



Winter 2011

Ohio Connection

American Council of the Blind Ohio
P.O. Box 307128 Gahanna, OH 43230

1-800-835-2226

ACB Ohio 2011 Convention Roundup

— *By Katie Frederick*

The 2011 ACB Ohio State Convention, “Connecting for a Brighter Outlook,” kicked off Friday evening, November 18 in Worthington with a keynote address by Tim Jones, a teacher in the Grove Port school district. Tim shared his experiences teaching Orientation and Mobility to people living in the Philippines. After his presentation, the evening concluded with some fun and song with Karaoke.

Saturday morning’s breakfast speaker was Rep. Steve Stivers, (R-OH). See page 9 for details of Stivers’ talk. The business meeting followed with a jam-packed agenda. The meeting began with membership committee chair, David Perry, hosting a short panel discussion to learn how members became involved in ACB, and how we might improve our membership efforts in the future. Panelists included Troy Sullivan, Lori Woodall, and contributions from membership committee member Sara Soper.

The election of officers followed the panel discussion with these results:

Jill Noble was elected to her first two-year term as First Vice President; Katie Frederick was elected to serve her first two-year term as Secretary; David Perry, Jacque Perry, and Vicky Prahin were re-elected to serve on the board; and Carl Kienzle and Chris Schumacher were elected to fill seats on the board as well.

The morning meeting concluded with reports from our Director of Development and Advocacy, Marc Guthrie, and our outgoing Executive Director, Mary Hiland.

Saturday morning’s workshops featured topics such as pedestrian safety and jury duty service. During lunch, Kitty Hevener spoke to the group about preparing for a natural or manmade disaster. ACB Ohio’s Second Vice President, Irwin Hott, also spoke to members about his experience dealing with his house fire, which occurred in early 2011.

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From the President's Desk — Embracing Uncertainty by Embracing One Another— *By Nolan Crabb*

I daresay one or two of you may have looked at the title of this message and decided to summarily skip it. Don't do that; my thoughts aren't nearly as new-age and crunchy as the title would indicate. I'm not much of a new-age kind of guy, so if this title left you with visions of me out hugging trees somewhere or getting in touch with someone's inner child, I apologize for the deception.

The conclusion of our annual convention in late November left me asking what I think are deep and cogent questions about how we're doing as a group. I was saddened to note that attendance was down somewhat this year. It's easy to shrug that off and blame the economy. But is it really that simple? I wonder whether we can do more and do better at reaching out to those who might have come had they had just the right assistance at the right time. Let me illustrate this with an experience I had years ago.

As Christmas approached that year, I had adorned my guide dog's harness with a remarkable string of sleigh bells that absolutely ensured that he stood out in any crowd. The bells filled me with the spirit of the season whenever we did something together. We were the recipient of numerous positive comments about both the magic of the bells and a small scarf the dog wore bedecked with Christmas patterns.

One day, as I was walking back to my office, the strap on the dog's harness

fell apart. I panicked in grand style. With the strap broken, the harness would slip over the dog's head and be useless. I had two extremely busy intersections to cross between where I was and my office, and it became more than a little apparent that I simply wouldn't get back easily or safely with that broken harness.

I did everything I could to fix it. I knelt on the sidewalk and tried to bang the clip back onto the harness, all to no avail. Those two busy streets loomed frighteningly ahead, mocking me with their mere presence in my path.

"Do you need some help?" A voice suddenly came from behind me, startling me. "I sure do," I said with feeling, holding out to my new acquaintance the harness and broken clasp. He reached out and took the clasp and harness from me, introducing himself as Tim, a driver for the *Washington Post*. I held my dog's leash quietly as I waited for him to tell me what I already knew. "This won't work anymore," he said, "but I think I can temporarily fix up something."

Tim proceeded to remove all of his keys from a large key ring in his pocket. He maneuvered the ring in such a way that it would enable the harness to fit securely without injuring the dog in any way. I was overjoyed, as you might expect. No longer did those busy streets mock and frighten me. The dog's bells rang with even greater conviction as we crossed safely back to my office.

From the President's Desk (*Continued*)

I've never forgotten that experience. You see, I merely decorated for Christmas, so to speak. Tim lived the spirit of Christmas. Where I was merely content to decorate my dog, he took steps that personified the best things of the holiday season. First, he carefully observed and assessed the problem. Second, he offered help without forcing anything. Third, he made the sacrifice of giving up something he needed and used in order to enable me to preserve my independence. He could have simply walked me back to my office; instead, he found a way to enable me to continue to use the dog safely until a new strap could be procured.

