



# ***OHIO CONNECTION***

American Council of the Blind of Ohio

## **LEGISLATIVE SEMINAR 2019**

***Excerpted from an article by Claire Stanley***

**B**y the time this issue of the *Ohio Connection* goes to the printer, a small group of us will have visited Washington and spent time on the Hill with staff members of our representatives and senators. The major issues this year reflect the continuing growth of technology in our society. They show both the positive benefits of accessible technology and the negative ramifications of failing to include accessibility from the beginning. Here are the issues we will bring to their attention.

In the last Congress, blindness organizations and the auto industry supported legislation that would establish working groups to focus on accessibility and prevent discrimination in operating such vehicles based on disability. ACB calls on Congress to move forward with similar legislation that will continue to drive this technology forward.

Advancements in health technology have resulted in a watershed of durable medical equipment (DME) that monitors vital health activity and conditions such as diabetes, one of the leading causes of blindness in the United States. However, a failure by the DME industry to make devices accessible has raised serious health concerns by those living with such conditions who are blind and visually impaired. For instance, devices such as glucometers have notoriously been a challenge for diabetics who

are blind. This can all change through the development of accessible DME interfaces like smartphone apps and other devices capable of using nanotechnology that can incorporate simple accessibility solutions. Congress can play a role in ensuring that such technology adheres to the latest software technology standards, such as Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, and that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) provide assurances that accessible DME devices make their way into the hands of individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

In November of 2008, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) promulgated a regulation that has had a detrimental impact on the lives of countless individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies (DMEPOS) Competitive Acquisition Rule contains a provision entitled "Low Vision Aid Exclusion" which states that all devices, "irrespective of their size, form, or technological features that use one or more lens to aid vision or provide magnification of images for impaired vision" are excluded from Medicare coverage based on the statutory "eyeglass" exclusion. ACB is well aware that this extremely restrictive reading of the "eyeglass" exclusion has resulted in the denial of vital assistive devices for seniors and other Medicare benefi-

ciaries who may have disabilities. The expansion of the eyeglass exclusion has prevented access to devices such as handheld magnifiers, video monitors, and other technologies that utilize lenses to enhance vision.



**ACBO Community Shares  
Campaign Codes**

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

## CALLING ALL ACBO MEMBERS!

To get more members involved in the affiliate last year, the membership committee held conference calls in which at-large and chapter members could participate. We also welcomed non-members who wanted to find out more about ACBO. These phone conferences were quite successful. We plan to have a call on the second Sunday of each month in 2019. Consider joining us on March 10, April 14, May 12, and June 9 at 7:30 PM.

The calls last an hour or so and often include a speaker. We welcome speakers or discussion topic suggestions. Those on the Acbo-list will receive a reminder of the

phone conference meeting, which will include information about the speaker or discussion topic. Feel free to spread the word and invite someone who is interested in our organization.

The meeting conference phone number is 218-339-0402. Use passcode 2226446 (ACBOHIO).

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Ann Pimley.  
[apomerai@verizon.net](mailto:apomerai@verizon.net)  
440-226-9141 cell  
440 290-7591 home

**Michelle Spillan, Editor**

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

As always, thanks to the contributors: **Carol Akers, Debra Baker, Larry Benders, Marianne Denning, Katie Frederick, Jill Noble, Ann Pimley, Vicky Prahin, and Claire Stanley.**

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](mailto: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 **May 15.**

# 2019 CONFERENCE & CONVENTION: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

*By Katie Frederick*

The 2019 joint ACB-Ohio and ACB-Indiana Conference and Convention will take place at the Crowne Plaza Columbus North hotel November 15 through 17. The program committee is hard at work putting together workshops, speakers, and maybe an exciting outing for attendees this year. "Breaking Down Barriers" is the theme, and Linda Leuderman of Women at Risk will present the keynote address. Possible workshop topics include restaurant and grocery delivery service apps, information about STA-

BLE accounts, cutting the cord, and many more. If you have program ideas to share please reach out to Brant Adams or Katie Frederick, the program committee co-chairs. Look for more details in the next issue of the *Ohio Connection*.

