



OHIO CONNECTION

American Council of the Blind of Ohio

LEGISLATIVE SEMINAR 2019

By Molly Marcinick

In February, Vicky Prahin, Karen Spry, Katie Frederick, Jill Noble, and I traveled to Washington, D.C., to represent Ohio at the Legislative Seminar. We visited our state senators' offices and met with staffers of all 16 representatives. In most offices we met with someone who was working on one or more of the imperatives we were advocating, meaning that they already had information about the issues.

The first topic was the Durable Medical Equipment Legislative Imperative. Technological advances have brought about a myriad of new medical equipment that can be used independently at home. People with diabetes now have access to several medical devices that can both read their sugar levels and deliver needed insulin, but many remain inaccessible for blind and visually impaired users. We discussed the need for Congress to develop legislation that requires manufacturers to make durable medical equipment accessible right out of the box.

The second imperative we presented was Secure Independence for Seniors and Medicare Beneficiaries. In 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



Vicky Prahin, Molly Marcinick, Karen Spry, and Jill Noble outside of Rep. Robert Latta's office.

(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 lenses to aid vision or provide magnification of images for impaired vision" are excluded from Medicare coverage. ACB believes this extremely restrictive reading of the eyeglass exclusion has resulted in the denial of vital assistive devices for seniors and other Medicare beneficiaries. We urged Congress to re-introduce the Medicare Demonstration on Coverage of Low Vision Devices Act, legislation that would evaluate through a five-

year national demonstration project, administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, the fiscal impact of a permanent change to the Social Security Act. This legislation would allow reimbursement for certain low-vision devices that are the most essential to daily independent living.

The third imperative we presented was the AV START Act. The auto industry continues to develop and test autonomous vehicles (AV) which will likely provide significant opportunities to the blind community as sight will not be required to drive. Large companies such as General Motors are developing their own lines of autonomous vehicles which require no direction from a driver and can make decisions on their own. We urged the House of Representatives and the Senate to reintroduce the AV



Katie Frederick, Vicky Prahin, Karen Spry, and Peace visiting Senator Sherrod Brown's office.

START Act in the 116th Congress. This would create a framework for a federal role in ensuring safety when using autonomous vehicles. The act would also preempt state laws that govern autonomous vehicles, enabling the government to set federal policies for consistency throughout the United States. The law would also dictate conditions under which the vehicle could be introduced into interstate commerce.

I believe the seminar and our time on the Hill was successful. We received great feedback from the staffers with whom we met.



Elvis, Katie, and Kenzo outside of a Tennessee congressional office.

2019 CONFERENCE & CONVENTION: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

By Brant Adams

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. Here is some of what the Program Committee has planned so far.

Our theme this year is “Breaking Down Barriers,” and we are pleased to have Linda Leuderman of Women at Risk to present the keynote address Friday evening. We are working on several breakout sessions throughout the weekend. The November convention begins the season in which many people pick their health plan for the upcoming year. Attend the Saturday workshop and learn about 2020 healthcare options. Other breakout sessions include restaurant and grocery delivery services, vision enhancement glasses, and possibly a session on essential oils.

In this newsletter, you will find information and a request for help with the session we



have planned on cutting the cord and the accessible devices used to bid farewell to cable. Please consider this request and see if you can help, or just come and learn.

If you have program ideas to share, please reach out to me or Katie Frederick, the Program Committee co-chairs. There is still time. Look for more details in the fall 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 to get the special room rate. Join us in Columbus!

DITCH CABLE AND STILL ENJOY THE PROGRAMS YOU LOVE

By Katie Frederick

Do you wish there was a way to enjoy your favorite programs without paying a high cable bill every month? Are you interested in learning which streaming services are the most accessible? If you answered yes to either question, the Convention Planning Committee invites you to join us



for an informative session on how to cut the cord while still enjoying the programs you love. There is a variety of options to choose from, including Amazon Fire TV, Apple TV, YouTube TV, and various smart TV's with out-of-the-box accessibility features. Find out if getting rid of cable

may be an option and which services and hardware would best meet your needs.