As members of our individual chapters, are we doing enough to really embody the spirit of this season where reaching out to one another is concerned? I'm not suggesting we delve into one another's lives inappropriately and learn all kinds of personal facts that may not be relevant. But I wonder if we could do more to reach out. Are we doing enough to assess the need and then providing the kind of help that preserves independence and dignity? It's amazing what you and I can learn about one another from brief conversations when we're focused on listening.

The coming year is fraught with the usual excitement of the future; it's also fraught with its share of uncertainty. We will all survive uncertainty best if we're doing more to reach out to one another to assess needs when we can and to make the sacrifices for one another that

will pay dividends of greater unity among us and a larger membership. Perhaps the writer Richard Paul Evans puts it best in his outstanding book The Christmas List. "We humans, at least some of us, are seriously flawed. The things that are the most necessary, the most critical to us, are the things we take most for granted—air, water, love.

"If you have someone to love, you are lucky. If they love you back, you are blessed. And if you waste the time you have to love them, you are a fool. This is my advice to you: Make the most of the time you have with those you love. Because ... because you don't know when it will end."

It's my hope that all of us will find ways to embody the spirit of the season rather than merely decorate. As we find ways in our chapters to quietly assess needs and provide the kind of help that preserves dignity, we will all be better equipped to face whatever uncertainties accompany the excitement of a new year. Merry Christmas.

Contributors . . .

Thank you to ACB Ohio members who contributed to this issue of the *Ohio Connection*: **Nolan Crabb, Katie Frederick, Ann Gazelle, Marc Guthrie, Mary Hiland, Carl Kienzle, Jill Noble, David Perry, Vicky Prahin, Joyce Rogers, and Linda Wyman.**

Transition Time — *By Ann Gazelle*

Let me introduce myself. My name is Ann Gazelle and I will be your new Executive Director of ACB Ohio as of January 2012. First, I want to thank Mary Hiland for her excellent work these past five years and her tremendous help in acclimating me to my new position as she vacates it for future endeavors of her own. Also, I look forward to partnering with Marc Guthrie in his new role as Director of Development and Advocacy.

As I write this first column, Carla, my guide dog, and I are visiting good friends who live near Burr Oak State Park on their own 40 acres for the Thanksgiving holiday. Yesterday, a large gaggle of us were treated to turkey, ham, and lots of other goodies including apple and pecan pies. Now, feeling very relaxed and satiated, I am writing you to say how honored I am to have been selected as your new executive director.

Here are a few things you might like to know about me: Being an early transplant from Indiana, I have lived most of my life in Columbus. I am a graduate of The Ohio State University in social work and am licensed in the state of Ohio. I taught arts and needlework to the general public for several years, headed up a small statewide arts organization (now VSA-Ohio), exhibited my artwork, performed in theater, founded the Volunteer Support Program at Goodwill Columbus that has been in existence for 25 years, was one of two key founding members of Accessible Arts of Central Ohio that provides audio description of movies and live theater, and taught ESL

(English as a Second Language) to South Korean students living there. Interior design and gardening are my favorite pastimes.

And I recently discovered I don't need a treadmill to keep in shape. ACB Ohio's statewide convention in Columbus kept me on the run from morning to night learning everything I could about how and why this organization has been successful.

You have all heard the concept that it takes a village. Guess what... YOU are the village. This job requires a lot of support and input from members and supporters. I intend to contact as many of you as possible throughout the new year, to make your acquaintance and gather your thoughts and ideas. Together, we will continue to make this organization strong and successful.

This new adventure will access all of my management skills and probably develop new ones. It's an exciting time and I look forward to sharing it with all of you. In the next issue, I will share with you my goals for the coming year. Please remember that I truly want, expect and appreciate your input. Happy Holidays to you all.

Ann Gazelle is the new Executive Director of ACB Ohio.

Sharing in a Brighter Outlook — *By Joyce Rogers*

Are you familiar with (--- --- .- - . - . - . -)? As an amateur radio operator for 37 years, Katherine Hevener knows that those dashes and dots spell Morse Code. Katherine, who is a member of ACB Ohio's Cincinnati chapter, grew up in a little town in West Virginia, and she obtained her radio license as a result of peer pressure.

However, high achievement seems to be the norm for her, and she has since received an Extra Class license. Katherine has worked at challenging jobs and lived in wide-ranging places from Boston and Hartford to Palo Alto, finally settling in Cincinnati in 2003.

She was appointed by Governor Strickland in 2007 to the Governor's Council on People with Disabilities and works on emergency preparedness and disability awareness training for first responders through the council.

