

THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN
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OF THE BLIND

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The CALIFORNIA CONNECTION is a weekly news service provided: by phone, in English and Spanish at 800-221-6359 Monday through Friday after 4 p.m. and all day on weekends and holidays; by email subscription, send a blank message to connection-subscribe@ccbnet.org; or on the web at www.ccbnet.org. Submissions for the California Connection can be emailed to gabe.griffith@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.

If you or a friend would like to remember the California Council of the Blind in your Will, you can do so by employing the following language:

"I give, devise, and bequeath unto the California Council of the Blind, a nonprofit charitable organization in California, the sum of \$_____ (or _____) to be used for its worthy purposes on behalf of blind persons." If your wishes are more complex, you may have your attorney communicate with the Executive Office for other suggested forms. Thank you.

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 under three pages or 1800 words.

The deadline to submit material for the Fall, 2010 issue of THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN is noon, September 1.

Please send all address changes to the Executive Office.

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Editor's Page

by Mike Keithley and Judy Wilkinson

Mike writes: Many of you have already heard that I have resigned my editorship of the Blind Californian as of the fall issue. The Publications Committee conducted a search for a new editor and believes it has found one: Judy Wilkinson. Judy lives in San Leandro, has taught English at the community college level for 28 years and is well qualified as the new BC editor. She was formally appointed during the board meeting at CCB's spring convention in Burlingame.

Let's welcome and support Judy. Both she and her husband Steven Mendelsohn have been active in the blind community for many years and will bring to the BC a wealth of valuable knowledge, which will enrich the magazine.

I want to close by saying

that I have enjoyed working as your editor for the last five years, but it's now time to move on to new adventures. Happy trails to all of you!

Judy writes: The composer Johannes Brahms remarked (concerning the pressure of living up to expectations about his becoming the next Beethoven) that he heard giant footsteps coming up behind him. Well I am mightily aware of the giant footsteps of former editors of the BC, most recently Mike Keithley and Winifred Downing: footsteps going back to Cathie Skivers and beyond.

I am delighted and honored to take up the challenge of making the BC the finest publication possible. As Mike mentioned I will be calling on my husband Steven

Mendelsohn with his vast knowledge of disability issues to add his expertise. And I thank him for all his loving support.

I have thought long and hard about how to style myself. "Hello, I'm the new editor of the BC." So distant; so impersonal: "the" editor of "The" BC. It makes both me and the magazine something out there; an object with no ties.

Well how about, "Hello, I'm the new editor of your BC?" That gives ownership and responsibility to the hundreds of members of the CCB: better but not quite there yet. I finally hit upon, "Hello, I'm the new editor of our Blind Californian." After all, we all own this magazine: our statewide publication. We're in this together you and I. I'm here to put the package together to send on to the fine folks who produce the various formats available to us.

You of course have a job to do as well. In a word: send stuff! Anything! Something happening in your chapter. Fundraisers perhaps? Things you do in your communities: something at your church maybe? You don't need to know how to write. That's why they pay me the big bucks! (I wish!) Call me with ideas: (510-357-1844) as Mercedes Leong did to offer an article about the tragic loss of rehab counsellor Barbara Messenger. Write to me at editor@ccbnet.org as Alysa Chadow did, volunteering her services. You'll find her contribution in the article on CSB's 150th birthday. Buttonhole me at a convention or chapter meeting as David Jackson of San Francisco did about a health article which you'll see in an upcoming issue.

We can't say it often enough. This is our magazine. It takes all of us to make certain it represents the best we can

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offer. I know we can do it: you and I.

**President's Message: Audio Description in the
Capitol City**

by Jeff Thom

**Sacramento has been
accused of being a cow
town with major delusions
of grandeur. We like to
think we have as much
culture as those folks in
the Bay or Lala-land. Deep
down, however,
Sacramentans know they
have a way to go to
become that metropolis
they crave to be.**

**Having said that, we do
have lots of theater
productions in Sacramento,
and we draw production
companies from all over
the nation who perform
some of the best old and
new plays you could ever
want to see. In times past,
we primarily had summer
productions, but now we
can see them all year
round. Until April,
however, we had never
had an audio-described**

**play in our fair city.
Hopefully, it's a mere
beginning of a story, but its
something to be proud of
and well worth the telling.**

**For many Sacramentans,
audio-described plays were
something you attended by
going to San Francisco or
San Jose. Audio-described
productions in Sacramento
were nice dreams, like
winning the lottery or
receiving a fan letter from
Julia Roberts. However,
two years ago, the tide
slowly began to turn. Anne
Kysor and I made the initial
foray toward the goal of
audio-described plays in the
Capitol City with our visit to
Marlene Shire-Anderson of
the Sacramento Community
Theater. From the very
beginning, Ms. Shire-
Anderson had been
interested in the project,**

the theater already having captioning for its deaf patrons and been treated to a workshop by southern California describers, including Terri Grossman, a longtime friend of CCB. Money, however, was and still is a big issue, as the theater, like most of its kind throughout the nation, is not in a position to underwrite the cost of equipment, let alone training and related costs of running an audio-description program.

For about a year, the momentum slid away, as we didn't aggressively follow up; but Margie Donovan rode into the suburbs of Sacramento like General Patton or perhaps John Wayne and helped save the day. Margie and I did some brainstorming, and after a meeting with Marlaina, determined that perhaps "A Little House on the Prairie" might just be the ticket, so to speak, to kick off our hopes for audio-description. As luck would have it, Margie

discovered that Nashville had used a describer, Beth Crabb, for that very play put on by the same company that was coming to Sacramento in April. The rest, as they say, is history.

Beth was more than willing to come to Sacramento and describe the play. The CCB Capitol Chapter agreed to pay for her airfare, while the theater paid the extremely reasonable cost of her stipend for providing the description. The producers of the play subsidized the tickets so that they were quite reasonably priced, and the event was on.

What made the Saturday matinee such a special event was not just that over 30 blind and low vision individuals attended, but that they came from throughout the community. Members of CCB, NFBC, the local macular friend's organization, and persons aligned with no group whatsoever attended. Many of them went to dinner

after the show and had a chance to talk with Beth. Without exception, they wanted more shows.

Moreover, a core group, essentially a steering committee, including Marlene and Margie, is continuing to plan for the future. We have lofty goals, but we'll take it slow and ensure that our support is community-wide and that we have sufficient resources to maintain our program in the years to come.

Why bother to tell this as yet unfinished saga?

It's very simple, to show that a local blind community can get together and rally round a cause and make things happen. This isn't a CCB success, although I am proud that our chapter has played an active role, it's a Sacramento blind community success; and if our plans are to come to fruition it must remain that way. In a couple of years I'll do an update on this story, and I just bet I will mention some audio-described productions I've seen in downtown Sacramento.

Governor Makes Appointments

compiled by Judy Wilkinson

From Anthony "Tony" P. Sauer, Director,
Department of
Rehabilitation

Joe Xavier has been appointed by Governor Schwarzenegger as the Deputy Director for the Specialized Services

Division, Blind and Visually Impaired and Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SSAID) for the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR). Joe will assume the full range of duties and responsibilities for the SSAID. Joe has extensive qualifications and is

uniquely qualified for the position. In May 2008, Joe was appointed by Governor Schwarzenegger, for the position of Deputy Director, Independent Living and External Affairs Division, and has served in an exemplary manner. Joe has over twelve years of public administration experience, fourteen years of business ownership through the DOR Business Enterprises Program (BEP), and over 20 years of participating in community and advocacy organizations.

Joe is a fellow member of the Sierra Health Leadership Program, and a graduate of the California Health and Human Services Agency Leadership Academy. Within months of his appointment to Deputy Director, Joe earned the trust of the independent living community; leading the distribution of \$12.8 million in stimulus dollars to the community with transparency and

collaboration. Joe was elected to serve on boards of several organizations, including the California Vendors Policy Committee (CVPC). As a blind consumer and beneficiary of the DOR's services, Joe has the experience and understands the challenges and opportunities available to individuals with disabilities and the services required to foster success. Joe's background and knowledge from working in various sections of the DOR, along with his business experience, uniquely positions him to administer the various programs within the Specialized Services Division. Please join me in congratulating Joe on his appointment.

