



Winter 2014

Ohio Connection

American Council of the Blind of Ohio
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Winter Sports Retreat 2015: Snow Much Fun!

— *By Jenna McCartney, Recreation Committee Chair*

Long-time readers of these pages probably expect to see Chris Schumacher's name associated with stories about the Winter Sports Retreat. Starting with this issue, you'll be hearing from me about ACBO's sports and recreation activities. Who am I? I'm Jenna McCartney, and I am starting my first full term on the ACBO board. I have been to conventions in two previous years as a scholarship winner. I am excited to serve as your recreation chair and to get to know those of you that attend our events. If you wish to contact me, you can email acboassist@gmail.com or call (419) 310-6452. But enough about me; now on to the much more exciting point of this article!

Recently while leaving my office, I overheard a co-worker announce "Snow flurries!" Winter is here once again. While this means Christmas is just around the corner, there is even more to look forward to in the new year with ACB Ohio.

Our upcoming Winter Sports Retreat will be full of new experiences and new places. Because Punderson is being

renovated, this year's retreat will be held at Maumee Bay State Park in Oregon, Ohio. Managed by the same company that manages Punderson, Maumee Bay has many of the same options regular Winter Sports Retreat attendees remember, including three hiking trails and the possibility for cross-country skiing.

If you are not a fan of all that snow, don't worry! We have many other indoor activities! We'll play various card and board games throughout the weekend. No matter what interests you, you will have a blast at ACBO Winter Sports Retreat 2015!

For any questions or to register, e-mail acboassist@gmail.com. A \$100 deposit is required at the time of registration. The deadline for registering is December 12, and no money will be refunded after December 26 if you cannot attend. If transportation is not available, your deposit will be refunded. I hope to see you all in January!



Keep active!

2014 Conference and Convention Roundup

— *By Katie Frederick*

The theme for the 2014 American Council of the Blind of Ohio's conference and convention was *Actively Connecting to Build Originality* (ACBO).

Friday afternoon, attendees had opportunities to visit the exhibit hall, find their way around the hotel, reconnect with friends and make new ones, and attend breakout workshops. New vendors offered innovations in product labeling, indoor navigation, artwork for purchase, information about accessible video games, and products for those who are blind or visually impaired. Walking through the exhibit hall offered convention goers a chance to learn about guide dog schools, distance education, products to help in their daily lives, technology, and chances to purchase Scentsy products, jewelry, candy, cookbooks, coffee, 2015 braille and large print calendars, and raffle tickets.

Friday night's activities began with a local Girl Scout troop leading the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by Keynote Speaker Christy Demetrakis, who spoke about following dreams and taking risks. After the opening session, many attendees enjoyed a game of Friendly Feud. The game was based on the popular Family Feud TV show and was a fun way to end the first day!

Saturday morning's breakfast speaker was Tracy Grimm, representing the State Library of Ohio. Some highlights from her presentation include 69,000

titles available through the library for checkout, approximately 800 audio described DVD's available for patrons, new update to the iPhone BARD app, monthly book discussions, and a new book club for children and teens. Tracy also spoke about the partnership between the National Library Service and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to distribute free talking iBill currency identifiers. Beginning in September 2014 and continuing through December 31, 2014, an individual who is an NLS patron and wishes to obtain a currency reader should call the Ohio Library for the Blind (800) 362-1262. Free currency readers will be available for all consumers who are blind or visually impaired in January 2015; Tracy's informative presentation closed with some fun--a trivia game that encouraged audience participation and the chance to win a USB flash drive if the title of a book was guessed correctly after the reading of a short passage.

Following the breakfast, conventioners participated in the ACBO business meeting. The meeting began with elections of officers and board members, followed by reports from the treasurer, president, and executive director. Vicky Prahin and Chris Schumacher were elected to serve as president and treasurer, respectively; their first term will end in 2016. Robert Rogers was elected by acclamation to serve as the organization's second

vice president. Board positions were then elected and filled by Terry Olandese, Theresa Carroll, Tom Dimit, Jenna McCartney, Mary Ann Donelon, Irwin Hott, and Lita Wesley. Congratulations to those newly elected, and thank you to those who have served on the ACBO board for your hard work and dedication to the organization.

