



OHIO CONNECTION

American Council of the Blind of Ohio

2021 CONFERENCE ROUNDUP

By Katie Frederick

Nearly 60 individuals from Indiana and Ohio gathered over Halloween weekend to “Stir the Cauldron of Knowledge” at the 2021 conference and convention. Staff members at the host hotel, the Crowne Plaza Columbus North – Worthington, were great to work with and met conference needs throughout the weekend.

The event began Friday afternoon with the opening of the exhibit hall and registration. Attendees, many of whom had not gathered for two years, greeted one another, picked up meal tickets and programs, then browsed exhibits. ACB-Ohio offered something new this year—a hospitality suite providing snacks and socialization opportunities. Conference sponsor Democracy Live presented a Friday afternoon workshop explaining what their company offers and how individuals can request accessible ballots.

Friday evening, Ron Brooks, ACB member and founder of Accessible Avenue LLC, gave the keynote address. Ron shared his personal story with the audience and encouraged us to find our passion and keep pushing and challenging ourselves. Following Ron’s humorous and inspiring talk, teams challenged each other playing trivia.

Saturday morning kicked off with the annual business meeting. Minutes and the treasurer’s report from 2020 were read and approved, then the 2022 officers and board were elected. Brant Adams will serve his first term as first vice president; nominated from the floor, Alex Densmore, will serve his first term as secretary; and board members



Lori and Kenny Woodall



**Banquet speaker
Kathy Zolo**

Melody Banks, Molly Marcinick, and Karen Spry were elected to serve additional terms on the board. Rachel Densmore, who was appointed to fill the remainder of a one-year term, will now serve her first two-year term. Congratulations to newly elected board members Marilyn Allison, Kathy Gerhardt, and Malaina VanderWal. Thank you, Ann Pimley and Kelsey Nicolay, for your service on the board. The business meeting concluded with chapters sharing activities they have participated in over the past year. Most chapters continue to meet via Zoom, but a few have had some in-person meetings. While we all miss getting together,

meeting over Zoom allows chapters to bring in speakers from around the country and the world.

Following the business meeting, breakout sessions began. Saturday morning featured a transportation workshop facilitated by Ron Brooks, and Andy Burstein shared information about the company and services of Accessible Pharmacy. During lunch, Richard Rueda, the digital content manager for CareerConnect, an initiative of the ConnectCenter at the American Printing House for the Blind (APH), described the sites and services of the ConnectCenter, CareerConnect (for those seeking employment), FamilyConnect (a resource for parents and families), the Information and Referral line (I&R), and VisionAware (focusing on the needs of adults adjusting to blindness or vision loss). Thank you to the APH ConnectCenter for sponsoring this year's conference. A lunch tradition many attendees look forward to is the awarding of ACB-Ohio scholarships, and this year was no exception. See page 4 in this issue for a profile of our winner, Ethan Smith, and congratulations, Ethan!

Saturday afternoon featured workshops including updates from an eyecare professional; an explanation of the ICanConnect program; a call to action and for those who use equip-



Brant and Tonya Adams

ment to manage diabetes; and information about alternative accessible cell phone options for those who don't use an iPhone. Attendees took advantage of the last call to visit the exhibit hall between the Saturday afternoon sessions.



ACB-Ohio presented two awards during the banquet Saturday evening. Read more about our award winners on page 5. Kathy Zolo gave this year's banquet address, speaking about her experiences receiving cochlear implants. She described the joy of hearing the birds sing and hearing her grandchildren laugh. Saturday activities concluded with the annual auction, which raised over \$3,000.

A nondenominational service, a memorial service remembering members who passed away in 2021, and an ACB national advocacy update concluded the conference. Thank you, attendees, exhibitors, presenters, sponsors, and volunteers for gathering and helping us "Stir the Cauldron of Knowledge." A special thank you to Cecily Nipper, who coordinated ACB Media streamers and Zoom hosts for us at the national level. Be sure to read upcoming editions of the *Ohio Connection*; planning for the 2022 conference is just around the corner.



