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Submissions for the California Connection can be emailed to ca.connection@ccbnet.org.

Non-members are requested and members are invited to pay a yearly subscription fee of $10 toward the production of THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN.

In accepting material for THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN, priority will be given to articles concerning the activities and policies of the California Council of the Blind and to the experiences and concerns of blind persons. Recommended length is 1800 words.

The deadline to submit material for the summer, 2017 issue of THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN is noon, May 15, 2017.

Please send all address changes to the Executive Office.

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From the Editor's U2

By Mike Keithley

Strange title, what's a U2? Well, it's the Hims Braille Sense U2 notetaker, where I assemble the Blind Californian. And I write my own stuff on it too, so why not put "U2" in the title. "Master, your ego's showing." Ah common King.

So, welcome to the spring BC! I think you'll find a blend of serious and not-so-serious articles for your enjoyment and study.

Changes are coming to CCB, and President Wilkinson, Paul Shane and Catherine Skivers have much to say about them. Eric Smiley has a wonderful story to tell in "The Truck," and we have a little poem by Sarah Harris. Plus, Susan Glass gives us a "health report" from chapter profiles we've done. "You guys are lucky, you don't have to access your health website!"

So, ride the BC into spring and enjoy.

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George Bailey and the Miracle Question: Opposite Sides of the Coin

By Judy Wilkinson

Several us have been working on a Case for Support, a 4-10 page document explaining why anyone should give CCB money anyway? On another occasion the day before our Tommy T's fundraiser, the Executive Committee participated in a Vision Casting session with our CEO Paul Shane. More about both the Case for Support and Vision Casting another time. During that session, Paul asked us to imagine what the world would be like if we woke up and our mission had been accomplished.

That got me thinking!

Remember when in the movie "It's a Wonderful Life" George Bailey says his family would have been better off if he'd never been born? Clarence granted his wish and George learned how changing that one thing created a far-reaching domino effect. In a similar vein, what if there had never been a California Council of the Blind?

Hundreds of students would never have gotten scholarship help. They would have been dumped in the general Rehabilitation population rather than being served in the Division for the Blind created over a decade ago by SB 105. You have no rights as you travel the streets because there is no White Cane Law. You either don't have any rights to insurance or insurance companies can charge you outrageous rates because such protections were never legalized. Want money from an ATM? Want information about your prescriptions? Want to independently use a point-of-sale machine? You can't do any of those things because Structured Negotiations wouldn't have been available. Can't get adaptive equipment for your job and need a loan to buy your own? Sorry, the employment assistance loans don't exist. The hospital staff who knew better took your baby away because you were blind parents and deemed unable to responsibly care for your newborn. Blind parents, members of CCB weren't there to educate them on your behalf. How about using voting machines independently, accessing online voting, using audio devices at the movies? You're the loser because CCB isn't working on these cases right now.

Now imagine you wake up and CCB's mission has been accomplished: "to gain full independence and equality of opportunity for all blind and low vision Californians." You don't have to debate whether to let a possible employer know you are blind. Your assistive device needs will be met without question and you are being interviewed on a level playing field. By the way, that 70% unemployment number for blind folks is history; our rate is no worse than the national unemployment rate. Almost everything in your home is accessible to you through modern technology. Outside your home, streets are safer because APS on smart phone devices are ubiquitous; and those smart cars mean we're safer on the road. (You can't drive them yet though; after all, this dream must have some credibility!) There are lots of programs and activities for all our younger members, and services such as advice to people facing vision loss are readily available. And if you're facing tough times, there are loans and funds to tide you over. We have plenty of staff to provide extensive information and referral services. And we're back with full time staff devoted to our legislative efforts. After all, there are still challenges facing us and help we still need to provide the public about what blind people are and what they aren't.

George Bailey soon learned the world was a better place with him in it, and certainly it's a better place with CCB working toward accomplishing our mission. Moving forward, if we are ever going to wake up with all the goals accomplished, we need to create a compelling reason for donors to invest in us, which is why we're working so hard on our Case for Support. A number of you will be contacted to provide input for this all-important document. But in the meantime, CCB is moving forward with our exciting budget and innovative ideas. And though they may not have all the answers, our staff and your officers are mere phone calls or emails away.

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An Introduction

By Paul Shane

Greeting Friends:

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to those of you that I have not had the pleasure to speak with yet.

My name is Paul Shane and I am the new Chief Executive Officer for the California Council of the Blind. I began my tenure at the CCB on September 19, 2016 and let's just say that my time here has been "adventurous" to say the least. As a new CEO, it is industry practice to conduct a comprehensive assessment to understand the temperature of the organization and to begin to map out where your time is best spent for the maximum return of investment. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that the CCB lacked even the most basic infrastructure needed to conduct this assessment. As I soon discovered, the CCB, while a very mature organization in terms of age, was in fact operating in the initial stage of the nonprofit lifecycle. I remember thinking: "no problem, I can handle this, just start from scratch, you have done it before and can do it again." Then the computers crashed, the phones stopped working and I was asked to spearhead the budget for 2017 (which was another adventure entirely). Good times. Also, did I mention the simultaneous fundraiser at Tommy T's, the 2018 pre-convention walk through and the vision casting session?

My first ninety days at the CCB passed quickly and I learned a lot about the organization and about people who are blind and visually impaired. This period was intensive but, to be honest, I loved every minute. I am a lifelong learner who loves people. I have had the sincere privilege of meeting many amazing devoted people in my time at the CCB. Even on my most frustrating days, I come to work with a smile in anticipation of making a real difference in the lives of others and supporting a mission that truly matters to so many people. Having said that, now let me briefly visit some unpleasant realities. As I have said in both my report to the CCB Board of Directors and on the President's Call in January and February, the CCB needs to put some basic things in motion to become a long-term financially sustainable organization. At an absolute minimum, we need a strategic and operational plan, a comprehensive resource development plan and fund development model, a marketing and communications plan, internal financial controls consistent with industry standards, a commitment to avoiding emotion and concentrating on substance and an unwavering commitment to unifying the CCB under one mission and one vision. To accomplish these things, we need to put together the basic building blocks that these essential elements will grow out of.

