



Winter 2023

OHIO CONNECTION

American Council of the Blind of Ohio

CONFERENCE AND CONVENTION RECAP

By Katie Frederick

Nearly 70 people from Indiana and Ohio gathered November 10 to 12 to “Defy Expectations” at the 2023 conference and convention. The staff at the host hotel, the Crowne Plaza Columbus North–Worthington, was great to work with and met conference needs throughout the weekend.

The event began Friday afternoon when the exhibit hall and registration opened. Attendees picked up registration packets, browsed exhibits, and enjoyed socializing in the hospitality room. Democracy Live, a conference sponsor, demonstrated their accessible ballot during a Friday afternoon workshop. Afterward, a panel discussed video game accessibility.

Friday evening, thanks to support from See3D, approximately 30 attendees received CPR certification through the American Heart Association. At this interactive, hands-on workshop, the group also learned how to use an AED (automatic external defibrillator) to restore a healthy heart rhythm in a person experiencing cardiac arrest, as well as emergency first aid, such as what to do if someone has a seizure or needs a tourniquet.

Breaking from conference tradition Saturday morning, nearly 40 adventurers went to Escape Room USA in downtown Columbus. See page 8



Julie & Mike Russell practice chest compressions at the CPR workshop.



Banquet speaker Dan Kelley talked about defying expectations.

for more about that experience. Thank you to volunteers who drove and acted as guides during the event. A HUGE shoutout and thank you to the management and staff at Escape Room USA for working with us to make an accessible escape room adventure!

Saturday afternoon breakout sessions focused on traveling when blind or low vision, adapting to change, products one can use to live more independently, and, thanks to See3D, 3D printed tactile models of objects.

The 2023 business meeting wrapped up Saturday afternoon activities. We heard and approved minutes and the treasurer's report from the previous year, then we elected officers and directors. Brant Adams is serving his second term as first vice president; Alex Densmore, elected by acclamation, is serving his second term as secretary; and board members Molly Marcinick and Malaina VanderWal were elected to serve an additional term on the board. Lynn Powers will finish the remainder of D A Pimley's term as treasurer. Thank you, D A, for your service on the board. Congratulations to newly elected board members Catherine Bister, Janae Miller, Niral Sheth, and Andre Webb. See the fall 2023 *Ohio Connection* for profiles of the new board members. Thank you, Melody Banks, Kathy Gerhardt, Karen Spry, and Linda Wyman, for your service on the board.

ACBO presented five awards during the banquet Saturday evening. See the following pages for more information about our award winners. Dan Kelley gave the banquet address, speaking about his experiences defying expectations. Saturday activities concluded with the annual auction.

A nondenominational service, a memorial for members who passed away, and a wonderful presentation from NLS narrators Jack and Jill Fox that included a lively question and answer exchange concluded the conference. A special thank you to our sponsors, See3D, ACB-Ohio Columbus chapter, Democracy Live, Vanda Pharmaceuticals, Baldwin and Sours (Polara), The Literacy Project, Blind Girl Designs, and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. Thanks to ACBI and ACBO members, exhibitors, presenters, and volunteers, for helping us "Defy Expectations." Thank you, Brant Adams and Tyson Ernst, for assisting with audio needs. Be sure to read upcoming editions of the *Ohio Connection*; planning for the 2024 conference is just around the corner.

CONGRATULATIONS, 2023 AWARD WINNERS!

ACB-Ohio awards honor those who profoundly advance the independence and quality of life for all blind and visually impaired Ohioans. We are proud to recognize this year's recipients.

Vicky Prahin, Ken Morlock Award

Vicky has been a member of the American Council of the Blind of Ohio since its beginning. She has served as its president and as a director on the board. In addition, she served as executive director, and later took on the job of interim executive director while ACBO was in the process of hiring a new ED. She trained two previous executive directors and is helping our present director in any way she can.



Katie Frederick and Morlock Award recipient Vicky Prahin

Vicky has chaired numerous ACBO committees, including newsletter, organization documents, and scholarships. She managed the information desk at the ACB national conference and convention for ten years. She hosts a monthly program on VOICEcorps that keeps listeners up to date on ACBO efforts and features guests on various topics of interest to people with visual impairment. She has met with representatives in Washington, DC and on the state level to advocate for accessibility and equality. She has served as president of the Columbus chapter as well.

Whether in a highly visible role or working quietly behind the scenes, Vicky continually uses her time and talents to advance our mission. She is a tireless advocate and a reservoir of knowledge on ACBO history and procedures. The organization would not be what it is today without her leadership, dedication, and hard work.

