

Fore~Sight



Newsletter of the Arizona Council of the Blind

Fall 2012

ACB's 2012 Annual Conference and Convention

By Barbara McDonald, Arizona Delegate

I had the privilege of being the delegate for the ACB's 51st Annual Membership Conference and Convention, which was held in Louisville, KY during the second week of July.

I would use the word "whirlwind" to describe all the convention activities. The hustle and bustle started at 7:00 in the morning with breakfast and lasted until midnight or even a little later. Imagine approximately 1500 people, with at least half of those being people who are blind, walking with swinging canes, guide dogs, sighted guides, walkers, and wheelchairs moving around to get some place on time. It was truly amazing.

The conference officially opened on Sunday evening. There were several speakers welcoming ACB to the city. I would like to focus on some of the things that Mitch Pomerantz, ACB President, had to say. One of the things that he mentioned was the strategic plan meeting that was held during the ACB Mid-year Conference, which was attended by the board and staff. The purpose of this two-year plan will serve as ACB's blueprint for the future to ensure that we move in a positive direction.

Convention Continued

Mitch mentioned the following four strategic goals:

1. Strengthen communication and marketing of ACB.
2. Strengthen ACB's funding efforts.
3. Develop and implement a plan to strengthen paid staff and volunteer help.
4. Review and recommend modifications to the overall structure of ACB and maximize its performance

Mitch said that achieving the strategic plan goals would require a lot of work from each and every one of us. Not only will we work to improve programs and services for the blind and visually impaired, but we will work to maintain all the things we have gained over the last fifty years.

I was also the representative for the nominating committee. It was there that I learned even though your name and answers to questions are displayed on the candidates page of the website, you may not get nominated by the committee. It took the committee two hours to agree on five board-of-directors and three board-of-publication candidates. Once the meeting started, the doors were locked. If a delegate was late, he or she could not enter to participate and if one chose to leave the meeting room, one could not return.

This year during the general sessions, we used the secret ballot election process for the first time. A square piece of colored paper was given to each person wearing their badge, which identified them as a voting member. If you were voting for the first candidate, you left the paper whole. If you were voting for the second person, you tore off one corner. Each voting member placed their vote in the ballot box as it was brought to them. The doors were locked during the time individuals voted and ballots were counted. —

Convention Continued

Although it might have taken a little longer, the members seemed to be happy with this new process.

Mitch reminded us that the American Council of the Blind is an organization that represents all blind and visually impaired people regardless of economic status or functional ability; not just the elite blind, not just the employed blind or the blind of a certain age. ACB advocates for accessible prescription labeling for seniors and for the teaching of Braille to youth. He said that at times, the job may not be easy and seem frustrating, but that is our mission. We want all members to be able to say, "I was part and I am still part of the success of ACB and AzCB".

2012 ACB Scholarship Winner from Arizona

My name is Anna Michelle Havig, and I was born in Saint Petersburg, Russia. I was adopted into the United States when I was 7 years old and didn't speak any English. I am fortunate to have a big family, with four brothers and two sisters and loving parents who want the best for me. Over the years, I have learned the English language and become a citizen of this great country where I've been blessed to receive a wonderful education. Last summer, I went to Morristown, New Jersey where I received my Seeing Eye dog, Quote. In my leisure time I like to sing, listen to music, go on the computer and play with my dog.

I am both eager and excited to have an opportunity to attend the ACB 2012 national conference and convention. As a scholarship winner, this will be a tremendous experience for me being able to not only continue my education; but also gain a bright and successful future.

From the 2012 AzCB John Vanlandingham Scholarship Winner

I am Jordan Rodriguez of Scottsdale. I recently graduated from Desert Mountain high school and I am going to attending Arizona State University. In the beginning of my junior year of high school, I began losing my sight. After months of confusion, multiple doctors' appointments and an unimaginable amount of medical tests, I was finally diagnosed with Leber's hereditary optic neuropathy (LHON). LHON is a disorder that causes an affected person to lose their central vision and the ability to distinguish between the colors red and green.