To make reservations for the ACBO-ACBI convention, call either 614-885-1885 or 866-309-1866; choose option 2 and use code BLI.

## OLBPD SURVEY

The Ohio Library for Blind and Physically Disabled (OLBPD) strives to provide the best services we can for our patrons. As part of that initiative, OLBPD is conducting a survey to collect feedback regarding our services, how well we perform them, and ways to improve services in the future. The survey is open now until July 31, 2019. It contains 17 questions, and all answers are confidential and will be collected anonymously. Patrons can participate by completing the survey online through Survey Monkey at [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2019\\_OLBPD](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2019_OLBPD).

The online survey is accessible, but patrons who do not want to use the internet can call OLBPD at 800-362-1262 and a staff member will conduct the survey over the phone. We appreciate patrons taking time to complete the survey and sharing their feedback and ideas with us.

## ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIPS



Congratulations again to the 2018 scholarship winners.

Every year the American Council of the Blind of Ohio offers six scholarships to residents of Ohio.

- Apply for \$1,000 if you will be a freshman in the 2019-2020 school year and are blind or visually impaired;
- \$2,000 scholarships if you are a blind or visually impaired undergraduate;
- \$2,500 scholarships if you are a blind or visually impaired graduate student; or
- \$2,000 scholarship if you are blind or visually impaired or studying a blindness-related field.

To get qualification information and apply, go to [www.acbohio.org](http://www.acbohio.org) or call the ACBO office at 614-261-3561.

# WINTER RETREAT #31—FUN, FUN, FUN!

*By Jill Noble*



It was cold, snowy, and windy the weekend of the 31<sup>st</sup> Winter Sports Retreat. The average temperature was in the single digits and the wind chill was several degrees below zero. Although the conditions were not optimal, some of the more hardy souls decided to brave the

elements and try cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, and hiking. Because it was so windy, a few tried something new: flying a stunt kite. Unlike a typical kite, a stunt kite uses two strings to keep it up and control it. Needless to say, the rest of the folks chose to stay inside to swim or play board games.

As many participants have stated, this yearly event is like a big family reunion. Old friends get to spend time together and new friends experience the camaraderie. There is always something new to try, and the food is wonderful!

Thanks to all of the volunteer drivers/guides that help out with this event. We couldn't do it without you!

Now, let's switch gears to heat and sunshine—the Summer Sports Retreat. This year it is scheduled for the first weekend in August (2-4). The cost is \$85 for participants and \$25 for guides. For more information, call the ACBO office at 614-261-3561. Sign up early to reserve a spot.





# ADULT BRAILLE LITERACY PROGRAM

*By Debra Baker & Marianne Denning*

In the fall of 2017, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) sent a request for proposals to teach uncontracted braille to legally blind adults throughout the state of Ohio. The National Federation of the Blind of Ohio (NFBO) was awarded the funding for this initiative. As certified teachers of the blind, we proposed to teach uncontracted braille to 16 adults. The opportunity was open to residents of all Ohio counties who were at least 14 years old and legally blind. We agreed that it was not necessary for students to be members of NFB, nor was it necessary that they were OOD consumers.

In order to include students statewide, we divided Ohio into four regions with four students each. For the introductory weekend lessons, four students traveled to Dayton, four to Columbus, four to Toledo, and four to Cleveland. Each student received the Braille edition of *The McDuffy Reader*, UEB Edition, 200 sheets of three-hole punched heavyweight Braille paper, a loose-leaf binder, one slate and stylus, a sleepshade, and a \$730 Perkins Braille. The grant funded student transportation, meals, and lodging for each of the four introductory weekends.

