**Dots and Dashes**

**March 11, 2024**

# **Welcome to ACB’s New Executive Director!**

It is with great excitement that we announce Scott Thornhill as ACB’s new Executive Director. Scott has been the Director of Public Policy for Alphapointe, a non-profit organization operating in Kansas City, MO and New York City, with the mission to empower people who are blind through opportunities for employment and personal development for the past five years. Scott was responsible for issues such as government relations, successful employment, innovation, event fundraising in New York and more for Alphapointe.

Previously he operated his own real estate brokerage which his wife continues to run after Scott felt compelled to join the effort to help make the playing field level for people who are blind and low vision. Scott is blind himself, losing his vision due to retinitis pigmentosa (RP) after being diagnosed at the age of eight and told at 15 he would be blind by 40. Scott brings experience from the non-profit world as well as corporate management to his new position.

In addition to his business ownership and employment, Scott has served on multiple non-profit boards, including Industries of the Blind in Greensboro, NC. He has been active with the National Association for the Employment of People who are Blind as well as serving on the VisionServe Alliance public policy committee. Scott’s first official day with ACB will be Monday, March 18, 2024.

# **A Reminder about Membership Updates**

We are nearing the deadline to add new members to your affiliate. Presidents, please follow up with the person who is taking care of your membership records to ensure they have been adding new members and they know about the March 15th deadline.

Below are the next 3 items on the certification schedule you will need to follow.

**March 15, 2024: Last day to add new members on the records screen until May 1, 2024:**

* This is the last day to submit AMMS additions until May 1, 2024. After March 15th, new membership requests will not be processed until May 1, 2024.

**March 16 – 21, 2024:  AMMS change requests updated**

* Our offices need time to enter all pre-March 15th AMMS change requests before the certification reports can be submitted. We will email AMMS users when they can start submitting their certification reports.

**March 22 – 31, 2024:  Submission of AMMS Certification reports**

If you are unclear about any information above, or need help getting started, please call Nancy Becker as soon as possible at (612) 332-3242.

# **ACB Leadership Conference a Success**

It was wonderful to see many of you in person this weekend! For those of you who have conducted or will be conducting visits with your members of Congress after the legislative seminar, below is the link for the feedback form. **Only fill this form out once per visit. Be sure to complete your entries by April 1st.**

Survey link: [**https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QWZ6KGV**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QWZ6KGV)

# **Registration Now Open for the Audio Description Institute**

Registration is now open for the Audio Description Project’s Audio Description Institute, taking place virtually April 8-12, from 1 to 5 p.m. Eastern. Space is limited, so secure your place today!

Topics covered include audio description history and theory; the Four Fundamentals of Audio Description©; active seeing/visual literacy; developing skills in concentration and observation; the art of editing what you see; vivid language; and using the spoken word to make meaning.

For more information, visit [**https://adp.acb.org/education.html**](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fadp.acb.org%2Feducation.html%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR0rn9Qr7eShSR8VRZrdxbPOiHRXV9xaZlNazb6kKUNyB6vks66CL-vY7OI&h=AT0Np7NflhO84551IdMwBnb7eVONxkiX6BvbwF3nWTcwRTSAlDOvVAEb2AleppkgcugsKiKU6TpbmKYl000aZob_H96inLDavVegwUQ0AdeWrFnOqTZGOrjLuHmQT3tKig&__tn__=-UK-R&c%5b0%5d=AT1mTbk7NhwZVx598hGyRV3O8mQq6aoNoy0MENXRxmwHOLuKgQu6eet22_6-iBrwEzQ937G0L3lKeFkPZVC4IyZmHzlbNZ2hRxZE1jvjPVvT0NgJruxaovTQUPX2yOwUp5iHpnwgJBLZqXdG5eG4nVk9bNzw-PWrnqD4gtKOsT3kBuh4-DEbZje4s2M9CNjHHvdj5wE-OjUr)**.** To register, visit [**https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/weblink.aspx?name=E144393&id=94**](https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/weblink.aspx?name=E144393&id=94).

# **USPS COVID Test Program Comes to a Close**

The free COVID-19 test program with the United States Postal Service (USPS) is coming to a close. USPS said that the service will be suspended after Friday, March 8. Any order placed before or on that date will be delivered.

