



OHIO CONNECTION

American Council of the Blind of Ohio

MEET OUR FOREIGN GUESTS

By Vicky Prahin

Last year, ACBO had a chance to participate in a unique international fellowship program and was honored when asked to host two of this year's visitors to Central Ohio. Lorela Musta, from Albania, and Larisa Nechita, from Romania, arrived in Columbus in mid October and stayed about four weeks. Larisa stayed with me and Lorela resided with Columbus Chapter members Julie and Mike Russell.

The program is through the Great Lakes Consortium for International Development & Training (GLC), a cooperative effort of Bowling Green State University, Lourdes University, the University of Toledo, and WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc. Its mission is to initiate, seek support for, and coordinate international training and development efforts to benefit the world community. GLC manages the Professional Fellows Programs with grants from the Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and organizes exchanges with fellows from Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Albania, and the United States.

Under the program, professionals in various areas of study and practice are exposed to diverse community organizing methods to engage citizens in problem solving in their own communities. They are placed in non-profit organiza-



Lorela Musta and Larisa Nechita

tions, private sector businesses, and government offices across the U.S. to learn firsthand how issues in their field are addressed in this country. Thousands of Americans host, work with, and learn from the foreign fellows while they are in the United States. Some hosts then visit the Eastern European countries to continue the collaboration.

The day after arriving in Columbus, Lorela and Larisa began their program with a visit in the morning to the Marion support group and in the evening by attending a new support group, Living Blind in a Sighted World, in Columbus. Both women found these groups fascinating because no such support groups exist in their countries. Over the next few weeks they spent time at the Ohio



Larisa checking out a vintage racecar at the speedway museum

State School for the Blind, Voicecorps (the radio reading service in Columbus), the State Library of Ohio, The Ohio State University, and the Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. They took many ideas and concepts home with them, hoping to implement some in their hometowns.

Lorela has a master's degree in organizational psychology from the University of Tirana. For the past two years, she has served as executive director for LIBURNETIK, an Albanian nonprofit with various social programs for youth and marginalized groups. She especially enjoys working as an art therapist with visually impaired children and working in theater with minority groups. During my visit to Albania in 2019, she and I will present to several groups, focusing on the mission of ACB and introducing the concept of guide dog use; there are no guide dogs at this time in Albania.

Larisa is working on her Ph.D. in community organization and conference interpreting. She has one of the few guide dogs in Romania and has advocated strongly for acceptance in her town. During my visit we will promote the use of guide dogs, a better work ethic among blind and visually impaired people, and the possibility of establishing the first radio reading service in Eastern Europe.

Both ladies attended the convention in Indianapolis during their last weekend in Ohio. Larisa had an opportunity to participate in a project a group of students from the University of Indiana are engaged in.

Having these ladies here was a wonderful chance for them, and us, to become acquainted and to begin collaborations on projects which, I hope, will benefit all of us.



Larisa and her guide dog, Tina, and Katie Frederick with Kenzo on the legendary racetrack



THE RACE TO SUCCESS — 2018 ACB INDIANA & OHIO CONFERENCE RECAP

By Katie Frederick

The 2018 state conference and convention marked the third year the American Council of the Blind of Ohio partnered with the American Council of the Blind of Indiana. Attendees from Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Maryland, and other states met at the Waterfront Hotel and Conference Center in Indianapolis to take part in the weekend's activities.

Friday afternoon activities sped off with a tour of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway racetrack and museum. Participants enjoyed a bus ride around a lap of the track with narration highlighting the history and features of the raceway. At the finish line, the bus stopped so we could “kiss the bricks” and take part in an Indianapolis speedway tradition. The speed-



2018 Scholarship winners & board members
Back row: Michael Molchan, Alex Dinsmore, Jenna McCartney, Katie Frederick. Front row: Jill Noble, Molly Marcinick, Vicky Prahin, Ann Pimley, Beth McCrory

way museum tour offered hands-on opportunities to examine four different race cars from various years of the track's history, the chance to sit—or rather recline—in an actual race car, and of course, visit the gift shop.

The Friday evening pizza mixer gave approximately 25 exhibitors a chance to introduce the many products for sale to attendees. The exhibit hall featured gifts and gadgets for everyone, including dog toys and treats, Tupperware products, homemade cookies, jams, soaps, candy bars, keychains, large-print calendars, and much more. Peter Berg, project coordinator of technical assistance at Great Lakes ADA Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago, provided the Friday evening keynote presentation. He spoke about accomplishments since the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and challenged the audience to remain



Irwin Hott behind the wheel

active advocates because there is still a myriad of issues to address. Final Friday evening activities included an open mic night, an audio-described movie, and socializing with new and old friends.

