# The Braille Forum

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# the American Council of the Blind

**The American Council of the Blind strives to increase the independence, security, equality of opportunity, and to improve quality of life for all blind and visually impaired people.**

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**The Braille Forum™ is available in braille, large print, half-speed four-track cassette tape, and via e-mail. Subscription requests, address changes, and items intended for publication should be sent to Sharon Lovering at the address above, or via e-mail to slovering@acb.org. Submission deadlines are the first of the month.**

**The American Council of the Blind™ is a membership organization made up of more than 70 state and special-interest affiliates. To join, visit the ACB web site and complete an application form, or contact the national office at the number listed above.**

**Those much-needed contributions, which are tax-deductible, can be sent to Mike Godino at the above mailing address. If you wish to remember a relative or friend, the national office can make printed cards available for this purpose. To remember the American Council of the Blind in your Last Will and Testament, you may include a special paragraph for that purpose. If your wishes are complex, contact the ACB national office.**

**Join the MMS program and help improve tomorrow today in ACB. Contact Ron Milliman by e-mail, rmilliman@insightbb.com, or by phone at (270) 782-9325 and get started making tomorrow look brighter today!**

**To make a contribution to ACB via the Combined Federal Campaign, use this number: 11155.**

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**Contact Sharon Lovering in the ACB national office, 1-800-424-8666, or via e-mail, slovering@acb.org. Give her the information, and she’ll take care of the changes for you.**

# President’s Message:

# Saving the Randolph-Sheppard Program

# by Mitch Pomerantz

**Prior to the mid-year board and presidents’ meetings, and the legislative seminar, I was asked by Charlie Glaser, president of the Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America, to address the annual Sagebrush (vendors) conference in Las Vegas, Nev. This month’s column is taken from my remarks and concerns the past, present and future of the Randolph-Sheppard program and the relationship between ACB and RSVA.**

**Everyone in this room knows the history of the Randolph-Sheppard program and its status as the pre-eminent employment program for blind and visually impaired people anywhere. Everyone is also aware of the serious threats to the program which engendered the need for the Randolph-Sheppard Stakeholder Collaboration Proposal which ultimately led to the Blind Entrepreneurs’ Alliance (BEA). Let me briefly remind everyone of those threats: the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee’s plans for overhauling Randolph-Sheppard and Javits-Wagner-O’Day legislation; implementation of detrimental regulatory changes recommended by the Joint Committee Report; the Department of Defense Controller General’s investigation; the Department of Defense and Education Inspectors General investigation; an ongoing General Accountability Office evaluation and report; the lack of Rehabilitation Services Administration leadership in advocating for or defending the program; and permanent loss of contracts to the procurement list. For those of us who believe in the viability of the Randolph-Sheppard vending program, this is a daunting list, indeed.**

**To provide some perspective on the long-term nature of the problems faced by those trying to save the vending program, I’ll comment on what’s happening in my home state of California as an example of the benign neglect being practiced by too many of the state licensing agencies (SLAs) around the country. Thanks to Roy Harmon and David Hanlon, I received a copy of a 70-plus page audit of the Business Enterprise Program (BEP), which is managed (and I use that word advisedly) by the State Department of Rehabilitation. This document points out numerous glaring shortcomings in the program and makes more than a dozen recommendations to improve it. The most disturbing thing to me is that it’s deja vu all over again, as the saying goes.**

**My first real exposure to the vending program came in the mid-1980s when I was one of two representatives from the California Council of the Blind serving on the Blind Advisory Committee, the entity which provides consumer input to the state’s programs for the blind (we didn’t have a separate division at that time). I recall being briefed about a BEP audit which had uncovered numerous violations of state regulations and federal statute. We all expressed serious concerns and DR staff promised to make changes that would rectify the problems referenced in the audit.**

**I know that there are states where the vending program is held in high esteem, where it is encouraged to develop and grow by the SLA. However, too many rehabilitation officials — including officials within RSA — see the Randolph-Sheppard vending program as an anachronism, symbolic of a bygone era. Others see it as the perfect opportunity to employ people with developmental or physical disabilities and therefore believe that the blind priority should be scrapped. In short, the Randolph-Sheppard program needs all the allies it can get.**

**So, where do we go from here? What can RSVA expect from the American Council of the Blind and how can our two organizations assure that the Randolph-Sheppard program will not only continue to exist, but to grow and thrive? ACB will continue supporting the Blind Entrepreneurs’ Alliance and as our fiscal situation improves, it is my hope that we will be able to commit more of our financial resources to this effort. With RSVA and ACB, along with the other organizations comprising the BEA working together, we can restore the Randolph-Sheppard vending program to its former greatness.**

**Unfortunately, our two organizations must also be vigilant to ensure that no single organization dominates the alliance or tries to use it for political gain. It is, and must continue to be, a true coalition of equal partners. I am confident that the Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America and the American Council of the Blind will maintain that vigilance and work collaboratively toward a stronger vending program.**

**RSVA will be a full partner with ACB during my time as president. Those of you who know me at all also know that I don’t mince words or play favorites. Open and honest two-way communication is something about which I feel strongly, whether we agree or not. You will always know where I stand, and knowing some of you in the RSVA leadership, I am quite certain you’ll let me know how you feel about things. That’s fine with me as long as everyone respects each other’s points of view. That is a core principle of the American Council of the Blind and a principle that is central to my administration.**

# The 411 from the Information Access Committee

# by Marlaina Lieberg and Eric Bridges

**The Information Access Committee, whose staff liaison is Eric Bridges, has been working diligently to maintain a strong voice with regard to the Twenty‑first Century Telecommunications Video Accessibility Discussion Draft, and with the analog to digital TV (A to D TV) conversion slated to occur Feb. 17, 2009. Many of you who attended the ACB legislative seminar in February or who heard it on ACB Radio are familiar with some of the issues surrounding these topics. In this article, we will briefly describe each topic and what you can do to help.**

## Analog to Digital TV

**On Feb. 17, 2009, TV as we know it will change. If you subscribe to cable or satellite, you will not need to make any changes at this time. If you receive TV through the use of a TV antenna, either external or rabbit ears, you’ll need to know a few important facts.**