After the testing program ends, you can find more free resources online at [**COVID.gov**](https://www.covid.gov/tools-and-resources/resources/tests).

# **Interstate Auction Registration Now Open**

Registration is now open for the interstate auction on March 23 at 7 p.m. Eastern time. Coherent Automation company is a friend of ACB, and they have generously agreed to provide space for our auction registration on their website, for which we are most grateful.

Register for the auction here:

[**Register for the March 23rd Interstate Auction**](https://coherentautomation.com/acb-interstate-benefit.html)

Or paste this link into your browser:

[**https://coherentautomation.com/acb-interstate-benefit.html**](https://coherentautomation.com/acb-interstate-benefit.html)

For more information, or a list of auction items, contact Cecily Laney Nipper at (470) 218-7885, or via email at **roses828@comcast.net**.

# **Blind from Birth or Infancy?**

Are you curious about how your brain reorganized to hear, touch or remember better than your sighted friends?

Come take part in a new behavioral and imaging (fMRI) study at Georgetown University Medical Center, and let’s learn together about how the brain can plastically change.

The study takes two sessions of 90 minutes to complete in the fMRI scanner, and one more session outside the scanner. You will be compensated at a rate of $50 per hour of fMRI and $25 per hour of non-scanner experiment.

For more information, contact Prof. Ella Striem-Amit via email (preferred), **SAMPLab\_recruitment@georgetown.edu**, or phone (202) 687-8329.

# **Perkins Teams with MIT to Host Hackathon**

On any given Friday night at MIT there’s bound to be a few stragglers hanging around the Strata Center, the architecturally world-famous building in Cambridge that houses the MIT Computer and Artificial Intelligence Lab.

On Friday, Feb. 23, there were more than a few folks about, and not just from MIT: people from Perkins School for the Blind, Amazon, the Museum of Science, Cisco, and even a representative from the White House gathered for Perkins’ “#HackDisability: AI for Accessibility Hackathon,” the Watertown-based school’s second-ever hackathon and the first focused specially on harnessing artificial intelligence for a group that is often left behind by technology.

The task was seemingly simple. A few dozen participants from MIT and surrounding colleges all volunteered to spend their week working in small teams and putting together new technologies to help people with disabilities better function in the world. Sponsored by Amazon, guided by mentors who live with a disability — many of them sight-related — and fueled by free catering from Wegman’s, the nine teams had from 6 p.m. on Friday until noon on Sunday to identify, design, build, and test their new products before presenting to a panel of judges for a chance to win $2,500 to further their research and development. Their products had to be focused specifically on using artificial intelligence.

After an hour of presentations and judging, three $2,500 prizes were awarded — one of which went to My Own Voice.

To read the full article, visit [**https://www.watertownmanews.com/author/maya-shwayder/**](https://www.watertownmanews.com/author/maya-shwayder/).

# **NLS’ Patron Corner This Evening**

This evening at 7 p.m. Eastern time, the NLS Patron Engagement Section will host the quarterly Patron Corner. The topic for this program is “Your Patron Engagement Section: How We Can Provide the Service You Want.” The session will last 90 minutes and will feature the NLS Patron Engagement Section, which is responsible for programs and services for all NLS patrons. This will be your opportunity to let NLS know what you’d like to see in the future.

For more information, contact Tamara Rorie, Head, Patron Engagement Section, at **tror@loc.gov**.

# **Many Faces of BARD**

The topic for the March 14, 2024, Many Faces of BARD program will be “Using the Audio Player in BARD Express: A Demonstration.” The program will begin at 7 p.m. Eastern, and last for one hour. This program will be recorded.

The session will begin with a brief presentation. The remainder of the time will be spent answering questions about the presentation or other questions related to BARD usage.

For more information, contact Tamara Rorie, Head, Patron Engagement Section, at **tror@loc.gov**.

# **National Broadcast of Unseen Next Week**

[**unseen**](https://www.unseen-film.com/), a story of resilience and healing at the intersection of immigration and disability justice, will have its national broadcast premiere on the Multi Emmy® Award-winning [**PBS series, POV**](https://www.pbs.org/pov/films/unseen/), on Monday, March 18. The documentary will premiere at 10 p.m. Eastern/9 p.m. Central on the PBS television channel, and will be available to stream until June 16, 2024 via [pbs.org](https://cinematropical.us5.list-manage.com/track/click?u=2a3436da518d0a1df5e210eda&id=a564e5caa7&e=207b45ea33), and the [PBS App](https://cinematropical.us5.list-manage.com/track/click?u=2a3436da518d0a1df5e210eda&id=7fe8578ec1&e=207b45ea33).