**Two CCB Members
Appointed to Serve on the
State Independent Living
Council**

**Governor Arnold
Schwarzenegger announced
the following appointments:
Jessica Lorenz, 31, of
Oakland, has been**

appointed to the State Independent Living Council. She has been associate director for the Independent Living Resource Center since 2009. Previously, Lorenz was director of public policy for LightHouse for the Blind from 2006 to 2009. She served as intake coordinator for the San Francisco Mayor's Office on Disability in 2006 and instructor for the Keys to Introducing Disability in Society Project in 2005. Lorenz was a systems change coordinator at the Independent Living Resource Center from 2000 to 2005 and a technology trainer at Adaptive Technology Services from 1999 to 2000. She is a member of the board of

Rights Advocates.

Teddie-Joy Remhild, 77, of Burbank, has been appointed to the State Independent Living Council. Previously, she served as program administrator for the Los Angeles County In-Home Supportive Services Personal Assistance Services Council Public Authority from 2000 to 2008. Remhild was a client assistance program trainer at the National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems from 1999 to 2000, client assistance program advocate at Dayle McIntosh Center from 1997 to 1999 and an independent living skills trainer at the Braille Institute of America from 1995 to 1997.

Spring Convention Report

by Judy Wilkinson

Thanks to my "cub" reporters: Steven Mendelsohn, Roger Petersen, Bonnie Rennie,

Cristy Crespin.

There's nothing like attending a convention for

excitement and interesting activities. Remember you can order tapes of many of the convention events from the office or download mp3 files from the CCB website. The fall convention will be in San Diego, the last weekend in October. I'll be there; I hope you will too. This convention was dedicated to the California School for the Blind, celebrating its 150th birthday this May.

Thursday Afternoon

The Technology Committee focused on an update from HumanWare about new products, and Sheela Cushman-Gunn showcased a little device, the pen friend, for creating talking labels. Meanwhile Patricia Leets chaired the Rehab committee meeting. Frank Welte reported on the surveys many filled out at last fall's convention about their satisfaction with services from the Department of Rehab: 82 surveys showed that obtaining services in a

timely manner is an ongoing problem.

The final hour saw a fascinating discussion with 2 directors of states with commissions for the blind: Nebraska and New Mexico. Both directors suggested that because they know their populations and can specialize in meeting needs of the blind, they can offer more in-depth and specially-adapted services to their clients.

The Meeting of the Board of Directors in an afternoon and evening session covered many areas of the organization's business. (See Minutes elsewhere in this issue.)

Social Doings

Let's not forget the strictly social events: the Thursday afternoon welcome party, hosted by the San Mateo Chapter. The San Francisco LightHouse hosted a reception for their new CEO, Brian Bastion; the

California School for the Blind jazz ensemble entertained us before the evening Board meeting; the Friday afternoon Multicultural Concerns party. And after evening business at any convention: the Hospitality suite, hosted at this convention by various Bay Area chapters and the Blind Students of CA.

Friday

In case you have some spare time, the exhibit hall is open from 9 to 5 for two days. So much to see; so little time!

The convention couldn't function without the hard work of the Credentials Committee which assures that all voting entities have submitted appropriate records.

At 9:00 three choices were available. Association of Multicultural Concerns (AMC) discussed their braille writer project: they hope to send 6

Perkins Brailers and paper to a school for the blind in Africa; the estimated cost is \$3,600. They also discussed their proposed scholarship honoring the late Dr. Louis Preston. Speaker Diane Burkholder led a discussion of health issues: especially sexually-transmitted diseases, about which people are still reluctant to talk. She also indicated the scarcity of accessible information in alternative formats about health issues.

BRLC held elections: Steve Fort president, Roger Petersen delegate to BRL in Phoenix. The program speaker was Noel Runyan, a blind engineer and a member of a team sponsored by the National Braille Press doing research into possible new techniques to produce refreshable braille displays.

The joint session of CCLV and CAT focused on the use of the "structured negotiations" legal advocacy technique to

achieve greater accessibility of technology in the mainstream environment. This strategy was used to bring about installation of over 100 accessible pedestrian signals (APS) throughout San Francisco. San Francisco traffic signal engineer Eddie Tsui provided a fascinating account of the detailed work that went into selecting the technology, siting the installations and creating the correct customized audio message for each location, and he explained the work and organizational structure that goes into maintaining and improving the system.

In the next part of the program attorney Lainey Feingold reviewed the history of structured negotiations and the key role played by CCB in its development and continued success. Three skilled and dedicated advocates--Margie Donovan, Brian and Kim Charlson--described their

experience advocating in such areas as accessible retail point-of-sale machines, the Major League Baseball website and other areas. Each offered lessons and techniques based on their experience, ranging from the need for patience to the importance of "friend-raising" as much as fund-raising.

Later Friday morning, Library Users (CALUA) held its business meeting and decided to investigate holding a "book-club" via conference call.

The joint BRLC/CALUA luncheon speaker was Kim Charlson, head of the talkingbook library at the Perkins School in MA. The first blind librarian heading a talkingbook regional library, she told of her path to her current position.

She serves on the Committee for changing standards of administering libraries for the blind. She mentioned lots of databases available to any holder of a

public library card and reminded us to use them and check them for accessibility. Much of the remaining discussion focused on sources for "electronic" or "downloadable" books. Of special interest to blind folks is "Unabridged consortium" for downloadable books. Commercially-available books are purchased for the site.

At 4:15, a number of special-interest groups and standing committees meet. First-timers can learn how conventions work and get themselves oriented.

At the CCB Membership, Public Relations and Fundraising Committees meeting, John Ross, pinch-hitting for a speaker who canceled, spoke about Lions Clubs. Their involvement with blindness goes back to a 1925 Helen Keller convention address in which she challenged them to be the "eyes of the blind." John noted that

many clubs have no blind members and urged people to join. The meeting then discussed fund-raising: several people noted the difficulties encountered by most chapters and the lack of energy and creativity in fund-raising and membership recruitment. No one had any immediate or dramatic solutions, and one person suggested that chapters spend too much time and effort raising money from one another.

At the Publications Committee meeting, we discussed the need for new members since we lost several last year. The brochure on vision loss for Seniors is coming along. A lengthy discussion followed about large print best practices. Font is the least of it; lighting is all-important, Donna Pomerantz reminded us. For the BC we need to establish clearer policies for article submission: but the motto for now is "you give us your story; we'll polish it."

The presidents' dinner (to which all were invited) held a lively discussion about stereotypes of the blind.

Saturday

The Education Committee members get up early for their breakfast meeting where "Let's Talk Dots", inspiring kids to learn braille, was the topic presented by Ann Gelles, braille instructor at CSB. Braille is back and a lively discussion followed.

Guide Dog Users of CA also get up by 8:30; it was agreed to support SB 1491, which would allow schools wishing to participate, to train guide dog and handler teams at home, but the instructor must be licensed in California. During the more formal program, member Jerry Arakawa described a quiet car incident where with no noise to alert him that the vehicle was still moving, his dog (luckily unhurt) exited the opening door.

Trainers from several of the schools gave tips on what to do when your dog is attacked by another dog including: keep moving if possible beyond the other animal. If you can call 911, say "My dog and I are being attacked," because if your dog is being attacked, you are in harm's way as well.

The Blind Students of CA focused on volunteerism and community outreach, with three speakers--Jeff Thom, Brian Connersa and Darian Smith describing their volunteer experiences, ranging from hosting foreign exchange students, to working as a youth prison mentor, to service in the Americorps program. Each faced experiences where the fears or prejudices of others needed to be confronted, as when one of Darian Smith's work supervisors wouldn't let him participate in kitchen work because knives were involved. Each recommend volunteering as a great way of gaining experience and possibly beginning to build

a career.

At their business meeting, recent activities were discussed: serving on the Resolutions Committee; preparing for Capital Day with role-playing exercises designed to help members put themselves in the place of legislators; fund-raising plans, (their take from running the hospitality suite Thursday; a corporate letter; the upcoming karaoke party); and revising their constitution.