Two breakout workshops were held after the business meeting; attendees could choose to hear a presentation about the new KNFB Reader iOS app or participate in a workshop for cancer survivors. As in previous years, ACBO awarded its scholarships during lunch. See elsewhere in this issue and future issues of the Ohio Connection for profiles and photos of this year's winners.

Afternoon sessions gave conference and convention attendees time to hear about AI Squared, the ACBO website, and a short sneak peak at Windows 10, Microsoft's operating system slated for release in 2015. For the fashion conscious, a workshop entitled "Dress for Success and Coordinate Your Colors" offered a chance to learn what colors went well together, examine different clothing patterns courtesy of tactile drawings, and ask questions of the presenters. Those who wished to venture outside into the sunshine and warmth of the October Saturday, could pet a small cadre of animals, thanks to the Generation Next 4-H club. Two final sessions held in the afternoon featured information about services pharmacies can provide and a presentation on the Fitbit, a wearable device for tracking one's exercise activity.

Ray Foushee, a narrator for the National Library Service's talking book program, provided the Saturday evening banquet address. He spoke about how he became involved with the program, how much he has grown to enjoy reading, and some book suggestions. Following Ray's address, four awards were presented to individuals and organizations for their efforts to improve life for those who are blind and visually impaired. Please see elsewhere in this issue for more information about the awards and photos of the 2014 recipients. Saturday's activities concluded with the annual auction; as in years past, many unique items were available for purchase.

The 2014 ACBO conference and convention wrapped up Sunday morning with a nondenominational Christian service, breakfast, where we remembered those who passed away during the past year, and honored veterans, and concluded by sharing information with attendees about the Apple TV. Special thanks to Doug Hunsinger, Pennsylvania Council of the Blind, for his expertise and assistance, which allowed us to stream the event via ACB Radio this year. Thanks also to all the vendors and workshop presenters who gave their time over the weekend to attend and make our conference and convention so informative. A final thank you to the hotel staff of the Cincinnati Holiday Inn & Suites Eastgate for its professionalism, cooperation, and assistance throughout the weekend. If you were unable to attend this year, we missed you and hope to see you in 2015!

A Look Back at the Conference & Convention ...



*Christy Demetrakis key-
notes the 2014 convention.*



*The Noble sisters (Leah, Teresa, Jill)
dressed for Halloween.*



*Danene Fast, accepting
ACBO / OSU scholarship
on behalf of Karen Koehler*



Columbus Chapter members taking in a session



The 2015 ACBO Board of Directors



*Jim Debus accepting the
Linwood Walker Scholarship*



Scholarship winners Emily Pennington, Emily Molchan, Jenny Ham, Jim Debus, Whitney Johnson, Rachel Zeiter



Enjoying the petting zoo



Marty and Larry Honaker selling goodies at the Columbus Chapter table



Irwin Hott and Kate Sniderman at the Newsreel table



Karen Spry, Vicky Prahin and Jenna McCartney at the AC-BO table

“Actively Connecting to Build Originality”

The Qualities of ACBO Leadership

— *By Vicky Prahin*

As we settled down for the elections at the 2014 Conference and Convention, someone mentioned qualifications for the leaders of the organization. Looking back, I see qualities more than qualifications. I see foresight, conviction, and fortitude.

Dessie Page gathered three of us together more than 30 years ago and introduced to us the ideals of the American Council of the Blind. With his guidance, we put together the first constitution and sought out the earliest members of the American Council of the Blind of Ohio. His foresight got the Ohio affiliate off the ground. Ken Morlock, the first Executive Director, kept the momentum going and helped the organization establish a solid financial footing, at least in part because of his conviction that ACB Ohio would flourish. I wonder if he ever thought we would be where we are today.

We have had many leaders who have handled challenges with diplomacy and grace. I have great admiration for those who, because they were convinced of the validity and strength of what ACB stands for, picked up the pieces when someone else dropped the ball or simply gave up. The adroit way Mary Hiland and Nolan Crabb dealt with the embezzlement of our funds a few years ago serves as only one example of the fortitude and solidarity of the membership of ACBO. In 2013 that ability to work together and

share talents, along with the willingness to think outside the box, served us well as we helped plan and successfully bring off the first national convention in Ohio.