We decided that each student should interact with a blind mentor who reads and writes braille, so we selected 12 experienced mentors to help the 16 students. Mentors attended a one-day training in Columbus to be oriented to the *Reader*, to learn new UEB punctuation, and to make sure that all knew common braille terminology and tracking technique. Each student-mentor team spent one hour a week either reviewing a lesson that we had previously taught or introducing the next les-

son. Each student spent two one-hour lessons per week with us, the certified teachers.

During each introductory weekend class, students learned proper hand position for reading braille, line tracking, symbol discrimination (e.g. ability to discriminate one braille character per line that was different from the other three or four characters on that same line). During the face-to-face weekend teaching, we taught the first lesson, letters a through e, so that students could begin reading whole words.

Next, we taught the parts of the Perkins Braille by name and showed students how to load and unload paper from the device. They learned to write the letters and words they had read in lesson one of *The McDuffy Reader*. We also introduced the slate and stylus.

Since the literacy training was offered as virtual instruction, it was paramount that we find ways to communicate with all students. We communicated via Skype, Facetime, or telephone. Students received documents that were selected to supplement their extra practice beyond the 20 *McDuffy Reader* lessons. Both students and their mentors thought that their hour of interaction beyond regular instruction was helpful and valuable.

Thirteen students completed the program successfully. They report that they use braille to label, write phone numbers and personal notes, play games, and read books. OOD awarded the grant to NFBO again for 2019. Six mentors have asked to participate again, and six new ones will join the challenge.

# BRAILLE CHATS—ANOTHER WAY TO SHARPEN YOUR SKILLS

If you are interested in continuing to work with braille, consider joining Susan Fisher, a Hadley Learning Expert, each Tuesday from 3:30 to 4:45 Central time for her “braille chats.” Participants discuss tips and tricks and share information about new products and discoveries. To join the discussion, call 712-432-5610 shortly before 3:30 and enter passcode 6658#. Contact Susan at [susan@hadley.edu](mailto:susan@hadley.edu) or 800-323-4238, extension 6658.



## WHITE CANES NOW COVERED BY MEDICAID

*By Larry Benders President & CEO, Cleveland Sight Center*

A rule proposed by the Ohio Department of Medicaid to provide coverage of white canes as durable medical equipment took effect in January, making Ohio the first state in the country to provide coverage for white canes!

The Medicaid rule 5160-10-30 includes coverage for ambulation aids under durable medical equipment, which covered canes, crutches, or walkers, but previously excluded coverage of white canes. Individuals should check with local providers on availability of Medicaid-eligible white canes.

Cleveland Sight Center and other Ohio sight centers had previously advocated for coverage of white canes in House Bill 587, sponsored by Representatives Marlene Anielski (R–Walton Hills) and Darrell Kick (R–Loudonville). The bill received a number of hearings in the Ohio House while Medicaid contemplated making the change adminis-

tratively. We thank Representatives Anielski and Kick for their leadership on this initiative as we take a step toward closing the gap in insurance coverage that exists for individuals with visual impairments.

Cleveland Sight Center has been a leader throughout this process, providing key information and proponent testimony to legislators and administrators through meetings, hearings, and visits to the Ohio Statehouse in Columbus over the last two years.

Thank you for your continued support of Cleveland Sight Center.



# STABLE: A LIFE PLANNING TOOL

*By Carol Akers*

Too good to be true; there must be a catch—that is what I kept telling myself each time I heard a presentation about the ABLE Act of 2014, which created special savings accounts for people with disabilities and their families. In Ohio, these are known as STABLE (State Treasurer’s Achieving Better Living Experiences) accounts. I attended three different presentations for three different organizations thinking I would figure out what the secret was and why it didn’t fit our lives.