The Orientation Center Luncheon attendees heard from OCB's new administrator, Linda Woodbury. Highlights of her speech include her vision of what the letters OCB stand for; "O" opportunity and options; "C" choice and choosing; "B" maximizing benefits. Major construction and renovation are occurring on campus: including building apartments for student use near the end of their stay. More

emphasis is being placed on transitioning back to the home community.

The Seniors with Vision Loss program featured two innovative services that certainly add to the quality of life for seniors. California residents may call the Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired to access the free services of its Health Library. Call 650 858-0202 and ask for the Health Library and request patient education materials on a variety of conditions. Materials are provided in alternate formats. Senior Centers Without Walls is a free program for people over age 50 living in the Greater Bay Area. Imagine attending stimulating discussion groups and feeling the social connectedness of a community, just by calling in: 877 797-7299.

At 4:30 2 committees meet. Governmental Affairs focused on legislative issues of concern to the

CCB. (See article by Frank Welte.)

The Fund Raising Committee talked about ways to improve the raffle: obtaining prizes earlier and not attempting to mention them all; getting tickets to the chapters in a more timely fashion.

A number of fund-raising ideas: some sounding tried and true like dinners; garage sales and the like. Other thoughts: piggyback ideas: have a dinner and include an auction for example.

At all hours of the convention, the Resolutions Committee is hard at work; those folks often don't get to the Hospitality Suite!

Saturday's banquet is always exciting. The emcee tells bad jokes (yes Dan Kysor, that's you!), awards are given (see elsewhere in this issue), donations and raffle winners are announced;

and the banquet speaker, Anita Aaron, past CEO of the San Francisco LightHouse and new Executive Director of the World Institute on Disability, gave a warm, down-to-earth, funny, inspiring speech: teamwork between the LightHouse and CCB (of which she is a member) brought about APS's in San Francisco; helped pass the bill gaining the Office of Services for the Blind. She ended by reminding us that she hasn't gone anywhere! She's just across the bay, as close to all of us as she always has been.

General Sessions

The major activities of the convention occur in 4 general sessions of a minimum of 10 hours. Friday afternoon's first general session focused on activities at the California School for the blind.

But it began with 2 gentlemen talking about gardening; Ben Oude

Kammhuis, a horticulturist with the Parks and Recreation Department in San Francisco, and Sean Corritore his blind assistant aged 23 who began gardening with him at age 8. They talked about Project Insight, a program which began in 1994 with 8 gardeners with disabilities and now has some 70 participants. In partnership with the San Francisco LightHouse, the program allows gardeners to share the social aspects (coffee and cake) and the work aspects of gardening. The website is www.projectinsight.org

After providing a brief history of schools for the blind, Stuart Wittenstein, Superintendent at CSB, presented staff and students sharing about numerous current programs based at the school.

The Transition Services Program, preparing students for meaningful work, runs the campus

Rocket Café where students learn work behaviors and skills. Student Robin P helped set up the program and described what the students do. Some students participate in the summer BEP YEP (business enterprise program youth experience program) where they are paired with blind vendors in the BEP program.

Sharon Sacks (yes, a former CCB scholarship winner) and her colleagues talked about supporting blind students in all schools. One area involves team assessments either on campus or in the child's school. An assessment team evaluates students; meets with relevant school officials and families, and writes a report for guidance purposes.

Francey Liefert described the vision assessment process involving assessing the child's vision and then developing techniques to use it. Jim Carreon described his activities as a

technology specialist: assess needs and then help with implementation.

Stuart concluded this fascinating 2-hour segment by reminding us that more and more, visually-impaired kids are referred to CSB because their own districts aren't getting the job done: not enough in-depth needs assessment or intensive service delivery; caseloads too huge. And with schools cutting back spending, the problem will only get worse.

Friday evening, began with a moment of silence for those who have died: Frances Manino; Barbara Messenger; Connie Schoeman, (see articles in this issue); Caroline Scribner, hit by a train when her scooter stalled on the tracks; Louis Preston (see article in spring BC); Judy Stern from Los Angeles.

Following the report of the Credentials Committee,

Isaac Shapiro, described a new southern-California-based Inspiration Foundation focusing on assisting individuals who cannot get assistance elsewhere especially for technology. The foundation is funded through their profit-making enterprise, Imus trading with the brand Clean Logic with braille on the labels of some of their products. They hope to fund their first award in June.

The next amazing speaker, architect Christopher Downey, blind only 2 years, returned to his career within weeks of being blind. Because he knew the techniques he needed, he quickly adapted strategies such as using a Tiger printer to braille diagrams. But he said most of what architects do concerns strategizing and compromising. He now consults on projects which take advantage of his singular position. For instance, working on the Western Veterans Rehab

Center, he noticed that the original design had outjuttings from the walls which blind people would run into and which he knew wouldn't work. Most exciting, after working with blind students recently exploring career options he has convinced some colleagues that blind students could study architecture. His website is www.archforblind.com

Stuart Wittenstein returned to discuss his work as president of Council of Schools for the Blind. Lots of schools for the blind are in trouble; legislatures think closing them is a good way to save money. Kim Charlson chairs an ACB taskforce to provide expertise to schools and states so that schools such as North Carolina's won't be shut down as Oregon's has been already. Kim points out that outreach such as what Perkins does is absolutely necessary; Perkins works with hundreds of blind babies; early intervention

is key. Otherwise, schools for the blind are viewed as relics of segregation, from the philosophy of the independent living movement. We need to fight to keep our schools for the blind. The taskforce with which Stuart consults aims to do that.

Kim Charlson then spoke as ACB's representative to the convention: describing the many hats she wears as first vice-president. She chairs or is official liaison to: the Constitution and Bylaws Committee; The International Relations Committee; the Environmental Access Committee, which is working on finalizing a pedestrian safety handbook. The Scholarship Committee (which our own Richard Rueda co-chairs) now has applications online. The Health Issues Taskforce works to get more health-related information accessible as with the recent breast cancer and prostate cancer tapes. She works with the

Audio Description Project (Chris Gray is a member): ACB wants to become the "go-to" place for information on audio-description. She is one of two delegates to the World Blind Union (Mitch Pomerantz being the other). She is a representative to The Braille Authority of North America (BANA) which is doing further research on the Nemeth math code. She discussed the work being done to expand copyright law so that materials can be shared throughout the world; now for instance, 8 countries have each produced copies of the Harry Potter books because copyright law won't allow them to share.

Frank Welte presented the governmental affairs report. (See his articles). Jeff's President's Report insisted we remember the strengths of our organization: the most active disability group in the state with 2 conventions a year, and a

model for the ACB; a strong legislative advocacy program, with chapters chipping in to send folks to Washington for ACB's lobbying effort. He also mentioned the survey done about Rehab services; better fundraising efforts this year. Remember our strengths; not our weaknesses.

Leena Bandy was elected to fill the Board vacancy with the death of Louis Preston.

Saturday's general session began with the slate of the Nominating Committee: President, Donna Pomerantz; first Vice-President, Eugene Lozano; Treasurer, Christopher Gray; Board members: Vincent Calderon; David Jackson, Leena Bandy, and David Hanlon.

Larisa Cummings, Esq., Staff Attorney, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, reported the settlement with the Social Security Administration

allowing people to get materials in alternative formats, now including large print. (See article BC Spring.)

"Department of Rehabilitation in Budgetary Hard Times", was the theme for Luciana Profaca, Chief Deputy Director and Catharine Bailes, Blind Field Services (BFS) District Administrator. Joe Xavier spoke as acting (now appointed) Deputy Director of Services for the Blind.

Beth Berenson from the San Francisco Lighthouse described her weekly email cataloging accessible social and recreational events in northern California. She urges Southern California to create a similar service. To receive this email contact her at bberenson@lighthouse-sf.org or by phone 415-694-7322.

We all now know that when Frank Welte talks, we're taking notes, and

you will want to read his legislation report in this issue.

The session ended with Joan Levy, from the San Mateo County History Museum dishing the dirt about San Mateo County: where the outlaws went after California became a state and they were kicked out of San Francisco.