Christy Demetrakis, our keynote speaker on the first evening of the 2014 convention, made several salient points during her talk, but one thing has stayed with me; she said “We can’t get there from here if we stay here.” Those who preceded me as president have led us here; now we move on to there. ACB Ohio has a reputation nationally for cooperation and accomplishing what needs doing. I want to build on that, and I need the support of every member to achieve it. As we start into and move through 2015, we’ll find challenges to stretch our horizons, and we’ll find ways to meet them. Building on the foresight, conviction, and fortitude of the leaders who brought us to “here,” we will determine where “there” is and move on. This will make some of us a little uncomfortable at times because most of us don’t like change, but without change we stagnate. Let’s work together and move ahead.

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 15, 2015.

2014 Awards Presented

— *By Terry Olandese, Awards Committee Chair*

The presentation of awards at our annual banquet is among the most significant things we do as an organization. This year, we made such presentations not merely once, but four times. I'm pleased to announce the winners of our 2014 awards, and I've concluded that the best way to do that is to simply present the nominations for those awards. By so doing, I'm providing you with the compelling reasons for our choices. The nomination letters are below. (Letters have been edited for reasons of formatting and space.)

Ruth Davidson Award, Presented to Joyce Asher

The Davidson award, you'll recall, is given to a sighted person who is recognized for extraordinary efforts in providing assistance to blind and visually impaired Ohioans.

"I wish to nominate a person for the Ruth Davidson Award, a person who has been a member of ACB for more than eight years and who has faithfully attended our (ACB Ohio Greater Cincinnati Chapter) monthly business meetings for all that time. She not only attends the meetings, but she comes well prepared with carefully written reports for each meeting.

"She is now in her fourth term as an officer of our chapter... Why? Because she is a one-in-a-million treasurer who is dedicated, competent, reliable, trustworthy, and cheerful. ... She is so

cheerful in the work she does that we are beginning to think that she actually likes us weird folks who read with our fingers and walk by swinging long sticks about or bringing four-legged creatures with us wherever we go. (Maybe we are more lovable than we think).

"This person has also taken the lead in supporting our efforts to participate in the Flying Pig Marathon. She attended the Flying Pig Marathon meetings in the beginning and helped us navigate the logistics of registration. She now plays a key role in getting our t-shirts designed and donated to ACBOGCC each year so we can be visible to others in the Flying Pig as members of the local chapter of ACBO. She walks or runs in the Flying Pig herself and serves as a guide.

"A young woman named Meghan Kirkpatrick, a good friend of Joyce's, skillfully and joyfully designed our t-shirts the last two years. In March of this year, Joyce has invited us to honor Meghan's memory by piling up Miles for Meghan as a Million Miles for Meghan project reported on face book. Meghan, who was only in her twenties, died this year of cancer, but Joyce has given us the privilege of remembering her through our walks or runs over the months and years to come. Between March 21 and June 30, members of our local chapter and their guides walked or ran a combined total of 786.1 miles

for Meghan. With Joyce's help, we will always remember Meghan for her kindness and generosity.”



Katie Frederick (left) and Karen Spry congratulate Vicky Prahin (middle) on her Ambassador Award

ACBO President Vicky Prahin received the Ambassador award, given to a blind or visually impaired person who has reached out to others and ably represented ACB Ohio in a variety of capacities.

“For the past thirty years, a hard-working, dedicated, and passionate individual has been involved with the American Council of the Blind of Ohio, serving in various roles at the local and state levels. Recently, she has become more involved at a national level with the American Council of the Blind as well.

“The board of ACBO, scholarship and awards committees, to name a few, have benefited from her organization, time management, and willingness to try new ideas. Those who serve on the newsletter committee appreciate her knowledge and understanding of the rules of grammar, the countless hours spent reading, editing, and compiling

articles, and assembling the Ohio Connection.

“Actively serving on committees, assisting with campaign events, and keeping track of ACB Ohio’s involvement with Community Shares of Mid-Ohio are other ways she tirelessly gives of her resources and time to ACBO.

“Her leadership skills have resulted in election to positions including past secretary and current president of the Columbus chapter, board member of the American Council of the Blind of Ohio, chair of the 2013 ACB Conference and Convention Host Committee, and ACB Information Desk Coordinator. In addition, she has traveled to Washington, D.C. to represent ACB Ohio at the affiliate presidents meetings and discuss key legislative issues of importance with elected officials and their staffs.”

The Ken Morlock award was given to Jamie Piechuta, vice president and secretary of the Medina ACBO chapter. She is visually impaired.

