**THE TEXAS STAR**

**Vol. 30, No. 4 October 2022**

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[Note: Articles printed in The Texas Star are submitted by the subscribers and are not necessarily reflective of the membership as a whole. The articles express only the opinion of the author.]

**Presidential Ponderings**

By: Chris D. Prentice

Well, Autumn has arrived here in Texas. As the season changes with all its customary splendor, many other changes are upon us as well. There are changes in ACB of Texas and likely there will be changes in our state and national governmental officeholders. As a non-profit organization that seeks to be relevant and meaningful into the next decades, we must be ready to follow this plan: Attacking Change Brings Triumph! If we do this, ACB of Texas will continue to be relevant into the coming decades. If we don’t do this, we will soon fade away.

As one of these changes, I have decided to seek approval from our Board and to confirm my appointment of Jan Gray, Greater Fort Worth Council of the Blind to be our new 2nd, Vice President. It is my hope that our Board will confirm this appointment without delay so Jan can get started in her responsibilities in this new position. In the event she is confirmed, I will then have the opportunity to appoint an individual to replace her on the Board as a Director. I am still in that process.

I want to thank Peggy Garrett and the Conference Committee for doing a great job on our conference in Austin at the end of August. This year required a great deal of flexibility on their part as they planned and prepared for our gathering. Not everything was smooth, but it all worked out well in the end. Plans are already well underway for our 2023 Conference to be held in San Antonio. Details will soon follow.

Please read up and prepare yourselves to vote in our upcoming state and national elections. It is important to be a well-informed voter. Voting is one of the most important things we can do as Americans. We all need to do it!

October saw White Cane Safety Day (10/15/22) as well as National Disability Employment Awareness Month. These are both extremely important in the blindness community. I hope each of you found a way to celebrate and participate in these events. Stay tuned. There is more to come.

**First Vice President’s Report**

By Michael E. Garrett

From the Membership Committee

We are still unwinding from, what we believe, was a successful state conference/convention. Sessions were well attended; participants were engaged, and it appeared that all who attended had a good time. There was quite a bit of useful information shared and attendees learned a lot about ACBT.

There was much momentum created as a result of our members welcoming new attendees and sharing with those who hadn’t been to an ACBT gathering for some time. So, let’s continue to reach out and keep in contact with those we met and encourage them to get involved. At the same time, let’s keep in contact with each other. Strength comes from sharing and successful collaboration comes from constant contact.

Always keep our motto in mind:

ACBT: Advancing the Cause of Blind Texans.

**Secretary Secrets**

by Mary Alice Gary

I’d like to send a huge “Thank You” to all the members who stuck around for the Sunday Business Meeting to re-elect me as your secretary. My fingers will continue to fly over my keyboard keeping your Inboxes full and the Minutes current. You may even find me attached to a committee or two. I’d also like to congratulate my Fellow Officers and look forward to working with all of them.

Wow! There’s nothing like an in-person Conference. Nothing compares to the hustle and bustle of everyone moving from workshops to the exhibit hall, or just moving around the hotel. Oh, Yeah, don’t forget the Hospitality Room! Virtual just doesn’t cut it! There was so much fun, laughter and good times for all. Gosh, what a way to finish the night. Thank you to the Conference/Convention and Auction Committees and everyone else who had a hand in organizing an awesome event.

Remember you can stay connected to ACBT happenings by subscribing to the ACBT Groups List by sending an email to: ACBT+subscribe@groups.io, (that’s the plus symbol after the ACBT). No more missing important dates or events because you can get the 4-1-1 delivered directly to your Inbox. Most ACBT happenings, Committee events and activities are announced here, along with issues and events concerning the blindness community.

Another list that might peak your interests would be the ACB Community Calendar. You can participate in calls raging from socializing, exercising, and learning in classes, such as crafting, technology or playing an instrument, just to name a few. 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. You can also listen to many events and other topics on ACB Media using your Alexa device. Just ask Alexa to “Enable ACB Media” and she’ll give you a list of channels to choose from.