Sunday's final general session is set aside for organization business. A lengthy discussion was held concerning convention program format issues. The consensus was this convention's program format in both braille and large print was one of the best. Substantive points included: where to place various kinds of information (such as hotel layout); how to format braille so that new items are easily found; explaining the "alphabet soup" for committees; include a tactile hotel map and a quick guide to rooms. All these suggestions and those submitted to the

office will be considered.

We heard the Treasurer's Report: we're working toward having quarterly audit reports so we can keep tabs on budgets. Income in 2009 \$222,504 (79 percent of what we expected to raise). We spent 5.7 percent more than estimated. The budget for 2010 has a far smaller amount of deficit spending: \$341,287 with an

overspend of \$56,437. A motion passed to include our total assets in future reports.

Another motion suggested we include more of the business meeting in Saturday's schedule. For the report of the Resolutions Committee, see Gabe Griffith's article.

What a busy, fulfilling convention!

Frances Mannino: A True Gentlewoman

by Mitch Pomerantz

Frances May Thiesen Mannino was born in Reedley, California on May 1, 1921, and died in Burbank, CA on April 11, 2010. Frances was a gentle woman, a stalwart of our movement and a friend to the deaf-blind community for over 50 years.

She became blind at 15 and one-half from a severe

fever which destroyed her optic nerve. Frances attended the Berkeley School for the Blind (since renamed the California School for the Blind) from 1937 through 1941. Following her graduation, Frances attended the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, now Biola College, where she was its first blind graduate.

Frances Mannino became affiliated with the Braille Institute of America in Los Angeles: first as a volunteer braille teacher in 1951, then as a paid Home Instructor in 1956. In that capacity, she was a "Jill-of-all-trades," teaching braille reading and writing, arts and crafts, independent living skills, and serving as a counselor, mentor, teacher, mother and friend to hundreds of blind and deaf-blind students.

She married Anthony (Tony) Mannino in July 1974 and it is at that point when I first got to know Frances. Tony was then President of the California Council of the Blind, at the time an affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind. In my callow youth, I was frankly intimidated by Tony (many of us called him "The Godfather," although certainly not within his hearing). So it was with considerable trepidation that some time in 1975, I learned that Joanne (my wife back

then) had invited Frances and Tony to dinner. Joanne baked a cake and just before dinner, I went into the kitchen to get something. Imagine my reaction when I discovered that Joanne's guide dog had gotten to the cake before we could. Upon announcing this unfortunate event, I found out what a sense of humor Frances had and what a gentling influence she had on Tony. Frances was that sort of person.

Sadly, Tony passed away very prematurely in September 1976. Nonetheless, Frances continued her commitment to deaf-blind persons through the Braille Institute in order to help dispel the loneliness and isolation faced by so many in that community. She once invited me to the annual holiday party for deaf-blind persons which she hosted at the Braille Institute. At some point during the festivities, Frances introduced me to a woman whose last name made it

fairly apparent that she was Jewish; Frances knowing that I too was Jewish. I was instructed to finger spell my name into the woman's palm. After a moment and with a chuckle in her voice, Frances asked me on the woman's behalf whether I'd spelled my name in Hebrew. I hadn't; so much for my ability to finger spell.

In 1972, Frances Mannino was honored by the Braille Institute with its prestigious Light Award, given for outstanding service to the blind. She retired in 1983 from teaching, but remained active in various organizations including the Foothill Club of the Blind and the Glendale-Burbank Area Chapter of CCB.

Over the past 20-plus years, I didn't have many opportunities to see

Frances; usually we chatted when we both attended the Glendale-Burbank holiday party. Our last conversation was just a few weeks before her death. Donna and I spoke with Frances by phone for perhaps an hour. She was in the hospital by then, but was upbeat and lucid nonetheless. Frances was a woman of faith and seemed at peace with what she obviously knew was to come. I was truly sorry that ACB business had me out of town on the day of her memorial service.

Frances Thiesen Mannino was one of those CCB members who led, not by seeking and holding statewide office, but by her quiet, steadfast dedication to our cause. Those of us who encountered her for even a brief time were certainly in the presence of a gentle and good lady. Farewell, Frances Mannino.

The California School for the Blind Celebrates Its 150th Birthday

by Judy Wilkinson and Alysa Chadow

Preparing for this birthday bash began last fall reports Alysa Chadow, a teacher at CSB. Two events were scheduled: one on the day of the spring concert, May 13, and the other student-oriented day on May 19 where Alysa's play about the history of CSB was performed.

She says preparations began in October of 2009, when Dr. Sharon Sacks, Director of Curriculum, Assessment and Staff Development, formed a committee made up of teachers and dorm counselors to plan a program. Subcommittees included programming, dinner, decorating, dessert, and clean-up. Maureen DeLonge, mother of student Sebastian, a professional caterer, prepared the dinner at cost, and various faculty

members volunteered to make an array of cakes and cookies for the dessert extravaganza at the evening's end.

The Program Committee asked students to write letters of invitation to four prominent members of both the blind and able-bodied communities, including Michelle Obama, to be a guest speaker at our event. It was finally decided that blind entertainer Tom Sullivan would perform at the afternoon assembly.

And of course the CCB's spring convention with the theme "Education--The Key to Our Future", honored CSB, devoting the majority of its Friday afternoon session to showcasing the school's endeavors.

"The education of blind children in California began in a small wood frame

building on Tehama Street in San Francisco, in 1860. A group of prominent, influential women met on the 17th of March, 1860, to organize a Society for the instruction and maintenance of the Indigent Deaf and Dumb, and the Blind in California." So begins the wonderful document we received at the door, presenting the history of the school. Much of the credit for pulling the history together goes to Lynne Laird, a former CSB teacher and of course the producer of the BC large-print edition. To obtain a copy, contact James Rudder by phone 510-794-3800 ext 317; or email jrudder@csb-cde.ca.gov.

And what a day it was. Old friends chatted and reminisced until Sharon Sacks, the over-all event co-ordinator and day's mistress of ceremonies, began the festivities by telling of the time capsule buried by the school community the previous

day: containing among other things, a cane and a copy of the school's current budget. But we must wait 25 years to find out its other contents.

Throughout the day, Stewart Wittenstein, the current superintendent, read congratulatory messages. Dr. Dean Tuttle told of throwing out old grade 1 and a half braille books and being frantically telephoned by worried Berkeley residents alerting him that at the dump were "valuable braille books". Our own Cathie Skivers sent words about how important residential schools for the blind are and that we must fight to make sure not to lose any more of them.

The highpoint of the afternoon to me were the 4 students reading their own essays on the subject of what CSB meant to them. Angelica V, DJ H, Teresa G and Cody M, each said how much the faculty and staff meant to them. Another recurring theme was how

had gained.

We also heard from a panel of alums. Long-time CCB member Elmer Chapson, who entered CSB aged 10 in 1935, represented the early years. He spoke mostly of his successful career as a rehab counselor especially with the deaf-blind.

Worried that he would startle a client when he entered her open door, he turned on her fan: its breeze alerting her to her visitor. John Kavanaugh representing the 50's and early 60's, traveled furthest from New York City. He shared haiku describing the pride of traveling independently with a cane: One early trial, Going alone to the store, Bringing back a prize. A bag of doughnuts, Evidence of new freedom, Sugar-coated joy.

Connie Wright, a current teaching assistant at the school, told of how at age 17, she was forced by her parents to attend

the school because she was doing so poorly in her studies. She read an email written just weeks after her arrival telling her boyfriend how much she was learning and already how important the school had become both for her academic work and her self confidence.

Phil Hatlen, former professor in the credentialing program for teachers of the visually-impaired at San Francisco State University, former principal of CSB, and most recently, Superintendent of the Texas School for the Blind, spoke at length about his memories of teachers and staff. He spoke of former students, such as deaf-blind Ricky Joy (in the room at the time) who (using the method of "listening" by placing his fingers on the speaker's throat and lips) when Hatlen suggested he needed to end the conversation reported, "Ricky just wouldn't let go!"

The assembly ended

with the aforementioned performance by blind writer-singer Tom Sullivan who attended the Perkins School for the Blind. He reminded students that each was a unique individual and should strive to achieve all they desired.