Before we can do that, we need to discuss the elephant in the room. I have experienced both the best and the worst in people since starting at the CCB, and I can confidently state that I feel that the biggest current threat to the CCB is the internal strife present across the organization.

We need to put all our differences aside and to come together as a solid team if we plan to survive and thrive as we enter the exciting next stage of our development. This is not an insurmountable challenge. In fact, it is quite simple to overcome using a three-step method.

First, we increase transparency and communication across the membership. In the absence of information, the rumor mill flourishes.

We have already taken steps in this direction and welcome additional feedback and suggestions on how to increase these efforts.

Our first order of business in the new year was to get the 2017 budget approved and to make it accessible to every member of the CCB and the public who were interested in receiving it.

Next we set a requirement that chapter and affiliate presidents attend a monthly conference call to provide an additional channel of communication.

Our third step was to create the "Brown Bag for Knowledge" monthly conference call with the CEO. The purpose of this call is to create a direct two-way communication feedback loop between the CEO and the CCB Membership. This meeting will rotate monthly to insure everyone can participate. It will also evolve into a part questions and answers section and part educational workshop once topics relevant to the CCB Membership have been identified. Please refer to the CA Connections for times and dates for the meeting.

Second, we need to separate the personality conflicts and old wounds from new endeavors and opportunities and recognize our judgments and put them aside for the "Greater Good" and success of the CCB.

Third, we need to know when to be true to ourselves and true to the CCB. The CCB is a very diverse organization and there will probably never be a situation where everyone agrees on a course of action completely. At this pinnacle point, we are all faced with the individual decision to use our efforts to build up the CCB or to tear it down. To be successful and come together under one vision and mission, we need to be able to recognize when we reach this point and come to terms with the fact that even if we do not agree with the situation, we care enough about the CCB to make a conscious decision to "do no harm" to the efforts of others and to the CCB as a whole.

As one highly intelligent chapter president recently put it, "As a democratic organization, even if we don't agree with the vote or the direction of the organization, we have to respect it."

If we sincerely embrace this three-step method and are committed to it, the situation will fix itself. I have seen it work when implemented at other organizations and am confident that it will work for us. I truly believe in our ability to make this happen.

Now onto brighter topics. In 2016, the CCB membership contributed its time and talents to the organization by donating 40,409 volunteer hours, which is equivalent to $952,036 in in-kind services. This in an enormous accomplishment that you all should be proud of. Truly amazing work! As we all look toward the upcoming 2017 Convention, I would like you all to consider attending the fundraiser at BJ's Brew house on Wednesday, April 5th between the hours of 4 and 10 PM. The CCB will receive 20% of all proceeds during this time. BJ's Brew house is located about two driveways away from the Hilton of Woodland Hills and there will be plenty of guides available if you choose to use them.

There are also some new topics on the agenda this year, including a presentation on resource development by "yours truly”.

In addition, we will have exciting updates about the 2018 convention, and I will be hosting a brainstorming session to solicit your feedback on what you would like added to next year's convention. Stay tuned for a time and place.

In conclusion, I want to say thank you to all of you for your support and dedication to the CCB. It is often easy to forget to say thank you and take for granted those closest to us and I never want that to happen at the CCB. So, THANK YOU SO MUCH!! For everything that you all do in the name of the CCB. Never doubt that you are all appreciated! As always, feel free to call me or email me directly with questions and concerns and suggestions at 441-2100 or at paul.shane@ccbnet.org.

Yours in Service,

Paul Shane, CEO

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A Poem

By Sarah Harris

I stand in the warmth of the sunshine

But I cannot see its rise

I hear the birds singing

But I cannot see them fly

I smell the sweet scent of flowers

But I cannot see their color

But when I dream...

The sun is so bright it stings my eyes

The bird’s wings are so colorful that when they fly they paint a rainbow unlike any that I have ever seen

The flowers are such amazing shades of pink, purple, and orange

That I feel like I took a trip into wonderland with Alice by my side

Then I awake

And I open my eyes

To darkness

But I still have the memory of my dream

To remind me

That I am still alive

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Changing Times

By Catherine Skivers

If you read the last issue of the Blind Californian, you learned from our new president about the status of affairs in CCB today.

Throughout our history we have experienced changes, and realized outstanding successes in many areas. But just as our personal lives experience ups and downs, so it has been in the life of our organization: We have known some bad times too.

The first magazine distributed to our members in the early days was called the California Bulletin, and it was published monthly. Recruitment of members was not difficult back then.

The first two presidents of CCB were Dr. Newel Perry and Robert Campbell. From 1934 to 1959, they were directors of Advanced Studies at CSB.

Many blind students attended the School for the Blind and so they became acquainted with friends from all over the state. When they heard about the California Council of the Blind, quite a few of them joined the organization.

Through the years, many adults were involved with CCB throughout the state.

Along the way it was determined that blind children should go to public schools along with everyone else. This left many of them alone in a community where no one was familiar with working with the blind. If they were lucky, they had a resource teacher who helped them learn braille and the other skills needed to become independent people.

Quite often, when I have attended national conventions, I have heard college students receiving scholarships from ACB say they thought they were the only blind persons in the country, and they didn't realize how many blind people throughout the United States were gainfully employed and living independent lives.

Early in our history, the membership sold candy, held independent programs, and gave money to CCB.

Dolly Glass, who was a successful blind business woman, contacted many unions and other organizations and could get them to donate to the council.

For a long time, CCB was connected with a thrift store from which we received thousands of dollars each year as we were given 10% of their sales. Unfortunately, the store management dropped us and partnered with a group who took less money.

