**Dots and Dashes**

**October 23, 2023**

# **Karla Gilbride Confirmed as General Counsel for EEOC**

On October 17th, the U.S. Senate held a recorded vote to confirm one individual to serve on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). In that vote, Karla Gilbride was confirmed as General Counsel of the EEOC. ACB supported her nomination.

“This is an exciting milestone for me personally and for the representation of blind people in leadership positions,” Gilbride said. “I’m incredibly grateful to everyone who has taught me skills and prepared me for this opportunity, and I’m particularly grateful to those in the disability community who have advocated for my confirmation, including the American Council of the Blind. I’m honored to have been nominated and confirmed for this important role, and I’m looking forward to working with the talented and committed lawyers at the EEOC to break down barriers and make progress towards American workplaces that are fairer and more inclusive.”

# **Get to Know the ACB Development Team**

Please join your ACB Development team on Thursday, October 26, at 7 p.m. Eastern, for an Open House ACB Community event.

Whether you are an affiliate or an individual, Bill, Jo Lynn, and Kolby want to engage with and hear from you. Please share your fundraising ideas or ask fundraising questions. We value your input and look forward to spending time with you.

Join the call:

[ACB Development Team Open House](https://acb-org.zoom.us/j/83291161499?pwd=WkxPNk1YaExyV2VPQlVTcjVQdCtrQT09)

One tap mobile: +1 312 626 6799,,83291161499#

Phone: 312-626-6799

Meeting ID: 832 9116 1499

Passcode: 533410

# **Convention Cartridge Now Available!**

The 2023 ACB Conference and Convention cartridge is now available.  All sessions that were recorded June 19 – 24 and June 30 – July 6, 2023, are on the cartridge.  This includes general sessions, the banquet, and all recorded special-interest affiliate, ACB committee and business partner programming.

If you purchased a cartridge on the convention registration form, it will be sent to you. If you did not pre-order one, you can still purchase the cartridge by calling the Minnesota office at (612) 332-3242.  Please place your order by October 31st.

# **Lights, Camera, Description!**

The American Council of the Blind’s Audio Description Project (ADP) and the Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) are now accepting entries for BADIE, or Benefits of Audio Description in Education, an essay contest for blind and visually impaired young people (ages 7 to 21). It’s a great chance for students to engage with accessible learning materials, unleash their inner film critic, and compete for fun prizes.

## **How Students Can Enter:**

1. Browse the free DCMP library at <https://dcmp.org/>[.](http://www.dcmp.org/)
2. Watch any audio-described film (there are more than 6,000 educational titles to choose from!).
3. Write an evaluation of the film’s audio description, commenting on the ways the audio description enhanced or detracted from your experience.
4. Visit [http://badiecontest.org](http://badiecontest.org/) to submit your entry. There you’ll also find guidelines and prize details, tips on writing a good review, and information about how audio description is created.

## **Categories:**

Sophomore – ages 7–10

Junior – ages 11–15

Senior – ages 16–21

Alternate Assessment – students with non-traditional matriculation records

## **Deadline and Prizes:**

1. The deadline for contest entries is February 11, 2024.
2. Winners will be notified by the end of March 2024.
3. There will be first, second, and third place winners in each category, as well as a grand prize winner who will be awarded an iPad mini and invited to read his/her essay at the American Council of the Blind's National Conference and Convention in July 2024.
4. Teachers of first-place winners also receive prizes.

Go to [**http://badiecontest.org**](http://badiecontest.org/) for complete details and to submit your entry!

# **Countdown to AD Gala!**

The countdown to the third annual Audio Description Awards Gala continues! On Tuesday, November 14, at 7:30 p.m. Eastern, the Awards Gala will recognize outstanding achievement in a dozen media and entertainment categories, as well as announce the People’s Choice Award winners.

Join hosts Marilee Talkington and Conchita Hernandez, plus celebrity guests like director Shawn Levy, track and field star Marla Runyan, novelist Barbara Hinske, singer/songwriter Precious Perez, and many more, for the most glamorously inclusive awards show of them all. There will be captioning, audio description, and a simultaneous full Spanish translation. The show will be streamed on ACB Media and YouTube. More details will be coming soon, so mark your calendar and visit [ADAwardsGala.org](https://adawardsgala.org/). You can also [make a donation](https://adawardsgala.org/donate/) there to support ACB’s Audio Description Project and help us keep advocating for the audio description you love. (To donate by phone, call the ACB Financial Office at 612-332-3242.) We’ll see you on the virtual red carpet on November 14!

# **Introducing Scholarship in Spotlight**

By now you may have experienced one or several of ACB Voices’ Member at the Mic. We are thrilled to introduce Scholarship in Spotlight. This companion to Member at the Mic focuses on one student scholarship winner per month.

Beginning today with Eric Marco Ramos, we will hear their stories. We will learn about their goals and impressions of ACB and our valuable scholarship program. As we get to know the next generation of ACB members, we will offer community partnership to engage friends, family and college campuses.

It is our sincere hope that, as you listen to and get to know our scholarship awardees, local chapters, special-interest affiliates and ACB leaders will reach out to them and help enfold them into our dynamic family.