For the workshop to be as successful as possible, we need your help. We invite anyone who has any of the above-listed TV services to submit a two-minute sample demonstration of the product. Once the audio sample is reviewed, you will be contacted concerning submitting a more detailed (approximately 10 minutes) product demonstration. The format of the session will be a recorded presentation followed by a question and answer period. If you would like to participate, submit your two-minute sample demo by August 31 to Katie Frederick, Convention Committee co-chair, via email katie-fred@gmail.com. The audio sample should address as many of the following as possible in preparation for the 10-minute recording:

- How accessible is the setup process and what problems, if any, did you encounter?
- Explain how to turn on voice guidance for the first time
- Setting up an antenna to watch TV
- How accessible are streaming services like Netflix, Hulu, etc. with the particular device you chose?
- Describe how to turn on audio description, when available
- Describe the menu structure and how to access and navigate them
- List the pros and cons of the device
- Describe how to search for a program

We look forward to receiving your two-minute demo samples and hope you find the workshop useful if you're considering cutting the cord.

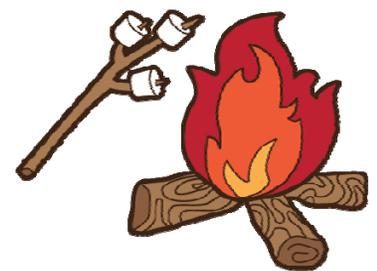
JOIN THE FUN & SUN AT THE ACBO SUMMER SPORTS RETREAT

By Jenna McCartney

This year, the Summer Sports Retreat will be held August 2 through 4. As usual, it will be held in Hockingport, Ohio. The retreat has many fun activities for all kinds of interests. If you enjoy being on the water, you can go boating, swimming, and jet skiing. If you enjoy games, you can play board or card games with friends. If you are a night owl, have fun around the campfire.

If you have camping supplies, please bring them as tent camping is most common for participants. Limited, first-come, first-served trailer space is available if tents are not your thing.

This is a great opportunity to make new friends and catch up with old ones. The cost for the weekend is \$85 for blind participants and \$25 for sighted guides. We will help with transportation if needed, and if it is unable to be arranged, your money will be refunded. It will be a fantastic weekend of friends and fun. We hope you will join us!





JOIN OUR AT-LARGE MEMBER CALLS

By Ann Pimley

We encourage chapter members and visitors to take part in our at-large member phone conferences—everyone is welcome! The Membership Committee started these phone conference calls to:

- Help at-large members feel more a part of ACBO
- Give them an opportunity to be more involved in the organization
- Meet new people
- Learn more from other members and speakers

What are at-large members? They are members who join ACBO but not a local chapter. The lack of transportation and/or the distance one may have to travel to attend a chapter meeting is the main reason many of these members choose not to join a chapter.

Our first phone conference was in June of 2018. We discussed having regular meetings during the year and possible topics at-large members wanted to discuss. We have decided to meet on the second Sunday of every month (except July) at 7:30 p.m.

We have had various speakers on such topics as the 2018 state and national conventions, accessible pill bottles, and video description. In May, Peter Berg from the Great Lakes ADA Center talked about all the free services the center provides, for example answering your questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act and the 1973 Rehabilitation Act.

The ADA Centers also provide free webinars on topics of interest to people with disabilities. To learn more about the ADA Centers, send an email to adata@adagreatlakes.org or visit www.adagreatlakes.com. The Center's toll-free technical assistance number is 800-949-4232 and 877-232-2342 is the Center's webinar toll-free number.

Our at-large conferences are not just about listening to speakers, but an opportunity for all members to add their perspectives on different issues. We hope to make these phone conferences like attending a chapter meeting—sometimes listening to a speaker and other times discussing different topics.