“What an asset Jamie is to Friends n Focus! Jamie is always at the meetings. She comes early and sets up for meetings. If necessary she makes sure that things will run smoothly. She takes wonderful minutes and sends them to ACBO. She puts a lot of effort into lining up speakers. She sends beautiful handmade birthday cards to our members and calls members to find out how they are doing. If she hears about someone in the area [who] needs help, she brings it to our attention so we can help.

“Jamie takes the initiative ... to do all this! The lovely boxes and cards our group auctions off at the ACBO convention are all lovingly done by Jamie. She also loves animals and belongs to Canine Therapy Companions (CTC) (Medina and Wayne County chapter of Therapy Dogs International). She has had three therapy dogs.

“In the past Jamie was a Medina County 4-H dog club advisor [for] 20 years. In Medina County, [she] helped start PROJECT RIDE, a volunteer therapeutic horseback riding program for children and adults with special needs [for] 15 years. Her family raised [guide] dogs for Pilot Dogs, Inc., [She] volunteered for St Martin of Tours Church, Valley City Ohio, former parish school of religion, PSR teacher.”

The community Service Award was given to Huntington Bancshares, Inc. to recognize the company’s achievements in creating an accessible consumer banking website and a mobile app.

“I’m writing to nominate Huntington Bancshares, Inc. for the 2014 Community Service award. It is my belief that few if any financial institutions have worked harder to ensure access to online banking features from the consumer perspective than has this organization.

“For more than two years, I have been able to successfully navigate the consumer banking portion of its website. Because of the access built into the

site, I have successfully and independently conducted every manner of business that any sighted account holder would conduct.

I first began using the mobile app soon after I opened my accounts, and even in its earliest iterations, I found the app highly accessible. Early on, transferring funds among accounts was difficult, but subsequent updates to the app now make it possible for a blind iPhone user to successfully transfer money among various accounts.

“Additionally, I have found Huntington’s ATM’s to work successfully when I needed to use one, and the sheer density of its network means that as a blind person I am not forced to find transportation to some distant out-of-the-way location to do something as simple as ATM banking.

“In short, I’m nominating Huntington because I believe it has demonstrated an interest in and a concern for accessibility in its online and mobile operations.

“It is my hope that the committee will award Huntington with the 2014 Community Service award. By so doing, its representatives may be able to remind others in the financial industry of the importance of and value of creating a banking environment that is inclusive and promotes the success, well-being, and independence of all of its account holders.”

Meet Our Scholarship Winners

— *By Vicky Prahin*

The scholarships ACBO set up with three Ohio universities to support the education of teachers of the visually impaired and blind students continue to thrive. We are proud of the three women chosen this year to receive \$2000 each.

The University of Toledo awarded the ACBO-UT scholarship to Chelsea Gerhan, who will graduate in May 2015 with dual Honors degrees in Special Education for the Visually Impaired and Mild/Moderate Special Education. This year she completed a summer research project, creating the first Tactile Map of the University of Toledo main campus. She has served as the Senior Braille and Tactile Graphic Coordinator for the Student Disability Services, has acted as a puppy raiser four times for Guiding Eyes for the Blind, and worked as a summer camp counselor for children and adults with blindness or visual impairments, most recently serving as camp supervisor. She next wants to earn a Masters in Orientation and Mobility. Her professional goals involve working as an itinerant teacher. Chelsea said, "Without the help of this organization, I would be unable to achieve all of these accomplishments in the way that I have." She was not able to join us for lunch.

Karen Koehler is a doctoral student in the College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University, one of the few universities in the United



Whitney Johnson, Wright State

States still offering degrees in special education. She has taught students with visual impairments for the past 26 years and hopes to continue serving these students in a greater capacity. She will soon receive her Ph.D. in Teaching and Learning. She wants to improve science and mathematics instruction for students who are visually impaired, thereby making it possible for more students to pursue these areas of study upon graduation from high school. Since she could not attend the convention, she wrote a very nice letter of thanks, read by Danene Fast of the OSU Program in Visual Impairments.

Whitney Johnson, recipient of our Wright State University scholarship again this year, is from Columbus. She is majoring in middle childhood education and learning to be an intervention specialist. She has completed two in-

ternships with Franklin County DD Northeast Schools as a classroom assistant and did some student teaching at Four Oaks in Beaver Creek. She has participated as a peer mentor and disability awareness speaker for Disability Services.