2021 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

By Brant Adams

Each year ACB-Ohio offers several scholarships. If you are, or know, a high school or college student interested in applying, please look for the applications next spring.



**Melody Banks, Claire, scholarship winner
Ethan Smith, and Karen Spry**

This year we are proud to present the combined

Max Edelman and David Newmeyer scholarships to Ethan Smith, a sophomore at Kent State University majoring in emerging media technology. He is working his way through college doing several jobs involving accessibility of computers and media.

Ethan lost the majority of his vision when he was 16, yet, in a short time, he has managed to figure out how to live without vision and become remarkably successful. He changed his career objectives to digital accessibility, thus creating success for himself and helping many others with disabilities. In our time with him during the convention, we got to know an outgoing, helpful, and pleasant young man. We hope to see much more of him in the future. The technology committee appreciates his help with the sound system at the convention and is recruiting him.

As many of you will remember, ACBO endowed scholarships at three Ohio universities. You read about the recipient of this year's scholarship at Wright State University, Matthew Sanders, in the summer issue of this newsletter. The University of Toledo presented this year's scholarship to Samuel Chipps, a senior exercise science major. His concentration is human performance and fitness promotion. Samuel says, "I chose this program because of how much physical culture has positively impacted my life growing up. Sports and physical activity have provided me with several physical, emotional, psychological, social, and economic benefits that I wish to pass on to others as they chase their individual life goals." Samuel gives a lot of credit

to his professors, people who have inspired him and encouraged him to push forward. He concluded his thank you with this paragraph:

Without this scholarship, finishing my education at the University of Toledo would be problematic. My personal and family income are not enough to cover my educational needs on a semester basis. Because of your generosity, I do not need to think about that problem and can focus solely on developing my professional and academic skills. I am honored to have received this scholarship and am forever grateful for it. ... Your faith in my abilities has provided me with the resolve to be and do better. I look forward to one day passing along the kindness you gave me to others within the University of Toledo community and beyond.

ACB-OHIO AWARDS FOR 2021

By Vicky Prahin

ACB-Ohio offers seven awards to recognize individuals and groups for their efforts to improve the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired. They frequently work in the background, unaware of the impact they are making on others.

This year we gave two awards, the Ambassador Award to Stori Dennis and the Community Service Award to the machine-lending folks at the State Library of Ohio.

Don Kalman, president of Friends 'n Focus, nominated Stori Dennis for the Ambassador Award. She initially called someone from the chapter for resources and joined that group, became a member, and has remained involved for several years. Always concerned about others, she is a believer in giving back to the community. Don says, "She is a kind and compassionate woman; she has bought needed items for others, organized fundraisers, and steered strangers to organizations that can help them. People have called her their angel!" The Medina community is proud to have her in their midst. Stori could not attend the convention, so Don received the plaque for her.

OLBPD works in partnership with the State Library of Ohio Talking Book



Shawn Thiel, Tracy Grimm from the State Library of Ohio Talking Book Program, Katie Frederick, Vicky Prahin

Program. The State Library of Ohio Talking Book Program acts as the machine-lending agency, providing equipment and accessories to eligible Ohioans. Equipment available includes digital talking book players, headphones, flash drive elbow adapters, pillow speakers, breath switches, and a specialized high-volume player and headphones for patrons with significant hearing loss. Tracy Grimm oversees the program, and she and her staff make sure that requests are filled as soon as possible. We presented the Community Service Award to the library for outstanding commitment to patrons of the Talking Book program.

If you know someone who deserves special recognition, contact our office at 614-261-3561 or review the descriptions of the awards at acbohio.org. We can't give awards without input from those who benefit!

ACBO Community Shares Campaign Codes

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



REMEMBERING MEMBERS WHO HAVE PASSED

By Vicky Prahin

ACB-Ohio, and all of us, lost seven people in 2021. Below is a brief memorial of each of them.

