

**A Win for Our Blind and Low Vision Voters**

By Eleanor Coldwell

The El Paso Council of the Blind has traditionally held a good relationship with the El Paso County Elections Department and its administrator, Lisa Wise. We often communicate with her during an election to inform her of any complications or compliments regarding her poll workers' knowledge of accessible voting preparedness. We vote on the first day of early voting in order to give poll volunteers a chance to repair any glitches that may occur. One area in which some of us were experiencing difficulty was in signing on the computer screen when we approved our addresses and checked our party affiliations. All our voting precincts use computer tablets for this identification. At one of our meetings with Mrs. Wise we suggested that a signature guide might be a big help for those of us who cannot see the tablet screen. She asked member Eleanor Coldwell and then member Blanca Cunningham to work with Fab Lab, a technology education non-profit that teaches digital skills and fabrication, to come up with a solution that would work. As a result of the collaboration between Mrs. Cunningham, Mrs. Coldwell and Adam Boyea, Fab Lab's Fabrication Director, a clear plastic signature card was designed and created. Mrs. Wise enthusiastically ordered a signature guide for every voting place in the El Paso area. When a blind or low vision voter shows up to vote, he/she is given the option of using this signature guide on the tablet's screen. This year Disability Rights Texas learned about the Poll Signature Card that was being used in El Paso County and nominated this accommodation to the election Assistance Commission (EAC). Each year EAC recognizes elections departments across the nation for excellence in Elections Administration. these awards are called the Cleary Awards. we were excited to learn that El Paso County's Signature Slate received an Honorable Mention Award for its efforts. On Monday, June 24th the El Paso County Elections Office received a Proclamation from El Paso County Commissioners Court. Present to be introduced to County Commissioner Judge Samaniego and the Commissioners were: Mrs. Lisa Wise, Blanca Cunningham, Eleanor Coldwell, Alfredo Perez, Adam Boyea and Valerie Dominguez, Fab Lab Marketing and Communications Manager. The El Paso County Elections Office, The El Paso Council of the Blind and Fab Lab were each given framed copies of the County's Proclamation.

**Texas’ Lighthouses Series:**

**Featuring Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth**

By Mary Witherspoon

Lighthouse FW joins community partners to bring unique enrichment events for BVI youth. For high schoolers, the Pre-Employment Transition Service (Pre-ETS) / Project BELIEVE, prepares teens for the workplace or further career education. With interest & talent surveys paired with career exploration, students consider their options and goals. Having never met a blind adult, teens in the 2024 class talked with BVI role models. Insightful conversations focused on confidently advocating for oneself in the workplace. Camp Lighthouse, in partnership with YMCA Camp Carter, is for kids age 11 to 16. The one-week camp includes swimming, ropes courses, rock climbing, and more all alongside sighted peers to experience camp as any other kid. Lighthouse FW supports mobility training and social interaction skills at the YMCA camp. Cane Quest, held in conjunction with Region 11 ESC, is a fun O & M Olympic event for grades 3 to 12. Students navigate courses to assess O&M skills while earning prizes in multiple categories. Parents talk with a mobility specialist and a guide dog handler to understand how skills developed in childhood impact success as a blind adult. Cane Quest is promoted at the Lighthouse FW White Cane Awareness, held at the Amon Carter Museum, attended by 18 school districts. Lighthouse FW has partnerships with Amon Carter, the Kimbell Art Museum, the Fort Worth Symphony and the Fort Worth Botanical Gardens to build more inclusive experiences. Lighthouse FW helped add Alt Text to Amon Carter website photos and improved website color contrast. A potential internship is in the works for a BVI student interested in plant sciences at the Botanical Gardens. For more news, call Lighthouse FW at 817-332-3341.