Medical Mutual of Ohio, Employer of the Year Award

This award recognizes an Ohio employer who has hired and made accommodations for employees who are blind or visually impaired. Caleb McKinsey, Cleveland chapter member and claims processor for the company,



Medical Mutual's Caleb McKinsey and Shamika Padgett

when employees with disabilities bring an issue to management's attention, they address it immediately.

Ohio Secretary of State Accessibility Advisory Board, Community Service Award

While election officials across the nation are addressing barriers to voting, Ohio's Accessibility Advisory Board really grabbed the ball and ran with it. Secretary of State Frank LaRose appointed people from his office to set up this group to ensure that elections under its jurisdiction are accessible to all Ohioans. The board makes information and resources widely available to Ohio voters with disabilities and promotes options like absentee ballots in accessible formats, accessible machines at the polls, and curbside voting.

Vicky Prahin, herself a longtime advocate for voting equality, says, "I have been privileged to work with this group for over a year, focusing on accessibility for all voters, both in

says, "Medical Mutual has been supportive from the start. The company has gone above and beyond to provide me and other blind and visually impaired employees the tools to do our jobs." Medical Mutual took the initiative to buy the equipment and technology Caleb needed, including JAWS software and a 40-cell braille display. They even hired a person to script the system, a tedious process which took a month. If any JAWS issues come up, they will contact the scripter, and they have Medical Mutual's own IT people working with JAWS as well. Accommodation requests are handled efficiently, and



Shay Hawkins from the Secretary of State's Office accepts the Community Service Award on behalf of the Accessibility Advisory Board

person and absentee. I have lived in Ohio all of my life and witnessed the growth of recognition of the value of people with disabilities, but no previous office has devoted so much time and effort to inclusion. We should applaud this office for helping to cut out as much bureaucracy as possible and for being available to those who contact them for assistance.”



Dr. Tiffany Wild and awards committee chair Melody Banks

**Dr. Tiffany Wild
Ruth Davidson Award**

The Ruth Davidson Award is presented to a sighted Ohioan who has worked to enhance the lives of persons who are blind or visually impaired. Dr. Tiffany Wild, associate professor at The Ohio State University College of Education and Human Ecology, has established a record of accomplishments in the field of teaching students with visual impairments at local, state, and national levels. When Dr. Wild began her work at the university, the Program in Visual Impairment had only seven students within one graduate-level program. By securing federal funding and her advocacy and recruitment efforts, the program has grown tremendously and currently offers undergraduate degrees, licensure-only options, a VI minor, masters degrees (MA and MEd), and the PhD program, which is recognized as the largest VI doctoral program in the country.

Dr. Wild created an Ohio Alternative Licensure for Visual Impairment in partnership with the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), providing teachers in the field a way to add licensure to meet teacher shortages. These programs have prepared multiple teachers who are serving hundreds of students with vision loss throughout Ohio and the nation. She is a respected leader and innovator in the field of visual impairments. As a project director of a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant, she worked with a team to create a National Agenda that was implemented in 2022 as a guide for inclusion of students with visual impairments in STEM (science, technology, education, and mathematics) education.



Robin Chenoweth and Carol DelGrosso

Robin Chenoweth and Carol DelGrosso, Media Award

The Media Award is given to an Ohio person or organization who has written or reported about blindness or issues that concern blind and visually impaired persons. This year's award goes to communications specialist Robin Chenoweth and media production specialist Carol DelGrosso from the College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University. The duo created an insightful (and a bit controversial) podcast that highlights the importance of teaching American youth, including those with visual impairments, about sex in a way that is respectful, accessible, and appropriate.

This team also produced an informative article titled “Kids with Visual Impairments Need Sex Ed, Too,” with interviews that highlight a topic that often goes unaddressed, bringing attention to the unique learning needs of kids with vision loss in all areas. In addition, they did a wonderful job of promoting teacher preparation programs that prepare specialists to work with kids who have vision loss. Both of these works were well received and brought attention to the VI field in a way that expands beyond traditional educational awareness and created dialogues that continue to this day.

Listen to the podcast “Let’s Talk about Sex (Education)” at these links:
Apple Podcasts: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/lets-talk-about-sex-education/id1522691315?i=1000617801729>
Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/5QZhP3zmGmeVmMY8vvnFx3>
Podbean: <https://ohiostateuniversityinspire.podbean.com/e/let-s-talk-about-sex-education/>

Read the article “Kids with Visual Impairments Need Sex Ed, Too” here:
<https://inspire.ehe.osu.edu/2023/04/05/kids-with-visual-impairments-need-sex-ed-too/>

ACBO SEEKS YOUR INPUT AND EXPERTISE

ACB-Ohio has several committees that help us fulfill our mission. If you are interested in joining any of the following groups, complete the form found at <https://tinyurl.com/7akjtp5>, or contact Katie Frederick via email at katie@acbohio.org or call or text (419) 306-3721. Most committee work begins in January, so please let us know by December 27.