On this balmy afternoon, we adjourned to the beautiful courtyard or "school's town square" as Alysa terms it, for refreshments and music. Some 200 of us were treated to a simple yet elegant dinner: (how anyone can prepare al dente asparagus and beautifully cooked carrots for 200 I'll never know) not to mention the chocolate-dipped strawberries (our "light dessert"). Throughout dinner more congratulations: from state officials; from Leslie Thom representing the CCB reminding us of the organization's support of CSB over the years; from Mary Willows, taking off

her CSB teacher's hat and putting on her hat as the president of the National Federation of the Blind of California--she said she was proud that the NFBC was one of the event's sponsors.

All along it was intended that the birthday celebration be held in conjunction with the semi-annual concert from the student musicians. At one point, three keyboards were blasting away. We had piano and flute solos and songs from the glee club.

Imagine an entire buffet table with every conceivable kind of cake and cookie and brownie: delicious. The sugar high was only equaled by the high created by the experience of the entire day.

A glimpse of how the CSB community of students and staff works together is illustrated by Alysa Chadow's description of preparing for and performing her play, based

on Lynne Laird's history. I wrote the play as a series of scenes depicting the school's history from its founding in San Francisco in 1860 to its present place in modern day Special Education. Two narrators (another student and I) were used to introduce each of the scenes. In writing and rehearsing the play, I needed to take into account the needs of the 12 students who were acting in it.

To that end, I devised a staging format, a system in which I broke down each scene into the order in which each actor spoke, and whether they were moving or sedentary. This formatting proved to be a tremendous help during rehearsals, especially when last-minute cast changes had to be made. It also proved to be an even bigger help to the 3 prompters working on stage with the students. The prompters were used when the actors forgot their lines or became too

nervous to speak without assistance. One of the best parts of putting on HOW IT CAME TO BE was the incredible teamwork between student and prompter. The former was able to respond almost immediately when the latter whispered their lines to them. The acting that was displayed on May 19 was outstanding by anyone's standards, yet the most important thing of all was the sheer enjoyment these children had. This wasn't just drama--it was fun.

I had gone into these anniversary preparations with the notion that the CSB community was made up only of those who were alumni of the school, which I am not. I had also equated community with working at the school for over 20 years, which I have not: (I've been teaching there only 10 years, a veritable rookie). What I have since come to realize is that community is made up of those of us who have dedicated our professional

and even personal lives to educating children in a school for the blind, and this is far different from teaching in a vision program in a public school district, which I have done. I may be a newcomer in

comparison to many of the people at the May 13 celebration, but I was as welcome as any seasoned member. Given a choice, I would much rather be where I am now.

The Incredible Life of Connie Schoeman

by Ken Metz

Connie Hubbard-Schoeman was born in Providence, Rhode Island on March 15, 1927, and passed away in the Los Angeles, California area, April 2, 2010 (Good Friday), after a bout of Alzheimers for some 5 years. She is survived by her husband, Obbie Schoeman as well as her two sons, Tom and Jim.

She attended the nursing program at Brown University, class of 1947, but did not complete the program due to getting married to her late husband, Bob Hubbard. She was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa at the

age of 19, never having heard that her father had lost most of his vision to RP as well as glaucoma, years earlier.

Connie worked as a lab technician until she couldn't see the samples any longer. After realizing that her vision was slowly disappearing, she attended the State Department of Rehabilitation program at California State University, Los Angeles, where she received her master's degree in Vocational Rehabilitation. She began her new vocational life with the Department of Rehabilitation in Oakland, moving down to Los

Angeles in the same position, became a Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind, and ending her career as the Southern Coordinator of Services for the Blind under Manuel Urena. She also received a degree in Radiology, and then volunteered in what is now known as the Junior Blind of America.

Connie went to Switzerland in the 1960's where she had an experimental surgery on her eyes. Around 2001, she was among 6 volunteers in another experimental procedure by Doctor Humyan at USC where a camera implant was used to restore some sight. When she was asked why she would go through all of these experiments, she answered: "if I can't get some vision back from these experiments, someone has to start it for others in the future to eventually regain theirs".

During her work with the California Council of the Blind, Connie was always an advocate for her clients when she felt that they really had some potential to vocationally succeed. According to her husband and many of her clients over the years, she was an extremely caring person.

Her interests included going to live plays, jazz/Dixieland concerts, and, with her husband Obbie, attending numerous musical programs at the Hollywood Bowl. She felt that she needed to go back to Connecticut to renew her New England accent.

She had an incredible sense of humor, once explaining following a car accident that she had been blind-sided, and didn't even see the other car coming. Before losing all of her sight, Connie's children used to walk to the corner with her where she would catch the bus to work at the Pasadena Rehab Office. They would tell her when

there were no cars coming, and she would then run across the street to her bus stop.

Connie joined ACBC some 33 years ago after meeting Obbie. It took him some 13 years to finally get Connie to marry him. I guess you can say that she had him on a rather long probationary period.

She was an avid reader and used talking books. She often said that she had just finished reading the first page of a convention's braille program by the time it was finished.

Connie was the CCB

Secretary under Bob Acosta's presidency. She served as a board member of BRLC, and as a Trustee/Treasurer of the Lily Perry Foundation. She was also a member of AAWB (Association of Workers for the Blind), which later became AER.

Her life was extremely fulfilling, yet she always found time to help whoever needed it. She always presented herself with a great sense of humor, a sincere love of people, and never had a bad word to say about anyone. She will be sorely missed by so many, especially her loving husband Obbie, and her family.

Our Legal Team: Update

compiled and edited by Judy Wilkinson

The following items show that our legal team is working hard on our behalf. Lainey Feingold's website Iflegal.com is

wonderfully accessible. If you want a site to "practice" your surfing skills, this is a good bet; and you'll learn a lot as

well. Provide feedback as follows: Lainey Feingold: If@Iflegal.com, Phone: 510-548-5062; Linda Dardarian toll-free 1-800-822-5000, 510-763-9800, LDardarian@gdblegal.com.

Great News for Visually Impaired Movie Goers!

On April 30, 2010, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that audio description is "clearly" an "auxiliary aid and service" under the Americans with Disabilities Act. This ruling revives a federal lawsuit against the Harkins movie theater chain that had been thrown out of court in 2008. The plaintiffs can now continue their case against the Harkins chain for that company's failure to provide audio description at its theaters. The appellate court's ruling also allows the case to go forward on claims brought by deaf and hearing impaired theater-goers for lack of captioning.

The lawyers for the

Harkins movie chain tried to convince the court that providing audio description was not required by the ADA because blind movie goers were not prevented from attending movies without description. The lower court had agreed that providing the technology needed for audio description would require Harkins to provide an "extra" service to blind patrons beyond what the ADA required. The Court soundly rejected this argument. The district court's reasoning effectively eliminates the duty of a public accommodation to provide auxiliary aids and services. By its very definition, an auxiliary aid or service is an additional and different service that establishments must offer the disabled. For example, a courthouse that was accessible only by steps could not avoid ADA liability by arguing that everyone--including the wheelchair bound--has equal access to the steps. And an office building could

not avoid having to put braille numbering on the buttons in its elevator by arguing that everyone--including the blind--has equal access to the written text.

New California Keypad Requirements

Lainey writes: "I have put a short post up on my website about the new California requirement, effective January 1, that all point of sale devices in the state have attached tactile keypads. (In small stores with only two point of sale devices, only one device has to have a keypad.)

"If anyone encounters a flat screen device in the state, they should notify the retailer about the new legal requirements and specifically ask the retailer about their plans to comply with the new law. If a retailer fails to install keypads shortly after January 1, we'd suggest that CCB be notified, that you let us know, and that

we then talk about whether Structured Negotiations might be appropriate."

Settlement with CVS

Linda continues: "We are writing about the Structured Negotiations settlement reached between CVS and the ACB, the American Foundation for the Blind, and CCB. Under the agreement, cvs.com should now meet the standards of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, Level AA.

"We need feedback from the community to help us make sure the agreement is being well implemented. Here's how you can help:

"(1) Spend some time on www.cvs.com and let us know what you think. We are interested in both positive feedback and areas where you think CVS could make the site more accessible.