1. **There are converter boxes you can buy for about $80, which will give your TV the capability to receive digital signals. These boxes have not been tested to ensure they will receive video description or for their usability by people who are blind. There is to date no information available in alternative formats regarding who manufactures the boxes or where to buy them. ACB has been a very strong and dissatisfied voice with regard to access provision for blind people in this entire process, and has continually appealed to National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA), the federal agency overseeing the development of this program. NTIA has chosen to take the road of least resistance with this program and the box manufacturers, only requiring what is currently federally mandated. Video description is a permitted feature, not a required feature, thus no testing of the boxes. Stay tuned; the IAC hopes to have a sample of these boxes at its meeting in Louisville.**
2. **NTIA has a coupon program wherein each household needing converter boxes may apply for up to two coupons. Each coupon will give you $40 off the cost of your converter box. Do not apply until you are ready to use your coupon; they expire in 90 days. Also, if you lose or misplace your coupon, you will not be issued another. For more information, call 1‑888‑388‑2009; if you are able to access the web, visit www.dtv2009.gov. Your coupon will come by mail; take care not to mistake it for an unsolicited credit card. Though NTIA assured us directly that they were interested in making the cards tactually identifiable, they have chosen not to do so.**
3. **If you use a TV radio, and it currently has no provisions for an external antenna, your TV radio will no longer receive TV signals as of Feb. 17, 2009.**

**Make your voice heard on this issue. Contact your members of Congress and tell them that the blind community has been left behind in the digital TV conversion process. You can also contact Tony Wilhelm at NTIA. He is responsible for the Coupon Converter Box Program; his phone number is (202) 482-6260 and his e‑mail address is awilhelm@ntia.doc.gov. NTIA and Congress need to know that we will no longer accept second-class status, and that we expect and demand the access other Americans will receive on Feb. 17, 2009.**

## The 21st Century Communications & Video Accessibility Discussion Draft

**Most laws dealing with accessibility do not cover Internet or digital media. The goal of the Coalition for Accessible Telecommunications (COAT) is to bring together individuals and organizations to eliminate this accessibility gap. COAT, of which ACB and several of its state affiliates are members, has worked with the House Committee on Energy and Commerce to develop this discussion draft. The committee released the draft just before Christmas, and now it’s time for individual advocates to contact their representatives to request that the draft be dropped as a bill, and on the Senate side that a companion bill be introduced.**

**Here, in essence, is what the draft is requiring and, if introduced and passed, what this bill will do for the blind and visually impaired community:**

 **1. Up to $10 million per year for specialized equipment for deaf‑blind users.**

 **2. Captioning decoder and description circuitry on all video devices.**

 **3. Video description and emergency warnings.**

 **4. Captioning and description on Internet video.**

 **5. Accessible user interfaces for all video devices.**

 **6. Accessible video programming and navigational guides.**

**I urge all ACB affiliates, both special-interest and state, along with members at large, to become involved with COAT. The time is now for our voices to be raised, voices that truly represent issues of importance to people who are blind. The following states have no COAT representation: Alabama, Arkansas, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, West Virginia and Wyoming. Your involvement would bring a great deal to the COAT table. Please contact Eric Bridges at (202) 467-5081 or e-mail ebridges@acb.org for information on how your state or special-interest affiliate can become involved.**

**The IAC meets monthly, typically the second Thursday of each month. If you have issues you would like reviewed, contact Marlaina Lieberg at (206) 433-6565 or via e-mail, Marlaina@traico.com.**

**Act now to restore video description, accessible emergency warning procedures, and ensure access to America’s most loved and perhaps most important medium, television. Make those calls and make your voice heard. One voice is important; many voices create change.**

# Good Dollars and Good Sense:

# ACB Board Dives into Its Budget

# by Ken Stewart

 **(Editor’s Note: The American Council of the Blind constitution and bylaws require**

**that a narrative summary of every board of directors meeting be prepared by the board of publications’ ex officio representative to the board of directors. Upon approval of the minutes of this meeting by the board of directors, the minutes will be made available to the membership on the web site. Members who cannot access the minutes in that way may request assistance from the national office.)**

**The ACB board waded through all the details of the organization’s 2008 budget during its early February meeting in Washington, D.C. President Mitch Pomerantz called the session to order. The entire board was in attendance, two via speakerphone, with executive director Melanie Brunson and controller Lane Waters also at the table.**

**Assorted good news and encouraging updates permeated the reports from Pomerantz, Brunson, and treasurer Mike Godino. The arrival of more generous bequests prompted one of**

**many unanimous voice votes. It decreed that a wall plaque honor all donors of amounts in six figures or higher, and that those names appear in “The Braille Forum” and on the ACB web site. Brunson also assured the board that all donations, however modest, are formally acknowledged. She also reported that recruitment is ongoing for the newly established national office position of director of development, and will be stepped up to reach even more suitable candidates. Brunson indicated that the organization’s business relationship with Damar Travel will end in April with all owed money received. A contractual relationship with some other travel agency is expected soon thereafter.**

**Pomerantz described his activities representing ACB in the World Blind Union, and the board was updated on administrative progress within the nascent American Center on Blindness and Visual Impairment. Godino noted that ACB’s financial reserves have now topped the $1 million mark. The remainder of its total assets are in ordinary operating funds, over $200,000, and funds with specific purposes designated for them, almost $900,000.**

**A detailed report was received from Michael Garrett, chair of the ACBES board. He indicated that the stores in Milwaukee and Texas are showing improved sales, while stores in other Midwest locales are still struggling. He and Waters mentioned specific actions being taken to improve their performance. The board of directors, by another one of its unanimous voice votes, authorized a $100,000 line of credit to finance capital expenditures needed for the thrift store operations.**

**The budget for the current calendar year received final approval by the board after extensive examination of the details of projected revenues and justified expenditures. The board enthusiastically blessed the board of publications’ proposal to return to a full 12 monthly issues of “The Braille Forum.” Funds for scholarships granted to blind students pursuing higher education were increased substantially, from $30,000 up to $42,000. The board allocated $14,000 for an entirely new telephone system in the national office.**

**Brunson led discussion of relocating the national office when the lease on its present quarters ends later this year. The lease for the Minneapolis space also expires this year, but it has been decided not to combine the two operations in one location. Pomerantz acknowledged the appeal of such an efficiency during the discussion. The objective is to find rental space convenient to the various District of Columbia business destinations frequented by national office staff. The board agreed on an expeditious decision-making process as soon as suitable quarters at a reasonable rent are located.**