Our next phone conference will be Sunday, June 9 at 7:30 p.m. We will not hold a meeting in July. The August call will be Sunday, August 11 at 7:30 p.m.; members will talk about their experiences at this year's ACB National Convention.

Our conference phone number is 218-339-0402. Use passcode 2226446# (make sure to use the # sign at the end of the password). If you have any questions or suggestions, contact Ann Pimley or Vicky Prahin.

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MEET SCHOLARSHIP WINNER ELIZABETH MCCRORY

I'm Elizabeth McCrory, a 45-year-old, legally blind mother of two daughters. Three years ago I started my long-sought-after college career at Cuyahoga Community College. In May I graduated cum laude with an associate's degree in applied business management and a concentration in human resource management.

During my college career I was a two-time recipient of ACB-Ohio's Max Edelman Scholarship. I had the opportunity to attend two state conventions as well as many activities at the Cleveland Sight Center and with the Cleveland chapter. Now that I have graduated, I am focused on finding employment within the business sector.

I am very honored to have been chosen for the scholarships and membership into ACB-Ohio. My newfound family and friends of ACB-Ohio and the financial support was invaluable throughout this journey. I graciously thank everybody who has



been involved in my college career. I couldn't have accomplished it without you!

ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIPS—APPLY NOW!



Every year the ACB-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 if you are a blind or visually impaired undergraduate;
- \$2,500 if you are a blind or visually impaired graduate student; or
- \$2,000 if you are blind or visually impaired or studying a blindness-related field.

To get qualification information and apply, go to www.acbohio.org or call 614-261-3561. **Application deadline is August 1.**

DONATING TO ACB-OHIO IS EASY

By Brant Adams

Donating through the ACBO website is an almost effortless way to make a donation, either once or on a regular basis. Follow these steps if you use a screen reader and Windows.

Go to <https://www.acbohio.org>. Press 'b' to go to the "Donate Now with PayPal - The safer, easier way to pay online!" button. Press Enter to activate that button. This should take you to PayPal; you will end up on an edit field where you can put an amount to donate. If not, press 'e' to move to the edit field. You may need to press enter to allow your screen reader to edit that field.

Enter your donation amount. Press tab, and you will land on a check box. Press the space bar to check that box. Now you will make a monthly donation. Next, press tab once to donate with your PayPal account. If you do not have a PayPal account, you can create one here. Then, log in to PayPal and review the following page to make sure your payment is correct. You can press 'b' once to select the account to donate from or 'b' twice to get to the "Donate Monthly" button. Please use shift 'x' to go to a check box where you can send your email address so that we can thank you. Then press tab twice to get back to the button.

That's it. Now you will donate without having to think about it.

If you need to stop the automatic payments for some reason, here is how: Log in to your PayPal account. Find and activate the settings link. Then, find and activate the "Manage Automatic Payments" link. Find the automatic payment that you want to cancel; it will be a tab. Expand that tab and there will be a link to let you cancel that payment. A dialog box will pop up to confirm; activate the Cancel link, and you are done.

We have heard from some people who have donated through Facebook. Please do not do that; we have never received anything from Facebook and have no idea where that money has gone.



**ACBO Community Shares
Campaign Codes**
State of Ohio 19003
City of Columbus 60240
Franklin County 60240
Ohio State University 60240
Columbus State 1061

NEWSREEL COOKBOOK

*By Irwin Hott,
Newsreel Editor*



The latest cookbook from Newsreel Magazine, *Cooking for 60 Years*, is now available in regular print, large print, and braille. (Audio editions will follow.) With recipes ranging from breakfast dishes to desserts, the cookbook features over 100 tasty recipes contributed by Newsreel friends and subscribers.

The cost is \$20. Large print and braille copies will ship Free Matter for the Blind unless otherwise requested. For other formats, any shipping charges will be added to the cost of the cookbook. For more information or to order, call us at 614-469-0700 or send an e-mail to info@newsreelmag.org

Enjoy!