John Jarzyna was an at-large member. Malaina VanderWal writes this about John:

I first met John in 2012, I believe, when several of us from the Michigan Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired (MCBVI) chartered a bus to go to the ACB convention. John was an attorney by trade, but he was much more. He was kind and caring and was easy to talk to, which is probably why it did not take long to become fast friends with him. I found John supportive and most encouraging even when I was not sure about how I would do in a new role with our state affiliate. Throughout the years John and I worked on a variety of things, and he was willing to lend a helping hand wherever he was able! He enjoyed spending time with his family, going to church, and thoroughly enjoyed going to conventions for MCBVI, ACBO, and ACB because it was a time for him to see friends that he did not see often otherwise!

Linda Moranz of Homerville died February 7. She was originally from the Cleveland area and was a graduate of the University of Akron. She was a member of the Friends 'n Focus chapter of ACBO for several years. Linda was a teacher in Brunswick at Hickory Ridge Elementary School. Don Kalman said, "She loved nature and raising orchids. She was an avid horseback rider and volunteered for the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. She and her husband, Dennis, enjoyed walking in the parks with their Shelties despite her visual difficulties."

Terry Olandese served as president of the Greater Cincinnati Chapter for eight years, moving to the position of vice-president recently so that he could spend more time with his many other activities. He would have completed his second term as first vice-president of ACBO in December. He was also active in his local Lions Club and in a couple of bands. Terry enjoyed music, popcorn, and people.

Jim Oyer was a longtime member of the Columbus chapter. Jim loved performing in theatricals and appeared in local productions at such venues as the Columbus Civic Theater. Mary Hiland remembers Jim:

One of my favorite memories of Jim is joining him, along with Ray Harrison, at the bar at the Winter Sports Retreat at Punderson State Lodge. Jim and Ray always did a fine job of holding up the bar, with Jim cracking the jokes and Ray splitting his sides with laughter. Jim tried skiing once at Ski for Light International, but he found that the boots didn't fit him right, since he claimed he had feet that were too skinny. So, his main activity was socializing. Jim loved to quote lines from movies, especially when they enhanced his stories. Sometimes he had a hard time finishing his jokes because he was laughing so hard. I am sorry that there will be one empty barstool that used to provide a lot of fun.

Marcia Selig, a member of the Stark County chapter, died in June. She was born and raised in Canton; she worked as a secretary at Fairmont Elementary for over 35 years. She had a passion for taking photographs, sending cards to family and friends, scrapbooking, playing piano, hot air balloon rides, making molded chocolates with her mother for over 50 years, and traveling. One of her favorite sayings was, "To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world!"

Anna Sponsler, a member of the Cleveland chapter, was born in Oberland, Ohio. She lived in Bellaire and worked in food service.

Sue Thrans belonged to the Appleseed chapter. She was a quiet person, preferring the background. Sue is survived by her husband, Guy, also a member of the Appleseed chapter.

Jack Weaver joined the Columbus chapter in late spring of 2021, after listening to a couple of Columbus meetings and an ACBO board meeting. He was amazed at all the activities in which ACB takes part and decided to get involved. He was excited about listening to the national convention in July and perhaps participating in the state convention in October. Unfortunately, his condition worsened suddenly on June 21 and he died peacefully on June 25, secure in the presence of his daughters, Karen Spry and Vicky Prahin.

\$80 BUYS A BARGAIN: A LOOK AT STATE CONVENTION COSTS

By Ann & D A Pimley

Every year there is a lot of chatter regarding the cost of the state convention. Most discussions are about why it costs so much for a member to attend. Registration cost \$80 this year, and we are only at the convention for two nights! When you add transportation, lodging, the registration fee, and incidental costs like dinner for Friday night, each member could spend \$400 to \$500 to attend, depending on actual transportation costs.

You can reduce your expenses by sharing transportation and lodging with another ACBO member. This could cut \$150 off the cost and if you are a board member, ACBO will pay for your transportation and half of your room. Board members who share a room can further reduce their overall convention expenses. This benefit might even entice members to run for the board.