Initially, the transition to a visually impaired life was rough. Luckily, I am still able to do many of my favorite activities like running and attending concerts. Also, helping the community has always been important to me and I have always been active in community service. In October of my senior year, I ran a half marathon in Toronto, Canada for the charity Childhelp. Childhelp is a non-profit that works to treat and prevent child abuse and neglect.

I am planning to use the John Vanlandingham Scholarship from the Arizona Council of the Blind to help pay for my food and housing expenses at Arizona State University. Currently, I am going to major in environmental engineering, and depending on how my first semester goes, I would love to double major in a degree in sustainable energy, materials, and technology. I have always been fascinated with energy efficient and reusable materials. One day, I hope to make the world a much cleaner and more enjoyable place to live in.



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Attending the ACB Convention Means Fun, Information and Way Too Much to Do By AzCB Alternate Delegate, Ron Brooks

For about ten days in July, I enjoyed the double pleasure of taking almost two weeks off work for an honest family vacation, and of representing the Arizona Council of the Blind at the 51st Annual American Council of the Blind Conference and Convention. This year, the ACB returned to the Galt House Hotel which is located alongside the Ohio River in downtown Louisville, Kentucky, which made it a fantastic venue for both Convention business and pleasure, and trust me; I got the opportunity to do lots of both.

Now I could spend several pages sharing all of the really fun things our family did—from the cruise on the Belle of Louisville, the oldest continuously operating steam-powered paddle-wheel river boat in the USA, to a side trip we took for bumper boats and arcade games at a family-oriented game park called Kart Country. However, I'm guessing most Foresight readers are probably a bit more interested in the convention itself, so I'll focus the balance of this update on these more relevant topics.

My first opportunity to represent Arizona came on Saturday evening, July 7, at the annual Convention Welcome Party which is hosted by the local Host Committee—this year a joint sponsorship by the two Kentucky affiliates, the Blue Grass Council and the Kentucky Council of the Blind. The party featured a DJ, a dance floor, a cash bar and (during the time I attended) about fifty celebrants mixing, mingling and even dancing. It was a good party, but I commend our own 2010 AzCB Host Committee because in all modesty, our party was at least as good, and I know how hard our Local Host Committee worked to make it so.

Alternate Continued

Still, I had a good time attending the Louisville version, and I'm looking forward to what the folks in Columbus, Ohio will have planned for next year.

Although Saturday night ended late, Sunday morning came early at the Fourth Annual ACB Walk and Fun Run. The Walk is an annual fundraiser that benefits ACB as well as state and special interest affiliates by allowing walkers and runners to raise money and split their proceeds. This year, we walked and ran at a beautiful park in southeastern Louisville. Although the weather was hot and very humid, about 90 people, including my nine year old daughter Kacie and I participated. We enjoyed our two hours circuiting the park, while we raised money for the ACB and its Arizona affiliate. To be honest, this was not a huge fund raiser for Arizona, but each year, the walk gets a little bigger, and the more of us who attend, the better we'll do.

Later on the same day, I had the honor of hosting a two-hour workshop which was jointly sponsored by the ACB Transportation Committee (of which I'm a member) and ACB's Environmental Access Committee. The focus was on strategies which we can use for improving the livability of our communities and neighborhoods through a dual focus on accessible public transit and enhanced pedestrian access. About sixty people attended the workshop, and all left with additional ideas, resources and energy for improving access in their own home towns.

Sunday evening represents one of the highlights of the convention-the Opening General Session. Because we were traveling with three kids (who were tired by this point), we did not attend the session in person, but ACB Radio is also a great tool for weary travelers, and I was able to attend the session virtually. The Opening Session is where the ACB President gives his annual report, and it's where the organization

Alternate Continued

celebrates some of the year's most significant achievements. At the end of the Opening Session, the ACB Secretary called the Roll Call of affiliates, and I listened as our President Barbara McDonald announced herself as our Delegate, me as the Alternate and herself as our representative to the ACB Nominating Committee. She then informed the assembly that we would need a dozen chairs to seat our delegation—a goodly number for a small affiliate from so far away.

Like a human heart, the heart of the ACB Conference and Convention has four chambers: 1) General Sessions and the Business Meeting; 2) the ACB Exhibits Hall; 3) meetings of special interest affiliates; and 4) the myriad of convention tours, mixers and parties. Because space does not permit, I will not be able to describe everything I did during the week, but I will share a few remarks on each of these aspects of the convention.