**Braille Revival League of Texas**

By Neva Fairchild

Stop by the BRLT exhibit table at the 2024 Conference/Convention in august to talk about how braille can enhance your enjoyment of leisure activities and increase your overall independence as a person with low or no vision. Pick up a free print/braille alphabet card and check out products to help you to reinforce learning the braille alphabet by touch that are really fun! Everyone who uses braille learned it as a child in school is a common misconception. I began learning braille when I was 36 years old to label file folders at work. Now, I use braille every single day of my life. It is definitely not too late for you to learn too.

BRLT will be selling 50 chances for $5 each (please bring cash) to win a $90 set of braille Lego bricks. If we sell out at the conference, you can take the Legos home with you, or we will keep selling until all 50 chances have been spoken for, and then we will draw the lucky winner. Whether you read braille or not, Legos are tons of fun for all ages.

Don’t miss the BRLT session at the upcoming conference/convention, because you could win a prize in a Jeopardy game created by our very own Larry Johnson. You will also learn about braille options offered by the Texas Talking Book program from Jacqueline Owusu. We will also hold a short business meeting to elect the BRLT Board. Join us on our mission to increase the use of braille in Texas by paying $15 dues for the remainder of 2024 and all of 2025.

**Library Users of America-Texas**

by Gayle Metoyer

Greetings LUAT members and friends:

Well, the summer heat is on! I hope this will give you the opportunity to relax and read a good book. You can get your favorite cool beverage of choice and stay inside where it is cool and enjoy reading.

It is almost time for our annual ACBT conference/convention. The 46th annual Conference/Convention will be held in Houston, Texas in August. The dates for the conference are August 22-25. This is also time for the LUAT annual business meeting.

The LUAT meeting will be held on Saturday, August 24 at 9 a.m. Please refer to your program upon arrival for the exact location. In addition to the business meeting, we will have Jacqueline Owusu from the Texas State Library. She will share updates from the Texas Talking Book Program as well as from the National Library Service. We also hope to have a narrator for your enjoyment. Please be prepared to pay your $15 dues for next year, and if you are a new member, the rest of this year will be included. We look forward to seeing you in Houston!

Happy Reading!

**Alamo Council Update**

By LouAnn Williams

This time of year, I am sure we are in perfect agreement about these two items. The first is that every mile of Texas is HOT! And the second is our ACBT conference/convention is quickly approaching! With that being said, the Alamo Council has been making plans to have a table in the nice cool vendor room. Please stop by and see what is for sale and what we will be offering in our drawing.

The Alamo Council will be announcing our scholarship winners in August, and they will be presented in September.

 We are always trying to think of new ways to fund raise. It was suggested that all the Chapters could have a call and discuss different ways fund raising is done in their chapters. So, hopefully sometime in the fall that call can become a reality.

Stay safe and cool!

**Austin chapter update**

By Marcus Manning

The sun is shining, and we are happily sending all y’all greetings in this summer of 2024. Yes indeed,

School is out for summer!So, lets gather together for some conventions.

The Austin Chapter has been meeting each 3rd Saturday of the month from 10:30 AM to 12:00 Noon and then hurrying over to one of our outstanding local eateries. Something about that formula is working because our chapter is continuing to see new faces and growing our membership. We have also been enjoying informative meetings and venturing out together to learn about our community. At our most recent chapter meeting, a local real estate agent, gave a presentation and facilitated a discussion on the importance of home ownership. She really got into some of the nuts and bolts like:

* Building your credit score
* Saving and preparing for home buying
* City and other programs that might assist with first time home buying.

If we did not call the discussion to a close to celebrate June birthdays, we might have continued on the topic well into the afternoon.

Several of us also met up at the LBJ presidential library to behold the American Music Tour. We really enjoyed the audio bits of that tour because there was hardly anything for us to touch and are thankful for our sighted members who provided descriptions of musical history artifacts such as Stevie Ray Vonn’s guitar and Gloria Estefan’s dress that she wore performing “Reach” at the Olympics. We also gathered at an exhibit designed by and especially for us. Jill Hudson, an Austin chapter member participated in Touch the art, working with the staff and students and other local artists to produce several amazing tactile works of art. With adult beverages in one hand and our pinkies to the moon we used our other hand to explore art in our own way. Cheers to Jill and all of our Texas artists who treated us to the sensory moments of significands that we could have never dreamed up, but tactual times together that we will always cherish.