ANNOUNCING OSU'S BUCKEYE BRAILLE SCHOLARSHIP

The Buckeye Braille Scholarship and Support Fund's goal is to promote the use of braille on campus. The fund provides scholarships to students with disabilities. Expenditures may be used for tuition, housing, textbooks or other educational expenses, or to purchase assistive technology devices.

The annual scholarship is offered through the Office of Student Life Disability Services. It is posted on the office website (slds.osu.edu) as one of several scholarships. Applicants must be Ohio State students who are registered with the Office of Student Life Disability Services; candidates will fill out an application form and write an essay. It will become available for the academic year 2020-21 and a call for applications will go out at the beginning of 2020.



VA SERVICES FOR BLIND & LOW VISION VETERANS

By Natalie Duarte de Escalante

The Veterans Administration provides services to veterans who are blind and visually impaired through its VIST (Visually Impaired Services Team) program. The purpose of the program is to improve the veterans' quality of life through case management, optometry and low vision eye exams, referrals to blind rehabilitation centers and community resources, education, and adaptive equipment to assist the veteran in adjusting to vision loss.

Who qualifies for the VIST program? Any veteran who is enrolled in VA health care and has vision loss that is impacting his or her ability to perform daily living skills such as cooking, grooming, eating, identification of money and cards, and using the telephone can participate.

For veterans who are legally blind (this definition is determined by an eye doctor), all services, equipment, and training at the Blind Rehabilitation Center at Cleveland's VA are entirely FREE. If a veteran is not legally blind but is having difficulty with daily tasks due to vision loss, please see the VIST Coordinator in your area to learn about available services.

The VA has 13 Blind Rehabilitation Centers within the United States. For veterans who qualify, transportation to and from the center is provided, as well as room, board, and training. The average stay is three to four weeks, but so much is

learned during that time that 95 percent of the veterans I work with ask to return for a second, more advanced program such as using a computer or smartphone.

As the VIST Coordinator at the Chillicothe VA Medical Center, I hold two support groups—one in Chillicothe and one in Lancaster. I also send out a monthly newsletter containing information about the VA and vision loss.

I am proud to serve our veterans at the VA here in Chillicothe, where I have been the VIST Coordinator since 2017. Before then, I worked at the VA's Blind Rehab Center in Long Beach, California as a living skills instructor and low vision therapist. I have worked in the field of blindness for almost 20 years.

If you would like to learn more about VIST services available in your area, please feel free to call your local VA or contact me at 740-773-1141, extension 7855.



TRANSIT UPDATES FROM THE GREATER OHIO POLICY CENTER

TRANSIT GETS A BOOST IN FINAL TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

The Ohio General Assembly passed the state transportation budget after reaching agreement on record funding for public transportation and an increase in both the state motor fuel and diesel taxes. Lawmakers approved:

- \$70 million per year over the next two years for public transit funding
- An increase in the state motor fuel tax of 10.5 cents per gallon to a total of 38.5 cents/gallon (effective July 1, 2019)
- An increase in the state diesel fuel tax of 19 cents per gallon to a total of 47 cents/gallon (effective July 1, 2019)
- New vehicle registration fees for owners of electric and hybrid vehicles of an additional \$200 and \$100, respectively. (effective January 1, 2020)

The new funding approved for public transit represents the largest investment on the part of the state in at least a generation. Previously, “flex” funding from the FHWA contributed the largest share of transit funding in Ohio. An investment of \$70 million as approved by lawmakers nearly doubles the total amount of money approved in 2017 for transit, and all funding for transit will now come entirely from the state general revenue fund.

Because the transit funding was shifted to the general fund, the appropriation will need to be approved as part of the larger state operating budget bill later in the year. Transit advocates will need to continue to press their lawmakers to support this funding, which will help to make significant progress in innovating Ohio’s transit systems to meet 21st century needs and demand.