Awards: This committee solicits, collects, and reviews nominations for the awards ACBO gives out at the state conference and convention. Committee members present awards during the banquet.

Budget: This committee determines how and where ACB-Ohio's money is spent.

Conference and Convention: Join members from the ACB-Indiana affiliate and help put together the program, find speakers, and plan workshops for the 2024 event, scheduled for October 25-27 in Indianapolis.

Fundraising: If you have ideas for raising money for any of our programs, we need you on this committee!

Legislative: Committee members keep current on legislation, update the membership, and contact legislators to support our needs. They also plan and participate in the annual trip to Washington, DC, to learn about current legislation and visit our representatives in the House and Senate.

Matching Grants: Members consider grant requests from ACBO chapters that need funds to expand membership or develop projects and Ohio residents who need help purchasing adaptive technology.

Membership: This group devises ways to increase membership, maintain current members, and hosts monthly membership calls on Zoom.

Newsletter: Committee members find content for and assist with editing quarterly issues of this publication.

Nominating: Do you know anyone who would like to serve as an officer or

director on the ACB-Ohio board? You can serve on the committee that vets and recommends the slate of candidates. Nominations may be made by committee members or any member of ACBO.

Scholarship: ACBO gives several scholarships to students enrolled in colleges and universities throughout the state. Committee members promote the scholarships, review applications, choose recipients, and confer awards.

Sports and Recreation: This committee promotes and plans recreational retreats and other activities for ACBO members.

Technology: Do you enjoy keeping a website up to date? What about helping with audio and sound equipment? If you answered yes to either of these questions, consider joining the technology committee.

ACB-Ohio members and friends: Participate and bring your ideas and expertise and help carry out the work of the organization!

MY TIME AS AN ART THIEF

By Michelle Spillan

When convention planners suggested an escape room for the outing I wasn't thrilled, but I tried to keep an open mind. As Rachel Densmore, planning committee co-chair and escape room enthusiast, explained what the experience entails and dispelled some misconceptions, I slowly warmed to the idea and signed up to participate. It turned out to be a unique and enjoyable adventure; you could say that it defied expectations!

For those unfamiliar, an escape room is an immersive challenge where participants find hidden objects, uncover clues, and solve puzzles and riddles to "escape" from a themed room before time runs out. The rooms are decorated to reflect themes ranging from historical settings to futuristic scenarios.

Weeks before the event, conference planners talked with a few escape room operators to find one that would make the experience accessible for



Team DaVinci Heist: (back row) Shawn Thiel, Mary Karabinos, Melody Banks, Angela Brown, (front row) Michelle Spillan, Elizabeth Lizanich, Molly Marcinick, and Melinda Rothrock

people with blindness or low vision. Escape Room USA welcomed the challenge and included clues that were in braille, tactile, or audible.

Bright and early Saturday morning, around 40 of us set off for Escape Room USA, located in an old warehouse building downtown. We were split into smaller groups for the five escape rooms offered: The Titanic, DaVinci Heist, Jailbreak, Contagion, and Morgan's Raid (a Civil War-themed room).

Eight of us were assigned to DaVinci Heist, and our goal was to find and abscond with the Mona Lisa within the hour and a half allotted. Three employees called "adventure guides" led us into a room, shut the door, and started the timer. Instead of one room, our experience involved two medium-sized rooms two small closets. The first room had paintings and other objects on the walls, a bookshelf and other furniture, and a locked door to another room. We began exploring. Molly Marcinick found our first clue—a plastic card with a symbol on it tucked into a book about a countess who was involved with Leonardo DaVinci. From there we found other clues, some tactile, some braille, and some from historical writings found in the

room. Solving one riddle would lead to another. Eventually we were able to crack the code that opened the door to the next room where we repeated the process. Sometimes we thought we were on the right track only to run into a dead end.