**At noon, the board went into executive session. When the audience returned, Pomerantz reported that no actions were taken, no motions were made, and the primary discussion dealt with the audit letter for ACB litigation matters and areas in which we might expect advocacy-related revenues.**

**Mike Dickson, a representative of the Dain Rauscher securities firm, presented himself to familiarize board members with the services which will be provided by that Minneapolis-based company in its capacity as ACB’s investment adviser. He assured attendees that there would be no fees charged over the basic annual contractual amount, just under one percent of ACB’s total asset package being managed.**

**A regular feature of ACB board meetings is a report on future conventions, provided by convention committee chair Carla Ruschival. She confirmed that a commitment has now been made for 2010 at the new Phoenix Sheraton. And the board passed a resolution to assure that appropriate accommodations are provided for attendees with other disabilities.**

**The board also took a few minutes to greet and converse with a visitor from Africa accompanied by an escort provided by the U.S. State Department. Danlami Barashu is an official of a Nigerian organization of the blind, and a national leader in that nation’s disability community.**

**Minus only the two members previously connected by speakerphone, the board reconvened the next day. Many would be participating in the annual affiliate presidents’ meeting scheduled immediately following. Questions and comments from that audience were accepted by Pomerantz, especially during the lively final segment of the board’s session. It featured officers reporting on the standing committees and other ACB working groups to which each of them, including the president himself, serves as liaison. (For a complete list of standing committees and their members, contact the ACB national office.)**

**Announcements made during the closing session included one from Brunson that efforts are under way to revitalize an affiliate in the state of Idaho. Board member and resource development committee chair David Trott mentioned preliminary plans to stage a walkathon during next year’s convention in Orlando, Fla.**

# Using Publicity to Get New Members

# compiled by Ardis Bazyn

**The membership committee held its most recent focus call on Jan. 27, 2008. The topic was “External Communication: How to use publicity effectively to get more members.” The participants on the call outlined the various types of publicity they used. Some affiliates use brochures that are revised as needed, while others just make simple flyers designed for the particular activity. You should try to have your organization listed on 411.com or switchboard.com so people searching for your organization can find you.**

**Many state lending libraries will send out letters if you give them the letters in various formats to send. If they send out letters for NFB, they need to do the same for ACB affiliates. If possible, meet with students at your orientation center or school for the blind. Offer to speak to the group about what your organization can do for them. Offer to have a booth with your brochures and other items of interest for those students.**

**Visit senior centers, rehabilitation centers, centers for the blind and visually impaired, talking book centers, independent living centers, doctors and medical centers, colleges and universities, churches, radio reading services, civic centers or organizations, and other appropriate organizations and agencies and give seminars on low vision. Have a booth with your materials and products for them to read. Provide tables on White Cane Safety Day, Braille Literacy Month, or at the same time as a low-vision fair or health fair is being held. Participate in general disability fairs or legislative days at your state capitol.**

**Call low-vision doctors and hospitals, and state universities to see when they might have special low-vision fairs or clinics and disability days. You might make a float in a local parade so your community is aware you are active. Share booths and tables with other disability groups to save money. Check out senior or disability expos. Some malls may allow you to set up a booth or table to hand out brochures and other materials. Your local Lions Club or doctor’s office may offer discounted or free eye exams at a low-vision fair.**

**You might consider offering diabetes education seminars or classes for senior centers or clinics and hospitals. Members could bring the equipment they use, and other low vision aids might be shown to visitors and participants. You could get gift certificates donated so you can have door prizes for those in attendance.**

**Provide a regular newsletter for members and friends. It can be quarterly or monthly. The size isn’t as important as regularity. It’s important to keep your name out in the public. Have extra copies printed so members can give them out at local agencies or organizations. All of the organizations and agencies listed above could receive your newsletter as well as other letters that outline your various ongoing programs and special projects. Fund-raising letters should also be considered publicity and written with information about your most worthwhile projects and services. Always remember to mention any scholarship information. Even if your affiliate doesn’t offer any, you can mention ACB.**

**Send letters and newsletters to donors. Develop a donor list to use. You can start a list by buying a list from a mailing company. You can also start a list from people leaving their addresses or phone numbers on your toll-free line’s answering machine and a subscription form on your web site. Acknowledge vehicle donors by sending them a friendly letter and/or your newsletter. Enclose an envelope with any letter, publication, or brochure you send.**

**Have a press release submitted to radio stations and newspapers whenever you have an event or a newsworthy item. Remember that newspapers and radio stations need your press release at least two weeks ahead of time. Often radio and cable TV stations and newspapers have a calendar of events in which they will put free announcements for community organizations. You can write articles or press releases about your upcoming speakers for chapter meetings or conventions. Also, you can use online calendars or bulletin boards to place your event announcements. Many newspapers have web sites where you can post your community events.**

**Approach your local rehabilitation boards about the ACB white paper on rehabilitation. Produce a special flyer or brochure on low vision that asks the question: “Do you know someone who has vision problems?” You can provide local information of interest to them regarding transportation, talking books, and other services they may not currently have. Have an “invite a friend” day at your local chapter. Invitations can be given to both sighted and blind friends so more people hear about your organization. Join local listservs and pass on information about your chapter events.**

**At a state convention, host an afternoon hospitality the first day so those getting there early can meet one another. Of course, evening hospitalities are also good times to mingle and introduce new people to those you already know. Have a picnic or summer barbecue and invite new people. Chapters should make phone calls or send letters in various formats to past members.**

**One affiliate has placemats made to celebrate White Cane Safety Day and asks local restaurants to use them that month. Each one is ready for kids to color. Coloring books could also be made to pass out to kids — just four or five pages. These would contain your contact information along with a simple explanation about White Cane Safety Day. You could also encourage restaurants to have braille and large print menus; offer to purchase a couple for them if you have enough funds. Thanks to everyone who shared helpful suggestions.**

# Affiliate News

## Come to Phoenix & Enjoy the Convention!

**The members of the Arizona Council of the Blind invite all of you down to Phoenix for our 37th annual convention. This year, the convention will take place May 2-3 at the Phoenix International Airport Hilton Hotel. Room rates are $105 per night, and a limited number of suites are available for $130 per night. We are planning an exciting program, lots of exhibitors, and as many meals as we can cram into the two-day program. We are also planning a couple of parties just for those of you who come in from out of town. To view the convention announcement and registration form, visit www.azcb.org or contact Ron Brooks, (602) 722‑3039, or by e-mail at ronlbrooks@msn.com.**

