

THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN

**Quarterly Magazine of the
CALIFORNIA COUNCIL OF THE BLIND
Winter 2018
Volume 62, No. 1**

Published in Braille, Large Print, audio CD, Email (bc-subscribe@ccbnet.org), and Online in readable and downloadable text and audio media.

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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 5 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 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 spring, 2018 issue of THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN is noon, February 15, 2018.

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Please send all address changes to the Executive Office.

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The Editor's Desk

Mike Keithley

Welcome to the Winter, 2018 Blind Californian. Wherever the holiday train happens to be when you get your BC, here's to a happy season!

The holiday season seems to be starting so early this year that I wonder if goodwill and peace will be kinda blasé by the end of 2017. King says I've been drinking too much sour pepsy-mist, and need to go to the dog park for some sweet opti-mist. I'll do that when it's not raining and the sun is out!

Anyway, there's a lot for you to read here. Judy Wilkinson talks about CCB's "scarlet letter," the 2017 CCB scholarship winners are announced,

we have a very nice review of "Smart Glasses," and Bev Clifford tells us about her ride in a developing self-driving car. Of course that's not all, read on!

O, King brought me a bottle of opti-mist. It's sweet and fizzy with a bit of lemon, and I'm keeping it away from my braille display. And he told me about a new podcast called "Out of Sight Dragons" (enter that in your Victor Stream) that features stories of visually impaired dragon boat paddlers. It's produced by Brian Yourish.

And remember to note CCB's new postal address in the masthead!

Presidents Message: The Scarlet Letter

Judy Wilkinson

Back in the day, every high school junior was forced to read Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, a novel (in my opinion wasted on such young readers). Hester Prynne refused to name the father of Little Pearl, and the scarlet letter A informed all that she had committed Adultery.

For some of our CCB members, the shameful scarlet letter A has come to stand not for Adultery but for Agency.

We only have to look back to the excellent historical proceedings presented in the Winter, 2014 BC to know why the word

"Agency" is anathema to people who are blind. In 1934, a bunch of do-gooders brought what they thought would be docile obedient blind men and women together to form an organization for the blind. But the sheep had other ideas. Led by the likes of the young Jacobus tenBroek, the majority of the new organization's positions came to be held by blind people themselves.

Flash forward to the 1960's when a number of well-meaning agencies formed the National Accreditation Council (NAC), to accredit (justify) like-minded agencies

ostensibly serving the blind, but mostly providing services they (agency folk) thought were good for them (the clients, constituents, pick your term). Years followed when the blindness organizations (NFB more forcefully, and ACB some would say more diplomatically) fought this self-perpetuating service model. The battle went on for years but in the end NAC became a laughable impotent entity.

With such a history, no wonder the word Agency sets off alarm bells for some of our members.

But let's be honest here: many agencies can and do provide useful services and benefits; the issue is: who controls them?

During this past year when someone suggests CCB is adopting this scarlet letter, your Board members assiduously and repeatedly have reassured members that this organization will always reflect its grassroots, with the final authority resting with our convention.

Seemingly we are flat out not believed. After all, we all know one supposed grassroots organization which provides services to its members. But if it walks like an agency and quacks like an agency, well you get the idea.

So it feels like despite all our protestations of still being your grassroots CCB, some still believe we're sliding down that slippery slope. The first danger sign was hiring a

CEO (a sighted one at that) who, in a desperate attempt to keep the money from running out, has gone after funds which, yes, provide services! We have received a VISTA grant allowing us to bring on board 3 folks: one of whom will work to provide members with employment services; and one who will help with capacity-building community outreach and increasing our volunteer base. We have a grant which will allow us to train some of our members to deliver trainings on financial literacy (come early to the convention on Wednesday afternoon March 21, 2018 to learn more).

Dear to my heart is a developing partnership

with ontheMuV [That's not an error] through which we hope not only to provide an inexpensive mini under-desk treadmill, but better yet, jobs. The device is behind schedule and a prototype is still being developed, but we hope to tell you more soon.

So if attempting to provide our members more services, and if directing callers to entities where they can receive services makes CCB an agency, then yes we are guilty.

Another scarlet letter Agency sign is that the CEO heads the business side of the organization, with employees reporting to, and being hired and fired by him. No matter how many times we assure our members that

the CEO reports, to and is evaluated by me representing the Board, the worry seems to be that Paul Shane is running the show.

Third, our CEO, in order to assist us in turning our 80-year-old grassroots organization into a 21st century modern nonprofit, has asked us to provide certain information: volunteer hours and our fundraising reports on a more timely monthly basis.

Fourth, it seems the CEO and the Constitution and By laws committee are plotting to dump our sacred document to replace it with a business model. We are designing bylaws, the modern approach, thereby leaving us free to keep policies

more fluid. That means for instance, we don't have to amend the Constitution in order to change the date things are due. The document will also reflect compliance with state and federal laws and regulations. Here is the Preamble your CANDB Committee is proposing. "We, the blind citizens of California, having established in 1934 the California Council of the Blind as an organization dedicated to the equality and opportunity in society for blind and low-vision Californians and now seeking through provision of our governing document to our organization and our commitments in response to the demands of today's

changing world, do hereby:

- Establish these bylaws to reflect continuity with the values and principles that have historically defined our organization;
- Reiterate our commitment to a self-governing organization in which people who are blind and low-vision are the supreme authority in organization maintaining control over their own decisions and lives;
- Develop mechanisms for acquiring the necessary management, fund-raising, legal, financial and technological expertise to assure the viability and success of the organization and to maximize its ability to

meet the challenges of the future;

and

- Devise administrative and accountability structures to ensure that delegated expertise is utilized in ways that maximize its effectiveness and that preserve membership authority and control."