Each issue of the newsletter will feature information about our 2014 scholarship winners.



Introducing Jenny Ham

— *By Sam Moats*



Jenny Ham, U. of Cincinnati

This year, a new scholarship was created to honor an incoming freshman majoring in any field of study. The first Friends of Freshmen scholarship was awarded to Jenny Ham from Cincinnati. Jenny graduated from Sycamore

High School with a GPA of 3.93. In school, she was a member of the National Honor Society, a staff writer for the school's newspaper, the Sycamore Leaf, president of the Yoga Club, sang with the choir, and participated in cross country. Outside of school she sang with the Sycamore Community Chorus, participated in the Relay for Life for several years, and went on a mission trip into rural Kentucky where she first saw the effects of poverty and malnutrition.

Since, as she said, food is her passion, she decided to pursue a career where she could make an impact helping the malnourished. She is attending the University of Cincinnati, majoring in nutrition, and plans to work with a non-governmental organization that provides education and support to impoverished communities. We at ACBO congratulate her and wish her well in her pursuit of a career in nutrition.



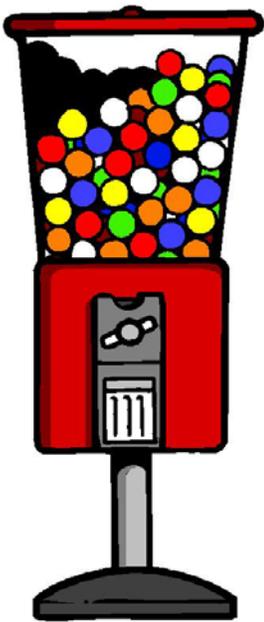
Chapter News

– *By Mickey Prahin*

Medina Friends-N-Focus

About a year ago I talked with Don Kalman of Medina concerning Friends-N-Focus and its gumball project. He said there were two machines placed and one looking for a home. I thought it was time for an update.

Don says the gumball machine in the beauty parlor is nearly empty, and I know he'll be happy to refill it. He still has a machine looking for a home. In the meantime, the Friends-N-Focus Chapter ACB Ohio is keeping busy. It has given a CCTV to one user, glasses to someone else, and worked to meet other needs that arise.

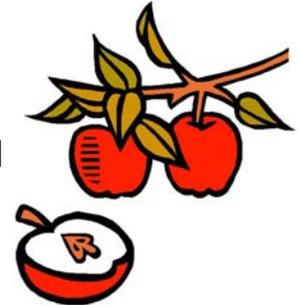


Chapter members were contacted by the Brunswick Chamber of Commerce to set up 130 tables on a Friday night and take them down on Sunday. For that the chapter received a contribution.

In September, the chapter hoped to have a speaker from Hospice. Keep up the good work, Medina!

Appleseed Chapter

The ACB Appleseed chapter's Loss of Vision (LOV) support group, Richland County, met on September 3 with Guest Speaker Teresa Miller of the



Richland Public Health Department, who presented information about senior health screenings and other health-related services offered by the agency.

Our October 1 meeting was an opportunity for open sharing to tell our personal stories about our vision loss by responding to questions posed by Steve Nemeth. This discussion allowed those present to share their challenges and solutions in overcoming these obstacles.

Our November 5 meeting was a tribute to veterans. Our speaker was Mariann Ryan, LISW, of the Louis Stokes VA Medical Center of Cleveland, who talked about low-vision and blindness rehabilitation services available to eligible veterans. The VA provides outreach services across the state to link veterans challenged by vision loss to appropriate services.

Happy Holidays from our group to yours!

Back to the Acting Future

— *By Jim Oyer*

When I was fully sighted, I counted acting among my talents. I had thought vision loss had stripped that opportunity from me, but after nearly 20 years I was able to return to the theater stage.

Dan Kelley, who teaches at the Ohio State School for the Blind, was contacted by Vern Hendrick, who was looking for a blind actor for the play he was directing. Dan phoned me, gave the contact number, and I phoned Vern.

My blindness meant I was unable to read a script at the auditions; Vern auditioned me at my house. The play is *End Game* by Samuel Beckett. For those who are not familiar with Beckett's plays, his work is somewhat avant-garde, generally positive about the human experience. However, you really have to dig deep to find it. The lead character, Ham, is blind and in a wheelchair. His assistant is mobile but has difficulty with his legs. There are two other characters. Nag, Ham's father, and Nag's wife, Nell. Both live in their own trash cans because they lost their legs in a boating accident. Pretty uplifting, huh?