We thought that it would be beneficial to provide our members with a little insight into convention costs. We think that when you know what it really costs to put on these conventions, you will admit that an \$80 registration charge is a real bargain. Especially when you consider that your registration includes four meals—breakfast Saturday and Sunday, Saturday lunch, and the Saturday night banquet.

So, what are the costs? The two most prominent items are food and facilities. ACBO does not pay a flat fee for either item. Instead, we guarantee the hotel for X amount of food service and for Y number of guest rooms. These guarantees permit us to use the hotel banquet and meeting rooms at no additional charge. Because of COVID concerns, attendance was down this year. Thus, food and facility costs per attendee were higher than normal. Twenty-nine ACBO members attended in person, 11 remotely, and 17 from Indiana, for a total of 57 convention participants. ACBO paid approximately \$13,000 to the hotel (food, facilities, and the board's lodging). Dividing \$13,000 by 57 participants results in an expense of \$228 per person.

Then there are some nominal fees for streaming, using sound equipment, room and board for the scholarship winner(s), one night of lodging and transportation for the keynote speaker, and a meal for the banquet speaker. The overall convention cost is offset by donations, the registration fees, and Indiana's portion.

Keep in mind that the more people who attend, the lower costs will be for individuals and ACBO. Your registration fee pays a fraction of the overall convention costs, so you really do get a bargain when you attend an ACBO convention!



UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP CALLS

By Ann Pimley

Our monthly membership calls are always interesting, fun, and full of information. Brant Adams, Katie Frederick, and Shawn Thiel previewed the state convention on the September call. In October, Jenine Stanley told us about AIRA and the services they offer.

The calls take place on the second Sunday of the month at 7:30 pm and are finished by 9 p.m. The first calls of 2022 will take place January 9 and February 13. If you have topics that you would like explored, let us know and we will try and get a speaker to cover them.

To join us, use the link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6142613561>, which will launch Zoom if you have it installed on your computer or mobile device. Call in on your landline or cell phone using 646-558-8656 or 669-900-9128. Whether you use a computer or a phone, enter the meeting ID 614 261 3561. If calling in, you have plenty of time to enter the meeting ID followed by the pound sign. When asked for a participant ID, press pound again. If you join before the host starts the meeting, you will hear that the meeting has not yet started and hear music.

We hope you will join us and invite others who you think might be interested. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact Katie Frederick (katiefred@gmail.com or 419-306-3721) or Shawn Thiel (acbo.director@gmail.com or 614-261-3561).

MEDICAL DEVICE NONVISUAL ACCESSIBILITY ACT FOSTERS HEALTH AND INDEPENDENCE

On July 29th, Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL-09) introduced the Medical Device Nonvisual Accessibility Act (H.R. 4853) in the House of Representatives. This act aims to make home use medical equipment and devices accessible to blind and visually impaired Americans. The bill would amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to establish nonvisual accessibility standards for Class II and III devices with digital interfaces. The FDA will, in consultation with the US Access Board, set regulations and a final rule according to those standards. Current cosponsors of H.R. 4853 include: Reps. Barbara Lee (D-CA-13), Mark Pocan (D-WI-02), Deborah Ross (D-NC-02), and Gerald Connolly (D-VA-11). The bill currently has no companion in the Senate.

The majority of home-use medical devices and outpatient equipment utilize digital display interfaces that are inaccessible to blind and visually impaired users. Devices such as glucose monitors, blood pressure readers, and at-home chemotherapy treatments do not have nonvisual accessibility features, such as text to speech output, tactile markings, or audible tones. As a result, it is very difficult for blind and visually impaired individuals to use medical devices properly and safely, making it difficult for these individuals to manage their health independently. The passage of this bill would ensure that product manufacturers incorporate accessible design in the beginning stages of development.