Do you see signs of the hated scarlet letter in this statement?

Perish the thought that we should actually try to do things to help meet our members' needs!

Negativity rises out of fear. Some fear that trying to meet members' needs will deprive them of autonomy or that providing services may deflect from our dedication to advocacy.

But such fears only lead to negativity which demoralizes your fellow members who are working so hard to make sure CCB doesn't have to close its doors.

When I speak directly to individual members or visit with various chapters as I have recently with Solano, San Francisco and Redwood Empire, as I plan to join our Southern California chapters in late January for a regional meeting: I feel invigorated and revitalized. Both Paul and I have and will continue to schedule "office hours". My phone

number is published in every Blind Californian. In short, if you have a complaint, problem or concern, don't just complain to each other, talk to me, to Paul, to any board member!

I look forward to the day when the letter A stands for Advancement: the kind of advancement we can accomplish when we communicate and converse, working together toward the common goal of promoting the interests of all Californians who are blind or visually-impaired.

Special Brew

Sugar Lopez

**I know that you're a little shy,
But don't let that bother you;
'Cause I've got the perfect recipe
For a very special brew!
The first few steps begin with you,
Now you really must believe...
For with a little confidence
There's so much you can achieve!
So, first you take a cup of wonder,
Blend in a little adoration,
Combine that with a dash of faith
And let this be your foundation!
Add a little splash of wisdom
And a nice big shot of fun,
Then mix in a bit of starlight;
Soon the magic has begun!
Stir in a little twist of hope,
And a nice big dash of glee;
A bit of luck and patience**

**Will help make your destiny!
Now just add a splash of truth
And pour it all into a jar,
Then think about the one you love
And wish upon a star!**

-Sugar Lopez

Please Support my Transplant journey at:

www.gofundme.com/sugars-transplant-journey

Governmental Affairs Report

by Jeff Thom

Sometimes I have more to report than others, but there's never a complete lull when it comes to advocacy impacting the California Council of the Blind specifically, and blind and low vision individuals in general. The big news, of course, is the passage of AB1705. A few felt that the elimination of the Board of Guide Dogs

for the Blind was a strong possibility, but it only goes to show that when a coalition comes together to unite around an issue, amazing things can happen. CCB, NFBC, Guide Dogs for the Blind (the largest guide dog school in the nation), other blindness organizations and many individuals united to

convince the Legislature and the Governor not to extend the life of the Board, which is normally the type of thing that happens with hardly a whimper in Sacramento.

Along with the Board's elimination, the bill requires guide dog schools to comply with standards being certified by the International Guide Dog Federation, whose standards are virtually identical to what the Board had been enforcing. Thus, schools will still need to meet standards for their employees, but will no longer be subject to the redundant and unnecessary burdens imposed by the Board.

I am also pleased to report on the passage of AB434, which requires, prior to

July 1, 2019 and every two years thereafter, every state agency to certify that its website is in compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 or subsequent revisions. Although the state is already required to meet ADA standards, state agencies often ignore this requirement. Hopefully, the mandate in AB434 will help ensure that the state meets its obligations with request to its web content. Unfortunately, no increase in the state's share of SSI benefits was adopted, although the federal share will increase by 2% in 2018. CCB is active in the Californians for SSI Coalition and will continue to work in this area, although it is unlikely that

we will have a reasonable opportunity for positive change until a new Governor takes office in 2019.

Next year, we will be re-introducing our bill to strengthen state law regarding liability by pet owners whose dogs attack service animals. In 2016, the bill was vetoed by the Governor, but we intend to eliminate some provisions to which he was opposed in hopes of ensuring that, if passed, he will sign it. Fortunately the provisions that the Governor found objectionable are not central to the goals of the bill which would, among other things, apply the law to instances when the service dog was not actually in discharge of its duties and would specify

loss of wages and other costs for which reimbursement must be made by the pet owner.

I am pleased to report that with respect to a resolution we passed at our spring Conference and Convention regarding limitations on the imposition by school districts of requirements pertaining to when and how orientation and mobility instruction and other special education teaching can be done, Disability Rights California is willing, when we can find the right case, to work on this issue. When an orientation and mobility instructor can only take a child three blocks from campus or must meet other stringent requirements, the ability

for a blind child to receive the skills he/she needs is significantly limited.

Turning to Washington, D.C., it is certainly true that there is never a dull moment. CCB sent a letter to every member of the California congressional delegation opposing HR620. This bill would, in a manner similar, but even more harmful, to what has been done in California, impose restrictions on when suits can be filed against businesses for violations of the ADA. Although the bill doesn't apply to suits alleging inaccessibility of websites, some are proposing extending these proposals into that area as well.

The health care debate continues to fester, with

proposals to dramatically cut Medicaid funding through block grants or other means and proposals to cut Medicare funding still floating around. Whether the Republican House and Senate will be able to agree on such proposals is anyone's guess.