We are planning for our upcoming dominoes tournament in the fall, but before we can really focus on that we hope to spend time with you all at one or both of this summer’s ACB and ACBT conventions.

**Beaumont Area Council of the Blind**

By Cynthia Julun

At our meeting, the Beaumont Area Council of the Blind discussed the importance of boundaries in business, friendships, leadership, organizations, and relationships in the month of April. According to the dictionary boundaries are something that defines or describes limits. Boundaries can be physical or metaphorical. For example, how you allow someone to talk to you or treat you. In the month of May we talked about the Older American’s Act. It was formed in 1965 and it was the first federal level initiative aimed at providing comprehensive services for older adults. It is comprised of entities such as the Area Agency On Aging. We also discussed emergency preparedness. Individuals should have a go bag ready in the event of a hurricane evacuation, a sudden trip to the hospital, or any disaster. Preparing a binder or water proof envelope for important documents is a great idea. Be sure to keep extra cash on hand if possible. Also if you can get extra medication to keep in your go bag so that you do not forget it during the time of an emergency please consider doing so. Lastly, in the month of June we spoke about audio description. It is wonderful to be able to go to the movies, watch television shows, and or go to the theatre and have the events described to you. In order to familiarize our members with audio description, we had a movie day during the June meeting. We listened to an audio described inspirational movie and we served food that you can purchase at the movies. For example, candy, hotdogs, popcorn, and soda. For some of our members this was a new and fun experience.

**Dallas Area Council of the Blind Update**

By Mary Witherspoon

May and June were active! What is it like being blind? When Dallas Cub Scout pack 325 reached out on the DACB website to ask for a presentation, Vice President Chris Allen accepted the challenge. In May, eight fourth graders and their parents joined Chris as he demonstrated accomplishing daily tasks. The pack learned how Chris reads email and searches the web with voiceover. Chris says, “I took a picture of a business card with my phone using the Be My Eyes app and they heard the A.I. feature tell me what it says.” After a white cane demonstration, every scout volunteered to practice sighted guide with Chris. “They were so eager and helpful” he says. “When I was in school some kids teased me about being BVI, so I was impressed with the intelligence and awareness of these scouts. One told me that blind does not mean that you can’t see anything, you might have some vision” says Chris. There could be collaboration possibilities between DACB and Den 325 in the future. President Ted Harper says “Many thanks to members, guests and volunteers who attended our Annual Picnic and Scholarship Fundraiser in May. I’m happy to report that the money raised put us within $49 of our 2025 scholarship program goal.” DACB welcomes its newest members Rochelle Clark, Brenda Moss, and Julie Herbert. On June 1, Mary Witherspoon visited the North Texas Blind Soccer Shootout and Clinic. The Para-Olympic Bronze Medal winning Moroccan National Blind Soccer team guided activities for both youths and adults. At the June DACB meeting, three members kicked-off the new ‘Getting to Know You’ program. At each chapter meeting, a few members will share their vision journey story. Follow us at dallasacb.org to stay connected!

