



Spring 2010

Ohio Connection

American Council of the Blind Ohio
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My First Visit to Capitol Hill — By Vicky Prahin

Seven representatives from ACB Ohio attended this year's legislative seminar in Washington, D.C. I had the privilege of joining ACB Ohio President Linda Wyman as part of the Ohio delegation, along with Board members Jill Noble, Rob Rogers and Sue Wesley, and members Joyce Rogers and Bostwick Wyman.

We heard updates on issues involving access to print materials, ACB's legal advocacy efforts, and the ongoing activities of the National Industries for the Blind. We learned about collaboration between ACB and the Equal Rights Center, based in Washington, D.C., and we met Lynnae Rutledge, the new RSA Commissioner.

This year's key issues were the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (H.R. 3101) and the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act (PSEA). We were also updated on health care reform.

On Tuesday, the Ohio delegation visited the offices of both Ohio senators and all 18 representatives. At least two of our representatives promised to sign on as

co-sponsors to the PSEA, and we will follow up to see if we have gained support on H.R. 3101.

We discovered that Senator Brown has Braille business cards and mentioned this to other Ohio representatives; several asked for information on how to obtain a supply.

This was my first time attending this annual seminar, and I expected to be overwhelmed and possibly bored listening to a lot of speakers. I did indeed receive plenty of information, but Eric Bridges, Mitch Pomerantz, and Melanie Brunson moved things along in a very organized and exciting way, and meeting with our legislators and their staff was delightful.

Everyone was upbeat and most expressed interest in our efforts. I was teamed with Jill Noble for our visits to Capitol Hill, and even though we are both totally blind, we had no difficulty navigating the immense buildings and locating offices. It was a wonderful experience.

See page 4 for more detailed information about the legislative seminar.

From the Director's Chair — By Mary Hiland

One of the most rewarding parts of my job as your executive director is fielding the questions that come into our information and referral line. Often callers have just lost their sight or are dealing with vision loss in their family. It seems that no one has given them any guidance or told them what they need to do to prepare for living as a visually impaired person.

Some are amazed to learn that people who are blind can work, parent, cook, travel, use a computer, take care of a household, and lead productive lives. Your dues and donations help fund this life line to dozens of people each year. In exchange for your \$15 annual dues, we also offer you a quarterly newsletter, an annual convention, three recreational opportunities, representation on Capitol Hill, and many seminars throughout the year. Most important, however, your dues support the work we do on a one-to-one basis. Reaching out to guide our newly blind friends through a challenging time is the reason why we are here. Thank you for the part you play.

A fine example of one of our services is the second All Technology All the Time seminar, to be held on May 1 in Columbus at The Ohio State University. Logon to www.acbohio.org or call (800) 835-2226 for registration information.

Thank you to the recreation committee for hosting a wonderful winter sports retreat in January. Committee members must have had connections with Mother Nature, because we had plenty of snow

to ski, hike and snowshoe. Forty participants, with an even mix of sighted guides and visually impaired folks, teamed up to share the joys of winter fun. As my guide and I glided over the snowy golf course, I soaked in the peacefulness of two friends enjoying the freedom of movement in a blanketed world, where only the swooshing of our skis and the occasional call of a courageous cardinal broke the silence. Later, as our tired muscles relaxed, we put our brains to work over the Scrabble board, while others played cards, splashed in the pool, or enjoyed a beverage by the fireplace. If this sounds good to you, I encourage you to join us next year for a truly enjoyable getaway.

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 May 22, 2010. Please include your name, address and phone number and send to: Terri Kevany, Editor, at takevany@roadrunner.com or call (216) 251-0484.

ACBO recently updated its mailing list. If someone you know has not been receiving Ohio Connection, please have them contact the office to be returned to our list.

Keeping Connected — By Marc Guthrie

ACB Ohio continues to establish its place as the strongest advocate for Ohioans who are blind or visually impaired. We were notified recently by Wright State University that we will be recognized on May 13 for our establishment of an endowment supporting a student who is blind or visually impaired.

ACB Ohio will be inducted in Wright State's Heritage Society and specifically recognized by WSU's President, David Hopkins, for our \$25,000 gift establishing this important endowment. You may recall ACB Ohio made the gift to establish an annual \$2,000 scholarship to an Ohioan who is blind or visually impaired. Wright State is raising funds from its own donors in an effort to raise an additional \$25,000 to match our gift.

Last fall, WSU awarded the first \$2,000 scholarship to a worthy and inspiring young man who attended our fall convention. Because of Wright State's matching gift, our investment in our mission has been doubled; seldom can such return on investment be achieved. Our relationship with Wright State, which has a great national reputation for serving students with disabilities, creates an awesome partnership for ACB Ohio.