When I opened my son’s account in January of 2018 with the minimum deposit of \$50, I did it more out of curiosity than need. I am the parent and guardian of an adult disabled child; his needs are ever changing, and I wasn’t quite sure how the account would benefit him, but I could see some possibilities. Little did I know that life would suddenly change in just a few months, when Dustin’s father, my ex-husband, died unexpectedly in June 2018. The STABLE account already existed and was the perfect place to have State Farm deposit funds from the small life insurance policy so Medicaid would not count it as an asset, which would put him over the eligibility limit. That money gave us the ability to pay the legal expenses for opening a Special Needs Trust, also a qualified disability expense (QDE), since there was potential for other funds from his father.

Later, I requested the reloadable debit card so I could load funds to purchase things for Dustin: new bedroom furniture, a new transport wheelchair, batteries for his favorite musical items, his lunch with staff—all QDE because it makes a difference in the

quality of his life. Finally, we can move beyond the Bank of Mom! The account helps increase health, independence, and quality of life. Dustin is very social, loves to meet new people, experience new things, go to fairs, festivals, concerts, visit friends and family, swim, eat out, and ride in the car. There are many great opportunities to use the account to accomplish these things.

A few fast facts about STABLE:

- It is not just for Medicaid recipients!
- The Ohio Treasurer’s office has given over 900 presentations in the last two and a half years to educate families and individuals about this program. Ohio was the first state to introduce the ABLE program, and enrollment is open to eligible persons from any state, not only Ohio residents.
- If your disability began before the age of 26, even if you were not diagnosed until later, you may be eligible for an account. There is a limit of one account per person.
- Anyone can contribute funds to your account to a maximum of \$15,000 per year (this may increase as the amounts change for the 529 College Savings Plan).
- If you are working, you may contribute an additional \$12,140 per year for a total of \$27,140 per year, up to \$468,000 lifetime max.

- Persons in Ohio (such as parents, other relatives, or friends of account holders) qualify for up to \$4,000 state tax credit for each STABLE account they contribute to.
- It takes \$50 minimum to open and there is a \$2.50 monthly fee to administer the account.
- Use your account to place excess funds in if resources need to remain under \$2,000 to protect government benefits.
- There are multiple ways to save or to invest your money.
- Qualified disability expenses are very broad, from rent, home expenses, transportation, and leisure activities to technology, medical expenses, copays, burial expenses, and so much more.
- On the other hand, you cannot spend on alcohol, tobacco, gambling, porn, or gifting to others; the money is only for the account holder's needs.
- The debit card may be loaded with up to \$15,000 (the maximum yearly account limit). It is still considered as part of the account, as with any debit card, not a resource.
- At the time of the account holder's death, after all burial expenses and liabilities are paid, Medicaid may ask for repayment, so the key is to use the money and enjoy life.

I am passionate about the STABLE program. I share the information whenever I meet families with special needs, whether disabled children or adults. This program is an exciting change for the disability world, a way to save money and increase independence while improving daily life.

For more information or to open your own account, go to [www.stableaccount.com](http://www.stableaccount.com).



## US IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MARRAKESH TREATY

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) issued a statement on February 8, 2019, from its headquarters in Geneva announcing that the United States has become the 50th member of the Marrakesh Treaty. Because the European Union comprises 28 states, the number of countries now adhering to the treaty comes to 78.

The official notification ratification document from Washington signed by Donald

Trump has been accepted by WIPO Director Francis Gurry, with Mark Cassayre, the Chargé d'Affaires for the American mission to the United Nations' installation in Geneva.

And with that, as many as 550,000 accessible texts have become immediately available to visually impaired people in the countries that have signed the treaty.

The treaty is designed to facilitate access to published works for people who are blind,



visually impaired, or otherwise print disabled by creating a universal copyright exception that will allow authorized parties to “travel” accessible formats to appropriate consumers.

“The Marrakesh Treaty is WIPO’s fastest-growing treaty and we hope it becomes a universal one soon, so visually impaired people in every corner of the globe can more easily benefit from learning and culture no matter where it is created,” said Mr. Gurry. “The U.S. already houses the world’s largest repository of accessible English-language material, representing a major increase in the global resource base for visually impaired people living in countries that have joined the Marrakesh Treaty.”