"(2) If you have a CVS prescription, try using the

on-line tools for ordering and refilling prescriptions and let us know what you think.

"(3) Register with the site.

"(4) Try buying something on www.cvs.com.

"(5) Let us know what you think about other sites owned by CVS. CVS has agreed to meet with us about the accessibility of these sites, and we need your feedback for that meeting. The other sites are: www.caremark.com and www.cvscaremark.com.

"Finally, because of the strong relationship with CVS that has been developed as a result of the Structured Negotiations process, we are able to talk with the company about other issues in CVS stores affecting the blind and visually impaired community. (The

agreement with them, for example, also covers tactile point of sale devices in CVS stores across the country.) If you have experienced any issues at CVS that you would like to bring to our attention, please don't hesitate to contact us."

Other Issues

On March 30, 2010, an agreement was reached with Best Buy to include tactile point-of-sale devices in their stores throughout the nation. And finally, for people like my husband Steve, for whom there are only two seasons a year, winter and baseball season, the settlement with Major League Baseball over accessibility of its website mlb.com comes as great news.

According to Lainey, the websites of Major League Baseball and of all 30 major league teams will be accessible to blind baseball fans as a result of advocacy efforts by ACB and its Massachusetts and

California affiliates.

"Improvements to the site began in 2009, and will continue for the 2010 season. Blind fans can expect to access MLB's on-line radio and television broadcasts without the problems experienced in past years. Improvements to statistics pages and all other information on the site are also being made. Last year was the first time blind fans were able to vote independently on line for their favorite All Star players. Major League Baseball has posted an Accessibility Information Page on the site with a dedicated email address where blind fans can provide comments on the accessibility of the site. The direct link to the page is:

mlb.mlb.com/mlb/help/accessibility.jsp. MLB also worked with ACB and its affiliates to develop "a Frequently Asked Questions page for blind fans. You can find a link to the FAQ's on the

Accessibility Information Page. MLB's web accessibility agreement was reached as with so many recent agreements using structured negotiations.

Northern California's radio station KCBS covered the story, with a piece featuring CCB's president Jeff Thom, who was quoted, "We're thrilled, not only with what they've done, but how tremendously cooperative they have been throughout the whole process." ACB president Mitch Pomerantz had this to say in the press release jointly issued by Major League Baseball and ACB and its California and Massachusetts affiliates: "MLBAM (sic) has undertaken groundbreaking work to make its web sites accessible and has assumed a strong leadership position among sports, media and entertainment properties in doing so. We certainly urge similar sites to make this level of commitment in following MLBAM's lead."

Let's Meet Leena Bandy

by Bonnie Rennie

Our newest CCB Board of Directors member was voted in at our spring convention, filling the position vacated by the late Louis Preston. Leena is on the slate of Board nominees to run in the Fall for a full term.

Ms. Bandy brings youthful energy and ideas to her new position. She is the president of the Blind Students organization and is a member of the San Gabriel Valley Chapter. She eagerly participated in the ACB 2010 Legislative Seminar in Washington, D.C., along with several other CCB members. Leena says that she has been interested in politics and the legislative process since age nine. She avidly followed the Presidential election that year, to the point of telling her mother how to vote.

By way of background,

Leena grew up in the San Fernando Valley, with her parents and younger and older sisters. Totally blind since birth, she briefly attended the Frances Blend School for the Blind in Los Angeles. At around age four, her parents were told that she would be better served attending regular public school. The rest of Leena's school career has been spent in public settings, yet she participated actively in the National Braille Challenge and developed her passion for Braille literacy.

Ms. Bandy has worked as a Braille teacher for two years. She has continued to attend Kaplan University, an online school, majoring in psychology. When asked what she hoped to do with her education, Leena stated she planned to go on to a local university and perhaps one day work with foster children. Her great dream

is to eventually help establish a school in Israel, where all blind children could study together in harmony.

Leena says she found her way to ACB through the scholarship program. What also continues to attract her to this organization, in addition to legislative advocacy, is her experience of "being needed". She says she appreciates how CCB utilizes the talents of its members for the benefit of the organization. She likes the sense of warmth and connectedness that is cultivated by working together.

The success of the students' affiliate Leena presides over is reflected in its recent winning of one of the membership growth awards at our Spring convention. Leena is proud of this group and that it is becoming increasingly known. She cites a call she recently received from a local culinary school,

asking for help on working with a new student with vision loss. She was glad she could offer some assistance to this cooking school. Her hopes for the students' group are for continued growth and increased willingness to take initiative in advocacy and other CCB efforts.

Leena has a presence on Facebook and holds monthly meetings for the students. She is currently busy organizing a fundraiser karaoke party in Southern California.

Incidentally, she says that her other passion is singing. Leena looks forward to making a positive difference through her service on the Board. She wants to see that "the needs of the blind students are represented in overall policy." She hopes to continue to promote Braille literacy. Her enthusiasm and willingness to work hard for us in CCB are apparent. Welcome to the Board, Leena!

Publications Awards 2010

by Bernice Kandarian

The members of the CCB Publications Committee vote on which articles should receive the two awards each year, and they commented favorably on the variety of authors and topics among the 2009 issues of the Blind Californian. We give an award for the best "issue-oriented" article and one for the best "lifestyle" article. Sometimes there is not perfect agreement among the committee members about which articles fall into which categories. There was also not consensus about which were the best articles. Voting was rather close. But again, we made our choices and here they are.

The award for the best issue-oriented article of 2009 was given to Susan Schulter of the Silicon Valley Council of the Blind for her article Brailleing for Success: Reflections on the

2009 Northern California Regional Braille Challenge, which appeared in the Summer, 2009 issue of the BC.

Susan's plaque (smoked glass 8 by 10, silver underplate and silver lettering on black plate, landscape mode) reads: California Council of the Blind; Publications Award; Best Issue-Oriented Article of 2009; To Susan Schulter for Brailleing for Success: Reflections on the 2009 Northern California Regional Braille Challenge; The Blind Californian, Summer, 2009; Presented this Seventeenth Day of April, 2010 in the city of Burlingame, California).

Honorable mention in this category went to Lighting that Works by Dr. Bill Takeshita, Hollywood's Blindness, by Rick Boggs and Advocating for Light Rail Safety, by Donna

Pomerantz.

The award for the best lifestyle article of 2009 was presented to Patricia LaFrance-Wolf for her article Dream, which appeared in the Winter, 2009 issue.

Patricia's plaque (black glass 8 by 10, silver underplate and silver lettering on black plate, landscape mode reads: California Council of the Blind; Publications Award; Best Lifestyle Article of 2009; To Patricia LaFrance-Wolf for Dream; The Blind Californian, Winter, 2009; Presented this

Seventeenth Day of April, 2010 in the city of Burlingame, California).

Lifestyle articles which merited honorable mention included An Introduction to Facebook by Joel Isaac and Richard Rueda, Thanksgiving and Giving Thanks, by Catherine Skivers, Profile: Michael Williams, by Bonnie Rennie and My Seattle Story, by Dawn Wilcox.

We congratulate the two winners and encourage those who wrote non-winning articles to write more. As we said, the voting was close!

CCB Award Winners from the Awards and History Committee for 2010

by Catherine Skivers

One of the things many people look forward to at the spring CCB Convention Banquet is the awards ceremony. This year, three awards were selected by

the Awards and History Committee: two were given during the banquet program. The third will be made known at the fall convention when the

recipient is expected to attend.

The Community Service Award went to Jane Kardas of Ukiah who has a long and distinguished record of service with CCB. For eight years, she was on our Board of Directors, and she has served on many committees on the local, state and federal level, serving the blind and visually-impaired community. Some years ago, she assisted with a disability awareness day where local officials were willing to be blindfolded and use a wheelchair in order to feel what it was like to have a disability.

She has been extremely successful working with state and national legislators. Jane is on a first-name basis with her state legislator and is well known to social service and other organizations in her area. She has been designated as a person in her county where questions concerning

blindness issues can be directed. She has worked diligently to help preserve the rights of people on IHSS.