Similarly, although many of our programs, including funding for our Older Individuals who are Blind program, are safe for this calendar year, there is no telling what might occur next year.

ACB is working for the passage of two pieces of Medicare legislation which are unlikely to pass by themselves, but might, if Medicare reform is taken up, have a chance to become part of more

comprehensive legislation. HR3457 would require the Government Accountability Office to investigate the failure of government to provide Medicare and Medicaid recipients with information in accessible formats. ACB is also working for passage of HR2050, which would establish a pilot project for coverage of low vision devices under Medicare, when prescribed, in order to determine the cost and benefits of permanently covering such devices under the program. ACB is also working on a number of regulatory fronts, and I will attempt to discuss many of these topics during the next few columns in this magazine. Issues range from

accessibility of in-flight entertainment, regulation of service animals on airlines, audio-description requirements for television networks, and more.

Finally, as part of the 2018 CCB Conference and Convention, we will be holding Capitol Day from 9 AM to 1 PM on Thursday, March 22. Early next year, we will begin to identify the issues to be covered by CCB members participating in Capitol Day. However, it is the goal of the Governmental Affairs Committee that those of you who intend to be part of those advocacy efforts let us know well in advance so that we can make plans for that day, including making appointments ahead of

time with members of the California Assembly and Senate. We are hoping for a large turn-out to storm the halls of the State Capitol.

I have said it before, and I'll keep repeating it,

success in our advocacy efforts is in your hands. Your passion and commitment can make a real difference in the lives of people who are blind or have low vision.

CCB 2017-2018 Scholarship Winners

by Christy Crespin, Scholarship Committee Chair

On behalf of the CCB Scholarship Committee members, a hearty congratulation goes out to this year's winners for the academic school year 2017-2018. This year six applicants were awarded scholarships in the amount of \$15,000 from the CCB and Active Blind, Inc. from Los Angeles, CA. We appreciate the late Anthony G. Mannino, past

president of CCB [1966 to 1974], and the Catalano family who hold the funds in trust through Active Blind, Inc.

Mia Carius, age 26, from Lemoore, CA, has earned her bachelor of social work degree and is obtaining her master's degree from California State University, Fresno in clinical rehabilitation

counseling and mental health counseling, toward her goal of working in the field of vocational rehabilitation counseling.

Cheng Xiong, age 19, from Fresno, CA, is a freshman at Clovis Community College. His primary goal is to become an assistive technology instructor for people who are blind; his secondary goal is to continue his education to work as a vocational rehabilitation counselor.

Rostom Dadian, age 27, from Glendale, CA, transferred into California State University, Los Angeles. His goals are to work in the business sector, designing websites, educating the public through inspirational speaking, and possibly further his

education to earn his juris doctorate.

Chad Deuschle, age 37, from Perris, CA, transferred to California State University, San Bernardino majoring in administration in human services management. He works and attends university, and continues to adapt to a relatively new visual impairment. His goal is to continue working in the field of hotel management.

Adrian Hermosillo, age 19, from Yucaipa, CA, is a sophomore at Crafton Hills College majoring in business administration. His goal is to continue his education at California State University, San Bernardino, majoring in business administration. He would like to work in a

management or leadership role in a nonprofit agency and believes a degree in business administration will assist in forming a broad prospective that will allow the nonprofit agency to provide viable and healthy services.

Lorise Diamond, age 50, from Bonita, CA, attends San Diego State University. She received a bachelor degree in communication with an emphasis on rhetoric with double minors in sociology and honors interdisciplinary studies. She is relatively new to her visual impairment, and has worked as a performer, and also in the field of nursing. She has received scholarships from the American Council of the Blind, has attended

the ACB Leadership Institute, and has numerous community involvements. She is pursuing a master's degree in communication from San Diego State University and is working toward a goal of writing grants, proposals, and appeals for companies, or as a freelance entrepreneur.

The 2018-2019 CCB Scholarship Application will be available via the CCB website from February 1 through May 15, 2018. We encourage residents of California, regardless of school attending, to apply.

I would like to thank the Scholarship committee members: Robert Wendt, Rob Turner, Leslie Thom, Guillermo Robles, Linda

Porelle, Steve Fort, and Nelly Emerson for a great

job and productive year.

The ACB Scholarship

from the ACB Leadership List

The American Council of the Blind has a great opportunity for students who are legally blind to earn a scholarship, whether you are going to a technical college, an entering freshman, undergraduate or a graduate student. Over \$45,000 in scholarships are awarded to students each year. To be eligible, you need to be legally blind in both eyes, maintain a 3.3 GPA and be involved in your school and local community.

As a scholarship winner, you will experience firsthand ACB's national

conference and convention this July, where you will meet other students who share the same life experiences, create lasting friendships, and network with individuals who understand what you are going through and can help you with your journey.

The 2018 ACB Scholarship application is now open! Go to acb.org/scholarship to access and fill out the form.