Then for many years we were connected with a car donation program, which helped us to remain financially sound. Some cars are still donated to us, but because of a change in laws for donations and less publicity, this source has not been able to help us sustain the cost of our programs.

Throughout the years, we could count on our membership to do whatever it took to help us raise money and become known. This was done by attending many county fairs and passing out literature, as well as writing countless braille notes and alphabets for the benefit of those who had never seen braille.

We have always worked for education, independence and employment for the blind.

In future issues of this magazine, I hope to list some of the benefits we enjoy because of the countless laws we have passed in the California legislature. It would be hard to find a blind or visually impaired person in our state who has not had a better life because of our efforts.

In 1959, a quarter of our delegates left the council and formed the Associated Blind of California. The members of this group helped form the American Council of the Blind and became the first California affiliate of ACB. This was the first major change of this type in CCB.

While having two organizations in the state meant that we had two groups working on state committees and legislation, it did create some difficulty because our legislators were reluctant to vote on a bill if the two groups did not always agree on it.

While testifying before an investigative committee, I was asked why the blind groups didn't get together and just have one organization.

My answer was "that's a great idea Senator! Why don't Republicans and Democrats do that and tell us how it happened."

This brought laughter and applause from the audience and a hug from Oakland Senator Nick Petras.

In 1978, the council found itself threatened by the national federation. It was a policy for quite a time, to give half of money raised during White Cane Week [see Cathie’s article in the winter, 2017 BC] to the federation. It seems that half of our other monies were also expected to be given to them.

A bequest was received by CCB for California. The federation demanded half of it, and a court battle ensued. Bob Campbell and George Fogarty, who belonged to the Associated Blind of California at that time, assisted the council, which finally succeeded in keeping its money.

There have been other difficulties that you will hear about in our history articles later.

CCB has taken the lead in many areas. For years, we have had the California Connection, which has enabled our members to call an 800 number and find out what is going on throughout CCB. Most of the time this support was provided by our own members. I had the privilege of recording the English version for more than 10 years. Maria Lopez and many other CCB members translated the material for our Spanish speaking friends, and for several years now staff members have been reading the Connection in English.

CCB has prided itself on receiving no funds from any governmental agency.

In the 90's we combined forces with several disability groups and applied for a grant to bring AIDS education to disabled communities. As far as we could ascertain, no other such group existed in the United States or the world. During that time, about a half dozen of our members got part time work in reaching out to the blind throughout the state, supplying braille and large print materials and other training regarding AIDS.

In 2002, our council and the National Federation of the Blind of California combined their efforts to secure the passage of SB105, a bill that gave California a division within the State Department of Rehabilitation to serve the blind and visually impaired and the deaf and hard of hearing. It took two years to accomplish this.

In about the year 2000, Jim Willows, at that time the President of the NFBC, and I talked about the need for our organizations to work together. The blindness community has wanted a commission for the blind for a very long time, and while we had not been successful in accomplishing this, we were finally able to get our division. When we appeared before the legislature, Senator John Burton, who had introduced the bill for us, agreed with my testimony that this was a history-making bill because for the first time, the major organizations for the blind had come together to bring about this monumental change.

As I read Judy Wilkinson's article in the last BC, my heart went out to her; history does repeat itself.

When I came in as president in 1997, we were out of money and some of our restricted funds had been used. Thanks to the car program, some variety shows we had to raise money for us, and some wonderful people who left us extremely generous bequests, we could build many programs we wanted for CCB. We did quite well for a very long time, but times have changed and tax exempt organizations are finding themselves with much less support from the public than we have known in the past.

When things go wrong, we always think we should have a change, and change is good if you choose a path that has the likelihood of succeeding.

Our membership has always supported us in our changes, so we have remained successful.

But you must be careful with change. If you doubt that, just look at what's happened to our country lately!

I hope that you will all remember that we can't have success without your help. Please join me and many others in supporting our new president and our new executive director, Paul Shane, in continuing to build and strengthen CCB. There is still much to be done for the blindness community.

Our children need help learning braille, there's talk about eliminating specialized services for the blind, and the unemployment rate among blind people is still ridiculously high. Wonder what the powers that be will think of next? Can we count on you?

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The truck

By Erik Smiley

The truck pulled up and parked at the curb with a hiss of air brakes and an idling engine. This seemed like a normal thing which happened every few days or so. Another delivery was being made to the local store by an ordinary- looking truck with "United Groceries", plastered prominently on the vehicle.

I was supposed to be taking care of my own errands and deliveries but something made me stay and look again.

The child, a boy of about age 6 stood nearby and with great anticipation worked his way closer to the idling truck. It looked for a minute like he was going to walk right under the machine. With the toe of his right foot he felt for the edge of the curb and reached up to touch the truck's rounded front fender. Keeping his hand on the vehicle, he listened with rapt attention.

A truck! I heard it from down the street coming closer and closer and now stopping. I knew right where it was and headed over to get better sounds and smells.

Mom and Dad told me about staying out of the street, saying a car could hurt me very badly.

A few days ago, I had tried to touch the school bus right when it stopped in front of us so we could get on. I thought my hand would just brush the bus but no, it pushed my hand and arm and I would have fallen if my friends hadn't caught me. The bus driver, scared that he may have done serious damage jumped off to see if I was all right.

"Don't you ever do that again", he said. "This bus could have run you right over."

I waited until this truck was stopped all the way. "Pshshshsh", went the air brakes.

Now, it was time to move. I followed the curb with my foot. I knew this curb on this street. It was my street. It's called Playa and I was across the street from my house and the store was behind me.

The truck was idling right in front of me now, the heat and diesel fumes of the engine were coming out at me and I touched the amazing machine which I knew I could reach. I heard the air brakes hiss and the door close. I didn't think there was anybody in it.