Vern and I discussed me playing Ham, but I felt it was too much for me. So, I played Nag. I didn't need to worry about blocking, that is what your movement on stage means. Again, because I can't read a script, I memorized my part before the rehearsals began.



Beckett's use of prose is unusual, and part of my performance required me to do four different voices, gestures and head positions rapidly as I told a joke. I did a Walter Cronkite for the narrator, a Floyd the barber from the Andy Griffith show for the tailor, and an angry Englishman for the customer and my own character.

I was hesitant to do the play because it has been a long time, but parts for a blind person in local theater are very rare. I am really glad I did it. Some of the people that came to see this show were fellow actors I had not seen in 20 to 30 years. They were so happy for me because they knew me in plays before my eyesight failed.

Vern was the best director I have ever worked with. He really knew this play and was very demanding that we delivered our performances to the tee. The Columbus Civic Theater in Clintonville, which is just north of Columbus, is very intimate. It seats only 50 in three rows.

Acting continued on next page

Acting continued

My thanks go to Glenn Beachy and Katie Frederick who came to see the show. I could hear Katie laughing.

On a final note: Some members of the audience knew that there was a blind actor in the play. They left the theater and some said, "Who was the blind actor?"

If I have whetted your curiosity, you can download a performance of this play done by the Irish theater which is good. But the actor that does my part sucks. Enter the play End Game by Samuel Beckett.

Nolan Crabb
Editor

Michelle Spillan
Editorial Assistant

Thanks to the contributors: **Katie Frederick, Jenna McCartney, Sam Moats, Terry Olandese, Jim Oyer, Mickey Prahin, Vicky Prahin, Elizabeth Sammons.** The deadline for the next issue is February 15.



Katie Frederick, Jill Noble, Leah Noble, Lynn Powers and Melody Banks busy at registration

News Bits

— *By Elizabeth Sammons*

December 31 is the last day on which you can apply for a **grant from the Association of Blind Citizens Assistive Technology Fund**. You may

apply for up to \$3,000 or 50 percent of the retail price of adaptive devices or software. Applicants must be legally blind and a resident of the USA, have a family income of less than \$50,000 and cash assets of less than \$20,000.

<http://tinyurl.com/mqzc7yg>



January 15 is the final day on which you can apply for a **scholarship from Guild Scholar College Scholarships for U.S. blind/legally blind high school students**, merit-based, to the college or university of your choice. Up to \$15,000. Applications are accepted from students in their junior year, with scholarships awarded the following academic year.

<http://tinyurl.com/l5qxu6e>

Products and Devices to Help You Identify Your Medications

<http://tinyurl.com/n9h43kq>

Reading for All: The Potential of the Public Library System in Providing Access

<http://tinyurl.com/qhus2vx>

American Foundation for the Blind's new public service announcement titled "Breakthroughs," hit national television in honor of Blindness Awareness Month. **The PSA highlights breakthroughs from nine decades of AFB's history—from the creation of the talking book in the 1930s to the passage of landmark communications legislation in 2010.** A longer version of the PSA, which contains video description and more breakthroughs, is also available on the AFB website and YouTube Channel.

Keep handy this list of **disability tech support hotlines** from companies committed to providing some special services.

<http://tinyurl.com/pxp6vmp>

Regardless of your situation, many people share things in common with your life circumstances. Browse this **A to Z listing of over 500 e-communities of people facing similar life challenges, medical conditions, and mental health issues** whose goal is information sharing and support.

<http://tinyurl.com/6sscmmk>

ACBO Community Shares Campaign Codes

State of Ohio 19003
City of Columbus 60240
Franklin County 60240
Ohio State University 60240
Columbus State Comm. College 1061



American Council of the Blind
3805 N. High St., Ste. 305
Columbus, Ohio 43214

FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND



ACB OHIO DATEBOOK

JANUARY 4

ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF LOUIS BRAILLE

JANUARY 9

**ACBO BOARD MEETING
VIA CONFERENCE CALL**

JANUARY 16-19

ACBO WINTER SPORTS RETREAT

FEBRUARY 21-24

ACB NATIONAL MID-YEAR MEETINGS