The form must be submitted no later than

**February 15th, 2018 at
11:59 P.M. Central time.**

**For more information,
please contact Dee Theien
in the ACB national office**

**at 612-332-3242 or 800-
866-3242. We look forward
to receiving your
application materials.**

Yosemite Audio Description

by Jamie Gibson-Barrows

**On Friday November 10,
2017, members of the CCB
Fresno chapter visited
Yosemite National Park to
test the beta app
"Unidescription" (UniD)
developed by the
University of Hawaii. We
chartered a bus financed
by ACB through its
Executive Director Eric
Bridges. Without the
support from Eric and
ACB, this trip could not
have occurred. Our
original transportation
was through the Yosemite
Area Rapid Transit System**

**(YARTS), however we
found they didn't have the
funds for fall or winter
transportation from
Fresno, so ACB donated
the funding for the charter.
I reached out to Brett
Oppegaard, Associate
Professor and Principal
Investigator at the U of H
at Manoa, soon after the
ACB convention when I
learned of the
development of the
Unidescription app for
Yosemite National Park.
We visit Yosemite every**

year with CCB Fresno members and other members in our community, only to find very little audio description in the Park. So we were eager to help out with testing of the app. Brett was excited to give our chapter this opportunity, and for the next three months we communicated with ACB, University of Hawaii and the National Park Service. We had the pleasure of meeting Sajja Koirala, who flew into Fresno from Hawaii to join us on this trip. Sajja is one of the developers of this AD app. She joined us as a supporter and observer. At the end of our trip, Sajja facilitated a focus group discussion on the AD app.

The trip was fantastic with 26 attendees and 4 guide dogs. Yosemite's Ranger Sally Kintner guided us through a tour throughout the day. We touched and smelled large trees on the paths, such as the Incense Cedar Tree and the Ponderosa Pine. We found that if you scratch the bark on the Ponderosa Pine, it has the fragrance of vanilla. In addition we enjoyed the sculpture display on another trail. This sculpture was hands-on, enabling us to feel the massive rock formations and the Yosemite falls to get a better description by touch of the surrounding mountains. Many participants listened to the UniD app that features the map and brochure before our visit, as well as while

we were on the trails. It was a beautiful fall day walking on trails, visiting the Lower Falls, Yosemite Lodge and the Visitor Center. Most took a sack lunch for an outdoor picnic, and some purchased a quick meal on site.

We are very proud of participating with the audio description beta testing for Yosemite and being so supported by everyone who have worked for months getting this app up and running. Our Facebook page has pictures of our day. In addition, we will be sending photos to ACB, who will publicize them soon. Our local producer for Blindsight Fresno, William Elliott and wife Darcie, are both members

of the Fresno chapter. They participated in the trip, and will be producing a Blindsight Fresno segment via CMAC and YouTube that's coming soon.

Unidescription (UniD) works both for iOS and Android. I encourage you to download it on your Smartphone. Our focus was on Yosemite, however, the app has many more National Parks already loaded, and more to come for the rest of the parks here in California throughout the upcoming year. Our goal is to take part in more National Parks beta testing. Our feedback during the focus group, as well as our filling out surveys for both ACB and Yosemite National Park, will help

improve audio description for those of us with low or no vision.

Thank you to the following who have worked months on this project: University of Hawaii, Brett Oppegaard, Megan and Thomas Conway, and

Sajja Koirala; from ACB: Executive Director Eric Bridges, First Vice President Dan Spoone, Grant Writer Jo Lynn Bailey-Page; and from Yosemite National Park Services: Kara Stella, and Sally Kintner.

A Review of Smart Glasses

by **Bill Takeshita, O.D., F.A.A.O., F.C.O.V.Da,
Braille Institute**

Have you ever imagined that there would be glasses that were controlled by a computer that would allow you to read, identify faces, and see distant objects clearly? The time is here! Many manufacturers of low vision aids have developed high-tech computer glasses that incorporate a tiny camera

in a pair of glasses that focus on the object of interest, and displays the image on a high definition LED screen. These glasses are very lightweight and comfortable to wear, and they allow users to change the level of magnification, and the colors of the background and foreground. Some of them

are also able to scan written text and read it aloud!

None of the glasses described in this article are legal to use for driving an automobile. Most impressive is the fact that these high-tech glasses have improved the vision and lives of thousands of people with macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, optic nerve atrophy, retinitis pigmentosa and other eye diseases.

Vision Enhancement Glasses

The first category of smart glasses are placed on the user's face and display an enhanced version of their camera image. This image is in full color, and the user is able to magnify,

enhance contrast, and change the colors.

e-Sight

The e-Sight glasses are one of the most popular smart glasses and incorporate a large number of features allowing people with low vision to perform daily activities independently. They are the only glasses so far that have been proven effective in a clinical trial. The e-Sight glasses weigh 4-ounces and incorporate a camera that is smaller than the size of an eraser on a pencil. The camera is positioned near the bridge of the glasses and sends an automatically focused high definition picture to the Organic Light Emitting Diode (OLED) screens.

These screens, which offer the highest contrast of any display technology, allow a patient's glasses prescription to be incorporated into the system for maximal clarity of sight. Also, distance between the displays can be adjusted to match the distance between the patient's eyes, preventing double vision. The 21.5-MegaPixel camera has a very rapid refresh rate that provides smooth images when watching sports or other action. The user can adjust the magnification up to 24X and also change the contrast and the colors of the background and foregrounds for optimal reading. The e-Sight has a wide field of view that measures a maximum of 38-degrees.

In addition, the OLED screens can be tilted to provide users with the ability to use peripheral vision to walk safely when playing golf or sightseeing while wearing the e-Sight glasses. This is a feature that is unique to eSight in this market segment.