A growing group of us stood a short way down the sidewalk with our backs to the shops and our business forgotten for the moment as we watched this unusual and possibly dangerous but fascinating situation unfolding before us. It was much more interesting than the mundane stuff that most of us had in store for the rest of our day.

The little boy was now standing very close to the truck. His left hand was still on its front fender, feeling the vibration of the idling machine.

"That's dangerous", someone in our group said, but the woman's voice was swallowed by the engine of the truck and the boy was oblivious to anything but the pounding pistons, heat and diesel fumes just in front of him.

"Good," I thought. "Be quiet and let this happen a little longer."

Now some other voices of concern, "Should we call the police!", "Who is he?", "Is he "Blind", I answered the question. "What!” "Should he be by himself?" "You lost kid"?

Oh! It was the driver, back from making his delivery, startling me back to the world, bending close, his voice loud to be heard over the engine, his breath smelling like cigarettes and onions.

"What's in this truck”? I asked.

"I'm the driver", he answered.

I asked again, facing up toward his voice, "What's in this truck!"

"Oh, I got groceries for the store in here."

"What kind of engine's in this truck!" I wanted to know.

"It's a big diesel engine, son".

I listened to the idling machine, wanting to get in and go where it and this amazing man who drove it were going.

"Ok, I got to go and finish my run, and then go all the way back to San Jose."

I know about San Jose. It's where we pick up relatives at the airport and there are more neat sounds like screaming jets, roaring freeways, and trucks everywhere.

"Let's get you back out of the way so I don't run over you as I go out. Your mother would kill me if I did that, wouldn't she?"

Big hands on my shoulders were now bringing me back from the edge of the curb.

"Now, stay right there so I can get going. You be careful out here all by yourself, see you later."

The driver's door slammed, air brakes hissed, the motor revved, gears ground, and the truck was off. The truck pulled out and the little boy stood where the driver had parked him, listening intently, head tipped forward taking in the last groan of engine and whine of transmission which was getting further and further off and finally giving way to the usual sounds of this small town: light traffic, someone's laugh, children at play, bird song, and always the comforting surf about a quarter mile away.

Some of the crowd had moved away but now someone behind me remained curious to see what would happen next.

"Shouldn't someone help him?"

"Hold on a sec", I said. "My kids go to school with him and they told me some stories about the blind kid who walks around with his eyes closed and knows where he's going."

We didn't have to wait long to have this confirmed for us. The child turned from where he had been standing and yes, with eyes closed, making clicking sounds with his tongue, walked into the general store about 20 feet away.

We could hear him talking excitedly to someone about what he had just experienced.

"O", said the concerned onlooker picking up a bag and heading to a parked car not far away.

Now, I was alone on the sidewalk, with the surf and bird song. The child, the truck and the voice of concern had gone to continue the day and now it was my turn to do the same.

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New Transportation Option for Seniors

By Kenneth Semien, as seen on the ACB Leadership List

Hello Everyone:

I hope that you are doing well and you can smile during any challenges you may be facing.

Here is a new service taking advantage of the new on demand transportation technology that can help older adults maintain their independence while putting family member's minds at ease! Gogograndparent.com connects seniors to Uber to get to doctor's appointments, a bridge club or anywhere they want to go within 100 miles.

It sounds super easy and no smart phone is required. You can try out their demo with a sample phone call right from their website. Operators are available 24/7, too!

I registered today when I dialed (855) 464-6872. You can add an emergency contact for safety purposes. Your emergency contact can receive an email or text message alerting them of your requested trip.

The best thing about this service is that you aren't required to download an App, and that is good for seniors who don't have a cell phone.

Review the frequently asked questions by accessing gogograndparent.com/faq.

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The New Los Angeles County Voting System

By Noel H. Runyan

About 10 years ago, Los Angeles County was faced with a decision of whether to spend their millions of HAVA (Help America Vote Act) dollars on the poorly designed and mostly inaccessible voting systems that were being offered by voting system vendors or to find an alternative solution. The county chose the bold alternative of designing their own voting system, one that could better meet the needs of their diverse electorate. This was a major effort, since Los Angeles County is home to approximately a quarter of the voters in the state of California. The County started this effort by formally launching a Voting System Assessment Project (VSAP) and establishing a VSAP Advisory Committee representing various communities, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders. They also established a VSAP Technical Advisory Committee composed of subject-matter experts representing technical backgrounds in accessibility, usability and security of election technology.

With the aid of disability groups and other stakeholders, a set of General Voting System Principles was developed and adopted by the VSAP Advisory Committee to guide the voting system development and implementation.

The thorough list of design principles included accessibility-related principles such as the requirement that the system must guarantee a private and independent voting experience for everyone, including voters with a full range of types of disabilities and those with limited English proficiency.

Some of the advocacy groups that participated in and provided significant feedback in the VSAP research, design, and testing activities were representatives from United Cerebral Palsy of Los Angeles, California Council of the Blind, Disability Rights California, Communities Actively Living Independent and Free, the Los Angeles County Commission on Disability, and the Braille Institute.

Over 3,800 stakeholders participated in focus groups, surveys, community discussions, brainstorming sessions, and user testing.

For my own part, I was involved as a member of the VSAP Technical Advisory Committee. One of my hot buttons was making sure that the design included access and security concerns from the very start, rather than having them added on late in the design process, as after thoughts or Band-Aids.

I also pushed repeatedly, throughout the design process to make sure that the voting machine included an attached ballot box, to assure it would support hands-free ballot casting. When representatives of election poll workers' interests strongly pushed back against having those ballot boxes on each machine, we pressed them to describe the reasons for their strong concerns.

The engineers developed technical solutions that removed most of their concerns, and we eventually reached consensus on an acceptable design that included workable attached ballot boxes.

To me, this was an excellent example of how LA County's inclusive design process worked well to derive solutions to many of the design road blocks that seriously hampered other voting system designs.