## Florida Council to Meet in Jacksonville

**The 2008 Florida Council of the Blind convention will be held May 15-18 at the Holiday Inn Airport Jacksonville, 14607 Duval Road, Jacksonville, FL 32218; phone (904) 741-4404. Room rates are $85 per night plus tax. Be sure to mention that you are with the Florida Council of the Blind to get the convention room rate.**

**The convention begins on Thursday evening with a barbecue/fund-raiser “done Mandarin style.” On Friday morning, Guide Dog Users of Florida will hold its annual meeting. Becky Barnes, Director of Student Services at Guiding Eyes for the Blind, will talk about recognizing and coping with signs of stress in our guide dogs. In the afternoon, attendees can choose from two workshops: the annual legislative seminar or the employment committee workshop.**

**Saturday morning, we will learn from transportation experts how to work to improve transportation in your community and in our state. There will also be several workshops and seminars. Library users excited by the world of digital books will hear from Dr. Jane Karp, Library Program Administrator, about this important and innovative reading option. Nancy Folsom and Joyce Thornton, FCB members and Mary Kay consultants, will answer your makeup and fashion questions. Those interested in improving their advocacy skills should plan to attend the session led by Eric Bridges.**

**On Sunday morning, you will have the opportunity to participate in FCB's annual business meeting, during which we will elect officers.**

**Everyone is welcome to join us for what promises to be an informative and fun-filled time! To receive registration material, contact Sally Benjamin at 1-800-267-4448 or by e-mail at floridacouncil@comcast.net, or visit www.fcb.org.**

# In the Far Turn: ACB Convention 2008

# by Carla Ruschival

**The 47th annual convention of the American Council of the Blind will be one of the biggest and best ever. Make plans now to be in Louisville July 4-12 for all the information, exhibits, fun and friends.**

**The Galt House Hotel is home to ACB for convention week. This beautiful hotel, overlooking the mighty Ohio River, has undergone a multi‑million‑dollar renovation. Its standard rooms in the Rivue (west) Tower are spacious; its executive one‑bedroom suites on the east side let you “live it up” with a separate parlor for entertaining friends. Every suite comes equipped with a fridge. Enjoy scrumptious delicious entrees and to‑die‑for Kentucky Derby pie at the hotel’s four restaurants. Relax with friends at the outdoor pool, or bring your guitars and gather ‘round the piano in the new 24‑hour third‑floor lounge area for an old‑fashioned sing‑along.**

**General sessions and exhibits will be just steps away from registration, the Information Desk, and the ACB Café on the east side. Afternoon programs and evening functions will be found in both towers.**

**But wait! There’s more! The Galt House is within a few blocks of 4th Street Live, Louisville’s fun‑filled entertainment district with lots of restaurants. Grocery stores, drugstores, and other businesses are nearby (a long walk or short taxi or trolley ride away).**

## Explore Kentucky with ACB Tours

**Visit historic Bardstown (an hour from Louisville) for a tour of Maker’s Mark Distillery; or enjoy a delicious dinner and the “Stephen Foster Story,” a live outdoor musical featuring songs such as “I Dream of Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair,” “Annie Laurie,” “Oh Suzanna” and “My Old Kentucky Home.” Try your luck with the horses and eat lunch on Millionaire’s Row at Churchill Downs. Visit the Louisville Slugger, Muhammad Ali, and Frazier Arms museums, all within easy blocks of the hotel. Discover how glass is blown, pizza dough and candy are made, and braille, large print and recorded books are produced.**

**The serious side of the 2008 ACB convention is packed with outstanding workshops, seminars, exhibits, and programs. Here are just a few highlights already on the schedule:**

* **Special workshops on rehabilitation (Monday), transportation (Tuesday), and employment and careers (Wednesday);**
* **Seminars, training and users’ groups on a variety of adaptive technology;**
* **Special informational sessions for human service professionals, blind vendors and small business owners, teachers, attorneys, and artists and musicians;**
* **Discussions and programs for parents, students, guide dog users, braille readers, people with low vision or who have both a hearing and visual impairment; and**
* **Programs, workshops and events for diabetics, Lions, women, international and multicultural attendees, sports fanatics, and lesbians and gays.**

## Getting to Convention

**Join the race to the 2008 ACB convention by making your hotel reservations now. Choose a standard room in the Rivue (west) tower for $85/night, or spend convention week in style in an executive suite (fridge included) for $105/night. Rates are single/double, and do not include tax; add $10 per night for each additional person in the room. Call the Galt House directly at (502) 589‑5200 for reservations.**

**Keep up with all the latest convention announcements. Join the acbconvention e-mail list by sending a blank message to acbconvention‑subscribe@acb.org.**

**For convention questions or special concerns, contact Carla Ruschival, convention committee chair, at (502) 897‑1472 or by e-mail at adamcarla@bellsouth.net, or call the ACB national office at 1-800-424‑8666.**

# Special Honor for Special People

**There are many special people who have played significant roles in the lives of blind and visually impaired people. The volunteer who works tirelessly at local chapter events, that member who runs the telephone tree, the deceased member who played a significant role in the history of your chapter — often these outstanding individuals go unheralded on the national scene.**

**Now you can share the accomplishments of these special people by participating in the new commemorative section of the ACB convention program. Commemorative pages in the large print edition will be printed on high‑quality paper; pages may include a color photograph of your special person and a short caption about his or her accomplishments. The text of the page will appear in the braille, tape and electronic editions of the program. What a wonderful way to honor or memorialize that special person!**

**To reserve commemorative pages in the 2008 ACB convention program, send photographs (digital preferred) and text, along with a check in the amount of $500 per page made payable to the 2008 ACB Convention, to: American Council of the Blind, 2008 ACB Convention, 120 S. 6th St., Suite 1005, Minneapolis, MN 55402. For more information, contact Brenda Dillon at (615) 874‑1223, or by e-mail at brendan0@bellsouth.net.**