Katherine also serves with Queen City Emergency Net in communications during natural disasters and for events such as the M.S. 150, the bike-a-thon to raise funds for a cure for Multiple Sclerosis. Her experience as a teacher, trainer, and communicator has prepared her well for her current career as a professional speaker and a speech coach.

While Katherine is accomplished and successful, she is not all that extraordinary as far as people like her are concerned. What puts her in an extraordinary class are other people's false assumptions and underwhelming expecta-

tions. It is surprising that people like us who travel about with white canes and dog guides are often regarded as amazing or remarkable. We are amazed, not amazing.

Do others not expect us to move about freely, work, raise families, and have fun as others do? Why do so many others often think the world should only include and accommodate people like themselves?

When asked "What message do you want most for *Ohio Connection* readers to hear?," Katherine responded, "I want people to know in their very bones and in every brain cell they possess that I am a person just like them, and, because I do some activities differently, I should be no less included and accommodated than they are."

You may e-mail Katherine at kitty@speechcoachforyou.com or call (513) 471-8866 if you are in need of a speaker or a speech coach.

The ***Ohio Connection*** is a quarterly publication of The American Council of the Blind of Ohio. Please submit your material in print or through e-mail. The next deadline is February 22, 2012. Please include your name, address and phone number and send to: Terri Kevany, Editor, at takevany@roadrunner.com or call (216) 251-0484.

2011 Scholarship Recipients — *By Vicky Prahin*

Each year, three major Ohio universities award scholarships, totaling \$6,000, in the name of the American Council of the Blind of Ohio. These awards are a result of endowments established during the past five years by ACB Ohio.

It is important to note that these endowed scholarships with the Ohio State University (OSU), Wright State University (WSU), and the University of Toledo (UT) will be in place in perpetuity. ACB Ohio has doubled its investment with the WSU and UT endowments because both universities are awarding a \$2,000 award annually, even though our \$25,000 gifts to each university don't come close to producing a \$2,000 annual award.

The three university endowments were established as a result of a significant need to support blind and visually impaired college students and because of a shortage of VI teachers in Ohio. OSU was ACB Ohio's first endowment, followed by Wright State and then the University of Toledo. All three of these universities have shown a commitment to these endowments and support our efforts.

Shannon Dunigan received the 2011 University of Toledo-ACB Ohio Endowed Scholarship. She has won this award for three consecutive years. Shannon graduates in December 2011 with a dual degree in Mild/Moderate Special Education and Special Educa-

tion of the Blind/Visually Impaired. She will work at whatever she can find until a position opens in the latter field, which is where her heart is.

Wright State University chose Hillary Dwire as the 2011 recipient of the WSU-ACBO Endowed Scholarship. Hillary is a third-year student at Wright State, majoring in English and professional writing. She is active in the Wright State Pep Band and enjoys hiking and biking with her dog.

On her scholarship application she shared the following: "Wright State has helped me become a more well-rounded, outgoing, and hard-working individual. Challenging classes, dorm life, and social activities have helped me make friends and achieve educational success. My dream is to continue my education onto grad school in order to earn a Master's degree."

Laurie Scramoncini, a Springboro teacher, won this year's scholarship from The Ohio State University. Laurie has taught for 23 years, but she only recently felt the pull to teach students with visual impairments. She will receive her Master's degree next year, but she says that she may go on to further studies.

Please watch future issues of the *Ohio Connection* for more on our scholarship winners. For more information on ACB Ohio scholarship opportunities, log on to www.acbohio.org.

Keeping Connected — *By Marc Guthrie*

There have been many significant changes around ACB Ohio since we last connected. As Mary Hiland, our executive director, winds down her tenure of service to the organization, I'd like to personally thank her for providing stable leadership for the past five-plus years, and for being a good partner in our effort to advance our mission.

As you may know, ACB Ohio had a significant theft this year; however, due to Mary and the Franklin County Prosecutor's diligence, we have recovered the stolen funds. At the time of the theft, as Mary was planning her retirement, she stood strong and guided ACB Ohio through the toughest period of its recent history. As I predicted, though the theft was extremely disheartening, the organization has overcome this, and Mary deserves the lion's share of the credit for why we are where we are today.

With the board's hiring of Ann Gazelle to replace Mary, I'm sure we have a capable new leader to take the reins in January. I, too, am preparing to undertake an expanded roll next year as ACB Ohio's Director of Government Advocacy, and I am grateful for the opportunity. I'm excited about being the point person with Community Shares, a true growth opportunity for us and will serve as liaison to our university endowments. I'll also be working with Ann to ensure that we have strong financial checks and balances in place for our organization.