The award-winning Palo Alto based human-centered design firm, IDEO, was engaged as a major partner in the research and development of several generations of prototype voting machines that were tested and redesigned many times.

The IDEO team spent several days at my home learning about accessibility issues and tools, and I spent several days at their Palo Alto facilities, discussing and testing their various prototype designs. IDEO took several different prototype voting machine designs to Los Angeles, where they ran exhaustive human factors tests with typical Los Angeles voters or potential voters.

Feedback from Los Angeles area voters with disabilities helped the IDEO team make several surprising human factors discoveries.

One was the realization that the design could be greatly simplified and functionally improved by designing the support for the touch screen display so that its height and angle could be adjustable enough to accommodate very different height requirements, alleviating the need to raise and lower the whole voting machine. Prior to that, many voting system designers assumed the whole machine had to be raised or lowered for height accommodation.

Admittedly, over the last several years, there were many times when we all felt quite frustrated with the slow pace of the VSAP voting system development, because reaching consensus with so many stakeholder interest groups seemed like trying to herd cats.

However, now that the VSAP has produced an excellent finished prototype design, all the time and effort invested in including feedback from so many stakeholders in the design process was well worth the time and frustration.

\* What is this new voting system?

Basically, the new voting system is an accessible paper Ballot Marking Device or BMD. It looks somewhat like a simplified computer terminal or cash issuing machine. It allows you to insert a blank ballot in a slot, use the visual display or audio interfaces to make your vote selections, have your choices printed on the ballot, and then be offered an opportunity to verify the correct marking of the printed ballot before the machine places your paper ballot in the attached ballot box.

The paper ballot is a simplified form of ballot, called a selections-only ballot. That means that the ballot only has the names of each contest, followed by the voter's choice for that contest. This makes it much easier to verify the correct marking of the ballot.

The verification of the marked ballot is accessible in several ways. Before casting into the ballot box, a sighted voter can view the actual marked paper ballot.

Voters who are blind can choose to have the machine scan in and read back the marking it finds on the printed ballot, or the voter might choose to remove the ballot and scan it with their own smart phone camera and reading system such as the KNFB Reader.

\* Summary of the VSAP Ballot Marking Device Accessibility

Features

1. Touch screen display with height and angle adjustments
2. Multiple languages and the ability to toggle back and forth between them
3. Choice of high or low contrast
4. Text size options for medium, large, and extra-large characters
5. Audio ballot option speaking all languages
6. Voice rate and volume controls
7. Attached headphones
8. Audio jack for users’ own headphones or listening devices
9. An A-B switch control jack on the front of the machine
10. Tactile control keypad attached by flexible cable
11. Braille labels and unique shapes for keypad buttons
12. Wheelchair accessible height and controls
13. Integrated Ballot Box
14. Paper ballot verification option for both audio and touch screen users
15. Front edge sensor for scanning vote selections from a mobile vote carrier or “poll pass”

\* Additional Access-related Features of the Voting System

The County has completely redesigned, large print, vote by mail paper ballots.

For voters who have access to computers or smart mobile devices, LA County will provide a method for voters to visit a County web site to download their ballot definition file. Then, using their preferred access tools and taking as much time as they wish, voters use that ballot definition file and a special program or app to make their ballot selections. When finished, the system generates a vote selections carrier or poll pass. This “poll pass” digitally represents all the voter's selections and can be either printed on paper or stored on a smart phone or another mobile device.

The voter then takes this representation of their vote selections to their polling place, where they can scan it into one of the voting machines by simply waving the paper or mobile device screen past the front edge of the voting machine. The voter can then accessibly review all their vote selections as if they had just entered those choices on the voting machine.

They can go on to print, verify, and cast their ballot on the machine in the normal way.

\* Braille Display Support

We architected the design of the new voting system so that it might be possible to support attaching external standard braille displays to the USB interface jack. However, designing a USB interface to prevent security exposures would hold up the system's introduction in 2018, so the LA voting systems will not initially support external display attachments.

Voters who wish to use their braille displays will need to advocate for LA County to invest in the effort to develop a secure USB port.

\* Vote Center Issues

Recent state legislation has paved the way for counties in California to start using vote centers, instead of many local neighborhood polling places.

Originally, I assumed using vote centers was a bad idea, but I have since found that there are more advantages to vote centers then I formerly thought. Instead of over 4,000 separate local polling places in LA County, the County might replace them with something like 700 vote centers or super polling places.

Instead of being open for just one election day, the vote centers might be open for 10 days.

Switching to vote centers may present some people with greater transportation challenges, assuming they will be, on average, further from their homes compared to current local polling places. However, it may be possible to select vote centers with better access to public transportation systems.

It is claimed that vote centers might be more accessible, including access to bathrooms, etc.

The staff at vote centers could more easily have better training.

Allowing voting throughout the week and the weekend might make it easier for everyone to accommodate their own schedules, plan for rides, baby sitters, etc.

Now, it is not clear how well many of the possible advantages of vote centers will work for us.

However, one of the most promising is that vote centers in LA County will be able to accommodate anyone, since the Ballot Marking Devices can print any needed ballot style for any voting precinct. Any valid LA County voter should be able to go to any of the County's vote centers and vote without being turned away or forced to vote provisionally.

\* In Summary

Thanks to the support of many stakeholder groups, the new LA County voting system has a very robust and flexible design that can be modified to assure that it can keep up with changes in voting laws, technology innovations, and the changing needs of voters and elections officials.

The County has completed the system research, design, and engineering phases of the VSAP process and has developed several prototypes of this new system. These prototypes are functional units that allow for interactive demonstration of the voting system.

Los Angeles County is now starting the manufacturing phase of the project and plans to have the units available for use in the 2018 election.

In the meantime, LA County election officials will be involved in a major outreach program to help folks learn about and plan to start using this exciting new system.