# Honor the Best of the Best

# by the Awards Committee

**We have all sat out in the audience during the awards segment at convention, listening intently as someone is described through the words of the nominating letter, trying to guess who that special person will be. And there’s a good chance that as many of us have listened, we’ve thought to ourselves, “I should have nominated so-and-so.”**

**Well, it was too late then, but it’s not too late now. Please read on and then write your nomination.**

**The Robert S. Bray Award is given to a person who has made a contribution for improving library technology or communication devices. It could also be given for expanding access for blind people, or making opportunities within the mainstream media.**

**The George Card Award is given to an individual who has dedicated his or her life to work with and for blind people, making a real difference and improving quality of life, for providing leadership and being a positive role model.**

**The Durward K. McDaniel Ambassador Award is one of our most popular awards. It is given in recognition of a blind person who may or may not be a member of a blindness organization but who has spent his or her life integrating with the community.**

**The James R. Olsen Distinguished Service Award is periodically given to individuals who have made important contributions which have advanced opportunities for the blind community. This award can be given to an individual or an organization.**

**The Affiliate Growth Award is based on the greatest increase in membership, as determined by the 2007-2008 membership reports.**

**The Affiliate Outreach Award is based on a recommendation by an affiliate president, which recognizes a local chapter for a new outreach program. This program must have a measurable outcome.**

**Nominations must be received by May 1, 2008 to be considered and should be sent to the attention of the awards committee, care of the ACB national office, 1155 15th St. NW, Suite 1004, Washington, DC 20005.**

**Now stop thinking about that special someone and instead write about him or her in a nominating letter.**

# Making the Connection with the DKM First‑Timers’ Award

# by Mike Hoenig and Carol Edwards

**Remember the first ACB convention you ever attended? Were you like me, in awe of all the activities, special‑interest groups, and great people who became instant friends? You no doubt felt that special ACB connection which brought you back for more each year.**

**You can help a deserving member of your state or local affiliate experience that same connection by nominating that person for the Durward K. McDaniel (DKM) First‑Timers’ Award. To refresh your memory, the DKM Committee selects two winners — one from east of the Mississippi and one from west of it. We pay all convention‑related expenses, including airfare, lodging, and meals. We don’t stop there. DKM Committee members welcome recipients by introducing them to fellow conventioneers, involving them in special-interest group activities, and hosting a reception in their honor.**

**You may nominate an individual for this award, or encourage an individual to nominate him/herself. All nominations must include, at a minimum, a letter of introduction from the nominee and a letter of support from his/her local or state affiliate president. As a “first timer” in last year’s selection process, I found letters which helped me get to know the nominee to be most helpful. Tell us about past and present ACB involvement at the local, state and national levels, and explain why attendance at the national convention would be beneficial. Send completed nominations to the DKM First‑Timers Committee, ACB National Office, 1155 15th St. NW, Suite 1004, Washington, DC 20005 as soon as possible but no later than April 15. For more information, call DKM Committee Chair Carol Ewing at (702) 524‑8444 or Cathy Skivers at (510) 357‑1986.**

## Mark Your Calendar

**We will all gather July 5-12 in Louisville, Ky., for the ACB national convention. On Thursday, July 10, the DKM committee will host a get-together for this year’s recipients of the DKM First-Timers’ Awards. Mark your calendar so you don’t forget to sign up on the pre‑registration form!**

**The DKM Committee is now selling raffle tickets to help get two first-timers to convention, both now and in the future. If you would like to purchase tickets, call Carol Ewing at (702) 524‑8444. Then plan to attend the DKM mixer on Thursday, July 10. Let’s take time in our busy schedule at the convention to welcome our first-timers!**

# Going Once, Twice, Sold!

# by the Auction Committee

**If raising $18,884 in one night isn’t reason enough to hold another ACB Benefit Auction, then maybe it’s the fun and excitement which occurred throughout the first event, the wonderful items which were donated and purchased by winning bidders and the knowing that we can do it all again, maybe just a little bigger and better.**

**That’s right, the auction committee is busy at work preparing for our second annual ACB Benefit Auction to be held in Louisville, Ky. on Wednesday, July 9, in conjunction with the ACB convention, but we can't do it without you!**

**So your first instruction is to keep that night of July 9 available so that you can actively take part in the bidding, buying and supporting of our national organization. Then the next order of business is for you to go to your local chapters, state or special-interest affiliates, businesses which you frequent often, family members who have connections with businesses, and begin gathering items for our auction. We want everything from electronics, household goods, theme baskets, special foods, tickets for a concert, sporting event or show, gift certificates for goods or services, trips, sports memorabilia, and the list goes on. Please use your imagination.**

**Whether you will be at convention or not, your contribution to the pool of auction items will help immensely. This is a great way for everyone to get involved in raising funds for the American Council of the Blind. All contributors will be recognized throughout the auction.**

**If you have items to donate for the auction, please send the pertinent information, including item description (color, size, expiration date, etc.), company name and contact information and retail value, to Cindy Van Winkle, (360) 698-0827 or cindy.vw@msn.com. Information should be sent by June 15.**

**We encourage folks to bring their auction items with them to the convention; there will be a designated place to leave these items upon arrival. However, if you need to make arrangements to ship items ahead of time or have any questions about the auction, please contact Brenda Dillon, auction committee chair, at (615) 874-1223 or brendan0@bellsouth.net.**

**Now here’s to one of the most exciting nights of the upcoming ACB convention. Let’s raise our voices with big bids and in the process, raise lots of funds for ACB.**

# Pack Two Lunches a Month and Support ACB Through the MMS Program

# by Ray Campbell

**“Braille Forum” readers have undoubtedly heard about the Monthly Monetary Support (MMS) program of ACB. Many of you are probably out there thinking, “That isn’t for me, that’s for people who can afford to make really big donations each month.”**

**That’s where you’re wrong. Think about your normal day. Perhaps you work or go to school and you buy a lunch each day. Let’s say that you spend on average $5 for each lunch that you buy. Why not pack two lunches a month, and take the $10 you would have spent on them and contribute it to the MMS program? If you do this and designate your total contribution to go to ACB, then ACB has an additional $120 that it did not have before to help fund our vital programs, including this very magazine, “The Braille Forum.” ACB has around 25,000 members. If each of us donated $10 a month to ACB, our organization would have $3 million more to fund its work.**