“I’m proud of American leadership and the USPTO’s efforts in the negotiation of the Marrakesh Treaty, and the opportunities that our ratification creates for the blind and visually impaired community in the United States and around the world,” said Andrei Iancu, Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). “This treaty establishes an important mechanism to both protect intellectual property rights and ex-

pand access to information and resources.”

“The United States’ formal membership in the Marrakesh Treaty marks a major achievement for our country and a significant positive step forward for the millions of persons who are blind and visually impaired throughout the world,” said Karyn A. Temple, Acting Register of Copyrights and Director of the United States Copyright Office. “The United States will now join our fellow nations in promoting greater accessibility to print materials around the globe.” They include versions in braille, full audio, and Daisy.

“We pause to celebrate this moment as the United States formally joins the Marrakesh Treaty,” said Maria A. Pallante, President and CEO of the Association of American Publishers. “Having worked so tirelessly with so many talented partners to realize a better legal framework for accessible formats, publishers now salute the many readers throughout the world who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise living with print disabilities. Congratulations, and happy reading!”

Information about the Marrakesh Treaty is available at the WIPO site ([www.wipo.int](http://www.wipo.int)).

## A TRANSPORTATION LETTER TO GOV. DEWINE

MOVE Ohio!, Mobility & Opportunity for a Vibrant Economy in Ohio, presented the following letter to Ohio’s new governor on February 14, 2019. ACBO is among the 36 signatories. Please share it with your local legislators and with other groups who may have an interest in transportation.

Dear Governor,  
Mobility and Opportunity for a Vibrant Economy in Ohio, or MOVE Ohio, applauds the

formation of your Blue-Ribbon committee on funding transportation infrastructure into the future. While your priorities must include funding to maintain safe roads and bridges, Ohio needs more.

Ohio must prioritize funding to support the safe, affordable mobility of all who call our state home, especially but not limited to people with disabilities, pedestrians, riders of public transit, and bicyclists as a

complete transportation network.

MOVE Ohio is a diverse coalition from urban, suburban and rural Ohio. We represent the interests of everyday transportation users, older adults, people with disabilities, environmental groups, historically disadvantaged communities, anti-poverty advocates, bicyclists and active transportation advocates, organized labor, local transit coalitions, small businesses and faith leaders. Our vision is an Ohio transportation network that moves people and goods, not just cars and trucks. It must be a complete network of affordable, accessible, and environmentally-friendly transportation options, including public transit, passenger and freight rail, and walkable, bikeable streets.

To address the concerns we share with you below, MOVE Ohio asks for the following in the next ODOT budget request:

Dedicate \$150 million per year for public transit, safe pedestrian, ADA and bicycling infrastructure via the creation of a Transportation Choice Fund. ODOT's own 2015 Statewide Transit Needs Study recommended \$120 million to stabilize the ability of Ohio's transit systems to address both service and capital improvements. An additional \$30 million for safe pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure is also included in this figure.

We believe this can be done by dedicating a greater share of flexible Federal transportation dollars, and adopting a 80/20 highway-transit split, like the federal government, for any increase in the Motor Vehicle Fuels Tax (meaning 20% of any gas tax increase should go towards public transit, pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure). These transportation investments on or along public rights-of-way should be recognized in statute for the highway purposes they serve (safety and

decongestion). We also support an array of potential funding options that could be dedicated into a transportation choice fund, some of which we included in an addendum to this letter.

We urge you to address Ohio's decades-long under-investment in public transportation and safe pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure. These under-investments leave many of our citizens, businesses, and communities at a competitive disadvantage, unsafe, and disconnected from opportunity. Too many people struggle to get to work, schools and training centers, the doctor's office, a grocery store and retail centers, among other things. Cars are expensive to own, insure and operate. For many low-income families they can be prohibitively expensive. For older adults and people with disabilities, driving may not be an option at all.