**Tales from the Treasurer**

By Sheila Derrick

I hope everyone is still basking in the glow of the ACBT in-person very successful annual conference/convention. It was a lively, exciting event with many new faces enjoying all the activities on offer. San Antonio will be our site in 2023. I want to thank all of you who supported both the virtual and silent auctions with your donations and winning bids. We raised $5,300. This was the best ever and many thanks to the Auction Committee for doing such a great job. Also, thanks to Bill and Mary Alice Gary for being our Door Prize champions this year. If you missed all the fun and excitement, start planning now for 2023.

It is now time to begin renewing ACBT memberships and bringing in those new ones. Dues are as follows: local chapters pay $7.00 per member and $3.00 for junior members aged 13-17, at-large members pay $10.00, and special interest affiliates with ACBT (LUA-T, BRLT, and GDUTX) pay $2.00 for each member.

Current 2022 membership rolls will be sent to each chapter treasurer via email in Excel spreadsheet form in December. If a different format is needed, please let me know. This should allow for easier changes and additions. Updated membership rolls must be returned by February 20, 2023. The following information is needed for each member: name, address, home and cell phone numbers, email address, Braille Forum format (large print, digital cartridge, Braille, or email), Texas Star format (large print, Audio CD, or email), and vision status (Blind/VI or fully sighted), and demographic information (age range, ethnicity, and gender). **Please note ACB has changed their vision status choices again and only Blind/VI and Fully Sighted are needed.**

If you have any questions, please contact me: Sheila Derrick, ACBT Treasurer, 309 Paloverde Ln., Fort Worth, TX 76112; (817) 507-3964; sjderrick212@hotmail.com.

**A Museum Reaches Out**

By Eleanor Coldwell

The El Paso Museum of History reached out to EPCB member, Gema Ceniceros, inviting her to speak at their planning meeting in July. Ms. Erika Marin, Director and Ms. Nora Rose, Community Engagement Coordinator were anxious to learn how to make their exhibits more Accessible to visually impaired patrons. Gema explained to Ms. Marin, Ms. Rose and their summer camp students how we depend on cues to help us move around an area, and how we use Braille and our smart phones to assist us. As a result of Gema's information that she shared with them, the Museum of History opened their first ever accessible exhibit. Velvet ropes were used to guide us through the exhibits, which were placed in individual cases. Each case contained a QR Code that explained the object we were standing in front of. An additional case held 3-D printouts of the students ‘heads and shoulders. QR codes offered us each student's voice introducing themselves to the listener. Braille labels told us each student's name.

This is just a first attempt at creating accessible displays. The El Paso Museum of History hopes to continue to. Reach out to all visitors, making their visit the best experience possible, no matter their disability. See [www.epmuseumofhistory.org](http://www.epmuseumofhistory.org) for more information.

**Advocacy Highpoints**

By Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Those who were in attendance at the in-person ACBT Conference/Convention in Austin on Saturday August 27, 2022, had the privilege of learning innovative advocacy strategies from ACBT member, Larry P. Johnson, Dennis Borel, Executive Director of the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, and Chase Bearden, Deputy Director of the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities. This team of seasoned advocates were invited by the Advocacy committee to set the stage for advocacy and legislative actions we should take in an effort to have a successful legislative session in 2023.

It is necessary for all of us to be in contact with our legislators well before January 10, 2023, when the Texas Legislature convenes. Personal stories matter when sharing issues faced by Texans who are blind, visually impaired or have low vision.

A second conference/convention session was facilitated by Bob Kafka, Coordinator of REV Up Texas and Molly Broadway, Training and Technical Support Specialist for Voting Rights of Disability Rights Texas on the importance of registering to vote, becoming educated and developing a plan to vote on November 8, 2022, or during the early voting period from October 24 to November 4, 2022. The advocacy committee will meet soon to determine 2023 Legislative Priorities.

Highpoints for 2023:

* Equal Access to the Absentee Ballot
* Ensuring Equity When Hiring VI Teachers in Texas
* Expanding Services for the TWC OIB Program
* Additional Funding for the TWC OIB Program

If you have advocacy related questions or would like to share comments, send email to semien.k@att.net or call Kenneth Semien, Sr. at 409-866-5838.