"We have been very pleased with the success of the e-Sight 3," said Brian Mech, CEO of e-Sight. "We have dispensed approximately 2,000 units, and children and adults have told us how the glasses have changed their lives." "The latest versions of the e-Sight are able to take photographs, stream and record videos, connect to and display your mobile phone, connect to a TV or computer via HDMI, WIFI,

or Bluetooth, read bar codes, and they can scan books. And many more amazing features are on the way!"

The cost of the e-Sight is \$9,995 and is covered in part by some insurance companies, and includes a 3-year warranty.

Additionally, the glasses come with a training program called eSkills, and world class customer support, including a personal Vision Ambassador who is also a user of the device. For more information, please go to www.esighteyewear.com or call 855-837-4448.

NuEyes Pro

The NuEyes Pro glasses are another very popular form of smart glasses and

they function very similarly to the e-Sight devices. The NuEyes Pro consist of a small camera that displays the image on the OLED high resolution screen. The NuEyes glasses use a high definition camera with a fast refresh rate that provides a clear and smooth picture without "jumpiness" when watching live action and sports. The field of view of the NuEyes measures a maximum of 30 degrees and has up to 12X magnification.

The NuEyes Pro is unique in that users can adjust the magnification, contrast, and color combinations with their voices. There are no wires that connect the glasses to the computer.

"We are very pleased with the latest features we have on the NuEyes Pro. Users can stream videos, scan pages of text and listen it, read bar codes on food items, surf the Internet, and they can also take videos and photographs," said Mark Greget, CEO of NuEyes.

The cost of the NuEyes Pro is \$5,995 with a 2-year warranty. NuEyes is located in Southern California, and to obtain more information, go to www.nueyes.com or call 800-605-4033.

Vuzix Glasses

The Vuzix glasses are a more affordable design of smart glasses that are being used to assist veterans of the military who have low vision. They

consist of a camera that projects the image to a single lens. As a result, users look with one eye to view the image on the screen. The Vuzix glasses weigh 2.5 ounces and are able to magnify text for reading, and are able to focus at various distances to allow users to identify faces of friends and families. They can also scan text and read it aloud as well as to identify bar codes when shopping for food. There are multiple models of the Vuzix glasses to meet your specific needs. For more information, go to www.vuzix.com.

Audio Enhancement Smart Glasses

Smart glasses are also available in designs that do not display a magnified

and enhanced image for users to see. Rather, they take a picture of objects, and a voice will describe what is in front of them. This design of smart glasses is very helpful for those who are totally blind or who have very poor vision. Some manufacturers have staff to tell you exactly what is in front of you while others will use computer technology to describe objects or text.

AIRA Glasses

The AIRA glasses are one of the most exciting and innovative devices to help people with low vision. They are designed with a small camera mounted on the glasses and the camera will display the image to an employee of

AIRA and that person will describe what is in front of you. The user may ask the employee questions, such as "Where is the escalator to the train station?" or simply ask for directions to find a specific point of interest. The AIRA system is very helpful in that it can also identify people around you and help you find a person you are trying to meet!

AIRA is a company that relies on their staff to help users. The staff of AIRA are highly trained and available to assist users from 4 am to 10 pm Pacific Standard Time. The fee for the AIRA system is dependent on how many minutes you choose to use it each month. The initial fee includes the glasses, camera, and all

hardware. The user must have a smart phone in order to use the AIRA system. The camera of the AIRA can be mounted to the Google or Vuzix glasses. Users can select a monthly plan and change plans at any time. 100-minutes has a fee of \$89 while 200-minutes has a fee of \$129. 400-minutes are available for a fee of \$199 per month. For more information, go to www.aira.io or call 858-876-2472.

OrCam My Eye

The OrCam MyEye smart glasses is an innovated device that was developed in Israel to help people with low vision to read independently. The OrCam MyEye consists of a pair of conventional glasses

with a small camera mounted on them. The user can place a book, newspaper, magazine, or a box of food in front of the OrCam, point at it with a finger, and the system will instantly begin to read the text aloud in a very easy to understand voice.

The OrCam can also be taught to identify faces of people by storing photographs into the system. This will allow users to know who is sitting across from them at the dinner table or at a meeting. The cost of the OrCam MyEye system is 5000 Australian dollars and this device is very easy to learn to use, [and it comes with a training package and dedicated support]. For more information, go to

www.orcam.com or call 866-976-7226.

Smart Glasses with Implants

The last category of smart glasses are those that involve the surgical implant of an electrode chip in the retina of the eye or directly into the visual cortex of the brain.

Second Sight is a company from Los Angeles, CA that has successfully developed electrical chips that receive electrical impulses from a camera on the glasses and provides enhanced vision. The treatment has received approval for use in adults with retinitis pigmentosa and it has actually restored vision in some people who were totally blind. However, the level

of vision for those who benefited from the surgery and the device was not equal to their vision in the past. The people who benefited most reported that they can often see people, objects, and read large numbers and letters. However, their vision was not at a level that allowed them to read books or to drive an automobile.

Vision is a complex process that involves the eyes and the brain. In cases where there is severe damage to the retina, an electronic chip called the Argus-60 can be surgically inserted into the retina. As users scans the environment, the camera sends electrical signals to the Argus-60 chip and the signals are sent to the optic nerve and processed

in the visual cortex of the brain. Today, clinical trials of the Argus-60 are being performed on people with macular degeneration and retinitis pigmentosa.