Saturday morning kicked off with the ACB-Ohio and Indiana business meetings followed by breakout sessions. During the Ohio business meeting, Elizabeth Sammons, retired program administrator at Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), spoke about a statewide initiative to increase braille literacy. The 2018 contract, awarded to the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio, combined in-person instruction, one-on-one mentoring, and virtual training sessions, giving approximately 15 program participants around the state an opportunity to learn uncontracted braille. ACB-Ohio Executive Director Vicky Prahin and Affiliate President Jill Noble provided updates to the membership. The 2018 business meeting concluded with board elections, resulting in Chris Schumacher's reelection to the affiliate treasurer position, Lori Woodall's reelection to second vice president, and Annie Davis, Irwin Hott, Jenna McCartney, and Robert Rogers reelected as members of the board of directors. Ken Woodall chose not to seek reelection, so the affiliate welcomed Shawn Thiel, a member of the Columbus chapter, to the board this year. Following the business meetings, two breakout sessions were offered, covering transportation and conflict management and resolution.

As a member of the ACB board of directors and Indiana affiliate liaison, I spoke at lunch on Saturday, updating the audience on ACB's strategic plan initiatives, the establishment of an ACB endowment fund, and the organiza-

tion's continued advocacy efforts. ACB-Ohio awarded four scholarships this year to undergraduate and graduate students. The endowments at The Ohio State University, University of Toledo, and Wright State University established over ten years ago continue to grow and fund scholarships to deserving students. See upcoming issues of the *Ohio Connection* for profiles of the 2018 scholarship recipients.

Saturday afternoon breakout workshops addressed topics such as Windows 10 access, emergency preparedness, and OneTouch Self Defense. The exhibit hall remained open, providing attendees a last chance to purchase gadgets, gifts, and goodies. Saturday activities concluded with the annual banquet, award presentations, and auction.

This year's event provided a whirlwind of activities, networking opportunities, and fun. A huge thank you to all the volunteers who provided assistance at the hotel and did so much more throughout the weekend to help make the convention a success—we could not have done it without you! It was a pleasure collaborating with the Indiana host committee to make this event a success. Stay tuned to the *Ohio Connection* as we begin planning for the 2019 conference and convention.



Jill Noble “driving” a cement racecar



RECORDING OUR LOCAL MEETINGS

By Irwin Hott

Since 2011, I have been recording our Columbus chapter meetings for those members who could not be present. The audio is posted to a Dropbox folder and the link is e-mailed to the membership list.

Initially, I used the original Victor Stream, which made an adequate recording. After some experimentation, I switched to the Bookport+ from the American Printing House for the Blind, which creates very high-quality MP3 files. Almost any digital recorder will work, as long as it has a way to copy the recording to a Mac or PC. The files would most likely be too large to e-mail.

I do some slight editing, such as removing pauses during our 50/50 raffle drawing and between our meeting and

our speaker. I generally start the recording well before the meeting begins in order not to miss the opening remarks and then I trim that time off. Our meetings are generally about two hours.

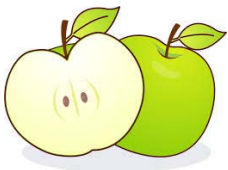
I place the recorder on the table with our PA system. We have three roving wireless microphones and a wired microphone for the chapter president to use. The microphones are primarily used for our assistive listening devices. We ask that all attendees use the microphones when participating in the meeting. It's possible to do some post processing to improve the audio.

If anyone would like to talk to me about ways to record your meeting, e-mail me at ishott263@att.net.

CVS OFFERS TALKING PRESCRIPTION LABELS

As part of its ongoing efforts to enhance accessibility and usability of prescription medications, CVS's local pharmacies now can dispense controlled substance medications with Access-A-Med talking prescription labels. Patients seeking Access-A-Med labels for controlled substances should contact their local CVS pharmacist, who will obtain the Access-A-Med device and get it to the patient. This may take a day or more, depending on availabil-

ity. CVS will continue to dispense non-controlled prescription medications with ScripTalk talking labels through cvs.com. CVS patients can sign up for ScripTalk labels for non-controlled substances by calling 1-888-861-4363. Patients who prefer to have non-controlled prescription medications with the ScripTalk labels sent to their local CVS stores for pickup can make that request through cvs.com.