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A CCB Health Report as Reflected Through Chapter Profiles

By Susan Glass

For the last two years, the BC has featured profile articles about several CCB chapters: Orange County chapter, ACB Capitol chapter, Greater Los Angeles and Glendale Burbank chapters, Fresno, Silicon Valley, Humboldt, and San Francisco chapters. We are by no means finished sharing our chapter stories; we still need to hear from East Los Angeles, Active Blind Inland Valley, Bayview, Compton, Contra Costa, Golden Gate, Greater Bakersfield, Lakewood, Long Beach, High Desert, Redwood Empire, San Bernardino, San Diego Braille Club, San Diego, San Gabriel Valley, and Solano County.

If I haven't named your Chapter, please nudge me, because I want to include all voices.

I can see that to publicize all of us in timely fashion, I'll need to write at least two profiles per issue. But in the meantime, the 8 chapters who have shared their stories with us have brought to light several strengths common to CCB chapters, as well as several needs and challenges that we all face. This article attempts to gather strengths, needs, and challenges into one accessible place, a midpoint check in if you will, as we move forward into 2017.

\* Engaging in Community Service as an Educational and Networking Tool

The CCB chapters profiled thus far embrace the value of serving their surrounding communities, and in so doing, educating those larger communities about the viable presence and needs of blind/visually impaired people.

The Greater Los Angeles Chapter for instance, participates in an annual holiday toy drive sponsored by one of their local television stations. They also sing holiday carols at nearby nursing homes, and in June of 2017, they plan on procuring nonperishable items for a city-wide food drive.

The Humboldt chapter created and maintains a water front sensory garden where all citizens experience the textures and fragrances from a plethora of plants. While citizens experience the garden, they encounter blind and visually impaired people caring for it, and at the garden entrance stands a box of braille alphabets available to any interested person.

The San Francisco chapter sponsors the Alice Chavez Pardini Education Advancement Grant that annually provides $2,500 to a legally blind student who demonstrates a need for assistance in improving educational access.

Likewise, the Silicon Valley chapter awards an annual $1,000 technology grant to a blind or visually impaired individual from Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Mateo and San Bonito Counties, who can show that a particular piece of adaptive technology will enhance his/her work, education, or quality of life.

The Fresno chapter hosts Dining in The Dark experiences for their surrounding community, where attendees eat a meal while blindfolded, and are served this meal by their blind and visually impaired hosts. They also hear stories of blindness and visual impairment, and end their evening with a deeper understanding of blindness, not as handicap, but as opportunity.

Chapters with service projects on which they can focus tend to mobilize, grow, and experience success. When their successes are known to their surrounding communities, it's easier for them to appeal to those communities when fund-raising time comes around, since they appeal for funding from a base of success rather than one of need.

\* Educating Members

A second strength of CCB chapters is our ability to educate our members.

Around election time, nearly all of us invite representatives from the League of Women Voters to our meetings to acquaint us with local, state, and federal issues.

Several chapters have legislative committees who regularly update members on state and federal issues directly affecting them as blind people.

Several recruit program speakers who address everything from audio description, to adaptive technology, to recreational opportunities.

For a time, the Orange County chapter featured a "Program Corner" at each membership meeting. One meeting might feature books as its Program Corner, and members would share their favorites. Another meeting might feature hobbies as the Program Corner, and yet a third might feature favorite recipes.

When a chapter educates its members while also meeting their social needs, it's bound to stay healthy.

\* Collaborating on Fund-Raisers

Andrea Pitsenbarger, who is president of the Orange County chapter, shared the following fund-raising strategy: "We network with other organizations in our community who are also having fund-raisers. Certain of our chapter members know people at the Braille Institute, AA and several senior centers. They are our points of contact. We attend events sponsored by their organizations, and they in turn attend ours." Several other chapters engage in this strategy.

Thus, the frequent announcements in the California Connection about upcoming chapter picnics, holiday parties and other fund-raising, community-building events.

CCB chapters might consider extending this collaborative fund-raising approach beyond blindness organizations to other community groups seeking to benefit the common good. I write this suggestion with the caveat that we avoid becoming too diffuse, as we want to retain our ultimate focus on bettering the lives of blind and visually impaired people.

\* Advocating for Our Issues

Advocacy throughout our organization has assumed many forms. The ACB Capitol chapter's proximity to the state legislature has enabled it to spearhead advocacy efforts on all our behalf. A case in point was when members of this chapter testified before the state legislature to prevent a drastic funding cut to our Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Chapter Vice President and Advocacy Chair Margie Donovan also tirelessly worked with her constituents to bring audio description to Broadway Sacramento, one of the city's performing arts venues. More recently, she arranged for Audio Description Project Director Dr. Joel Snyder, to hold a describer training seminar in the Folsom area.

Humboldt chapter members advocated for audio description in their local movie theaters, and for audible traffic signal installation throughout their community.

There are of course, many ways to advocate, and they can range from overt efforts like these, to the daily examples that we all set by living actively in our communities.

\* Challenges Apparently Faced by All CCB Chapters Surveyed

Thus far not surprisingly, all chapters face the challenge of balancing between the needs of members seeking a social outlet, those who want to focus on local issues, and those wishing for deeper involvement in, and ties to, both CCB and ACB.

Recruiting new members, especially younger ones is a challenge. Sarah Harris of the Fresno chapter, believes that using social media will go a long way toward reaching these young people, provided of course, that we offer activities that interest them. Sarah is now a member of the CCB Publications Committee, with specific responsibilities that involve helping CCB build a social media presence.

Pam Metz of the Los Angeles chapter, invites CCB as it recruits new members, to "reflect the diversity of every group in the United States."