I am elated to report that our \$25,000 investment at the University of Toledo

now has a balance of more than \$67,000 even after producing several scholarships. Our current balance in our OSU endowed fund is more than \$50,000, also after awarding several scholarships. Although Wright State University has not yet secured a match for our gift, they are continuing to keep their commitment to provide adequate funds annually to ensure that our full \$2,000 scholarship is awarded.

I hope that the ACB Ohio membership feels as good about our university endowments as I do. We should be proud that these endowed funds continue to be a major part of our footprint in Ohio, as the number one advocate for blind and visually impaired citizens.

I also want to thank the Ohio Lions Foundation for its continued support of our family seminar at OSSB for the fifth year with its \$1,000 gift.

I want to again thank Mary Hiland for her good leadership. I'll miss her strong work ethic and devotion to our mission. I look forward to a new relationship with Ann and am confident that as a team, we can continue to do good things for ACB Ohio.

Until we next connect, please have a wonderful holiday season.

Marc Guthrie is ACB Ohio's Director of Development and Advocacy. His e-mail address is marcguthrie@hotmail.com.

2011 Conference (Continued from page 1)

Saturday afternoon's workshops included topics of technology, financial planning, and downloading and reading accessible books. Saturday evening featured our banquet, at which several deserving individuals were given awards for their hard work and dedication to ACB Ohio. This year's award recipients are highlighted on page 10. The final event of the day was the ACB Ohio auction, which raised approximately \$896 and was a blast to attend.



Annie Donnellon of Cincinnati entertains convention goers with her beautiful singing.

Sunday morning's breakfast featured our ACB Ohio scholarship presentations. See page 6 in this issue as well as future issues of the *Ohio Connection* to read profiles of the 2011 winners.

Two workshops rounded out this year's convention, one focusing on student issues and/or those who are new to blindness, and a session on eating healthy and exercise.

This year's convention was a rich

source of reconnecting with friends, networking, and information sharing and gathering. I invite those of you who were not able to attend to consider joining us next year. Watch for convention planning and details in upcoming issues of the *Ohio Connection*.



New ACB Ohio Executive Director Ann Gazelle enjoys the 2012 state convention.



Cincinnati member Joyce Rogers congratulates husband Robert Rogers, ACB Ohio's 2012 Ambassador Award winner.

New Congressman Urges ACBO to Stay Involved

— *By Nolan Crabb*

Rep. Steve Stivers (R-OH), reflected on his first year in Congress as part of his remarks to the ACB Ohio convention at its November 19 breakfast session.

He pointed out that nearly one in four members of the current House of Representatives is a freshman, many of whom have never held political office before this year. In a largely optimistic message, Stivers said contrary to impressions given by media and others, the vast majority of representatives do indeed want to work together to solve the nation's problems. "I've tried to reach out and meet every one of those freshman — the Democrats and Republicans, and I've been very impressed," Stivers said.

He expressed optimism about the nation's economic future, but warned that the solutions won't be easy ones. "The problems are so enormous that we can't afford to kick this can down the road anymore," he said. "I'm 46 years old, and during my lifetime, the government has managed to balance the budget three times. We can't continue to operate that way; it's going to mean work; both sides are going to have to compromise."

Stivers said those compromises must include cuts to military spending. Leaving Iraq is just one area where cuts need to be made. He called for a re-evaluation of placing American forces in Italy, Germany, Japan and elsewhere. "Let's look at our basing strategy that's

based on World War II and the cold war and ask, 'can we really afford that?' Should we be paying more than 50 percent of NATO's expenses?"

Stivers described some of the legislation he had written recently, pointing out that he had Democratic cosponsors on virtually all of them, including a bill to force the Department of Homeland Security to reassess how it spends money—forcing DHS to look at risks rather than merely at large population centers. Stivers is a member of the Congressional Vision Caucus, and he has co-sponsored legislation that would make it more difficult for Veterans Administration facilities to deny entrance to service dogs.

On a somewhat more personal level, Stivers says his office's brochures are available in large print and maps are available in large print, Braille, and on CD.

Stivers urged ACB Ohio members to get to know their member of Congress. "The most effective thing you can do is let the member of Congress get to know who you are." He encouraged the group to talk to the staff member most conversant with those issues of greatest importance. "I can tell you some of the best ideas I've gotten for legislation, including Medicaid buy-in, came directly from constituents," he recalled.

ACB Ohio Annual Awards — *By Linda Wyman*

The outstanding efforts of both individuals and organizations were recognized during an awards ceremony held at the ACB Ohio Annual Convention in November in Worthington.

