**Dots and Dashes**

**December 4, 2023**

# **Calling on Braille Forum Readers…**

For over 60 years, “The ACB Braille Forum” has been the official publication of ACB. For many members, access to information in the Forum has made a profound difference in their lives. We’d love to hear your stories about the importance the Braille Forum holds for you, especially if an issue or article has impacted your life in a particular way. Please send your testimonial or story to Jo Lynn Bailey-Page, Associate Director of Development, at **jbailey-page@acb.org**, or reach out by phone at (202) 467-5081.

# **Help Us Choose the Theme for 2024**

Now is the time to put on your thinking caps and help determine the theme for our upcoming convention in Jacksonville, Florida! Below is a list of past themes.

2021 (Virtual): ACB, Better Together Wherever We Are

2022 (Omaha) ACB: Here, There and Everywhere!

2023: ACB Winds of Change!

Send your ideas to **Janet.dickelman@gmail.com**, with “theme” in the subject line. The winner will receive a $25 Amazon gift card. The submission deadline is **December 31st.**

# **CCLVI Offers Scheigert Scholarships**

The Council of Citizens with Low Vision International (CCLVI) annually awards four scholarships in the amount of $3,000 each to full-time college students — two incoming freshmen, an undergraduate and a graduate student — all of whom must be low vision, maintain a strong GPA and be involved in school/local community activities.

**Application materials must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time March 15, 2024.**  Scholarship monies will be awarded for the 2024 -2025 academic year.  To access the guidelines and application, visit [**http://cclvi.org**](http://cclvi.org/) and click on the Scholarships link.

# **Calling All Veterans!**

Veterans of ACB, previously known as Visually Impaired Veterans of America (VIVA), will be holding its first membership meeting on January 11, 2024. It will be at 8 p.m. Eastern/5 p.m. Pacific. If you know of someone who is a visually impaired veteran, a sighted veteran, or if you would just like to be a supporting member, please feel free to join us that evening. It won't be a traditional business meeting. If you know of anyone interested, feel free to send them my way. Zoom information will be sent out closer to the meeting date.

Cassie Trosper

President, Veterans of ACB

Phone: (541) 808-2899 (no texts, please)

**cassie.trosper@yahoo.com**

# **2024-2025 White House Fellowship**

The application for the 2024-2025 White House Fellows Program is now open.

The 2024-2025 White House Fellows Program year will begin in August 2024, and conclude in August 2025. All applicants must be United States citizens, and must have completed their undergraduate education. With the exception of active-duty military personnel, federal government employees are not eligible to apply.

Selection criteria include:

* A record of remarkable early-career professional achievement.
* Evidence of leadership skills and the potential for further growth.
* A demonstrated commitment to public service.
* The skills to succeed at the highest levels of the federal government and the ability to work effectively as part of a team.

Interested individuals may apply at [**https://fellows.whitehouse.gov/**](https://fellows.whitehouse.gov/)[**.**](https://whitehouse.us19.list-manage.com/track/click?u=c97630621baff8c44fe607661&id=d9e92e0d9f&e=dc8fc53d83) The application will remain open until January 5, 2024, at 3 p.m. Eastern time. Any applications received after the deadline will not be accepted.

Questions about the program may be directed to **whitehousefellows@who.eop.gov.**

# **Nationwide Settlement Grants Millions of Dollars to SSI Beneficiaries Harmed During Pandemic**

Millions of low-income older adults and people with disabilities who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and who had their benefits reduced or discontinued during the pandemic are entitled to millions in overpayment waivers and other relief as a result of a settlement finally approved on November 20, 2023 in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York in a nationwide class action lawsuit filed by New York Legal Assistance Group, Justice in Aging, and Arnold & Porter.

This settlement will provide automatic remedies to nearly a ​​quarter million SSI recipients, who will have back benefits credited to their accounts without having to take any action. It will also provide needed relief to nearly 2 million more recipients by clarifying the standards by which they can request that overpayments that arose during the pandemic be forgiven.

[**​​​​​​​Read the Fact Sheet**](https://justiceinaging.org/campos-v-kijakazi-settlement-information-for-advocates) about what information advocates and SSI recipients can expect to hear from the Social Security Administration as a result of this settlement agreement.

# **Seminar Regarding Canine Respiratory Illness**

The Schwarzman Animal Medical Center is holding a Zoom seminar on “Unidentified Canine Respiratory Illness: What You Need to Know to Protect Your Dog.” It will be held this Thursday, December 7th at 6 p.m. Eastern time. Dr. Ann Hohenhaus leads an informative session on the unidentified canine infectious respiratory disease complex. Tune in for the latest developments and to discover steps you can take to protect your canine companion. Please submit your questions in advance upon registering for this event.