In the second room, we found a box with three locks—one required a key that we found, one we unlocked by solving a letter puzzle, and the third we unlocked by using a combination of numbers from dates mentioned in various texts in the room. Inside was a key and a scrambled numerical code. After figuring that out, the next challenge involved a complex math problem, and we were fortunate to have math whiz Liz Lizanich on hand to work it out in her head since we had no phones or calculators. We opened a door to a closet with more puzzles that led us back to the first room and an iPhone with audible clues. As time wound down, we were able to open a closet that held the Mona Lisa—but would we have time to unscramble the code so we could open the door and “escape” with the masterpiece? Of course team Da Vinci Heist came through, solving it with ten minutes to spare!

I think everyone who went enjoyed it, no matter which of the five adventures they did. All teams were successful, with one team going down to the wire with only seconds left. It was a fun, and, at times, frustrating opportunity to work as a team with other ACBO members. Together we used our quick thinking and problem-solving skills to successfully complete our mission.

ADULT ADVOCACY CENTERS HELP ENSURE JUSTICE IS FOR ALL

By Kat Rogers, LSW, Forensic Interview Coordinator
Adult Advocacy Centers

What are The Adult Advocacy Centers?

The Adult Advocacy Centers (AACs) are a disability victim service agency. Our organization exists to teach the world how to listen to what people with disabilities have to say, particularly when they are victims of crime or abuse. We are a disability-led national organization piloting our groundbreaking programs in Ohio. We provide forensic interviews, training, indi-

vidual consultations, resources, and victim services to adult crime victims with disabilities and those working with them.

In 2021, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that the rate of violent victimization perpetrated against people with disabilities was nearly four times higher than the rate of people without disabilities. With crimes against people with disabilities being so prevalent, it is important that the different aspects of the justice system and evidence collection be accessible. That's where the AACs come in.

Updated ADA Accommodations for Crime Victims with Disabilities

The AACs have developed protocols and started training forensic interviewers how to conduct specialized disability-focused forensic interviews. The AACs' forensic interview protocols address:

- How to interview an adult crime victim with a disability, including those with communication differences;
- How to provide accommodations;
- How disability-focused forensic interviews can qualify as a reasonable accommodation; and
- How to ensure accessibility and engage trauma-informed practices so crime victims with disabilities have an equitable opportunity to report crimes and to be heard.

Forensic interviewing protocols designed to accommodate victims with disabilities are reasonable accommodations available under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Resources for Crime Victims with Disabilities

The Adult Advocacy Centers provide free resources on a variety of topics on our website. Some helpful resources include:

- Self-Directed Safety Planning Guidebook (https://www.adultadvocacycenters.org/assets/documents/safety_planning_guidebook_self-directed.pdf)
- Assisted Safety Planning Guidebook (https://www.adultadvocacycenters.org/assets/documents/safety_planning_guidebook_assisted.pdf)

- Coping with Victimization (https://www.adultadvocacycenters.org/assets/documents/aacs_coping_with_victimization.pdf)

More resources can be found under the Resources tab on our website <https://adultadvocacycenters.org/resources>.

Where to Go for Help

If you are a person with a disability and have been a victim of a crime, you may request a specialized and disability-focused forensic interview from law enforcement. If your request for this type of accommodation is denied, you may:

- Contact your state's federally mandated Protection and Advocacy (P&A) agency (ndrn.org/about/ndrn-member-agencies) for free legal advocacy.
- File a formal ADA complaint (ada.gov/file-a-complaint) through the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division.
- Find more information and technical assistance on the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division Information and Technical Assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act website (archive.ada.gov/criminaljustice/index.html).
- Contact the Adult Advocacy Centers (adultadvocacycenters.org/contact) for more information about forensic interviews and certified forensic interview training.

LOOKING AT EVIDENCE THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS: MY EXPERIENCE AS A BLIND JUROR

PART 1

By Caleb McKinsey

When people think of jury duty or when someone says they need to appear for it, they're usually irritated that their schedule is being interrupted. That certainly was my thought when I got my jury summoner in September. I deferred it, thinking because I am totally blind, being selected to serve on a case would be unlikely. I served on a case 11 years ago and I did not want to do it again. So I postponed my court date until the week after Thanksgiv-

ing. My plan was to further push back the date as far as possible and if asked I would cite blindness and hopefully be excused. As the old saying goes, the best laid plans always go awry, and mine certainly did because I forgot to further defer my summons. I received my summons to appear the week starting Monday, November 27.

I was apprehensive about serving. I am totally blind and had to figure out how the logistics of this process would work. How will I get to and from the courthouse? How do I navigate the building? Will there be people who can assist me with everyday activities like finding the restrooms and cafeteria? I also have my guide dog Hamish and had to figure out where to relieve him, and if I were to be selected to serve on a case, I would need to explain his needs to the judge. Anyone who votes in the US is eligible to serve. My biggest fear was if visual evidence was shown during the trial, I would have no way of helping the others on the jury render a verdict. All these thoughts were going through my mind and I hadn't been called to serve on a case. Now, after completing my jury service, I realize that I should not have worried.