Irwin Hott of Columbus was the recipient of the Ken Morlock Award, which is given to a person who is blind or visually impaired who has worked tirelessly and selflessly for the blind.

The Ruth Davidson Award, which is given to a sighted person who has worked to enhance the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired, was presented to Sue Wesley of Cincinnati.

Robert Rogers of Cincinnati received the Ambassador Award, which is given to an ACB Ohio member who has worked tirelessly for ACB Ohio and the blind community.

The Arlene Cohen Art of Teaching Award, which is given to a teacher of blind or visually impaired children, was presented to Sandra Foersterling of Cincinnati.

Ben Callahan and Jan Ostendorf with FORGE Ideas of Dayton received the Media Award, which is given for writing or reporting about blindness or issues that concern blind or visually impaired persons.

The Employer of the Year Award, which is given to an Ohio employer who has

hired and made accommodations for employees who are blind or visually impaired, was presented to Charles Bonacci on behalf of the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center.

It's not too early to begin thinking about nominations for the 2012 awards. Look for additional information in an upcoming issue of the *Ohio Connection*.

Linda Wyman is chair of the ACB Ohio Awards Committee.

“Eye Opener” Coffee Still on Sale — *By Carl Keinzle*

Thanks to all who purchased ACB Ohio's own special "Eye Opener" blend of coffee at this year's annual convention. Sixty-six bags were sold and there are more for sale.

If you would like someone from your chapter to bring home some Eye Opener coffee from the January Board of Directors meeting please call me at (937) 361-6909 or e-mail me at number1coffee@number1coffee.com. Please use "coffee" in the e-mail subject heading.



Membership Report — *By David Perry*

The Membership Panel at the ACB Ohio state convention was quite a success. The Membership Committee came up with the name, ACB Ohio Membership on the Grow, for our Vision to Victory. Troy Sullivan from the Columbus chapter and Lori Woodall of Cincinnati were our featured panelists. Sara Soper from Toledo facilitated the panel discussion.

We learned how our panelists became involved with ACB Ohio and the importance of an engaged membership body. We discussed the importance of people who are blind maintaining independence in everyday living situations. We also touched on the significance of ACB Ohio being more involved in the local communities in such areas as education, employment, transportation, recreation, technology, orientation and mobility, and independent living. The purpose for this membership panel was to simply encourage more of our members to get involved with their local chapters or communities, as well as ACB Ohio on a state level.

The membership committee gave out three membership awards at the Convention and one lucky person walked away with a free membership for 2012.

Michelle Hasenstaub from the Eye on Summit Chapter was named Recruiter of the Year for 2012. Ernie Breece accepted the award honoring the Marion Chapter for recruiting the most mem-

bers in 2011. Carolyn Burley, on behalf of the Stark County Chapter, accepted the award for the highest membership increase for 2011. Carrel Riddle was the lucky winner of the free 2012 membership.

One of my goals for the new year is to develop a membership committee that includes one member from each local chapter or community. We also need to focus on attracting more young adults to participate in ACB Ohio, since they are the future of this wonderful organization. If you would like to participate on the membership committee, or any other area of ACB Ohio, feel free to contact me at (513) 470-1122 by or e-mail at daveperry@fuse.net.

I want to say one last thank you to Sara Soper, Katie Frederick, Vicky Prahin, Mary Hiland, Annie Donnellon, Jamie Davis, Chris Schumacher, Dana Metcalf, and Nolan Crabb for their participation on the membership committee! It was an honor and pleasure to serve you as the membership committee chairman for 2011, and I look very forward to serving you once again in 2012.

David Perry is ACB Ohio's Membership Chairman.

Ohio Connection
American Council of the Blind
Ohio Chapter
P.O. Box 307128
Winter 2011

**Free Matter
for the Blind or
Handicapped
P.O. Manual
Part 138**



2012 ACB Ohio Datebook

ACB Ohio Board Retreat

Columbus, Ohio
January 7, 2012

Winter Sports Retreat

Punderson State Park
January 13-16, 2012

ACB Legislative Conference

Washington, D.C.
February 19-21, 2012

For more information on any upcoming ACB Ohio events, call (800) 835-2226 or log on to www.acbohio.org.

Winter Sports Retreat

The ACBO Winter Sports Retreat will be held January 13-16, 2012 at Punderson State Park in Newbury, Ohio. The weekend gives adults who are blind or visually impaired a chance to experience cross-country skiing and hiking. The cost is \$280 for a three-night package or \$255 for a two-night package and includes meals and all activities, including a wine and cheese party. A few stipends are available. Call (800) 835-2226 for details.