**ACBT Auction Committee Update**

by Sara Freeman Smith

A huge Texas sized thank you to everyone that participated in our two Auction fundraisers in August. We held our online Auction using Zoom on Sunday, august 21st prior to the start of the State Conference & Convention. It was our large one with more than 30 items and with participants from Texas and other states. We then held a small Silent Auction during the Saturday evening banquet on August 27th. Thanks again to all the generous donors and bidders for making this year’s auction our most successful! These proceeds will help fund many of our programs especially our annual Scholarships.

Thanks also to our Auction Committee, Website Committee and Leslie Schultz for all their time and hard work on making it a success behind the scenes! We look forward to another successful auction in San Antonio next august!

**Get Movin’ with Transportation**

by Mary Alice Gary

As this issue of the Texas Star arrives in your mailbox or Inbox, scarecrows, witches, pumpkins, ghosts, vampires, and other scary villains are probably beginning to pop-up around your neighborhood. Soon superheroes, princesses, villains and other cute and not so cute characters will be ringing doorbells hollering” Trick or Treat”. And following on these footsteps comes the busy Holiday season. Is everyone ready for the cooler weather?

I would like to take this time to thank all the Transportation Committee Members, Chris Allen, Conswella Bates, Cynthia Julun, Gayle Metoyer and Ted Harper for all their hard work, dedication and time spent in helping to keep our community informed in all thing’s transportation. I greatly appreciate all your ideas and input in what you wanted the committee to accomplish this past year. It could not have happened without all of you. Thank you, all! Happy and Safe Travels!

**A Gastronomic Forerunner**

By Jan Gray

While watching TV recently, I heard a report on the State Fair and all of its’ gastronomic delights that are fried, and bacon wrapped. It reminded me of something in my childhood and I knew what I had to write about

The summer I was nine, I was a mostly obedient child who was probably overconfident about her abilities. While my dad was at work, and my mom and brother were working the irrigation ditch, I had lit the pilot on a gas stove, and baked a cake from reading the recipe on the back of the Bisquick box. Mom admitted I did a good job but made me promise not to lite the pilot on the oven, unless she was there, and I agreed. Later that summer I got hungry for fudge, and again I picked a day when I was alone. Now since my mom was blind, I was used to reading recipes for her and watching her put everything together. I was, at least in my 9-year-old mind, an experienced cook. There in front of my eyes was the Hershey’s baking cocoa box with the cherished recipe, and it did not require my lighting the oven pilot, only the pilot on the burners. I got down the pan Mom always used and began my adventure. I had it all in the pan when I discovered we had no margarine or shortening, but being a resourceful child, I got down the hog lard and measured it out, after all mom occasionally used it to fry things. I very carefully followed the directions, tasting the mixture frequently to make sure it tasted all right. At last, I poured it up and to my delight, it set up just like Mom’s. Shortly afterwards Mom and my brother returned and smelled my surprise. I was suffering the effects of too much tasting, but Mom was very surprised and when she tasted it, she got a big grin and asked me what I had put in my fudge. I explained it all and told her I used the hog lard, and she began to laugh that she thought it had a bacon flavor. Then, she said that she had told me not to light the pilot, and I reminded her that she had only restricted me from the oven. Immediately, she amended her restriction to any pilot lights on the stove. The fudge was enjoyed by my family, but they said they preferred margarine be used next time. I guess we were just not ready for the bacon fudge available at the State Fair today.

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

By Michael Garrett

 BRLT is pleased to announce that it will be holding a membership meeting on Monday, October 31st. The meeting will be held via the Zoom platform. More information will follow during the month. All are invited even if you don’t read braille, but you have an interest because you support it as an essential means of literacy.

There is this huge debate over whether braille is still relevant. We hold that braille is truly important to those of us who use it every day and it should be included as a requisite part of a blind student’s learning profile. In fact, we encourage our members and others to:

READ MORE BRAILLE!

**Library Users of America-Texas**

by Gayle Metoyer

Greetings LUAT members and friends.

I hope this email finds you all well. I hope everyone traveled back home safely from our annual conference/convention.