While many of us call on our legislators and sometimes get to know them well, she is the only one I have personally heard of on our Governmental Affairs Committee who has ever had a legislator call on her at her home.

Jane's plaque, (black glass 8 by 10, gold underplate and gold lettering on black plate, landscape mode) reads: California Council of the Blind; Community Service Award; To Jane Kardas; whose active participation as a leader of the California Council of the Blind and as a leader in her local community, serving on local boards and commissions in matters such as in-home support services and disability awareness, has led to the creation of a positive awareness of the abilities and needs of

people who are blind and visually impaired in her area and a close and productive relationship between the blindness community and local, state and national legislators; Presented this seventeenth Day of April, 2010 in the city of Burlingame, California).

Bonnie Rennie received the Merit Award. This award is given to someone who does a lot of volunteer work, and this lady certainly fills that bill. She has written many articles for the BC and has served as Chair of the Committee on Seniors with Vision Loss for many years. Her devotion to assisting not only blind seniors but their families and assisting them to cope with the onset of vision loss is well known throughout the state. She doesn't just limit herself to finding great programs for her committee at conventions, but she was a moving force in the presentation of our pamphlet, *Failing Sight and*

the *Family Plight*, which is now available in English, Spanish and Mandarin. There is no way to measure how much good this has done.

Bonnie's plaque (solid walnut 8 by 10, gold plate and black lettering, landscape mode) reads: California Council of the Blind Merit Award; To Bonnie Rennie for giving unselfishly of her time and energy as leader of the California Council of the Blind Seniors with Vision Loss Committee, to present programs and produce articles and publications, Notably, the committee's very popular booklet, *"Failing Sight and the Family Plight,"* that enhance the lives of blind, visually impaired and disabled seniors, encouraging them and their families to acknowledge the newly acquired disability and continue to move forward with a productive and satisfying life. Presented this Seventeenth Day of April, 2010 in the

City of Burlingame, California

Both ladies were very surprised to receive their awards and seemed pleased. We, on the committee, were very happy for them. It is always so great for us to be able to acknowledge

people who work for our cause, particularly when they are our members. The members of the Awards Committee are Gussie Morgan, Roger Petersen, Bernice Kandarian, Don Queen, Joe Smith, Al Gil, Chris Gray, and I have the pleasure and privilege to serve as chair.

Report on State and Federal Legislation

**by Frank Welte, Director of Advocacy and
Governmental Affairs**

As this column is being written, both the California State Legislature and the U.S. Congress are in session. There's a lot going on, and I can only cover a few of the issues in this space.

State Legislation

The CCB Capitol Day on May 18 was a great success with 31 CCB members and friends taking part. The majority were attending this event

for the first time. After an informative legislative briefing and a pleasant picnic lunch, participants visited the offices of almost all of the members of the California Assembly and State Senate. Thanks are in order for Ed Branch and Lily McCray who provided clerical and logistical support, Joni Patche, who prepared lunch and especially to our Capitol Day sponsors, Mr. Art Takahara and the Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of

California.

CCB is sponsoring two bills this year in the State Legislature. The first bill is AB 1787, and the author is Assemblyman Sandre Swanson. Currently, notices of proposed state regulations are formatted so that it is difficult for a person using screen reading software to read these documents to determine which portions of the regulations are being revised. This is because modified language is indicated typographically. Changed text is printed in *Italic* or underlined characters, and deleted text is printed in strike-through characters. AB 1787 would require the state to make notifications of proposed regulations available in a format that is more readable for blind and visually impaired Californians by using narrative text to explain modified language. The bill is currently stuck in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations. Because of

strict state budget constraints, the scope of this bill will need to be restricted to a small number of state agencies in order to get the bill through the Legislature.

Our bill, AB 2430, by Assemblymember Wesley Chesbro, would require agencies that serve the blind, as a condition for receiving state funding, to reserve at least 20% of the seats on their boards of directors for people who are visually impaired. CCB contends that an agency that receives state funds to provide services to the blind community is accountable to that community and to the rest of California's taxpayers as well. Accountability can best be achieved when the boards of directors of agencies serving the blind include meaningful representation from our community. The bill is currently awaiting consideration by the full Assembly. If it is passed by the Assembly, it will be taken up by the State

Senate.

We encourage you to contact your state legislators and ask them to support these two important pieces of legislation.

Federal Legislation

Our hard work of gathering large numbers of congressional cosponsors for the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act, H.R. 734 and its companion bill S 841 has yielded positive results. This strong show of congressional support on the quiet car issue has resulted in the inclusion of language requiring minimum motor vehicle sound requirements in the Motor Vehicle Safety Act, H.R. 5381, so the chances of Congress passing quiet car legislation this year are much improved.

The Video and Communications Accessibility Act, H.R. 3101, has 47 Cosponsors, including 8 Californians.

The companion bill in the Senate is the Equal Access to 21st Century Communications Act, S 3304.

We encourage you to call your congressional representatives and our U.S. Senators in support of all of these bills. You can reach the office of your member of Congress by calling the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121. You can get detailed information about all of CCB's legislative activities by reading my legislative reports which will be posted regularly on CCB's web site, www.ccbnet.org and distributed on our various Email lists. You can listen to the reports by calling the CCB's toll-free phone number, 800-221-6359, on evenings and weekends. Check with the California Connection to find out when my next Legislative Report will be updated. For federal legislative information, please check with the Washington Connection 800-424-8666 or on the

**ACB web site,
www.acb.org. Please write
me at
frank.welte@ccbnet.org if**

**you would like me to send
you my legislative updates
and other advocacy
information by Email.**

Barbara Caslava-Messinger: Friend and Mentor

by Connie Bateman

Barbara Caslava-Messinger passed away on April 9, 2010 after a short illness. Barbara was a senior vocational rehabilitation counselor and Qualified Rehabilitation Professional with the Department of Rehabilitation. She had worked in the Blind Field Services District, Richmond branch office since November, 1997. She cared very much about her clients and made a great deal of effort to provide them with materials, equipment, and services that would meet their individualized needs.

Many of us knew Barbara long before she became a rehabilitation

counselor. She emigrated from Australia as a young child, with her Czechoslovakian parents and twin brother, Robert. They attended public schools in San Francisco. Some of us met Barbara during her middle school and high school years, and later during her time at San Francisco State University when she was pursuing her teaching credential and master's degree in special education.

Barbara was a very serious student and a fun-loving friend. Her sense of humor and cheerful attitude was an encouragement to all who knew her. Some of us remember Barbara from participating in a youth

group at the National Association for the Visually Handicapped in San Francisco. This was a friendly and safe place for us to attend after school. My fondest memories with Barbara are the guitar lessons, singing, going on hiking, backpacking and camping trips, and ski trips. Barbara was very adventurous and willing to try almost anything.

Another fond memory I have of Barbara is the time we spent at Enchanted Hills Camp, both as campers and counselors. One summer, Barbara and I and two other ladies decided to form a small singing group. Our mission was to do a spoof on country western music. We were widely known around camp as "The Four Hicks". Other camp memories include singing in the camp choir, hiking to Napa, and talking and laughing with her and other friends.

The fondest memory I

have of Barbara is the summer I stayed with her and the Caslava family. In our quest to lose weight, we went jogging almost every day at San Francisco State. We started by running around the track. I could only do about four laps; Barbara would do a few more than that. Eventually, we started jogging around Lake Merced. She kept saying we would jog until we got to the gate; she said this several times. Later I found out there was no gate; she made this up so that I would keep going.

Barbara and I also tried to go on a diet, but in the Caslava household, this was impossible. Her mother made the most scrumptious apple strudel, and on Friday nights, her parents prepared some delicious European dinners. During those summer months, we spent time talking and going places; she even taught me how to do the Polka.

Last June, I started attending the Orientation Center for the Blind in Albany because I lost my remaining vision about two years ago. One night, I received a phone call in the dorm from Barbara. We talked for an hour, catching up on what was going on in our lives. Barbara was really worried about the impact the furlow days were having on her and her sons. In spite of this, she was very

supportive and encouraging to me.

Barbara Caslava-Messinger was a mentor and role model for her clients. She was a sincere and encouraging friend. We still can't believe she's really gone. We miss her deeply.