The new registration fees on electric and hybrid vehicles and the increase in the gas tax are estimated to generate \$1.75 billion in new revenue for road and bridge projects, split 55-45 between the state and local governments.

TRANSIT ISN’T JUST FOR BIG CITIES!

Between working, running errands, and reaching essential services, Ohioans are constantly moving from place to place. Public transit helps fill the gap for no-car and one-car households to access everyday needs, across both urban and rural geographies. Last fall, cities in Southwest Ohio took a critical step in more effectively filling that gap with a new service route focused on transporting workers to jobs in several cities.

The WorkLink route is an initiative among the cities of Middletown and Monroe, Atrium Medical Center, and the Butler County Regional Transit authority. The route runs up and down the I-75 Corridor and connects to routes in the Greater Dayton RTA and Metro/Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority systems. This route is the

first to connect workers in Dayton and Cincinnati to jobs in Monroe and Middletown. Buses run six days per week and cover all three work shifts.

Jennifer Patterson, of the Monroe City Manager's office, says the new bus service is "user friendly for employees and an effective recruitment tool for employers. Providing better access to jobs is an important part of creating a more connected region." The WorkLink route reflects new patterns of job concentration by expanding outside of Central Business District. The service fulfills the needs of urban and exurban residents alike and provides employees more regional mobility.

Public transportation is a lifeline to connect people to the places they need to reach. Atrium Medical Center, a major employer located in Middletown, has a stop located along the route, broadening access for both employees and patients. Michael Uhl, of Premier Health Network, comments "this project is an exciting new opportunity to continue to evolve public transportation."

In phase two of the program, city partners will be working with Uber and DriveOhio to bridge the first mile/last mile gap for potential employees getting to work, according to Doug Adkins, Middletown City Manager.

It is the vision of the Reinvention Cities Network that Ohio's smaller communities have sufficient funding for appropriately scaled public transportation systems that connect residents to jobs and critical services. Greater Ohio Policy Center has created a blueprint for generating millions of dollars in new investment in our state's public transportation systems. GOPC's recommendations could generate \$123 million to support public transit and innovations like the BCRTA WorkLink. Learn more about GOPC's Fueling Innovation plan here: <https://www.greaterohio.org/fueling-innovation>.

For more information on the BCRTA WorkLink route:
<http://butlercountyrta.com/worklink>.

Michelle Spillan, Editor / Newsletter Committee: Irwin Hott, Jenna McCartney, Jill Noble, Vicky Prahin

As always, thanks to the contributors: **Brant Adams, Natalie Duarte de Escalante, Katie Frederick, Molly Marcinick, Jenna McCartney, Beth McCrory, Ann Pimley, and Vicky Prahin**. 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, and include your name, address, and phone number. E-mail items to acbo.newsletter@gmail.com or send them to the address below by **August 15**.

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FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND



ACB-OHIO DATEBOOK



JUNE 28–29

SCIENCE ACCESSABILITY CONFERENCE
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, COLUMBUS

JULY 5–12

ACB CONFERENCE & CONVENTION
ROCHESTER, NY
ACBCONVENTION.ORG

JULY 9

OLBPD FAMILY FUN & LEARNING DAY
CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

JULY 20

ACBO BOARD MEETING
CONFERENCE CALL 9 AM

JULY 26

29TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADA

AUGUST 1

ACBO SCHOLARSHIP
APPLICATION DEADLINE

AUGUST 2–4

ACBO SUMMER SPORTS RETREAT
HOCKINGPORT, OH

AUGUST 11 & SEPTEMBER 8

AT-LARGE MEMBER PHONE CALL

SEPTEMBER 15

ACBO AWARD
NOMINATION DEADLINE

NOVEMBER 15–17

ACBO / ACBI CONFERENCE
CROWNE PLAZA NORTH, COLUMBUS, OH