It also appears that our endowment at the University of Toledo is generating enough dividends to produce a \$2,000 award this fall. Last year our first UT award to a student focused on teaching

children who are blind or visually impaired was for \$500. If all goes well, our endowments at OSU, WSU and UT will produce \$6,000 in awards this fall. Every stakeholder in ACB Ohio should be very proud of this grand achievement.

Since we last connected, we placed the sports memorabilia donated in 2010 in a January auction in Newark, Ohio. We cleared \$1,310 on the sale of the items and as always, we are grateful to donor Larry Rodak for his generous gifts.

One other item that I should note is that I am working with ACB Ohio Executive Director Mary Hiland toward researching the possibility of becoming one of the State of Ohio's Combined Charitable Campaign's charities for the state employees' 2011 campaign. Though we'll report back later on this with more details, the bottom line is that if ACB Ohio can become an eligible charity with the Ohio's Combined Charitable Campaign, more than 50,000 state employees would have the option of supporting our non-profit mission.

Best wishes, until we next connect.

Marc Guthrie provides counsel to ACB Ohio on fundraising and advocacy matters. His e-mail address is marcguthrie@hotmail.com.

From the President's Desk — By Linda Wyman

The American Council of the Blind held its annual Presidents' Meeting February 20 and 21, followed by the Legislative Seminar February 21 - 23 in Washington, D.C. Mitch Pomerantz, President of ACB, hosted presidents and representatives from state chapters and affiliates. Highlights follow:

ACB's 49th annual conference and convention will be held at the Phoenix Downtown Sheraton July 9 through July 17 in Phoenix, Arizona. Carla Ruschival, Chair of the Convention Planning Committee, gave us an update on the 2010 National Convention. In addition to the many tours, workshops, activities, and sessions, ACB will hold the 2nd Annual ACB Walk-a-thon on July 10 in the air conditioned Arizona Mills Mall. Watch for convention details in the *Braille Forum* and mark your calendar now for a great event!

Concern for Schools for the Blind in America led ACB to establish a Schools for the Blind Taskforce, some of whose members presented a panel discussion of current issues. We heard about the recent closing of the school for the blind in Oregon, as well as funding concerns in other states. The American Council of the Blind supports schools for the blind as a valuable resource for educating children who are blind, noting that a free and appropriate education is the right of all children. Even though mainstreaming is appropriate for some, it is not the best choice for all blind children and their parents. We were all encouraged to make our state legislators aware of

our support for our schools for the blind. I spoke up for our own Ohio School for the Blind and our pride at having its band march in the Rose Bowl Parade. Loud applause told me that those present saw them marching, too.

We heard from Paul Edwards about streaming conventions and hosting shows on ACB Radio; Melanie Brunson on legal issues for chapter presidents; and Carla Ruschival on planning state conventions. Bert Colley, Chair of the ACB Oral History Taskforce, talked about how affiliates can participate. Now, we need to produce our 30-year members who are willing to be interviewed for this project.

I thoroughly enjoyed representing ACB Ohio. Besides hearing from our national leaders and great speakers, I had an opportunity to network with other chapter presidents about increasing membership, meeting the needs of our members and local chapters, and advocacy on our state level.

The Legislative Seminar started shortly after the Presidents' Meeting ended. Other members from Ohio joining me were Rob and Joyce Rogers and Sue Wesley from Cincinnati, Jill Noble from Cleveland, and Vicky Prahin and Bostwick Wyman from Columbus.

The Seminar started with a discussion of ACB's legal settlement with Amazon and Arizona State University. The result is that college textbooks must be accessible to all students. Since the Kindle

reading machine is not currently accessible to blind and visually impaired students, Amazon has agreed to make the next version of its Kindle accessible. Discussions about accessibility also took place with other colleges using or planning to use the Kindle. The ACB national office did a splendid job establishing an important precedent for new technology and education.

The Legislative Seminar then moved on to the two main legislative issues: The Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (H.R. 3101) and The Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act (H.R. 734 and S. 841).

The Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act addresses access to television and Internet products and programming that rely on visual information to communicate with consumers. This bill will require that mobile and other Internet-based telecommunications devices have accessible user interfaces and offer people with disabilities access to a full range of text messaging and other products that are currently inaccessible.

The bill mandates an audible component of emergency announcements on television, reinstates some audio-description requirements, and makes special provision for the deaf-blind. So far only a few representatives have signed on as co-sponsors and there is no Senate version, so we have a lot of work to do to promote this legislation.

The Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act, known informally as “The Quiet Car

Bill,” directs the Secretary of Transportation to conduct a study to determine what sort of sounds electric and hybrid cars should produce to warn pedestrians who are blind or visually impaired or distracted. Eventually a standard will be established and will apply to all new vehicles. This bill, with its modest requirements, has almost 200 co-sponsors in the House and the push for co-sponsors in the Senate is beginning as well.