CALL TO ACTION

We encourage all ACB members and friends to contact their representatives and urge them to cosponsor and support the Medical Device Nonvisual Accessibility Act (H.R. 4853). To find your representative's contact information, visit www.house.gov and search by zip code. You can also get connected to your member's office directly by calling the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121. When writing or calling your representative, please let them know that you are a constituent and urge them to support and cosponsor the Medical Device Nonvisual Accessibility Act (H.R. 4853). Be sure to share your personal story when dealing with inaccessible medical equipment and let them know what it would mean for you and all other people living with vision loss to have independent control over your health.

Please share your advocacy efforts with the ACB National Office by emailing advocacy@acb.org or by calling Swatha Nandhakumar, ACB's advocacy & outreach specialist, at 202-467-5081. Thank you and keep advocating!

PROPOSED OHIO HB 448 MANDATES COVERAGE FOR PRESCRIPTION DRUG READERS

Rep. Richard Brown (D-20th District) along with several cosponsors reintroduced HB 448, which proposes that health benefit plans shall provide coverage for prescription readers provided by pharmacies. It states that prior to selling a drug, both retail and mail order pharmacies shall provide notice that a prescription reader can be made available. If the person purchasing the drug requests a prescription reader the pharmacy will provide the reader for at least the duration of the prescription. "Prescription reader" is defined as a device that audibly conveys the information that is required by rule or law to be on a label affixed to the container of a drug. The information should include any cautions, drug interactions, contraindications and side effects that are also provided to sighted patients.

MCDONALDS TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE SELF-ORDER KIOSKS

Vispero, the global leader for assistive technology products for the blind and low vision community, has been selected by McDonald's to assist in providing customers with an accessible kiosk experience. Vispero's product, JAWS Kiosk, has been deployed to select McDonald's US company-owned restaurants, as well as newly deployed kiosks in US franchise locations.

Creating an accessible and usable kiosk experience for McDonald's customers required an understanding of McDonald's robust self-order kiosk interface and a plan for making the menu easily navigable and intuitive for blind customers.

"The selection of JAWS Kiosk as a solution for McDonald's is a game-changer for providing equal access in Quick Service Restaurants for blind

and low vision customers,” states Matt Ater, vice president of corporate business development and software at Vispero. “At Vispero, our goal is to innovate for customers with disabilities. Working with McDonald’s allows us to ensure our products are reaching people when they need it most.”

JAWS Kiosk will allow blind and low vision users the ability to interact with a self-order kiosk by inserting headphones into the headphone jack, located on the navigation pad, which will then navigate the kiosk screen, reading the content as they move through the application.

“McDonald’s prides itself on fostering an inclusive restaurant experience for all,” said Kelsey Hall, senior manager of global digital accessibility at McDonald’s. “This inclusive kiosk solution ensures blind and low vision customers can independently order their McDonald’s favorites for themselves, their families, and their friends.” McDonald’s is in the process of deploying this solution to corporate-owned stores and select franchise locations across the US.

PLANET FITNESS AND THE COALITION FOR INCLUSIVE FITNESS ANNOUNCE COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBLE EXERCISE EQUIPMENT

Planet Fitness, one of the largest and fastest-growing global franchisors and operators of fitness centers with more members than any other fitness brand, and the Paralyzed Veterans of America, National Council on Independent Living, and American Council of the Blind (collectively “Coalition for Inclusive Fitness” or the “Coalition”) announced a commitment to expand access to accessible exercise equipment.



“It is our mission to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment to anyone who comes through our doors,” said Chris Rondeau, Planet Fitness’ chief executive officer. “People with disabilities face significant barriers when attempting to access health and wellness activities, and it’s clear that health inequity is often due to a lack of access and opportunity. Our commitment is another way we are working to eliminate barriers and enhance



people's lives by providing a high-quality fitness experience for everyone.”

The Coalition is focused on working with global organizations to build inclusive health communities that provide people with disabilities equal access to, and opportunities for, healthy living. Planet Fitness is committed to providing inclusive equipment in all new stores and adding it to existing stores across the country as franchise owners replace current offerings, as inclusive commercial grade equipment becomes available for purchase and is approved by Planet Fitness for inclusion in its clubs.