In 2016, The Orion Cortical Eye Visual prosthesis was successfully implanted into the visual cortex of the brains of study participants at the UCLA Doris Stein Eye Institute. Clinical trials are moving forward today to evaluate the safety and efficacy of the Orion. The Orion shows very high potential as this system may be

able to restore some vision in people with low vision regardless of their eye disease. For more information, go to www.secondsight.com.

All people who are interested in trying non-surgical smart glasses should call the appropriate company and ask for a free demonstration. It would also be very helpful if you could schedule appointments with multiple companies on the same day so that you can compare the benefits of each system.

Plugged-in With CLUA

by Bonnie Rennie

Are you an avid fan of the NLS talking book library? Is regular contact with

your talking book library, for you, not a luxury, but a necessity?

Those wonderful books, however we read them: NLS digital player, Victor Reader Stream, iPhone, or other device! And The magical page! Made accessible, Companion on those long waits and commutes, the Welcome diversion on a busy day, pill-free passport to Slumber land, entertainment and mental stimulation when you're bored, comfort when you're lonely, o wow!

If you can relate to some or all of the above, then you should be eager to join the California Library Users of America (CLUA), yearly dues of twenty dollars is a chunk of change. So what do you gain by joining CLUA? briefly, there are many good reasons. Book

discussions via conference call, like the one we recently held, on your favorite book series and why you liked it. Dues include membership in the national organization, Library Users of America, with their conference calls and newsletter.

Convention programs of interest to visually impaired book lovers. A CLUA email list, a great forum to share book suggestions, to give and receive ideas raised by members on anything relevant to talking book library users. And we're exploring ways to get our positive message of accessible reading and CLUA into our communities. Finally, when time comes to advocate for our

indispensable NLS library network, both active involvement and membership numbers count!

Those of us who are blind or have low vision and are eager to pursue accessible reading will benefit from interacting with CLUA, and CLUA needs you!

Below is the contact information for our CLUA Treasurer, Vita Zavoli, with her mailing address and cell phone number. She invites any inquiries, in

order to facilitate your joining CLUA.

Vita Zavoli

**1271 Washington Avenue,
No. 144**

San Leandro, Ca, 94577

Cell phone: 510 846-4080.

Checks are payable to CLUA, for twenty dollars.

Please provide your complete contact

information: visual status (blind, low vision,

sighted), and state the format that you wish to

receive your CLUA Ledger newsletter, braille or email.

COTY and Growth Awards 2018

by Vivian Younger, Membership Committee Chair

Is your Chapter/Affiliate getting ready to make a run for the prize?

COTY is in the wings waiting for a CCB Chapter or Affiliate to claim it! The Chapter of the Year (COTY) Award is presented to the CCB chapter that conducts a group effort to make a significant difference in the life of an individual or community.

The Fresno Council of the Blind Chapter was presented the COTY Award during the 2017 CCB banquet for its extraordinary combined fund raising and community outreach activities around National

White Cane Safety Day (now officially known as Blind Americans Equality Day). The appearance of chapter members in costume with their dogs and canes along with prize drawings and general informal public interaction netted the chapter over \$3,000 and a lot of good feelings in celebration of this special and successful day.

The COTY award is given to the chapter with the best overall project for the previous year. The CCB Membership Committee will be accepting letters from chapters for projects developed and completed in 2017. Please submit

letters to the CCB state office by February 15, 2018. In the letter, please explain the following:

What was the purpose of the chapter project, who benefited from the group effort, when did the project time-line occur, how was the project accomplished, and what was the ultimate outcome.

The CCB Membership Committee is looking forward to presenting the COTY award during the upcoming spring 2018 CCB Convention and Conference.

The CCB Membership Incentive Awards

How about winning one of the CCB Membership Incentive Awards in 2018? These awards are

presented at every CCB conference and Convention, one to the chapter or affiliate having the highest membership growth and the other to the chapter or affiliate having the largest percentage of membership growth. We sincerely urge all of the CCB chapters and affiliates to come together for the purpose of boosting overall CCB membership. Inviting prospective members to chapter and affiliate holiday and special events can be a means for capturing new CCB Members.

The Braille Revival League of California achieved the highest percentage of membership growth and the California Library Users of America brought

on board the most members in 2016.

The CCB Membership Committee is looking forward to reading about

your chapter or affiliate accomplishments as well as membership growth. So let's make a dash for it!

First Voyage

by Beverly Clifford

Recently, I was lucky enough to be the very first person to ride in a driverless test vehicle in The Villages, here in South San Jose. But before I describe that first day of testing, let me give you some background information.

