



OHIO CONNECTION

American Council of the Blind of Ohio

FALLFEST FUN!

By Catherine Bister & Caleb McKinsey
Sports & Rec Committee Co-chairs

Wooster Noon Lions hosted Fallfest 2024, an accessible recreation event with ACBO members from throughout the state attending. The group enjoyed hiking and fishing at the Izaak Walton League conservation preserve, hiking and picnicking at Clear Creek Park, tactile board and card games and hanging out at the Best Western Plus, great food from Mariola's and TJ's restaurants, lots of lovingly prepared snacks and goodies, a classic car rally, and of course—the Woosterfest street fair!

It was truly heartwarming to see people in a community come together to share their local bounty, welcome visitors, and make lasting memories. Our group had an outstanding time. We heard many good stories, plus lots of laughter and excited plans to visit Wooster again.

We appreciate everyone who shared their time and talents or donated items to help make this event a huge success. Thanks for being part of the 2024 Fallfest weekend!



Volunteer Joe Hogan & Molly Marcinick try their luck at the fishing pond



Hiking at Izaak Walton League Forest



Woosterfest coffee break!





Taking a break at the overlook on the Clear Creek Park hike



The Dayton gang: Emilio Esteban, Rachel Spangler, Robby Spangler



Niral Sheth, volunteer Mark Colter, and an unlucky fish



Linda Ruzicka and Lynn Powers



A boy and his dog—Caleb McKinsey and guide Hamish (Hammy)



Left: Wooster Noon Lions event organizers Deb Mosier and Kathi Bond

Right: Daughter and father hike—Samantha and Gary Hasselbusch



Thank you Lion Jen Grim, Lion Deb Mosier, and ACBO member Liz Lizanich for the photos!

2024 CONFERENCE & CONVENTION WRAP UP

By Katie Frederick & Rachel Densmore

Seventy people gathered for the 2024 joint ACB-Indiana and ACB-Ohio conference and convention in October at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Indianapolis. ACBI and ACBO members and guests shared a time of learning, inspiration, connection, and collaboration as we “transformed attitudes!”

Back by popular demand, attendees had the opportunity to participate in an excursion. This year, participants traveled to the Indianapolis Children’s Museum on Friday afternoon, which proved to be an educational and fun experience for all. When asked about their experiences, John Debose, a first-time ACBO convention attendee from the Cleveland chapter, expressed that getting to touch an actual meteorite was really cool, and Melody Banks, a longtime ACBO member from Cincinnati, shared that the excursion was her favorite part, as it gave her an opportunity to go to an attraction out of town, which was a rare treat.

Back at the hotel, the ever-popular exhibit hall was busy Friday and Saturday. People could check out the latest in high tech, buy raffle tickets for exciting prizes, learn about ADA and statewide independent living services, and much more. The exhibit hall was full of excited participants, including John, who was glad to get to try out new gadgets and see all the different ways people approach blindness, which made the exhibit hall one of his favorite parts of the whole weekend.

ACB-Ohio’s annual business meeting was held Saturday morning. Members approved bylaw changes; the executive director, president, and treasurer provided reports; and new officers and directors were elected. Brant Adams was elected president, Rachel Densmore moved up to first vice president, filling the year remaining on Brant’s term. Malaina VanderWal was elected to the position of second vice president. D A Pimley was reelected to his third term and will serve as treasurer. Dan Kelley was elected to fill the year remaining of Malaina VanderWal’s term, and Jenna McCartney was elected as a director. Mary Karabinos was elected to fill a one-year vacancy following D A’s election to treasurer. Dave Bertsch and Lindsey LaVere were elected to their first terms on the board, Kate Morse was elected by acclamation to serve her second term, and Lynn Powers chose not to run for treasurer and was elected into a director position on the board. Members also voted to allow Molly Marcinick to fill the remainder of her term, extending her service on the board.

Thank you, Tonya Adams, Caleb McKinsey, Kelsey Nicolay, and Shawn Thiel for your contributions of talent, time, and treasure to ACB-Ohio. Katie Frederick will continue on the board in an advisory position as immediate past president. Thank you, Katie, for your work as president, and we look forward to acquiring your wisdom in the coming years. Finally, a special thanks to Vicky Prahin, who completed her role as immediate past president. Vicky has served on the board in

many capacities and we will miss her wisdom. Of course, she will still be consulted for advice from time to time. Enjoy retirement!

Also at the convention, we had numerous fantastic workshops discussing conflict resolution, exercise, personal stories and experiences, cooking, therapies for inherited retinal diseases, eating healthier on a budget, independent living resources, and disrespect and disability. Robby Spangler, an ACB-Ohio at-large member from the Dayton area, said that these workshops were his favorite part of the convention. One highlight he shared was attending the exercise workshop, where he learned new exercises and tried them out with others. Both Robby and Melody enjoyed workshops about cooking, where Robby learned valuable tips for eating on a budget, and Melody learned new tips for getting cooking measurements right as someone with low vision.