She is survived by her two young sons, Gregory, 20, and Al, 18.

On the Lighter Side

by Evelyn Drewry

Hello everyone! I want to thank Katrina McCurdy of the Alameda chapter for sharing a couple of funny stories for your enjoyment. They made me smile, and I suspect they will do the same for you.

She writes: "I am a member of the Nor-Cal Theater Organ Society because I enjoy hearing theater organs and am especially proud of the

mighty Wurlitzer installed at the Berkeley Community Theater located on the Berkeley High School campus. There was an annual membership business meeting of the society for tax purposes on January 24th this year. Before the meeting there was an organ concert to lure music lovers who might not ordinarily want to attend a business meeting. After the concert, chairs

were set up on the stage for the meeting, and then we were all going to a restaurant for dinner.

"Because I can't drive a car, I waited for the man who said he would take me to the restaurant. I saw another woman who looked a little like me. As I approached her, I said: 'Are you waiting for a ride to the restaurant too?' Suddenly I realized that the woman was me, and that there was a very large and long mirror ahead of me on the stage. Fortunately, there didn't seem to be other people standing near me at the time.

"Several years ago when the fall CCB convention was in Los Angeles, I flew from

Oakland to Ontario before the event to visit my sister in Rancho Cucamonga. She showed me to her bedroom where I could leave my red suitcase. She said she would sleep in the living room and would be quite comfortable. I wondered about that because I saw two beds in her bedroom. I thought that maybe she is afraid I will keep the radio on all night and prevent her from sleeping. Later I returned to the bedroom and saw two red suitcases. Then I saw the mirrors on the closet doors. There was only one small double bed."

On that note, let me quickly wish each of you a fun and safe Summer, and don't forget to share any humorous situations which you may find yourselves in.

Summary of Spring 2010 Resolutions

by Gabe Griffith, resolutions committee co-chair

I would like to first thank you all for your support over the last

several years of my chairing the resolutions committee. This may be my last time

writing to you as the chair or co-chair of resolutions. This spring I was lucky enough to be joined by Leena Bandy as a co-chair. She did a wonderful job chairing the meeting and reading the resolutions on Sunday morning. I have enjoyed my time as chair, but it is a demanding job; I am looking forward to just being another obnoxious member of the committee.

Now, for the business at hand. This year we only had 5 resolutions submitted to us. And now, here is the summary of the spring 2010 resolutions.

Resolution 2010A-1 dealt with talking pill bottles and was referred back to the author for further research and consideration.

Resolution 2010A-2 dealt with Sensory Access Foundation, the state department of rehabilitation, and their financial relationship. This resolution was referred

back to the resolutions committee. It was felt that this was an important issue but the resolution needed reworking.

Resolution 2010A-3 dealt with the repeal of California government code 4459a. It has been ruled that this code does not allow Title 24 in California state law to be amended beyond what is in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If code 4459a is repealed it would allow more stringent amendments to be made to Title 24.

Resolution 2010A-4 dealt with construction at the Sacramento international airport. They are building a new terminal B, and there are some access concerns, mainly with the use of non-conforming tactile markers. It called for CCB to explore all possible actions in stopping non-code tactile warnings.

Resolution 2010A-5

dealt with the California department of rehabilitation seat on the state guide dog board. It stressed how important it is that members of this board be guide dog users and urged rehab to have

their appointee be a guide dog user.

Resolutions 2010A-6 and 2010A-7 were the appreciation resolutions to the hotel and volunteers.

Summaries of CCB Board Meeting Minutes

by Gabe Griffith

April 15 2010 Pre-convention Board Meeting

President Jeff Thom called the meeting to order at a little after 3:00 P.M. Gabe Griffith called the roll. All members were present.

The minutes of the January 13, 2010 conference call were accepted with a couple of modifications.

Dan Kysor and Lily McCray gave a fund raising report. Dan talked about how important face to face contact is in fund raising. Lily reported on current fund raising efforts and

discussed grants that CCB is in the process of applying for. It was moved and seconded to accept this report.

The budget committee had a couple of recommendations for increases of prices related to conventions. In two separate motions the board voted to increase the convention registration price from \$10 to \$15 and to increase the meal prices for attendees by \$5. Both of these will be in effect beginning with the fall 2010 convention in San Diego.

Frank Welte has been attending planning

meetings for a 20th anniversary celebration of the signing of the ADA. He outlined some of the events being planned for the week of July 26th 2010. The board voted to sponsor a booth at this event.

Capitol day is an important event for this organization and with the spring convention being held in the bay area it had to be separate from the convention. The board decided to have capitol day on May 18, and to budget up to \$250 to help defray the cost of lunches. Attendees would be responsible for their own transportation.

During the treasurer's report Chris Gray discussed a proposed vs. actual budget document. This outlined where CCB is in regards to its projected income and spending in relation to the actual numbers. He also reported that the 2007 and 2008 audits have been

completed. It was also decided to continue working with the same firm that completed these audits for the 2009 audit. The board then accepted this report.

Donna Pomerantz gave the web task force report. There is an ACB group that is actively working with the web management program that CCB wants to implement. The board accepted the web task force report.

Bernice Kandarian gave the publications committee report. She discussed the numbers of people receiving The Blind Californian in the various formats. The publications committee report was accepted.

Cathie Skivers gave the Newel Perry and Ellen Murphy reports: including the trustees and amounts in each fund. She also discussed some of the things those two funds do. Both reports were

accepted by the board.

At this point the meeting recessed from a couple minutes after 5:00 until about 7:30. Before reconvening everyone in attendance was treated to a wonderful performance by the Jazz band from the California School for the blind.

There was discussion surrounding moving to a new company for vehicle donations. It was decided to move to a company called Action Donation Services on a one-year trial basis.

Chris then discussed the proposed budget for 2010. This proposed budget was adopted by the board.

All of the hotels that the board was considering for the spring 2011 convention had also submitted proposals for spring 2012; so the board made decisions on both conventions. It was decided to visit the

Doubletree hotel in Sacramento in 2011 and return to the Crowne Plaza SFO airport hotel in Burlingame in 2012.

After a few announcements the meeting adjourned.

December 14, 2009
Conference Call Minutes

President Jeff Thom called the meeting to order and went over the agenda for the meeting. Gabe Griffith then called the roll. There were two absences.

The minutes for the October, 2009 pre-convention board meeting minutes were accepted unanimously.

The board voted to participate in a SHARE program where people with cards handed out by CCB members could be used to have a percentage of their purchases at stores around northern and southern California donated to CCB.

The board then moved in to executive session to discuss the CalTrans settlement and staff bonuses.

After leaving executive session the board decided to begin the spring pre-convention board meeting at 3:00 P.M. with a break for dinner and the California School for the Blind jazz band performance.

It was decided to set aside \$5,000 for the crisis fund in fiscal year 2010.

Before adjourning there were several announcements including Jeff thanking Ann Kysor and Richard Rueda for their years of service since they will be leaving the board at the end of 2009.

**January 13 2010
Conference Call**

President Jeff Thom called the meeting to order. Dan Kysor was absent and Chris Gray

would join the call later.

The minutes from the December 13, 2009 conference call were accepted with a couple of modifications.

Jeff then read the web task force written report. There were several modifications made, and the board then accepted the report.

Chris, who had joined the call by this point, reported that we have a draft copy of the 2008 audit. It was decided to use the 2007 audit for any necessary purposes.

The board decided to contract with a company called Conference Direct for the fall 2011 convention hotel bids. This company says they can get organizations lower rates because they bring a large amount of business to hotels. The agreement that CCB set up does not preclude CCB from seeking its own hotel bids.

The final item of business for this meeting was to decide to join a Southern California Edison program that would allow people to get free

weatherstripping and obtain more energy efficient appliances. CCB will get \$2 for each person that is referred to this program.

CCB Officers and Directors 2010

[Editor's note: We are indebted to Bernice Kandarian who updates and corrects the list of CCB officers and board members, including the number of the term each is presently serving, the year elected to that term and the year next up for election. Terms actually begin on January 1 following election. The presence of an asterisk means that the individual served a partial term before the first full term.]

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