This equipment will include:

- An inclusive dual-cable strength machine that allows a person to perform multiple exercises from a seated position, including from a wheelchair.
- A recumbent cardio machine where movement of the arms can move the legs, and vice-versa, and, in addition, the seat can be removed so it can be operated from a wheelchair.
- Multiple cardio machines, which, depending upon availability, can include: treadmills, elliptical devices, upright bikes and/or recumbent bikes.
- All new cardio machines will have inclusive features including raised tactile buttons and the ability to receive audible instructions and performance feedback through This will enable blind users to operate cardio machines independently.

Planet Fitness will also include the inclusive fitness symbol on all accessible equipment, share information about the rollout of accessible equipment on its website (as it becomes available in its clubs), and continue its practice of providing customer service regarding the use of accessible equipment.

“We applaud Planet Fitness for this historic commitment to the disability community,” said Richard Thesing, Coalition for Inclusive Fitness’ chief executive officer. “At the present time, there are no cardio machines that can be used by blind people and very few fitness centers have cardio or strength machines that can be used by people with mobility disabilities. This

marks a huge step forward towards providing individuals with disabilities with a truly inclusive fitness experience. We hope this will be the start of an industry-wide effort to provide individuals with disabilities the opportunity to enjoy an accessible fitness experience and take similar steps to making that a reality.”



“People who are blind face a myriad of chronic health conditions due in no small part to the lack of accessible exercise and fitness equipment available in the market today,” said Eric Bridges, executive director, American Council of the Blind. “The lack of accessible user interfaces and audible output for nearly all types of exercise and fitness equipment prevents people who are blind and experiencing vision loss from independently operating, purchasing and enjoying the use of fitness and exercise equipment, and thereby taking control of their own health and wellbeing. ACB applauds Planet Fitness for their collaboration with the disability community, and we encourage other fitness and exercise providers to follow their leadership to enable people with disabilities the freedom to take control of their health.”

“Exercise is for everyone,” said Emily Seelenfreund, staff attorney at Disability Rights Advocates—one of the organizations representing the Coalition. “Planet Fitness’ pioneering commitment to increasing accessibility should serve as a model for fitness facilities across the country.”

Michelle Spillan, Editor / Newsletter Committee: Alex Densmore, Katie Frederick, Irwin Hott, Jenna McCartney, Jill Noble, Vicky Prahin
As always, thanks to the contributors: **Brant Adams, Katie Frederick, Ann Pimley, D A Pimley, Vicky Prahin, and Karen Spry.** 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. The spring issue deadline is **February 15. ACB-Ohio, 3805 N. High St., Suite 305, Columbus, Ohio 43214, Phone: 614-261-3561**



American Council of the Blind of Ohio
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Columbus, Ohio 43214

FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND

ACB-OHIO DATEBOOK

JANUARY 3, ACBO ON THE RADIO, 11 A.M., VOICECORPS.ORG

JANUARY 8, ACBO BOARD MEETING, 9 A.M., VIA ZOOM

JANUARY 9, MEMBERSHIP CALL, 7:30 P.M., VIA ZOOM

FEBRUARY 7, ACBO ON THE RADIO, 11 A.M., VOICECORPS.ORG

FEBRUARY 13, MEMBERSHIP CALL, 7:30 P.M., VIA ZOOM

FEBRUARY 15, ACBO NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

FEBRUARY 15, MEMBERSHIP DUES DEADLINE

MARCH 7, ACBO ON THE RADIO, 11 A.M., VOICECORPS.ORG

MARCH 13, MEMBERSHIP CALL, 7:30 P.M., VIA ZOOM

APRIL 10, MEMBERSHIP CALL, 7:30 P.M., VIA ZOOM

JULY 1-8, ACB NATIONAL CONFERENCE, OMAHA, NEBRASKA