General Sessions and the Business Meeting—Thanks to the ACB's Youth Activities Center (YAC), a program created just for the kids (both blind and sighted) of Convention attendees, Lisa and I had the opportunity to attend almost all of the week's general sessions as well as the entire business meeting. Throughout the course of these meetings, there were perhaps a dozen presentations and panel discussions on a wide range of topics. For me, the highlights included a presentation from Google, the developers of an autonomous "self-driving" car, which is in the process of being road tested, prior to wider production and distribution. I also found presentations on the recently passed Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) and on the status of accessible television technology, both here in the USA and internationally to be both exciting and frustrating.

Alternate Continued

Exciting because accessible television is a reality in Great Britain and Japan and frustrating because it appears to be years away from fruition here. In addition to presentations on emerging technology, we heard from Jack and Jill Foxx, two of the National Library Service (NLS) readers with whom many of us are quite familiar and a presentation from a local historian on the history of Kentucky and Louisville which chronicled the region's origins as a county in the colony of Virginia, its history as a significant port of call along the Ohio River, the dark times during which slaves were bought and sold at a park nearby the Galt House Hotel and even a history of the hotel itself. We also had the opportunity to be introduced to the 2012 ACB and CCLVI scholarship recipients, two of whom are attending school right here in Arizona. At the end of the week, I had the opportunity to witness the annual ACB elections, and I had the opportunity to witness and participate in the deliberation of and voting on resolutions and proposed Constitutional amendments. All of the proceedings of the convention will be archived and available on-line through the ACB's national website, <http://www.acb.org>, so anyone can get a more detailed summary of the 2012 General Sessions and Business Meeting by going on-line.

ACB Exhibits — I am not a shopper, and generally, I avoid the Exhibits Hall. However, Lisa and I are in the market for a new Braille display, so we wandered in, and I must say that I was impressed. There were approximately 70 exhibitors, showing off and selling a wide range of products and services geared especially to the needs of blind and visually impaired people. Although I did not visit every booth, I had the chance to check in with my guide dog's school representatives. I checked out about five different Braille displays, along with a range of other access technology products. I got to play with some very neat wooden toys designed to be accessible to blind people.

Alternate Continued

At the Exhibits Hall I learned about a number of new iPhone apps and other technologies which I didn't even realize that I needed—that's how cool they were. I also got a free three-month Bookshare membership, just by asking at their booth. Lisa shopped too, and between us, we had to repack our suitcases for the trip home, and one of my suitcases ended up ten pounds over the weight limit—a costly but good problem to have.

Affiliate Meetings – Because of my interest in family matters and guide dogs, I attended meetings sponsored by ACB Families and by Guide Dog Users, Inc. In addition, Lisa attended an event sponsored by the ACB Public Relations Committee, wherein our website was featured as the “Most Improved” and where participants had the opportunity to discuss strategies for improving chapter websites and for using our website to attract and retain members. Space doesn't permit a listing of all, or even most, of the groups which hold meetings in conjunction with the ACB Convention, but trust me; there's something for everyone.

Convention Tours – This year, we did not attend a large number of tours. However, we did attend the Louisville Bats game where ACB President Mitch Pomerantz threw out the first pitch and where Kentucky Council member Brad Mann sang the National Anthem, and where my kids rode a carousel, played on a playground adjacent to the playing field. In addition to this tour, there were numerous tours, including everything from a trip to a local dog treat bakery, to a tour of a candy factory, to a tour of the American Printing House for the Blind, to a bus tour of Louisville itself, to a longer tour to the Amish Country in Southwestern Indiana. Again, there is a tour to satisfy virtually anyone's interest and budget, so those of you who attend next year should set aside some time and the money to do at least one tour. You will not regret it.

Alternate Continued

I want to thank the AzCB for the opportunity to represent you at the ACB Convention. My entire family and I enjoyed ourselves, and I learned a great deal, and even though it's early, my wife and I are making plans to attend in 2013, and the kids are already dreaming about the roller coasters at Kings Island and Cedar Point. ... I hope someone from the Convention Committee is listening as they contemplate the tour schedule.