**There’s more. As you know, when you sign up for MMS, you can designate up to 50 percent of your contributions to go to an ACB state or special-interest affiliate of your choice. If all 25,000 ACB members did that, ACB would still come $1.5 million ahead.**

**And all this could happen if we each pack two lunches a month for ACB’s MMS program. Sound good? Then grab an MMS form and sign up today. You can sign up for MMS on‑line at the ACB web site, www.acb.org, or contact the ACB Minneapolis office, 1-800‑866‑3242, and someone will help you fill out an MMS form. Donations can be made by direct bank draft or credit card. Be sure if you are doing a bank draft that you have both your bank account number and the 9-digit routing number for your bank. The bank’s routing number can be found on your checks, or you can contact the bank and ask for this information. And we’ll be back this summer, signing up new MMS participants at the 2008 ACB national convention in Louisville.**

**So, let’s start packing those lunches and send the money you save to the ACB MMS program. If you have any questions about MMS, contact Dr. Ron Milliman at (270) 782‑9325, or by e-mail, rmilliman@insightbb.com.**

# Board of Publications Hosts Internet Candidates’ Page

**To paraphrase a famous campaign slogan, “It’s the Information, Stupid!” You will be far from stupid when you visit the ACB Candidates’ Page. The board of publications is again hosting an Internet candidates’ page on www.acb.org.**

**The candidates’ page is a web page where people declaring candidacy for office present themselves to the ACB membership. Entries on this page do not constitute nomination for any office and people may campaign for office without submitting entries to the Candidates’ Page. All candidates have the opportunity to respond to the same set of questions. This page also allows ACB chapters and affiliates to have more information at their disposal before they send delegates to the national convention. Many members have told us how much they appreciated the opportunity to participate more actively in ACB’s democracy because of the early dissemination of information from the on‑line forum.**

**In 2008, ACB members will elect five people to fill ACB board positions and three to fill positions on the board of publications. The appointed members of the board of publications have developed a set of questions for candidates, as follows.**

1. **What office are you seeking, and what qualifications do you possess that make you qualified to serve in that office?**
2. **What would you do to strengthen the relationship between the ACB national board and affiliates?**
3. **How can long‑term financial stability be achieved for ACB?**
4. **What strategies could ACB implement to make its advocacy efforts more effective?**
5. **Identify the issues which you think are most important to the welfare of ACB and the blindness community as a whole.**
6. **Tell the membership anything you think they should know when considering your candidacy.**

**Candidates for the board of publications should answer question 1 and may skip questions 2 through 6. Anyone seeking a seat on the board of publications should answer the following questions.**

**7. What specific tasks or areas of interest covered by the board of publications do you plan to address during your term?**

**8. How can the board of publications better serve ACB’s affiliates in their newsletter efforts?**

**9. How do you view the board of publications affecting ACB’s Internet presence?**

**Candidates should answer each question with a maximum of 300 words. Submit answers in any accessible, readable media, i.e., in hard‑copy print or braille, computer disk (in ASCII text, WordPerfect 5.1, or Microsoft Word formats), or via e‑mail. Pasting the text into an e‑mail message is preferable to sending attachments, but attachments in ASCII text, Microsoft Word or WordPerfect 5.1 will be accepted. Please note that the national office has an older version of Word; do not send your Word documents as .docx files. Submissions will not be accepted via telephone, voice mail, audiocassette, or in handwriting.**

**Note that we will not edit submissions for spelling, grammar, or content. Submissions will be coded into HTML for placement on the web site. It is our webmaster’s role to convert documents into HTML; we will not accept submissions which you have coded in this format yourself.**

**Word counts are based on the total number of words in each answer, with each answer being a maximum of 300 words. Word counts will be determined through the use of MS Word’s “word count” feature, in which every word contained in the answer enters into the total word count. Hard copy submissions will be converted into electronic format then counted. Entries for each answer will terminate at the end of the sentence containing the 300th word.**

**When submitting answers electronically, candidates should place name, address, telephone numbers, and e‑mail addresses at the top of the body of the submission. When submitting information in hard copy, place the requested identifying information at the top of the first page and name and a page number at the top of each subsequent page. Send completed submissions to the following address:**

 **American Council of the Blind Candidates’ Page**

 **1155 15th St. NW**

 **Suite 1004**

 **Washington, DC 20005**

**E-mail submissions to slovering@acb.org with “candidates page” in the subject line.**

## Time Lines

**Submissions should be mailed, either by postal delivery or electronic mail, so that they reach the ACB national office no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on May 31, 2008. When we receive a declared candidate’s materials, we will check the membership database to ensure that he or she is a member in good standing. The online candidates’ page will be available at the ACB web site as soon after we have received all the submissions as possible, so that members will have access to the information in time for June membership meetings of local chapters. The pages will be available online no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on Friday, June 6, and will remain online at www.acb.org until the conclusion of convention.**

**We encourage ACB members who have computer access to share the contents of the candidates’ page with members who do not. Anyone who does not have Internet access to the candidates’ page may call the ACB national office and request that the information be read. An announcement will go out to all ACB lists when the page is up and ready for viewing.**

**When official campaigns begin in earnest at the ACB national convention, declared candidates will present at formal and informal state and special‑interest caucuses. In addition, the board of publications will sponsor a live question‑and‑answer Candidates’ Forum, which will be held on Thursday of convention week. The board of publications encourages all ACB members to submit written questions to be considered for this forum to the convention communications center. More details about this and other aspects of communications center operations will be included in the June issue.**

# Passings

**It has come to our attention that we are rapidly losing members of our community, friends and supporters of ACB. In order to honor these people whose lives have impacted us, in large and small ways, we are introducing a column called “Passings.” In this column we will list brief obituaries of those who have passed away. Please see below for the format in which you may submit information about an individual, and the first submission.**

## Obituary Format

**Please include as much of the following as possible when submitting material for this column. Submissions must involve dates no more than six months from intended date of publication.**