LUUAT’s annual meeting was one of the best ever! We had a great number of members and perspective members that attended. Jacqueline Owusu from the Talking Book Program gave us updates from the Talking Book Program as well as the National Library Services (NLS).

The highlight of the meeting was the attendance of one of the narrators. His name is Ed Lunning, Actor, Volunteer Narrator & Former Associate Professor Saint Edwards University. He was quite entertaining. Mr. Lunning recited some of his favorite Texas books and was open to questions.

We have not held the business portion of our meeting yet. We are working on the slate of officers for the upcoming year. If you are interested in an officer position, please let me know. I can be reached at Metoyer903@comcast.net. If you still need to pay your dues for the upcoming year, please send payments to:

LUAT

7806 Chaseway Dr.

Missouri City, TX 77489

Attn: Michael Garrett

Happy reading!

**How to be your own best Advocate**

By Chris Allen

 Many of us have had to advocate for ourselves at least once and probably many times as people who are blind or visually impaired. Being your own best advocate is not as easy as it sounds. We tend to be emotional about things that adversely impact us, such as not getting the technology that we need in order to make us productive in the workplace or just in daily life. I have learned in my own experience of advocating for myself that it is not productive to be angry when you are asking for the things that you need in order to be self-sufficient. You need to have a plan of how you will go about advocating for yourself. Make sure that your plan includes the reason why you are asking for an accommodation and how it will benefit you and possibly others. There is a difference between being emotional when asking for something and being passionate in stating what it is you need. There is obviously a fine line between the two. Channel your anger into passion when you are speaking to someone.

There is no one-size-fits-all plan that fits every situation. You have to come up with a plan that fits your situation and addresses your needs. The 1st thing you need to do when developing a plan is to determine what your goal is in asking for what you need. You want to make sure that you are asking for things that you actually need versus something you might want but don’t really need. For example, if you are a client of the Texas workforce commission and you need a new computer for work, that is an obvious need. If you have several things that you need prioritize them in order of importance.

Make sure you are clear and concise when asking for what you need. Get to the point right away. Having a plan will help you when advocating for yourself and make it more likely that you are successful in getting what you need.

**Dallas Area Council of the Blind Update**

By Mary Witherspoon

“By the numbers” describes the fall season for DACB! Membership has grown to 34. Six members made the trek to Austin for the August ACBT conference. Cooler temperatures have ramped up the number of DACB activities! $15 is the magic number for a 1-pound bag of fresh crop pecans. Just in time for holiday baking, you can contact Second VP Paula Muysenburg or any DACB officer to order your stash through December!

October 13 was the great White Cane Day Safety Event on location at Dallas City Hall. DACB was a headliner that day to proudly renew our sponsorship of the white cane replacement program administered at Envision Dallas. The fund allows up to 20 white canes to be available for those who are unable to afford a replacement for a broken or damaged cane. DACB helps those in need return to safely navigating their world.

October 15 had DACB rolling in high numbers of thanks to our Street Taco Extravaganza and Scholarship Fundraiser. Tacos inspire folks to bid on auction items, right!! Thank you to Envision Dallas for the use of the lovely outside atrium, thanks to sponsors who donated auction items and especially thanks to folks for eating tacos and buying at the auction. Our scholarship fund increased by a happy number!

October 28-29, DACB financially supported the Region 10 ESC Sports Extravaganza for kids with visual impairment. Elementary to high school students demonstrated skills in track & field, beep ball, goal ball and more. The smiles were countless!

Do you have our number? Find it and up-to-date information on DACB activities at dallasacb.org.

**El paso Council Update**

By Eleanor Coldwell

The El Paso Council of the Blind hosted a special guest at our September meeting. Jazmine Venegas is the district 16 Representative for Congresswoman Veronica Escobar. She was very interested in learning about the American Council of the Blind and in how we use our life skills as BVI individuals. She requested that our members visit her office to teach her and her staff how to become sighted guides. She also asked if we would help her IT persons improve the Congresswoman's website to be accessible to BVI persons. We are hopeful and eager to maintain a close working relationship with Mss. Venegas and her staff.