After arriving, security assisted me to the assembly area where all jurors were required to meet for orientation. Hamish successfully navigated the open atrium and hallways. The staff in the building were helpful and even some of the prospective jurors helped. Asking for help was not intimidating or complicated; in fact, getting help was practically effortless.

I voiced my concerns to the judge and prosecutors and they definitely took that into account when evidence was presented. They also made sure there was plenty of room in the jury box for Hamish to comfortably stretch out while we were in session. The court assistants were very welcoming. During our lunch break they directed me to a place for Hamish to go out then helped me find the cafeteria. Overall, my experience was far better than I anticipated. Every effort was made for me to be a contributing juror and I felt included as the case progressed.

The case I served on lasted three days. With this introduction to my experience, a second part will go into further detail about how the case was presented and will discuss how blindness was not a limiting factor in helping my fellow jurors. It was an informative and educational experience and I encourage anyone to serve if called upon to do so.

RANDOLPH-SHEPPARD VENDORS OF AMERICA® SAGEBRUSH 2024 NATIONAL BEP TRAINING CONFERENCE

With the Theme "Sagebrush 2024: Teaming up to Tackle the ins and outs of Randolph-Sheppard business", the RSVA® Sagebrush National BEP Training Conference begins on Monday, February 12 with Sagebrush registration at 5 pm and the welcome reception at 7 PM. The conference ends on Friday, February 16 with our special "You don't have to see it to tee it" golf outing.

The seminar sessions cover topics from business and entrepreneur related topics, technology updates, using AI for business, as well as specific Randolph-Sheppard facility information and updates. Registrants have the opportunity again to earn continuing education credits—please spread the word.

With so many unique events and conversations, expect to enjoy the conference!!! The conference will be held at the Golden Nugget Hotel in downtown Las Vegas, a Four-Star Conference Center. Room reservations must be made directly with the hotel. NOTE: Special Sagebrush room rates apply Monday, February 12, 2024, through Saturday, February 17, 2024. Since Monday is overflow from the Super Bowl, the rate is slightly higher that night. There are much higher rates if you wish to stay at the Golden Nugget before Monday, February 12. Rates differ from tower to tower. A fee for one night's stay will be charged when you register for your room. For hotel reservations, please call 1-800-331-5731. When booking reservations over the phone, it is essential to give the group code GRSRV24 to ensure the group rates and other amenities are applied. To book online go to:
<https://goldennugget.reztrip.com/ext/promoRate?property=1115&mode=b&pm=true&sr=843490&vr=3>

All who attend the event in person and register by January 1 will have their name entered into a drawing for a free in-person registration for the 2025 event. Conference updates will be placed on the RSVA® website: www.randolph-sheppard.org. For further information or to receive the registration form for the conference, contact RSVA® by email: rsva@randolph-sheppard.org or call 303-963-5153.

REMINDER: ACBO DUES DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 15

Pay your 2024 membership dues online at acbohio.org, pay through your local chapter, or send a check for \$15 to 3805 N. High St., Suite 305, Columbus, OH 4214.

Newsletter Committee: Katie Frederick, Vicky Prahin, Malaina VanderWal / Michelle Spillan, Editor

As always, thanks to the contributors: **Ardis Bazyn, Katie Frederick, Caleb McKinsey, Kat Rogers, and Michelle Spillan.** The *Ohio Connection* is a quarterly publication of the American Council of the Blind of Ohio. Please submit your material in print or via e-mail, and include your name and phone number. E-mail items to acbo.newsletter@gmail.com or send them to **ACB-Ohio, 3805 N. High St., Suite 305, Columbus, Ohio 43214, Phone: 614-261-3561.** The spring issue deadline 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





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

ACB-OHIO DATEBOOK

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

JANUARY 11, MEMBERSHIP CALL, 7:30 P.M., VIA ZOOM

JANUARY 20, ACBO BOARD MEETING, 1 P.M., VIA ZOOM (USE
MEETING CODE 6142613561)

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

FEBRUARY 8, MEMBERSHIP CALL, 7:30 P.M., VIA ZOOM

FEBRUARY 15, ACBO SPRING NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

MARCH 6, ACBO ON THE RADIO, 11 A.M., VOICECORPS.ORG

MARCH 14, MEMBERSHIP CALL, 7:30 P.M., VIA ZOOM