**Name (first, last, maiden if appropriate)**

**City of residence (upon passing)**

**State/province of residence (upon passing)**

**Other cities/states/countries of residence (places where other blind people may have known this person)**

**Occupation**

**Date of death (day if known, month and year)**

**Age**

**ACB affiliation (local/state/special-interest affiliates or national committees)**

## Brockman, Rev. Maurice “Brock”

**Rev. Maurice “Brock” Brockman passed away on Sept. 3, 2007 at the age of 85. He was a resident of Bloomington, Ind. Though a sighted individual, Brockman was active in ACB of Indiana, performing at various times the duties of treasurer, board member, and member of the ACB scholarship committee. He led various support groups and helped start a new local chapter; he also drove elderly and disabled to medical appointments. Brock had valiantly fought leukemia for the past three or four years.**

# Confronted by a Mountain

# by Ronald E. Milliman

**What does a blind person do when confronted by a mountain? For Erik Weihenmayer, the answer is very simple: “You just climb it!” Erik lost his sight at age 13, but with the support of his parents, he has become the first, and only, blind person to scale the highest mountains on all seven continents. In 1985, Erik learned to climb at a summer camp for the blind, and he has been climbing ever since.**

**In 1995, Erik reached the peak of Denali (Mount McKinley) in Alaska, and in 1996, he scaled the top of California’s El Capitan. Then, in 1997, he accomplished the greatest feat of all by getting married to his wife, Ellen Reeve, on Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania! Later, in 1997, Erik reached the zenith of Mount Kilimanjaro. He climbed to the peak of Argentina’s Aconcagua in 1999 and to the top of Canada’s Polar Circus in 2000. Later that same year, he conquered Nepal’s Ama Dablam as a part of his training for the Everest climb. In March 2001, Erik began his Mount Everest expedition and completed that feat of topping Mount Everest on May 25. He tackled and conquered Russia’s Mount Elbrus in 2002, and later that same year, he scaled Australia’s Mount Kosciusko. More recently, in 2006, he went to Africa to complete an expedition that took him and his mountain-climbing team to the top of 17,300‑foot Mount Kenya.**

**Recently, I had the pleasure of interviewing Erik about his latest excursion to Tibet where he and a group of six blind teenagers scaled Mount Everest. They climbed to a height of over 21,000 feet. The accomplishment is captured by his latest documentary, “BlindSight.” The movie is set against the breathtaking backdrop of the Himalayas, and follows the riveting adventure of Erik, his team of specialists, and six Tibetan teens who set out to climb the 23,000-foot Lhakpa Ri on the north side of Mount Everest. The movie fully describes how Erik and his team went to Tibet to visit a school for the blind and recruited a group of six teenagers who wanted, and were willing, to attempt to scale Mount Everest with Erik’s tutelage.**

**“BlindSight” was released last month and is fully audio described. I had the pleasure of previewing the movie and found it fascinating. It reveals how Erik was invited to the school for the blind in Tibet by the school’s students and creator, Sabriye Tenberken, who is also a blind educator. Sabriye is from Germany, where she tried to join Germany’s equivalent of the Peace Corps when she turned 18, and was rejected because of her blindness. She migrated on her own from Germany to Tibet, where she went from village to village locating blind children. She then established a school for the blind, and taught them how to read and write braille.**

**The movie delineates the extraordinary challenges and tribulations faced by the six teens, including how one of them had been sold by his parents to become a beggar on the streets and eventually ended up at the Tibetan school for the blind. Believed by many Tibetans to be possessed by demons, the blind children are shunned by their relatives and villagers, and generally rejected by the society in which they live. “BlindSight” depicts how these six teenagers are, literally, rescued by Sabriye Tenberken, and shown how to achieve their tallest challenges by Erik and his team of expert mountain climbers.**

**Climbing tall mountains isn’t the only thing Erik does. He is also a long‑distance cyclist, skydiver, accomplished snow skier, a marathon runner, former middle‑school teacher, wrestling coach, and author of two books. His mountain-climbing adventures are also featured in another documentary, “Farther than the Eye Can See” (2003).**

**I urge you to make an effort to see this movie. I believe you will enjoy it as much as I did, especially since it is audio-described. Watch for it in your area, and if there is a theater near you that has descriptive audio capability, contact them and ask if they will show the movie. This could also be an excellent documentary for universities and colleges to show as a part of their various diversity programs. Theaters interested in showing this movie should contact Richard Abramowitz at (914) 273‑9545 or e‑mail him at abramorama@aol.com.**

# Here and There

# by Sue Lichtenfels

**The announcement of products and services in this column is not an endorsement by the American Council of the Blind, its staff, or elected officials. Products and services are listed free of charge for the benefit of our readers. “The Braille Forum” cannot be held responsible for the reliability of products and services mentioned.**

**To submit items for this column, send a message to info@acb.org, or call ACB at 1-800-424-8666 and leave a message in mailbox 26. Please remember that postal regulations prohibit us from including advertisements, and that we need information two months ahead of actual publication dates.**

## IAADP Conference

**The International Association of Assistance Dog Partners will be holding its 15th annual conference in the United Kingdom on June 25, 2008. IAADP is a cross‑disability consumer advocacy organization with more than 2,000 members partnered with guide, hearing and service dogs. The conference will include presentations by a British animal behaviorist, Norwegian members discussing media outreach, a panel on access issues throughout the world and other topics. Registration for the conference is $70 for IAADP members and $90 for others. For more information and registration forms, visit www.iaadp.org, or call Tanya at (513) 245‑2199.**

## Oral Hull Summer Camps

**The Oral Hull Foundation for the Blind is now accepting registrations for its summer camps for people who are blind or visually impaired. The schedule is: adult adventure camp, Aug. 3‑9; traditional adult camp, Aug. 10‑17; and family camp Aug. 21‑24. Camp activities include: field trips, arts and crafts, swimming, hot tubbing, games, and entertainment. In addition to the traditional activities, programs for the adventure camp may include: white water rafting, challenge course, hiking, skydiving (additional fee) and more. New this year is the family camp for families who have visually impaired children age 17 and under. This is an ideal time for parents and children to connect with other families for campfires, swimming, hiking, new games, skits and more. Fees for the adult camps are $350; for family camp, $125 per adult and $75 per child. For more information about Oral Hull's summer camp programs, call (503) 668‑6195, e‑mail oralhull@teleport.com, or visit www.oralhull.com.**

## Camp T’s Summer Offerings

**Camp Tuhsmeheta has released its summer schedule of programs for youth who are visually impaired. For fees and additional information on the following programs, contact Camp Tuhsmeheta at (616) 754‑5410 or strider@campt.org. More information is also available at www.campt.org.**