AN APPLESEED CHAPTER UPDATE

By Mary Castor, Chapter President

In September, ACBO at-large member Ruthann Thornsberry presented information about resources and services available to meet the needs of persons with vision loss to receive audible information about their prescription labels. This is an effort to reduce the likelihood of dangerous medication errors. Ask your pharmacist about accessible label readers.

In October, our topic presenters were Pamela Drake, executive director of the Independent Living Center of North Central Ohio, and board member Mark Daley. They talked about the agency's goals in serving persons with disabilities in many ways.

Our November meeting presenter was Joe Trolan, executive director of the Richland County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board. He presented information about coping with holiday stress. A member of the Perrysville Lions Club, Dana Zody, demonstrated how to use the ScripTalk label reader.

We enjoyed our time together at our Christmas party in early December. Lastly, our chapter wishes to recognize and thank Vice President Brant Adams for his many contributions throughout the years and wish him much success and happiness in North Dakota.

ACCESS THE OHIO CONNECTION VIA NFB-NEWSLINE

NFB-Newsline, a service provided by the National Federation of the Blind, offers access to international and national magazines and newspapers, as well as blindness-specific publications, to individuals who are unable to read print material. Eligible Ohioans interested in signing up for the service can contact the Cleveland Library for the Blind at 800-362-1262 or complete an online application at <https://tinyurl.com/yaelem4m>. ACB-Ohio puts the *Ohio Connection* on NFB-Newsline; this will replace the cassette version beginning with the 2019 spring issue.

To access NFB-Newsline, call the appropriate phone number, download the free iOS app, read the newspapers of your choice via the internet, have your

choice of newspapers e-mailed to you, or access the service with popular specialized players, such as the Victor Reader Trek. Call one of the local numbers listed below to hear NFB-Newsline.

Akron: 330-247-1241
Canton: 330-409-1900
Cincinnati: 513-297-1521
Cleveland: 216-453-2090
Columbus: 614-448-1673
Outside the local access area:
888-882-1629

Read the *ACB Braille Forum* by selecting the "Magazines" section once logged in. The *Ohio Connection* is located under the Ohio listing, under the ACB-Ohio channel.

MEET AIRA: THE “EYES” YOU CAN BUY



Aira can be used with or without smart glasses.

Aira is a service that connects blind and visually impaired people to highly trained, remotely located agents. Through an app on your smartphone, or through an optional pair of Horizon Smart Glasses, Aira delivers instant access to visual information at the touch of a button. Uses include going to the airport, using public transportation, shopping, navigating city streets, interacting with a group of people, increasing work productivity, and simply reading your mail.

You may be concerned about privacy when using the service, but be assured that the company has taken precautions for your protection. Unless you make a request to contact an Aira agent, the camera will not be turned on. For your peace of mind, Aira comes with a privacy mode, which allows you to pause the streaming. This action essentially stops the agent from seeing what you are seeing. Agents do not have access to any of your information unless actively in session with you; they sign a confidentiality agreement as part of the agent contract. Aira is not a replacement for your white cane or

guide dog. Our services complement your current mobility tools. We strongly urge users to think of Aira as an addition to your current navigational tools, not a replacement.

SHAWN THIEL EXPLAINS HIS EXPERIENCE THIS WAY:

I've been using Aira more since the beginning of November, despite being subscribed since early July. This is no coincidence; because Aira was a sponsor of our joint convention with Indiana, anyone at the hotel could use the service for free.

Aira was useful from the moment my roommate and I entered the room since the temperature was much warmer than anticipated. I was able to get assistance with my phone's camera to locate and adjust the temperature so that we were no longer roasting. The agent, Sian, also assisted with the layout of the room, and had no objection to the fact that I was on speaker so that we could both use the information. Users can rate every call and a history is kept so that you can go back and add a rating if you forget.

I have an older model of the smart glasses that wasn't working well, so I used my phone camera the next morning to help us find the stairs. We knew there were some nearby, but I was so busy concentrating on just getting to the restroom and room in general the night before that I had pretty much made up my mind that I was going to use Aira later. The camera in the iPhone 6S was enough to allow her to see where we were and get video over the

railing to see where we were in relation to the stairs.