Despite being the seventh most populous state, Ohio ranks 45<sup>th</sup> in the nation for our state's support of public transit. Ohio can and should do better. A little more than one percent of Ohio's biennial multi-billion dollar transportation budgets goes toward public transit, with nearly all of our transportation dollars going toward highways. As a result, transit systems large and small are forced to raise fares for riders, and continually cut vital services to work, school, and access to everyday life.

Ohio needs a 21st century transportation system. Expanded transportation options creates a more competitive Ohio economy that enables the expansion of existing businesses and strengthens our pitches to attract private investment. A full array of local and intercity transportation options better connects Ohio's businesses with a larger potential workforce and adds to Ohio's toolbox for attracting new business.

Young people and families want bikeable, walkable communities with better access to public transit. Small businesses looking to attract young workers are locating where these young people want to live and work. Safe, convenient and reliable alternative transportation options give low-income workers low-cost and accessible commuting options to reach a variety of jobs and training opportunities. Better, affordable public transit enables low-income families to spend or save money and forced less to choose between fixing an unreliable car, putting food on the table, paying for health care or rent.

Expanding investments in transit, paratransit, and safety infrastructure for all, or 'Complete Streets' supports a vital transportation workforce in good-quality jobs. Increasing the array of alternative transportation options will reduce our vulnerability to oil price spikes and the enormous amount of money we spend each year on gasoline.

These investments also connect more Ohioans not only to more jobs, but to education and health care, regardless where they live. They also improve health:

Investing in alternative forms of transportation helps address critical childhood and adult health issues like obesity and related health issues as well as their associated health care costs by promoting more active forms of transportation like walking and biking rather than passively driving everywhere.

Better public transit will promote good health, personal growth, longevity and expanded productivity for older adults and people with disabilities. Quality public transportation promotes community engagement and connectedness for everyone, and pre-

vents social isolation while reducing the risk of abuse and neglect so we can all thrive.

Per mile, taking public transportation is ten times safer than driving a car. As your administration strives to address Ohio's opioid epidemic, investments in transit and active transportation help provide access to addiction services, often an obstacle to treatment and recovery.

We the undersigned of MOVE Ohio, wish to be your active and engaged partners on behalf of Ohioans who use and depend on our transportation systems and in determining solutions to ensure they are robust, complete, forward-looking and safe systems. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter. We look forward to working with you during the budget process.



## **BLIND PARENTS CHAT GROUP**

Would you be interested in chatting with other blind or visually impaired parents? If you have been blind all of your life or lost all or some vision recently, are expecting your first child, have preschoolers, children in school or grandchildren, or children with disabilities, we would welcome you. Sharon Howerton is a retired instructor from the Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired (formerly Hadley School for the Blind) who has hosted a parents group for several years. Sharon is totally blind, a mother of two adult sons who are now married, and grandma to a blended family of five grandchildren. Please email Sharon at [shrnhow@gmail.com](mailto:shrnhow@gmail.com) to give her some ideas of your concerns, children, etc. We meet by phone on Wednesdays at 1 p.m. Central. Sharon will send you information about joining the calls when you contact her.



American Council of the Blind of Ohio  
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FREE MATTER  
FOR THE BLIND



## ACB-OHIO DATEBOOK

### MARCH 27

BRaille MATTERS  
NATIONAL BRaille PRESS LUNCHEON  
OOD OFFICE, COLUMBUS

### APRIL 6

ACBO BOARD MEETING

### MAY 12

AT-LARGE MEMBER PHONE CALL

### MAY 15

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

### JUNE 9

AT-LARGE MEMBER PHONE CALL

### JULY 5-12

ACB CONFERENCE & CONVENTION  
ROCHESTER, NY  
ACBCONVENTION.ORG

### AUGUST 2-4

SUMMER SPORTS RETREAT

### NOVEMBER 15-17

ACBO / ACBI CONFERENCE  
CROWNE PLAZA COLUMBUS NORTH