Our Ohio contingent split into three teams and visited the offices of both Senators and all 18 members of the House of Representatives from Ohio. In each office we spoke with staff members and occasionally met the Members themselves. We will be following up with those members of the Ohio delegation who have not yet signed on to support these bills. I encourage each of you to send e-mails to your representatives supporting the two initiatives. Please let me know if you need legislative contact information.

Contributors . . .

Thank you to ACB Ohio members who contributed to this issue of the *Ohio Connection*: **Marc Guthrie, Mary Hiland, Vicky Prahin, and Linda Wyman.**

Board Retreat Highlights — By Mary Hiland

Much of the work of ACB Ohio's dedicated board members takes place at our quarterly board meetings and annual Board Retreat. These meetings are full of idea sharing, chapter reporting and goal setting. January's Board Retreat was productive as usual and I wanted to share some highlights of that meeting with you. Please don't hesitate to contact me with your input regarding any of the work of the board.

- Tara McCarthy, the ACB Ohio/OSU scholarship recipient from 2009, was a guest speaker at the Board Meeting. Tara was unable to attend the scholarship presentations at the convention in November, so she introduced herself and outlined her plans for obtaining a degree in teaching children who are blind.
- Board members reviewed 2009 goals and assessed their achievements over the past year. The board also reviewed and revised the goals and objectives for 2010.
- The group discussed creating life memberships in the state organization, which would be separate from membership in the national organization and local chapters. The budget committee will continue to develop this idea.
- The Board expressed its concern that many chapter representatives have not been attending board meetings. President Wyman will personally call each chapter and encourage a representative to attend and remind them that expenses are reimbursable. In the meantime, she will hold quarterly conference calls for chapter presidents.
- The board's ongoing concern about our efforts to recruit young people to ACB Ohio was discussed. It was suggested that we present awards to students who are blind in their schools. We will continue the new Touch of Wonder Braille reading program and continue offering scholarships to students who are blind.
- ACB Ohio will spearhead a new coalition of organizations serving people who are blind or visually impaired. The coalition will coordinate its ideas to present a unified voice during advocacy rather than each organization pulling in different directions. Ideas for talking points are encouraged.
- ACB Ohio board members and friends attending the 2010 legislative conference in Washington, D.C., will be Linda Wyman, Bostwick Wyman, Joyce Rogers, Robert Rogers, Sue Wesley and Jill Noble.
- The board expressed support for All Aboard Ohio, an effort to promote improved public transportation and passenger rail service in Ohio.
- Director Hiland prepared the annual report for 2009. Board members were asked to read it carefully and send their approval via e-mail before it is posted on the Web site.

Retreat (Continued)

- There was discussion about hosting a “Dining in the Dark” fund-raiser, but because of the need for staff to work on such a large project, it was suggested that we partner with another organization or agency.
- The recreation committee reported that the Takes Two to Tandem fund raiser bike ride will again be held in Loveland. The Tukandu cycling club in Cincinnati has pledged to work on this event.
- The technology committee is working on making membership applications, donations, and registrations for seminars and conventions available online.
- The board voted to hold the 2010 annual state convention at the Holiday Inn Worthington on November 5, 6 and 7.
- Three other events for 2010 were announced: The technology seminar is slated for May 1; the Family Seminar in September; and the Students’ Seminar will be held during the annual convention in November.
- The budget committee approved the proposed budget for 2010 and the board subsequently voted on and approved it.

For the full text of the Retreat minutes, call the Ohio Telephone Reader at (614) 995-3888 or toll free at (888) 333-8181. Call your local radio reading service for your PIN.

Get Connected — By Mary Hiland

Would you like to be able to communicate with ACB members around the state? Is there information you need or would like to share? Now there are two ways to better connect with other ACB Ohio members. There is now a listserve for members to help you stay current on ACB Ohio activities. To join the listserve, send your e-mail address to Robert Rogers, our secretary and Web master, at rrrogers@nuvox.net.

Also, if you would like to receive the *Ohio Connection* in your inbox, just send your e-mail address in the body of a message to executive director Mary Hiland at mary.hiland@sbcglobal.net.

Thank You

Thank you to these recent donors to ACB Ohio. Your generosity is key to advancing the mission of our organization.

Marc Guthrie
Mary Hiland
Carl Kinzle
Doug and Nancy
Morgan
Robert Rogers



Ohio Connection
American Council of the Blind
Ohio Chapter
P.O. Box 307128
Spring 2010

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



2010 ACB Ohio Datebook

**ACB Ohio Board Development
and Board Meeting**
Columbus, Ohio
April 24, 2010

All Technology All the Time
Ohio State University
May 1, 2010

ACB Ohio Board Meeting
Columbus, Ohio
July 31, 2010

Takes Two to Tandem
Loveland, Ohio
September 19, 2010

ACB Ohio State Convention
Worthington, Ohio
November 5-7, 2010

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