The Aira representative in the exhibit hall explained to me that she had taken steps to ensure agents were prepared for assisting at our location. She took pictures of the climate controls mentioned and other areas such as the elevator. This last was important I learned later, as two blind people needed to show a sighted person where the recessed elevator was located at one point during the weekend.

I attempted several other tasks, but the most liberating was at the end of the weekend, when I was able to get assistance to make sure I had not left anything behind in the hotel room. I'm always afraid that I will lose track of things—luckily, this hasn't happened yet. For the stress this alleviated, I would have gladly taken that time out of my personal minute allotment however, I saved 47 minutes using the Aira Access free setup. I don't remember how many minutes I had left before the event, but it was nice not to have to worry about it. That meant I had some Aira time left to go through my goody bag and see what was worth keeping.

This is only the second ACBO convention I have attended, and as someone who is not the most confident traveler, Aira has made this experience go from something slightly overwhelming to empowering. We had excellent volunteers at the event; however, they couldn't be everywhere at once, and it was nice to know that I had another option. I don't know how the sponsorship works out from an administrative perspective, but I truly hope Aira Access will be available at the 2019 convention. I hope that writing about this experience has given readers an idea of how Aira can help

them in real-world situations. While the technology is amazing, sometimes figuring out how to apply it to one's own life can be a challenge.

USER MARY HILAND SHARES THE FOLLOWING:

I am a relatively new Aira subscriber. Because I have never traveled by air without an airport employee to assist me, and I rarely stay in hotels, I wasn't sure I would have a use for this technology. But lately, I've discovered services I didn't know they could offer.

I am often confounded by surveys and forms that are not accessible, and using large websites such as Amazon is virtually impossible for me, a non-techie by any standard. Recently, I purchased a cassette player/recorder that I couldn't figure out how to work, even when a techie friend thought she had figured it out and tried to explain it to me. I contacted an Aira agent who looked at the device through my glasses, found it online, studied the instructions, and discovered that in order to make a recording, I had to first record it on my computer and then send it to the cassette. Well, this sounded totally ridiculous to me, so the agent looked on Amazon and found exactly what I wanted. I didn't have her order it because I couldn't think of my password right that minute, but I am pretty sure she would have done so if I had asked her. I have other plans for Aira, such as finding my way to two establishments that I can walk to but am not sure exactly how to find their doors. But in the meantime, getting help with overwhelming tasks is a blessing. And oh yes, and if you get an agent who knows her colors, it's great for sorting out your closet.

Aira offers various plans to fit subscriber needs and budgets. If you want more information or are interested in acquiring this technology for your own use, go to the website, <https://aira.io>, or call 800-835-1934.



Aira is meant to complement—not replace—other mobility tools.

IS THE BLINDNESS EXEMPTION ENDING?

JOHN WILSON, CPA, ANSWERS A READER'S TAX QUESTION

A while back I read that the new tax cuts were going to take away our extra exemption for workers who are legally blind. Do you know if we'll be eligible to use the extra exemption under the new tax laws? -Dave, Canton

No, the blindness exemption is not going away. Here is a short explanation from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act signed by President Trump in December 2017:

1. The standard deduction is as follows:

Single or married filing separately
\$12,000

Married filing jointly or qualifying widow
\$24,000

Head of household
\$18,000

For a person age 65 or older and/or blind, per event add to the standard deduction:

Married filing jointly, qualifying widow, or married filing separately \$1,300

Single or head of household \$1,500
For example, a person who is single

and age 66 would have a standard deduction of \$13,500. A person who is age 66 and blind would have a standard deduction of \$15,000.

2. The personal exemption deduction is suspended from 2018 through 2025.

3. The phase-out of the itemized deduction provision is suspended from 2018 through 2025.

4. If you have dependents under 17 the child tax credit was raised to \$2,000 with up to \$1,400 of the credit refundable. If you have a dependent over 16 a new child tax credit of \$500 might be available.



NATIONAL DISABILITY FRAUD PROGRAM EXPANDED

The Social Security Administration and its Office of the Inspector General (OIG) announced three new Cooperative Disability Investigations (CDI) Units recently opened across the country. As part of the nationwide CDI Program, the new units will identify, investigate, and prevent Social Security disability fraud throughout their respective states. The new CDI units opened in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Honolulu, Hawaii; and Indianapolis, Indiana.