Lindsey McHugh AzCB Scholarship Winner

From a very young age, music has been the very fabric of my existence, and I notice it all around me, even in mundane things not particularly noticed by others. Its melodic and harmonic patterns and progressions have influenced my mood and the ways that I interact with others on a daily basis. For these reasons I have dedicated my life to sharing my love of music with the world and inspiring people to participate in it at whatever level they choose, whether it's listening, educating, performing, arranging, or composing.

I received my Associate's degree in fine and performing arts from Citrus Community College in Glendora, CA, and I'm pursuing a Bachelor's degree in choral music education from the University of Arizona. I have performed in several major concerts throughout the Tucson community as a pianist, soprano soloist, and a member of the University of Arizona Symphonic Choir, the top undergraduate choral ensemble. Additionally, I have participated as a performer, musical director, accompanist, and sound designer of several opera, musical theater, and comedy/dinner theater showcases and productions. I was honored and thrilled when I received the Dr. Frank J. Kells Memorial Scholarship from the Arizona Council of the Blind and attending the AzCB State Convention in April 2012 was a very rewarding experience. I intend to use the scholarship funds to further my education and continue to make a contribution to music, as well as to lead and inspire others to do the same.

A Legacy Of Leadership, Part 2 Robert L. Williams, Sr.

The summer issue of *Forsight* contained brief sketches of former governing board Presidents in chronological order to 1987. This issue shares biographical and program highlights of several additional members of the thirteen presidents who have provided leadership over the past 42 years.

Maxine Schramm Pluke, 1987 to 1989

AzCB's 7th President was born Maxine Freeman on October 29, 1912, in South Dakota. She attended the Wisconsin School for the Blind at Janesville graduating as class valedictorian in 1933. Two years at Milwaukee State Teachers College preceded her first marriage in 1935. The marriage produced three children. Maxine worked as a social worker for the State of Wisconsin recruiting young blind students with multiple disabilities for the Wisconsin State School for the Blind and teaching Braille to newly-blind adults. She also operated a rooming house in Milwaukee for over fifteen years.

Maxine married Earl Schramm in 1959. They retired to Phoenix in 1967. Following Earl's death Maxine married Art Fluke in 1989. She was a founding charter member of the AzCB and one of its first directors. Maxine was a longtime member of The Maricopa County Club for the Blind and longtime board member of the AzCB Federal Credit Union. She also served for a time on the Sun Sounds of Arizona Radio Reading Service board. Plans for the organization's direct mail fund-raising campaign in 1990 were developed during Maxine's presidency.

In 1988, Maxine, a longtime guide dog user, served on the America West Airlines special advisory task force for persons with disabilities during the planning and construction of terminal four at Sky Harbor International Airport in Phoenix. Input from the task force played a key role in terminal four becoming the first in the country to be fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Legacy Continued

Her successful presidency was supported by her keen sense of humor and ability to get along well with others. Stating that she never particularly wanted to be the president of anything, Maxine refused to be nominated for a second term in 1989.

She passed away while visiting family members in Oregon on June 11, 1994, at age 82.

Robert L. Williams Sr., 1989 to 1993

Glaucoma, sometimes called the sneak thief of sight, robbed me totally of mine by the end of 1977 following a battle of 27 years. My Oklahoma background included College graduation in 1961 and marriage to Faye Lawson of Oklahoma City in June 1962. Over the next nine years Faye taught little kids in the Oklahoma City public school system and I employed five years as an IRS agent and thereafter as Controller of accounting services for the Nonprofit antipoverty Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City and County.

Our relocation to Phoenix in December 1970, with sons Robert Jr and Ron followed my graduation from the Oklahoma City University law school earlier that year. Legal Blindness by 1974 led me to resign my position as Controller with the Maricopa County Community Service Department's Community Action Agency.

Faye and I jointed AzCB in 1987 and I was immediately elected to a director position on the governing board. In September 1988, Faye graciously accepted Maxine Schramm's appointment of her to the position of secretary on the governing board. She would continue to serve during my four-year tenure as president.