Voyage is a new company with a vision and a mission: First, to engineer the safest driverless car imaginable; and second, to keep seniors connected, independent,

and in their homes for as long as possible by providing them with a free taxi service to every place in our community, be it house, community center, swimming pool, park, golf course, or restaurant. The Villages is the first and only community presently testing Voyage's driverless cars, but there are plans to test them in other communities, as well as eventually moving their efforts into larger cities. To start, however, the company needed a small

community with challenging driving conditions, and The Villages fit the bill, offering the opportunity to teach their car how to avoid families of meandering ducks or geese, deer dashing across the road, inattentive drivers in speeding golf carts or automobiles, and fragile, slow-moving humans, all on small, winding roads. On September 13, 2017, I received a call from a neighbor informing me that preliminary testing of Voyage's cars would begin soon, and the company was seeking four volunteers to be their first testers. She thought I'd be perfect for the job, and I thought it would be great fun; plus, I'd be able to tell my friends in the

blindness community all about my experience, and I'd be helping to advance the future of the driverless car industry, which (being a devoted Sci-Fi reader) I felt was the wave of the future. So I agreed to be a tester. That same day, another call came in, this time from the CEO of Voyage, an Englishman with a lovely accent and a warm, friendly manner, who was delighted that I was willing to assist. He explained more about his company and what they hoped to accomplish, and after that call, emails flew back and forth between us until we came up with a date and time for me to be picked up at my house and taken to one of our community centers where

the first-ever testing would commence.

Fast-forward to Wednesday, September 20. A driverless car named Marge (a car not-quite-ready-for-prime-time and still needing a driver behind the wheel at every juncture) came to bring me from my house to the test site. Homer (the car which was all set to go, driver or not) was the vehicle that would be used for this preliminary testing. A third car, Lisa, is not yet on Villages streets, and a fourth is on the way. (You may have guessed by now that somebody in the company (namely the CEO) loves the Simpsons, and has named all their cars after his favorite characters).

Upon my arrival at the test location, and after being introduced to the Voyage Team (there were lots of them, both male and female), it was time for me to "summon the car." To do this, I used an app called Voyage, which the company is developing for both the iOS and Android Operating systems. At this writing, only team members have it on their phones, but eventually it will be available for all Villagers to download. Although the company has made the app accessible for VoiceOver, no one had ever seen a blind person use it to control a phone, so they found the process fascinating. A team member patiently walked me through the necessary

steps of the app: choosing my pickup and destination points, summoning the car, listening as the app announced the car's ETA and then its actual arrival at the pickup area, and running through a three-step safety check once I was in the car. (In time, Voyage will be adding new features to the app, such as control of the car's heating and air-conditioning and the ability to choose music for one's listening pleasure.) Once all car doors were firmly closed, and everyone was seated and buckled up, I double-tapped on "Ready to Go," because the car won't start until it gets that signal from the app. For my two trips that day, a human driver was behind

the wheel. (These cars still have steering wheels, but driverless cars in the future will not.) At present, Homer can drive autonomously on only one straight road, but the ultimate aim is to bring people to any address in The Villages on any road. The car has its own built-in voice, so when we began to move it said, "Starting trip," and away we went, with the human driver in charge. After a few twists and turns to get us on the straight road, I heard the car say, "Autonomous Mode Engaged," which meant that the robotics had taken over and were now driving the vehicle. The ride was very smooth and comfortable, except for one thing: As the car

braked, it would gently ease into the stop; but when it actually stopped, there were two slight jerks, one trying to propel me forward and the other trying to push me back, as if I were in a bumpy rocking chair. So at the end of the ride, when they asked me to give it a score (from five as the best ride to 1 as the worst), I gave Homer a 4. The Voyage Team was happy that I had given them this feedback, and as this is a software issue, they will be working on it to make the stops more comfortable. I pointed out that, especially in a senior community where people tend to have sore backs and hips, you don't want any jerks, even small ones. Also, any jerkiness

could lead people to mistrust the safety of the car.

When we neared our destination, the human driver took the wheel again, and the car announced, "Autonomous Mode Disengaged;" and when we arrived, it announced, "Trip Ended." We had come safely to rest.

On my second test drive that day, I was able to experience Homer's ability to make strategic decisions. As we neared an intersection, there was a car that appeared to be planning a turn to the right (according to the sighted passengers in our vehicle)"but it didn't. Instead, it merged in front of us, and Homer had to stop quickly to avoid a

mishap. Everyone said Homer had done exactly what it was supposed to do. Score one for Homer! During the two-and a-half hours I spent with the team, I answered myriad questions: How could they improve their app? "make sure it speaks everything on the screen, always!; make it as simple as possible; don't give unnecessary, redundant information." What were my favorite apps, and why, and which ones should they emulate? (Apparently, I'm going to be their app beta tester until, as one member of the team put it, the app is sublime!) How much voice feedback would I like from the car? "lots more!" What would I like their app and the car to do in the best of all

possible worlds? "perhaps skip all the swiping, and have the passenger just TALK to a Siri-type device to tell the car what it needs to know." How did I rate my over-all ride experience, and did I feel safe when the robotics were driving? Here I had to smile, as I answered that I have been in cars with sighted drivers when I wondered if I would get safely to my destination, as they were either driving too fast, were totally distracted, or were veering from one side of the road to the other! I also pointed out that, as a blind person, I've had to trust sighted drivers all my life, and when I'm in the car with them, what choice do I have but to trust that they know what they're doing?

So for me, trusting a robotic car is just another leap of faith. I answered their questions as best I could, although sometimes I wasn't able to give them a definitive answer.