This is a free, online-only event hosted via Zoom. Register at [**https://app.glueup.com/event/94471/register/**](https://app.glueup.com/event/94471/register/). The Zoom link will be emailed to all registered participants the day of the event. Please email **UsdanInstitute@amcny.org** with any questions.

# **Ragtime!**

If you’re in the greater Washington, D.C. area, this may be of interest. Signature Theatre will have an audio-described performance of Ragtime on Sunday, December 10th at 2 p.m. For more information, visit the [**Signature Theatre website**](https://www.sigtheatre.org/events/202324/ragtime/) or call (703) 820-9771.

# **BARD Mobile for Android**

The topic for the December 14, 2023, Many Faces of BARD program will be Using BARD Mobile for Android for Low-Vision Users. The demonstration will show how our low-vision users can navigate without speech. The program will begin at 7 p.m. Eastern and last for one hour. This program will be recorded.

After the demonstration, NLS staff will take questions about the demonstration or anything else relating to BARD.

For more information, contact Tamara Rorie, Head, Patron Engagement Section, via email, **tror@loc.gov** or **nlspes@loc.gov**.

# **APTA Researching Accessibility in Public Transit**

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) is conducting research on accessibility in public transit, specifically related to rider experience for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The objectives of this research project are to identify current challenges that may lead to barriers to ride and to promote current agency programs, services, and best practices within the industry. We will present recommendations for future improvements to public transportation systems to enhance the overall rider experience for these individuals who rely on public transportation as a primary means of mobility.

The program has created a survey for individuals who are blind or visually impaired to provide insight from our target rider group. To access the individual-focused survey, please click on the link below. The survey period will close on **December 15, 2023:**

[**https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LCT2SCQ**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LCT2SCQ)

# **NLS Updates Website**

In October, NLS launched a major update to its website, [**www.loc.gov/nls**](https://www.loc.gov/nls), with the goal of making the site more dynamic, engaging, and intuitive and to improve findability for patrons and other website users.

Specific changes include:

* A front page with links to the most sought-after information, such as lists of new materials and information on events and site updates
* Consolidation of duplicate pages
* Extensive cross-referencing and linking to resources
* Multiple points of entry to our most popular book finding aids — catalog searches, BARD, and **Talking Book Topics**
* Enhanced accessibility tools, such as a toggle for underlining links, contrast options, and text settings
* A dedicated page for BARD and BARD Mobile updates to help current users better understand new features.

# **Capstone Project Needs Your Help**

A group of high school students is working on a capstone project focused on enhancing accessibility for blind and visually impaired individuals. The group is conducting a survey to gather valuable insights from individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The survey is designed to understand their experiences with existing screen reader applications and to explore potential enhancements that could better address their needs. These students hope to collect at least 50 responses. To take the survey, click here: [**Blinkronic survey.**](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdA5Evn7QTKecDTETCroGeJtpHxqexLfjQ3w-Debe12b9OrrA/viewform?usp=sf_link)

# **DREDF Joins Call to End Decades of Subminimum Wages for People with Disabilities**

In this renewed moment for worker rights — reflected in a resurgence of interest in unions and high-profile strikes by SAG-AFTRA and the UAW — disability advocates are renewing their call to end the decades-long federal government policy permitting people with disabilities to be paid subminimum wages. As set out in Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, this discriminatory and paternalistic provision assumes that people with disabilities are unable to compete in the open employment market. Problematic from the beginning, Section 14(c) is now at odds with numerous federal disability civil rights laws that guarantee people with disabilities equal access to all facets of society. On November 8, 2023, DREDF joined a letter sent by a coalition of disability rights groups, urging the U.S. Department of Labor to finally end the Section 14(c) program.

# **Participants Needed for Survey**

The Occupational Ergonomics and Biomechanics Labs at Virginia Tech is seeking participants for a semi-structured interview on investigating the experience of visually impaired college students in shared living spaces (IRB-22-1110). Participants will be required to attend one remote interview session through Zoom and answer a series of questions and questionnaires with their camera turned off.

To be eligible for the study, you must be:

* A current college student or recent college graduate, living in a shared living space or have the experience of residing in a shared living space other than your own residence, and
* Legally blind or visually impaired (having central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in your better eye with correction)

If interested, please contact research assistant Mahdis Tajdari by email at **mahdis@vt.edu**. You will be contacted to confirm eligibility and schedule the Zoom meeting.