* **Family camp (parents and kids): June 12 to 15**
* **Elementary camp (ages 7 to 12): June 15 to 25**
* **Culinary camp (ages 7 to 18): July 6 to 13**
* **Braille camp (ages 13 to 18): July 13 to 20**
* **Boot camp prepare for sailing trip (ages 13 to 18): July 13 to 20**
* **Adventure Trip Sail a ship‑Lake Michigan (ages 13 to 18): July 20 to 26**
* **Art/Drama Camp (ages 7 to 18): July 27 to August 2**
* **Music Camp (ages 7 to 18): August 2 to 10**
* **GPS Technology Event (ages 16 ‑ 99+): August 13 to 17**

## Tour Opportunities

**Mind’s Eye Travel creates tours for people who are visually impaired or blind. Itineraries are customized not only for great comfort, camaraderie and enjoyment but also for full sensory discovery. Destinations are carefully screened in advance with hand‑picked activities, restaurants and lodging. The trips for 2008 include: mid‑coast Maine; Sedona, Ariz. and the Grand Canyon; and Tortola, British Virgin Islands. For more information, visit www.mindseyetravel.com.**

### International Tour Program

**VisionOutdoor has been organizing nature tours for people who are blind or visually impaired since 2004. The organization strives to create unique experiences in and with nature and culture and give people the chance and inspiration to get active. Tours combine outdoor sports like canoeing, hiking or cross‑country skiing with cultural experiences. This summer VisionOutdoor will offer three tours: exploring Iceland on easy hikes and guided tours in June; learning about wolves and moose in Upper Lusatia, Germany in July; and spending time in the land of a thousand lakes (Finland) with activities like hiking and canoeing in August. For more information call 011-49‑521‑399‑8182 or visit www.visionoutdoor.de/start\_english.html.**

## Accessible Cell Phone Software

**Mobile Speak and Mobile Magnifier are software programs that make the multiple functions of cell phones accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired. The software is currently compatible with five phones offered by AT&T: the Nokia N75, Nokia E62, Cingular 3125, Samsung BlackJack (Windows Mobile version 5), and Pantech Duo (Windows Mobile version 6). Each software program costs $89. For additional information or to obtain a 30‑day software trial, contact AT&T's National Center for Customers with Disabilities at 1-866‑241‑6568 or visit www.wireless.att.com/about/disability‑resources/mobile‑speak‑magnifier.jsp.**

## Label It!

**“Label It! Braille & Audio Strategies for Identifying Items at Home & Work” is a new book by Judith M. Dixon. In this book, the author sorts through the labeling strategies that she and her friends have used through the years and identifies the very best ideas and tips. Focusing primarily on labeling with braille, the book covers all the bases: clothing and accessories, medications, food containers, appliances, and a hodgepodge of other items, from postage stamps to chargers and cables. She also discusses what to do when you can’t label something, and tricks to employ when you’re out and about and nothing is labeled. An extensive resource list at the back covers labeling materials and products. It is available in braille and PortaBook from National Braille Press for $10. To order a copy, call toll-free 1-888‑965‑8965 or visit www.nbp.org.**

## New Tactile Learning Tool

**ViewPlus recently released the new IVEO Hands‑on Learning System, which is a multi‑sensory learning system that makes teaching of visual concepts such as diagrams, images and art more complete and interactive for people who are visually impaired. The IVEO system includes a touch‑sensitive pad on which raised or embossed templates are placed. Students can touch the tactile pictures and diagrams on the pad while the software speaks descriptions of the objects being touched. Descriptions can include computer speech, recorded speech, sounds, music or even links to web pages or computer files that contain information about objects on the tactile template. New features include: the ability to add sounds, music and links to objects in the tactile template; an enhanced user interface; and a choice of the previous portable IVEO touchpad or a new large format touchpad. It comes with sample curriculum templates with more available for free download and printing from the ViewPlus web site at www.viewplus.com. Curriculum packs for biology, math, health, and geography will be available soon. For more information, contact info@viewplus.com or (541) 754‑4002.**

## ZoomText Scripting Edition

**Ai Squared has released ZoomText Scripting Edition software which allows a script writer to create scripts that improve workflow and efficiency for the ZoomText user. Scripting Edition makes it possible to customize the behavior of ZoomText and other applications, providing enhanced magnification and screen reading functionality, and automation of routine tasks. Examples of useful scripts might be: a script that announces the contact fields you're interested in when opening a database; having ZoomText automatically read each e-mail that you open; or announcing all new text that's delivered into your chat window. Along with this new software you will need someone with script writing experience to create your scripts. Ai Squared is recruiting script writers who may be able to help. For more information, or to place an order, contact Derek Bove at (802) 362‑3612 x108 or dbove@aisquared.com.**

## Safety Whistle Update

**Wings & Things, maker of the Safety Whistle, has moved. The new mailing address is: Wings & Things, 1608 W. Campbell Ave., Campbell, CA 95008. Because of the address change, Wings & Things may not have received your order/check. For new orders or questions about the status of your order, contact Diane Hedgecock at (408) 378‑0700.**

# High Tech Swap Shop

## For Sale:

**118 LPs – rock and roll, folk, country music from the '60s through the '80s. Will sell individually or together. Also have several music DVDs. Anyone interested should contact Barry Wood at (201) 868-3336.**

## For Sale:

**Six Kingston 4GB USB 2.0 flash drives. Brand-new in blister packs. Asking $35 each plus $10 shipping, handling and insurance. Lexmark Z715 inkjet printer with brand-new black and color cartridges, USB cable, power adapter, software with drivers and documentation. Asking $25 plus $20 shipping, handling and insurance. 17-inch SVGA computer monitor with stand, power cable and video cable. Asking $25 plus $25 shipping, handling and insurance. Black-and-white Magnicam portable CCTV camera with 5-inch black-and-white monitor, power adapters, carrying case, and video cables to connect the camera to the monitor or other device. Asking $100 plus $25 shipping, handling and insurance. Contact Donald Risavy Jr. via e-mail, donaldjjr@bellsouth.net, or phone (850) 208-1923.**

## For Sale:

**DJ mixer, $100 or best offer. Talking cell phone, $150 or best offer. Call Dwain at (609) 377-3229.**

# ACB Officers

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