Now, to describe the car: Voyage uses a Ford Fusion hybrid model, but their car has additional features, both outside and in. On the outside, there is a flat area at the back of the car with a rectangular metal box on top, which is the Wi-Fi antenna that connects the car to the Internet so its driving capabilities can function. On top of the car, in about the middle near the sun roof, is a structure supporting an apparatus that spins round and round at about ten times

per second, high enough that I couldn't have reached the spinning part even on tiptoes, though I could reach the structure below it. This apparatus, called lidar (think radar and sonar), is a sensing device which rapidly sends out millions of harmless laser beams in all directions, and by the speed of the beams and the direction they take toward the objects they encounter, the sensor lets the car know what's happening around it at all times. (Ooooh: Star Trek stuff!) On the front of the car, at about knee level, is a flat round structure that reminded me of a vinyl record sticking out a bit from the rest of the car: this is its radar. The square, metallic, box-like

things on either side of the radar unit are the two front cameras, and there are two more such mounted on the left and right sides of the car. Two more cameras will soon be added to the back of the car as well, but Homer already seems to be doing just fine with only four cameras. The inside of the car looks pretty much as you'd expect, with steering wheel, shift mechanism, etc. But a small screen is mounted in front of the passenger seat, where the car's instructions and locations are shown visually.

My whole testing experience was exciting, energizing, and tons of fun! I was deeply

impressed by every person from the Voyage Team. These people are young, vibrant, dynamic, passionate, and wholly dedicated to what they are trying to achieve. They made me feel welcome and comfortable among them, even including me in a team picture after the preliminary testing was finished. And they thanked me over and over again for agreeing to be their first tester, for helping them perfect their app, and for being a spokesperson for their project. I am honored and privileged to have volunteered, and I look forward to many more adventurous encounters with the Voyage Team and their driverless cars.

Fresno Chapter Canes Across CA

by Jamie Gibson-Barrows

During the month of October, the Fresno chapter celebrated the CCB Canes Across California fund raiser by partnering with Barnes and Nobles and having a book fair fund raiser.

This event took place over a three day weekend.

Members volunteered many hours during this event to prepare and help its success. They participated in a white cane awareness walk, managed tables throughout the store, and actively participated in story time.

The event focused on "education in the public's eye." Our information tables included brochures

about CCB and etiquette skills training all three days. Story time was a great experience for members, children and their families. Two people read books in braille called Curious George and Safe and Sound at home, a guide dog story. After the readings, we had two additional chapter members writing children's names in braille on a card and handing out braille alphabet cards. Members taught the children and family members the history of braille and the tools used to write it. The children and parents were amazed on how the "dots" make words. We had a second

table in the store to demonstrate low and no vision tools like a portable CCTV, the talking book library, RX pill readers, Freedom Scientific's Ruby magnification, the PenFriend 2 voice recorder and labeler, and different voice recorders. Educating about technology was fun and a hands-on experience.

One of our members, Olivia Ostegaard is an author, and she performed a book signing during our event. Her book is "Looking at the Unseen: My Guide Dog Journey." This event was popular and supported by our

local puppy raising club "Far sighted Puppies with a Plan." They came out during this event to support our chapter and educate about Guide Dogs for the Blind, GDB. We had puppy raisers with their puppies throughout the store educating about blindness and the benefits of using a guide dog.

During our three day event, we had the opportunity to reach out to so many people about blindness on social media, web, email and in person. All proceeds from this event are being donated to the CCB.

New Medicare Cards Are Coming Soon

**by Seema Verma, CMS Administrator,
blog.cms.gov/2017/09/14/new-medicare-cards-are-coming-soon**

As you may have heard, or perhaps you've seen a recent TV commercial, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services will soon be issuing every Medicare beneficiary a new Medicare Card, without Social Security Numbers, to prevent fraud, fight identity theft, and keep taxpayer dollars safe, and to help ensure that we always put the needs of patients first.

It's unfortunate that criminals are increasingly targeting people age 65 or older for medical identity theft, including when someone illegally uses another person's Medicare number. An identity thief may bill Medicare for expensive services that

were never provided or overbill for provided services. This can lead to inaccuracies in medical records, which can mean delayed care or denied services for patients and impacts taxpayer funding.

To help combat this, we'll be sending all Medicare beneficiaries a new card with a unique, randomly-assigned Medicare number. It will consist of eleven characters, a combination of numbers and uppercase letters.

Because it is randomly generated, there is no connection to any other personal identifying information. This new number will replace the Social Security-based number currently used on

all Medicare cards, and it's designed to protect the personal information of Medicare beneficiaries.

We'll begin mailing the newly designed Medicare cards in April 2018, and we'll replace all cards by April 2019. If you're a Medicare beneficiary, or soon will be, you don't need to do anything, and you can start using your new card as soon as you get it.

When you get your new card, we'll ask you to safely and securely destroy your current Medicare card. Make sure you bring the new card to your doctors' appointments, and always keep your new number confidential. This will help protect your personal identity and prevent medical identity fraud because identity thieves

can't bill Medicare without a valid Medicare number. Additionally, you and your health care providers will be able to use secure online tools that we're developing that will support quick access to your Medicare number when needed.

You'll be hearing a lot more about this initiative in the coming weeks and months, and we're also helping doctors and other healthcare providers get ready for the change. We want to make this process as easy as possible for everyone involved. Above all, we want to ensure that people with Medicare and healthcare providers know about these changes well in advance and have the information needed to ensure an easy transition to the new card.

**California Council of the Blind Officers
and Directors**

July 1, 2017

[Editor's note: We are indebted to Donna Sanchez, who updates and corrects the list of CCB officers and Directors, including the number of the term each is presently serving, the year elected to that term, and the year next up for election. Terms begin on July 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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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.