**unseen**, the debut feature documentary film by Filipino-American director Set Hernandez — recent winner of the Independent Spirit Awards’ Truer than Fiction Award, presented to an emerging director of non-fiction features — uses experimental cinematography and sound, as well as a person-first approach to center the lived experiences of a blind protagonist and his queer filmmaker friend whose undocumented status has impacted their choices.

The documentary begins as an observational journey of Pedro, an aspiring social worker who happens to be a blind undocumented immigrant from Mexico, confronting political restrictions in order to get his college degree. Made over the course of seven years and guided by a conversation between him and director Hernandez, **unseen** explores Pedro’s relationships to everyone around him: his family who supports him while he studies to become a mental health professional, his close-knit group of friends who also navigate personal struggles and experiences, and his triathlon coach who encourages him on long distance bike rides.

# **Casting Call**

The producers of Blindsight are searching for a lead actress with low vision and experiencing vision loss. The lead character is Lucie, who is Latina in her late 20’s. Lucie is an aspiring, talented musician, soft-spoken yet resilient, and struggling with vision loss.

Spanish-speaking preferred. To be considered for the part, email **auditionblindsight@gmail.com** and include a short introductory video about yourself, your interest, and your vision. The deadline for submission is **April 3, 2024.**

# **Career Fair**

The 24th Annual Diversity Employment Day Career Fair for Washington, DC/Arlington, Va. will take place Wednesday, April 3, 2024, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Embassy Suites By Hilton, Crystal National Airport, 1393 S. Eads St., Arlington, VA 22202. The event is free, and open to the public.

There will be hundreds of jobs and career positions being hired for, from major employers. These employers are paying premium compensation for experienced candidates, willing to train new candidates and working hard to build a team and workforce that reflects all the communities they serve. Fields include healthcare and diversity, high tech and engineering, law enforcement and veterans, and many more.

For more information, visit [**https://citycareerfair.com/dc/**](https://citycareerfair.com/dc/). To register, go to [**https://www.eventbrite.com/e/dcvirginia-in-person-ip-diversity-employment-day-career-fair-04032024-tickets-737636720287?aff**](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/dcvirginia-in-person-ip-diversity-employment-day-career-fair-04032024-tickets-737636720287?aff).

# **AFB’s Digital Accessibility Bootcamp Now Accepting Applications**

AFB’s Digital Accessibility Bootcamp is a 3-month summer experience offering computer science students the opportunity to learn how to design and build digital solutions that break down barriers, ensuring that everyone, regardless of ability, can fully engage with the digital landscape. Participants will receive hands-on learning and mentorship from industry experts, gaining valuable skills in inclusive design and development practices that will give them a competitive edge in the rapidly growing field of accessibility.

To be eligible to apply, applicants must:

* Be enrolled in college full time, or other higher education program;
* Be studying computer science, or a related field; and
* Have a minimum 3.0 GPA and a recommendation from a professor or instructor.

**Apply by April 5th** at [**https://tinyurl.com/mtt9jm7u**](https://tinyurl.com/mtt9jm7u).

# **Candle in the Window Retreat**

Candle in the Window will hold its 2024 retreat from Wednesday, September 25 through Sunday, September 29 at the beautiful and friendly Dogwood on Lake Norman located in Sherrills Ford, N.C., not far from Charlotte ([**https://dogwoodlakenorman.org/**](https://dogwoodlakenorman.org/)).

Our topic, based on the participants' suggestions from our 2023 retreat, is Finding and Nurturing Community. Due to space constraints, the retreat is limited to 20 participants. A $40 deposit (non-refundable) will reserve your spot.

All registration fees must be paid in full by August 30, 2024. Electronic payments should be sent to **candleinthewindow1@gmail.com** via PayPal. Checks should be made out to Candle in the Window and sent to: Carlos Taylor, 925 S. Luick Ave., Muncie, IN 47302.

For more information, contact Carlos Taylor via email,

**candleinthewindow1@gmail.com**, or by phone, (765) 208-0882.