Legacy Continued

During my Presidency, I presided during annual state conventions in Tucson 1990, Prescott 1991, Phoenix 1992 and Tucson 1993. Our out-of-state special conventions guests included ACB National President Leroy Saunders of Oklahoma City in 1990 and ACB National Convention Coordination John Horst of Pennsylvania in 1991. Both filled several functions including luncheon and Banquet speaker and performed installation of newly elected members of governing board. We also periodically held monthly governing board meetings in Tucson.

We raised approximately \$11,300 from our direct mail fundraising campaign in 1990. The Campaign folded after nine months due to high start-up costs.

I served for 5 years on Arizona Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment. I also participated on the Governor Council on Blindness adjustments services task force. And, in May 1990, the AzCB Governing Board approved a donation of \$1,000 towards expenses of 2nd Annual Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment Conference in Phoenix. The Council had donated lesser amounts in subsequent years.

Our delegation of 13 from AzCB successfully defeated effort in Tampa during ACB National convention in 1991 to relocated 1992 national convention away from Arizona, due to the state legislature's failure to adopt a statewide King holiday.

I proudly served 10 years on governing board of AZCB Federal Credit Union. Additionally, I served on several other special Committees and task forces. On a national level, I enthusiastically participated on the Multicultural Committee.

In February 1993, a Tucson chapter organized with 15 members with Molly Eckstrom as their first President.

Legacy Continued

The governing board opposed effort in the state legislature that would establish a separate commission for the blind. While separate services for people who are blind is a concept we support, this particular bill appeared to favor a few with out benefit to people who are blind. The legislation was approved by the House but died in the Senate Appropriations committee later in 1993.

We will continue this series in incoming issues of Fore~Sight.

Harnessing Our Energy and Unleashing Our Talents

By Lisa Brooks

At last April's AzCB Convention in Tucson, Guide Dog Users of Arizona met to chart a new and more active future, and the future is now. GDUA's membership is on the rise, and our new Board is enthusiastic and busy, and we want to share some of our activities and plans for the upcoming year.

A New Web Presence – Earlier this year, GDUA launched a new and updated website at <http://www.gduaz.org>. Content is still being built, but from our website, you can send us a message, subscribe to our lists, find out about upcoming events and link directly to either of our parent organization websites—AzCB or Guide Dog Users, Inc. Coming soon, you will be able to become a member or renew your membership.

Building Our Presence on Social Media – Our website is only one aspect of our Internet presence. You can also follow GDUA on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/gduaz>. GDUA is following a host of international, national, state and local dog-related resources and sharing the best of the best. That way, you can stay connected with all things guide dog from just one place.

Connecting In Person – The Internet's great, but there's no substitute for face-to-face meetings with friends and fellow—

Harnessing Continued

Arizona guide dog handlers. Last May, we hosted our first Coffee with Canines Event for 2012 in Mesa, and we're already planning a follow-up which we'll announce on our website. We also held a fantastic "Diving with Dog Guides" pool party in August, and we're thinking about a picnic in the Fall. We are also actively working on our 2012 Fall Membership Meeting and Workshop, described below.

2012 Fall Membership Meeting and Workshop – GDUA is excited to announce our upcoming Membership Meeting and Workshop. The meeting will take place from 10 am to 4 pm on Saturday, November 3 at the Burton Bar Library in Phoenix. We will present workshops on a training topic, on guide dog safety, on traveling with guide dogs and on other topics of interest to anyone who lives and works with guide dogs. Pre-registration is \$20, and admission at the door is \$25, and lunch and refreshments will be provided. Watch our website, our announcement email list or the GDUA Twitter feed for updates.

A New Push for Members – Last May, GDUA's Board voted to wave dues for anyone who joined during 2012, and thanks to that effort, we've seen a surge in membership—primarily from former members who had lost touch with GDUA. At our most recent Board Meeting, we have set 2013 dues at \$20 which will cover not only GDUA but also annual dues for the Arizona Council of the Blind and Guide Dog Users, Inc. We are working to make both membership renewal and dues payment possible from our new website, and hopefully, we will have this in place by the time this article appears in ForeSight. We will make frequent announcements about GDUA membership on line and via email and Twitter, so stay tuned.

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