**El Paso Council of the Blind Update**

By Eleanor Coldwell

EPCB once again assisted Region 19 Education service Center with their "Camp Rock On," 8 days of fun, food and frolic for the area's blind and low vision students. We traditionally sponsor 1 day, and this time it consisted of carnival games, table games, a craft activity, a gardening activity, and an educational session with guide dogs and their handlers. The gardening activity was handled by 5 Master Gardeners of El Paso, who taught the students how to plant and care for aloe Vera plants. All students and teachers went home with their own aloe Vera plant and watering can. The games were headed by treasurer Kathy Perez and Immediate Past President Alfredo Perez, members Young Jackson, Olga Contreras, Mary Carmen Antillon, new member Albert Pacquien, Eleanor Coldwell, President Gema Ceniceros and her children. Alfredo Perez donated delicious home-made cookies for the Cake Walk activity. The guide dog speakers were President Gema Ceniceros and her dog Liberty, and member Beto Lopez and his newly acquired dog Bruno. The students learned about the caring and feeding of guide dogs, using correct protocol when in the presence of a guide dog, how they are trained, the guide dog's daily routines, and their favorite games. The students and their teachers were encouraged to ask questions. Camp Rock On director, Mr. Richard Torres was very pleased with the day's activities and has invited us back for next year's event.

**Fort Worth Chapter News**

by Jan Gray

 Our chapter has several members who are currently down at Chris Cole learning great things. We had a fantastic picnic in June, although it was a little warm. We announced our scholarship winner, Emma Jenke, who will be attending Texas Wesleyan University in the fall, majoring in counseling. Emma is from Lewisville ISD. We played games and visited and ate fried chicken and all the trimmings and had a good time. We will be meeting virtually in July due to some vacation schedules and the extreme heat. We are planning a fun raiser for the fall. Our future plans include our community information project which we can hopefully launch later this year. We are small but active.

**Houston Happenings**

By Michael Garrett

The Houston Council of the Blind (HCB) is still working diligently to be visible in the Greater Houston area. Whether through collaborative efforts with other organizations or through our own initiatives and activities, the Council has been reaching out with the intent of serving our community. We were unable to meet during the month of May in the aftermath of the storms in the Houston area. However, during the meetings held, we were able to give special recognition to our volunteer group, V T Seva; we welcomed an officer from J.P. Morgan-Chase who talked about how to build your credit and we had representatives from our paratransit company who spoke to us regarding upcoming changes.

As a part of our visibility, we exhibited at the HAVIN Expo and on the day we couldn’t hold our meeting we were still able to exhibit at the HCIL Adaptive Solutions Expo at the George R. Brown convention Center. In another weather related occurrence, we scheduled a huge yard sale fundraiser which got rained out. But our resilient members and families were still able to sell a good portion of the merchandise.

Regardless of the situation or circumstance, HCB members show up all over the place. Over the past few months, we’ve been gathering at several local restaurants, attending shows at Miller Outdoor Theatre and holding our Blingo fundraiser. In addition, we’ve been in contact with our City Council members regarding community issues. We also continue to field calls from individuals needing information and referral.

As a result of all of this activity, we have gained several new members. We continue to serve our community!

HCB: Helping, Caring, Building

**American Council of the Blind of Texas**

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

**ACBT State Officers:**

**President:**

Chris D. Prentice (2022-2024, First Term)

(806) 283-8227
cprentice61@att.net
Local Chapter: Austin Council

**First Vice President - Membership Chair:**

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

**Second Vice President - Fundraising Chair:**

Jan Gray (2022-2024, First Term)

(817) 232-4295

Jan.gray1950@gmail.com

Local Chapter: Fort Worth Council

**Treasurer - Finance & Budget Chair:**

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

**Secretary:**

Mary Alice Gary (2022-2024, No Term Limits)
(915) 269-2119
ma-gary@att.net
Local Chapter: Alamo Council

**Immediate Past President - Constitution & Bylaws Chair:**

Peggy R. Garrett (2022-2024)

(281) 438-9665
prcgarrett@sbcglobal.net
Local Chapter: Houston Council

**ACBT State Directors:**

**Board Member:**
Louann Williams - Director (2021-2025, Second Term)
(210) 884-7778
la.lozano.williams@gmail.com
Local Chapter: Alamo Council

**Board Member:**
Alfredo Perez, Director (2023 Appointed, First Term)

Local Chapter: El Paso Council