The Glendale Burbank chapter is rising capably to this invitation, boasting an age range of 30 to 82, with occupations as varied as a former Broadway actor, a teacher, a social worker, a therapist, an attorney, an employee at The Braille Institute, parents, grandparents, the list continues. Congenial, hospitable, welcoming, and homey, are the words members use to describe their chapter. One member has made others aware of gay pride, another of the challenges inherent in alcoholism recovery. All of course, come together to grapple with the challenges of limited vision and blindness.

The challenges listed here are significant, and we'll need to hear from every voice in every chapter to meet them.

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Proposed Constitutional Amendment

By Gabe Griffith, CCB Constitution and Bylaws Committee Chair

Since this article is lengthy we wanted to provide it to you here to be able to get an idea of what will be presented at the Spring 2017 CCB conference and convention. The Constitution and Bylaws Committee appreciates your input. You can give us your thoughts on this proposed amendment by emailing Gabe Griffith at gabrielgriffith@gmail.com or by calling 925-768-8195.

Thank you.

Proposed Amendment

Section 10.11 -- Censure, Suspension, and Removal of Officers and Directors

10.11.1 General -- An officer or director of the Council may be censured, suspended, or removed for cause: a documented breach of the CCB Constitution and Bylaws, or of the written policies established by the Board of Directors including:

10.11.1.1 Policy Regarding Expectations, Roles, and Responsibilities for Members of the Board of Directors;

10.11.1.2 Confidentiality Policy;

10.11.1.3 Policy Regarding Conflicts of Interest and Discharge of Duties;

10.11.1.4 Any policies subsequently adopted by the Board of Directors.

10.11.2 Conditions:

10.11.2.1 A censure may be issued for a first-time breach of the Constitution and Bylaws or of existing Board policy while suspension or removal may be imposed for what the Board deems as an extreme breach, or repeated breaches of the Constitution and Bylaws or of existing Board policy regardless of whether such breach(es) represent a first-time violation.

10.11.2.2 An officer or director may not be censured, suspended, or removed for behavior such as expressing strong disagreement or arguing for an unpopular position.

10.11.3 Censure -- The Board of Directors may censure an officer or director between conventions or at the Board meeting scheduled during the annual convention by a two-thirds (2/3) roll call vote. When an officer or director is censured, he/she will be given written notice that should the offending behavior continue, or a separate breach of the Constitution and Bylaws or of existing Board policy occur, suspension and/or removal may result.

10.11.4 Suspension

10.11.4.1 The Board of Directors may suspend an officer or director between conventions or at the Board meeting scheduled during the annual convention for an extreme breach or repeated breaches of the Constitution and Bylaws or of existing Board policy by a two-thirds (2/3) roll call vote. Upon imposition of a suspension, the suspended officer or director forfeits the right to vote as a member of the Board, to participate in Board deliberations, or in any other way to be a part of Board communications.

10.11.4.2 A suspension must be referred to the membership for ratification at the next scheduled convention following the Board meeting at which such action was taken. Ratification of a suspension will be by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the membership. In no event, shall a suspension be longer than one year from the date of its ratification by the membership.

10.11.5 Removal

10.11.5.1 The Board of Directors may suspend an officer or director with recommendation for removal between conventions or at the Board meeting scheduled during the annual convention for a breach or repeated breaches of the Constitution and Bylaws or of existing Board policy that, in the opinion of the Board, is so egregious as to warrant such removal. A two-thirds (2/3) roll call vote of the Board will be required for such recommendation.

10.11.5.2 Removal of an officer or director must be referred to, and upheld by, a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the membership at the next scheduled convention following the Board meeting at which such action was taken. The convention must receive notice of the impending vote at least 24 hrs. in advance of such vote.

10.11.5.3 If an officer or director is so removed, a replacement will be elected in accordance with the provisions set forth elsewhere in this constitution. The replacement officer or director shall serve the unexpired term of the removed officer or director. A president so removed shall not serve as immediate past president.

10.11.6 Causes for Removal of An Officer or Director -- In addition to the causes referenced in 10.11.1, an officer or director may be removed for one or more of the following causes, or multiple breaches of the same cause:

10.11.6.1 Failure to attend three-quarters (3/4) of scheduled Board meetings called in any 12-month period;

10.11.6.2 A documented breach of ethics or conflict of interest;

10.11.6.3 Employment with the Council;

10.11.6.4 Repeated discourtesy or disrespect shown toward other Board members, or members of the Council;

10.11.6.5 Repeated failure to adhere to Robert's Rules of Order.

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Embracing Membership and the CCB Organization

By Vivian Younger, CCB Membership Committee Chair

Whether you are a president, chapter or affiliate member or a member at large, your participation in the CCB Membership Committee focus calls can help this committee go a long way towards the accomplishment of CCB membership goals.

Don't be left out!

The CCB Membership Committee values your input, time and any way you feel comfortable contributing to this committee.

As the CCB Membership Chair, I hope that we will be able to address the following topics during future telephonic focus calls and/or during CCB Conferences and Conventions:

1. Learn about Members at Large interests and concerns.
2. Establish outreach and support networking for newly blind members.
3. Explore methods for attracting Young Members to the CCB Organization.
4. Organize a blindness awareness Seminar for sighted professionals who work for blindness auxiliary support agencies such as The Diabetic Society.
5. Prepare for mentor training. The CCB Membership Committee will be offering mentor training in June of this year. In addition to being provided with formal information about mentoring, expect to have fun during this training and future focus calls.

So, let's get going!

If you are only able to make phone calls, that is okay. If you work and are only able to write a few follow-up email letters each month, that would be great. If you are retired and would like to start a chapter or participate in a public event about CCB, we are here to help. If you are shy and are hesitant about what you can do for CCB, your involvement may result in a newly blind member being able to make the first step towards independence. If you are interested in posting CCB related videos or pictures on social media, that would be awesome. Prior to posting CCB information or pictures and so forth, it must be approved by the CCB Office.

Whatever you decide to do in the CCB Organization, your involvement in CCB activities will help to strengthen and embrace CCB Membership Goals.