So if you enjoy Member at the Mic and you would like to get to know our scholarship winners, Scholarship in Spotlight is the Board of Publications’ new and exciting ACB Voices venture. Subscribe to the blog for these and other engaging ACB Stories and news.

# **Exercise Your Creativity and Help Make National Park Brochures Accessible**

Join the 2024 Descriptathon and help make national parks more accessible! ACB, the National Park Service, and UniDescription (UniD) are recruiting volunteers to create audio descriptions for selected national park brochures. Teams are composed of people who are sighted and people on the blindness spectrum, all of whom will collaborate to describe maps, paintings, and visual images within park brochures. All meetings are held remotely, so you might find yourself learning about a park in your state or across the continent.

UniD is the only initiative of its kind in the world, making the Descriptathon a unique and exciting opportunity to contribute to a path-breaking accessibility project. The first Descriptathon was held a decade ago, and since then ACB members have established an impressive record of participating as the number of parks and teams has grown.

The Descriptathon will be a full-day event, taking place February 6-8, 2024 (volunteers are expected to attend all three days). Participants will likely spend 10 hours of prep time in the five weeks before the kick-off on February 6 (approximately two hours a week). During this prep time, team members will learn about audio description, how to use the UniD tool to describe their brochure, and get to know their teammates. Four to six hours might be needed to finalize the brochure description after the three-day event.

For more about UniD and to download the free app, visit [**https://unidescription.org/**](https://unidescription.org/). If you’d like to participate in the tenth Descriptathon in February 2024, contact Tabitha Kenlon, Audio Description Project Coordinator, at **tkenlon@acb.org**.

# **WBU Celebrates International White Cane Safety Day**

On Sunday, October 15, 2023, the World Blind Union (WBU) celebrated International White Cane Safety Day, alongside millions of blind and partially sighted individuals across the globe. This year, the WBU emphasizes the white cane as a universal symbol of hope, independence, and resilience.

"The white cane is more than just a mobility tool; it is a symbol of independence, allowing blind and partially sighted individuals to navigate the world confidently, from their local neighborhoods to international adventures," says Martine Abel-Williamson, President of the World Blind Union.

This year, the WBU continues to champion the rights and independence of blind and partially sighted individuals, emphasizing the need for continued education about the white cane and advocating for accessible resources and training to ensure everyone who can benefit from a white cane has access to this powerful tool.

# **Social Security Benefits Increase in 2024**

More than 71 million Americans will see a 3.2% increase in their Social Security benefits and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments in 2024. On average, Social Security benefits will increase by more than $50 per month starting in January.

The Substantial Gainful Activity amount for the blind will go up from $2,460 to $2,590 per month.

You can find more information about the 2024 COLA at [**https://www.ssa.gov/cola/**](https://www.ssa.gov/cola/).

# **AFB Needs You for a Research Project**

The American Foundation for the Blind is seeking your involvement in its latest research project, which will
collect details on the digital experiences of blind individuals as they interact with websites and mobile applications.

To qualify for this study, you must be:

* A person who identifies as blind, deafblind, or having low vision;
* At least 18 years old;
* Living in the United States; and
* A person who uses websites and/or mobile apps daily with assistive technology.

We are asking interested individuals to fill out this brief interest form, and we will select 20-25 people to complete the diaries to get a balance of experiences. If you are selected to complete the diaries, you will be asked to spend 5-10 minutes each evening answering questions on a short online survey for 10 consecutive days in November 2023.

For more information and to fill out the interest form for the study, visit [**https://afb.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\_8kKBJXIhf6rjdr0**](https://afb.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8kKBJXIhf6rjdr0). If you have any questions or concerns, contact Arielle Silverman, director of research, at **asilverman@afb.org**.

**Haitian Rice Fund**

In cooperation with the Caribbean Council for the Blind and CCB member countries, the Société Haïtienne d’Aide aux Aveugles (SHAA), had a presentation from Eddy LeMaire, head of the integrated education service of SHAA, describing the living conditions of Haitians with blindness and visual impairment. The Executive Committee of CCB pledged to transfer funds to SHAA to purchase bags of rice to feed blind people in Haiti. SHAA started the program in Port-au-Prince and needs to expand the program to serve blind people in more rural regions of the country.

So ACB and the World Blind Union are seeking support from WBU regional organization members. Individual members of ACB and affiliates can also make contributions.

ACB has arranged to manage the collection and distribution of the funds donated by members and affiliates. ACB has pledged to contribute $1,000 to begin this aid fund. If your organization would like to contribute, or you would like to make an individual contribution, every donation will help the blind people of Haiti with food shortages and insecurity.

Please send your contribution for the Haitian Rice for the Blind Fund to: American Council of the Blind, ATTN: Haitian Rice for the Blind Fund, 6200 Shingle Creek Parkway, Suite 155, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430.

To make a donation online, visit

[**http://weblink.donorperfect.com/ACBDisasterRelief**](http://weblink.donorperfect.com/ACBDisasterRelief). Send email to **kim.charlson@perkins.org** with the details of your organization’s contribution. If you would prefer to do an electronic fund transfer or credit card transaction, please contact Nancy Becker via email, **nbecker@acb.org**, or call (612) 332-3242.