The CDI Program is one of Social Security's most successful anti-fraud initiatives, contributing to the integrity of Federal disability programs. CDI brings together personnel from Social Security, its OIG, State Disability Determination Services (DDS), and local law enforcement agencies to analyze and investigate suspicious or questionable Social Security disability claims, to help resolve questions of potential fraud *before* benefits are ever paid. CDI Unit efforts help disability examiners make informed decisions, ensure payment accuracy, and generate significant taxpayer savings, for both federal and state programs.

"Social Security is committed to combating fraud and preserving the public's trust in our programs," said Nancy A. Berryhill, Acting Commissioner of Social Security. "As we open the three new CDI units, let us remember the important work they do. The CDI program plays a critical role in detecting and preventing fraud, helping to ensure benefits are paid only to the people who are eligible. This collaboration be-

tween Social Security, the OIG, and local law enforcement helps save taxpayer money and ensures the integrity of our programs."

The CDI Program consists of 43 units covering 37 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Social Security and OIG have opened several offices in the last few years as they work together to provide CDI coverage for all 50 states by 2022, as mandated by the *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015*.

"CDI has a long, successful track record of identifying and preventing disability fraud and abuse," said Acting Inspector General Gale Stallworth Stone. "We're pleased to partner with Social Security, the DDSs, and local law enforcement agencies across the country, to combat fraud and promote the integrity of Social Security's disability programs."

Since 1997, when Social Security and OIG established CDI, its efforts have contributed to \$3.9 billion in projected savings to Social Security's programs, and \$2.9 billion in projected savings to other Federal and State programs. For more information, please [visit the OIG website](#) and Social Security's anti-fraud website at www.socialsecurity.gov/antifraudfacts/.

BITS & BYTES



► EASILY CONVERT PRINT TO BRAILLE

Now you can convert a print document to braille quickly and easily at <http://robobrace.org/>. The site accepts many languages and alphabets and will convert Word, text, .pdf, and many other kinds of documents. Just choose the language you need and upload your file.

► 2019 REGIONAL BRAILLE CHALLENGE

Cincinnati's Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired will host the 2019 Ohio Regional Braille Challenge on March 1. Students from all over Ohio will gather at Clovernook to test their braille skills in reading, comprehension, spelling, graph and chart reading, proofreading, and speed and accuracy. This is the first step to participate in the Braille Institute Braille Challenge Finals held in Los Angeles in June. To register, students of any age should call 513-702-4878 or e-mail kathy@pinchange.com or braillechallenge@clovernook.org.

► ACCESS TO PRINT MATERIAL IS TRULY COMING OUR WAY

On October 10, 2018, the White House press secretary included the following in a press release:

The President has signed into law ... S. 2559, the "Marrakesh Treaty Implementation Act," which provides for the implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled.

Michelle Spillan, Editor

Newsletter Committee: Irwin Hott, Jenna McCartney, Jill Noble, Vicky Prahin

As always, thanks to the contributors: **Katie Frederick, Irwin Hott, Mary Castor, Vicky Prahin, and John Wilson.**

The *Ohio Connection* is a quarterly publication of the American Council of the Blind of Ohio (phone 614-261-3561). Please e-mail your submission to acbo.newsletter@gmail.com or mail your material to ACB-Ohio, 3805 N. High Suite 305, Columbus, OH 43214.

THE DEADLINE FOR THE FALL ISSUE IS FEBRUARY 15.

ACBO Community Shares Campaign Codes

State of Ohio 19003
City of Columbus 60240
Franklin County 60240
Ohio State University 60240
Columbus State 1061





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FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND



ACB-OHIO DATEBOOK



JANUARY 18-21

WINTER SPORTS RETREAT
PUNDERSON STATE PARK

JANUARY 5

ACBO BOARD MEETING
CONFERENCE CALL, 9 AM – 12 PM

JANUARY 27

7:30 PM AT-LARGE MEMBERSHIP CALL
CALL THE ACBO OFFICE FOR
PHONE NUMBER & PASSCODE

FEBRUARY 15

ACBO MEMBERSHIP DUES DEADLINE
OHIO CONNECTION DEADLINE

FEBRUARY 23-26

LEGISLATIVE SEMINAR
WASHINGTON, DC

MARCH 1

BRAILLE CHALLENGE
CLOVERNOOK CENTER, CINCINNATI

APRIL 6

ACBO BOARD MEETING

JULY 5-12

ACB CONFERENCE & CONVENTION
ROCHESTER, NY
ACBCONVENTION.ORG