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Summaries of CCB Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Compiled by Ardis Bazyn, CCB Secretary

June 12, 2016 Minutes, Approved by the CCB Board on August 30, 2016.

Jeff called the meeting to order. Ardis Bazyn, Leena Bandy, and Robert Wendt were absent. A motion to accept the agenda as sent was passed. A motion to accept the April 7, 2016 minutes as sent was passed. Donna gave a report on the L.A. Mutt Strut outreach thus far. A motion to accept the report on recommendations relating to the web hosting issue passed. A motion to take up the recommendations separately was passed. A motion to defer discussion on the recommendations until after input was given from the TOG was passed.

Peter gave a short treasurer's report. The revenue was $50,214 and expenses were $81,278 which left a minus difference of $30,653. A motion to accept the Treasurer's report as read was passed. Judy Wilkinson suggested the date for the next CCB Board meeting. The hiring committee will be creating a first draft of an employee handbook. Jeff thanked the CCB Board members who will be leaving the Board: Vince Calderon, Gene Lozano and Donna Pomerantz. A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting, it passed.

The July 12, 2016 Minutes Were Approved by the CCB Board on August 30, 2016. Judy Wilkinson called the teleconference Board meeting to order. Ardis Bazyn called the roll, and Robert Wendt was absent. A motion was passed to accept the agenda with a change. Judy discussed how she planned to conduct future meetings. Eight directors briefly introduce themselves. A motion was passed regarding the Resolution transferring Jeff Thom's name to Judy's. A motion passed that minutes approved by the Board be submitted to the office and that their availability published in the Connection and website. Attached documents would not be published on the website.

Further discussion of the Altschul Report took place. A motion was passed to adopt number 4 with an addition that at least 2 members of the TOG be trained to use the website, be consulted about development work and to make sure the site is checked for accessibility.

Peter Pardini gave an updated Treasurer's report. The car donation link hasn't been sent yet so it hasn't been marketed. A motion to accept the report was passed. Peter explained the reasons for having a modified audit rather than a full-blown audit. A motion was passed to have the review instead of the full audit for 2015. A motion was passed to approve budgeting for a part-time administrative assistant for three months this year [2016] and to budget for a whole year in 2017. Donna Pomerantz gave a Mutt Strut report. Judy gave an update on appointed chairs of some committees. Christie Crespin will chair the scholarship committee, Jeff will chair the Governmental Affairs committee. Mike Keithley will be the new editor of the BC and Susan Glass will be the associate editor. Judy mentioned August office hours and president's call. A motion was passed to adjourn the meeting.

The August 30, 2016 Minutes were approved on November 10, 2016

Judy Wilkinson called the meeting to order. Ardis called the roll and no one was absent. Judy introduced Paul Shane, the new CCB Executive Director. He will be starting September 19. September 30 will be Ed Branch's last day. Minutes were approved for March 31, June 12 and July 12. A motion was passed to accept a Convention Committee update.

After the Technical Operations Committee report was given, a motion was passed to accept recommendation B on number 2. A motion to accept items 3 and 4 of this report passed. A motion to postpone voting on the recommendations under number 5 passed--they will be clarified and brought back to the Board. A motion to reject number 6 passed. A motion to adopt items 7, 8 and 9 passed. Peter gave a brief report which was accepted. Income received until July 31 was: $53,590. Investment income was: $30,394. Expenses were: $144,677. The difference was negative $60,692. A Newel Perry Fund update was accepted. In her Mutt Strut update, Donna mentioned Mutt Strut costs for particular registrations and products. Table cost will be decided later. A motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 PM passed.

The November 10, 2016 Minutes were approved on January 26, 2017.

Judy Wilkinson called the meeting to order. CEO Paul Shane was present, but 2nd Vice-President Gabe Griffith; Secretary Ardis Bazyn; and directors Pam Metz, Robert Wendt and Vivian Younger were absent. Judy said that changes in the Free Conference Call service caused problems when recording meetings. She also shared how she uses the Executive Committee of CCB officers. Given that the top three officers are all new and we have a new staff, she uses the group as a sounding Board for ideas and advice. Meetings are closed and informal; no minutes are taken, but she will keep the Board informed. A motion passed to approve the minutes of August 30. Judy announced that all but one Board member has signed up for the Mutt Strut. She and Donna reported that over $16,000 have been raised so far. Donna gave the latest information about the day itself. Great Getaway raffle tickets are available until the end of November, and The First Giving pages will be open until February 19. Paul Shane explained why we propose hiring Jennifer Caldeira full time. The additional cost to CCB through the first six months is only $160. A motion passed to move Jennifer to full-time status.

A proposal to spend $5,000 to upgrade our computers and server as recommended by our consultant Jerry Redmond (with Paul Shane's additions) passed. It is understood that one computer in good condition will be totally accessible with updated software, even if it means expending additional funds down the road. This expenditure will be reflected in our budget. Judy reported that we have begun the search for new office space. Our lease is up in November, but we may have a chance for a lease buyout. The committee for the office space search consists of Judy, Jeff, Paul S, and Jennifer. Peter offered to assist. Paul Shane reported on various mishaps with our 15-plus-year-old van. A motion passed to allow Paul S to dispose of the van and CCB will rent vehicles when appropriate. A motion passed to adopt the IRS policy circulated to the Board for those circumstances when employees are using their own vehicles in conducting CCB business. Jeff in his role as Convention Committee Chair, reported the committee's exploratory thinking regarding scheduling. He reported a group will be paying a site visit to the Hilton Woodland Hills Hotel in early December. At the committee's recommendation, a motion passed to raise convention registration fees from $20 to $30. A motion to adjourn passed.

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California Council of the Blind

Officers and Board as of July 1, 2016

{Editor's note: The presence of an asterisk means that the individual served a partial term before the first full term.}

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