Our White Cane Safety Day Celebration was one of the best ever in El Paso, thanks to the hard work and cooperation between EPCB and El Paso Community College.

Happy Holidays to everyone!

**Fort Worth Chapter Update**

By Jan Gray

Fort Worth Chapter was pleased to have Neva Fairchild as our speaker for August, and Larry Johnson spoke to us about Advocacy in September. Our October meeting will be a pizza party with Discussion about the fall and winter months, and what projects are ahead for us. We are involved with the White Cane Day activities for Fort Worth. White Cane Day was held on Saturday October 15 in Fort Worth. Chris Prentice, our recently elected ACBT President will speak to us at our November meeting. We are looking forward to all the interesting opportunities that fall, and winter will bring.

**Houston Happenings**

By Michael E. Garrett

The Houston Council of the Blind (HCB) is excited to have begun meeting in person again! As of now, our meetings are hybrid; being held both with an in person contingent and a Zoom component.

In the meantime, we continue to try to cater to our members and to be visible in the community. We constantly attempt to stay in contact with our members, making sure that they get information and are included in what’s going on around us.

Our community activities include dealing with some advocacy issues, exhibiting at several White Cane Safety Day celebrations, helping to plan the Houston Community White Cane Safety Day Celebration and preparing for elections. We are also excited to announce our HCB Third Annual Holiday Auction, which will be held over Zoom on Sunday, December 4th. Stay tuned for further information.

HCB: Helping, Caring, Building.

**San Antonio Council Update**

By Shelley McMullen

Greetings! The Alamo chapter has had a productive summer. We continue to meet monthly at the Longhorn Café for our business meeting followed by good food and fellowship. Thanks to James and Elizabeth Hanna for bringing volunteers to provide sighted assistance when needed.

In August we awarded    1 scholarship to a very deserving college student.  Her name is Ghani Oussaci. She is a health information technology major. It should be noted that Ghani participates in our monthly meetings via conference call.  She appears to be extremely interested and appreciative.

In August we gave a donation of $500 from our Hope fund to an undisclosed visually impaired San Antonian in need.

Nine of our active members attended the ACBT conference in Austin. We manned the exhibit table, attended workshops participated in the elections and more. We look forward to hosting the conference in 2023.

So, until next time enjoy the cooler weather and continue to give and to advocate.

**A Smile**

A smile cost nothing but gives so much.

It enriches those who receive it,

without making poorer those who give.

It takes but a moment,

but the memory of it sometimes lasts forever.

None is so rich or mighty that he can get along without it,

and none is so poor but that he can be made rich by it.

A smile creates happiness in the home,

fosters goodwill in business,

and is the countersign of friendship.

It brings rest to the weary,

cheer to the discouraged,

sunshine to the sad,

and it is nature's best antidote for trouble.

Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed, or stolen,

for it is something that is of no value to anyone

until it is given away.

Some people are too tired to give you a smile.

Give them one of yours,

as none needs a smile so much as those who

have no more to give.

 Author unknown

**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

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

**First Vice President - Membership Chair:**

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

**Second Vice President - Fundraising Chair:**

vacant

**Treasurer - Finance & Budget Chair:**

Sheila Derrick
(817) 507-3964
sjderrick212@hotmail.com
Local Chapter: Fort Worth Council

**Secretary:**

Mary Alice Gary
(915) 269-2119
ma-gary@att.net
Local Chapter: Alamo Council

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

Peggy R. Garrett

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

**ACBT State Directors:**

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

**Board Member:**
Jan Gray

(817) 232-4295

jan.gray1950@gmail.com

Local Chapter: Fort Worth Council

**Board Member:**
Foster Brown

(832) 469-1817

brownfoster@gmail.com

Local Chapter: Houston Council

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

**2021 Partners for Success Honor Society**

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

* Amerigroup (Premiere Sponsor)

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

* Texas Central Partners, LLC (Keynote Sponsor)

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

* Vanda (Star Plus Sponsor)

Non-24-Hour Sleep-Wake Disorder

* Superior HealthPlan (Star Plus Sponsor)

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

* Cigna (Star Sponsor)

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

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

semien.k@att.net

409-866-5838