Attendees heard from three engaging speakers. On Friday night, we heard from James R. Michaels, the new superintendent of the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. It was great to hear about his passion for having every student succeed, the steps they are taking to make that possible, and how much he cares about his staff and students. As a fellow member of the blind and visually impaired community, he holds them to high expectations and gives great support along the way. At lunch on Saturday, Dan Parker, a blind racing athlete, shared his personal story of how he overcame obstacles to achieve his goals. John said that this was his other favorite part of the convention, as he loved to hear how Dan was able to keep his joy through his vision loss journey. Kolby Garrison, ACB development officer, gave the banquet address. She shared her story and experiences leading to her current job. Kolby brought a great energy and fascinating story to the banquet, and ACB is fortunate to have her on the team. Following her speech, ACB-Ohio and ACB-Indiana presented awards.

The auction, a popular annual tradition, followed the banquet. People bid on baked goods, handmade items, technology, wine and spirits, and more, raising \$3,454 in total, and \$1,343 for ACB-Ohio and its participating chapters. A special thanks to Brant Adams, Renee Arrington-Johnson, Alex and Rachel Densmore, Samantha Hasselbusch, D A Pimley, Lynn Powers, and members of the ACBO sports and recreation committee for your auction donations.

In addition to the auction, the convention introduced a new fundraiser this year. Throughout the weekend, participants had the opportunity to buy raffle tickets for four different baskets—a bourbon basket, a Cleveland Guardians basket, a homemade baked goods basket, and a potpourri basket of all sorts of goodies, from a blind Barbie doll to gift cards. Thank you to the ACBO fundraising committee (Lynn Powers, Rachel Densmore, Katie Frederick, Molly Marcinick, Kate Morse, and Michelle Spillan), for organizing this. Thank you to Alex Densmore, Jill Noble, Janae Miller, D A Pimley, and Niral Sheth, who helped the fundraising committee with ticket sales. Finally, a big thanks to Mark and Lisa Powers for the bourbon donation, Nolan Hopkins and his team at the Cleveland Guardians for all their wonderful donations, and Elizabeth Lizanich and the sports and recreation committee for their arrangement of the

Guardians basket. Altogether, this fundraiser raised \$506 for ACBO—a great inaugural success!

We concluded the convention Sunday morning with a nondenominational service and remembered members who passed away over the past year. We then heard from Peter Heide, newly elected to the ACB board of directors, about his personal story involving losing and regaining sight multiple times.

When asked what advice they would give to those of you considering attending the convention for the first time, all of those interviewed for this article had great advice. John shared that he would recommend you attend and keep an open mind, as you never know what you might learn or discover. Melody shared that you need to go so you can learn new life skills, network with others, and make new friends. Robby shared “I would highly recommend attending the joint ACB of Ohio and Indiana state convention each year. It is always packed with activities, opportunities to socialize, and lots of useful information.” Finally, Melody summed it up best when she said that her time at convention helps her know that she is not alone dealing with her vision and the challenges of life as a visually impaired individual. We hope that you will take their advice, and join us in 2025 for our next state convention!

As always, thank you to the convention program committee members from ACB-Ohio and ACB-Indiana for putting together a great conference. A huge thank you to the corporate and individual sponsors for their support of this year’s conference. Exhibitors, thank you for sharing your information and products with us. Thank you also to Melody Banks, John Debose, and Robby Spangler for their willingness to share their experiences for this article.



ACB development officer Kolby Garrison shares her life journey with banquet guests



Robby Spangler and Mary Stores learn new moves at the fitness workshop

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT ELECT

By Brant Adams

I was excited to be elected to the office of president at this year's American Council of the Blind of Ohio convention. I would like to thank Alex Densmore and the nominating committee for putting my name on the slate, the membership for electing me, and Katie Frederick for filling this position for the past two years and keeping the ship steady.

I have spent the last several years working behind the scenes, trying to help this organization grow and be successful, and I view this opportunity as another chance to help. There are some things I would like to see happen that I believe will make us better. We need to get members and chapters more engaged in our mission. The work of the sports and rec committee is a great way to do this, as fun and interesting events draw people. I plan to engage more with chapters, so you all know what the state is doing, and how you can help. Our goal is to improve the lives of blind people, and remember, we are the American Council of the blind. We, as blind people, are working to make life better for ourselves. The work we do is worthwhile, because it is for all of us in the blindness community. We have a great board this year, and I hope we can accomplish a lot.

Our members are welcome and encouraged to serve on the many committees that help keep ACBO functioning. A list of those committees follows and has also been posted on the listserv. If you are not a part of the listserv and would like to join, contact the executive director (acbo.director@gmail.com). It's a great way to keep up with what's going on with ACBO.

Please consider giving some of your time and talent to ACBO in the coming year. Once again, thanks to everyone for giving me the opportunity to serve as president; you will hear more from me as we move into 2025.

COMMITTEES OFFER MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

Below is a list of standing ACBO committees on which any member can serve. If you have an interest in any of these areas, contact the office (acbo.director@gmail.com) or the president (brant@acbohio.org).

Awards Committee - Solicits, collects, and considers nominations for the seven awards we offer. Selects recipients; arranges for the preparation of awards, and distributes them at the banquet during the state convention.

Fundraising Committee - Explores and implements ways to bring in donations to support the organization. Plans and carries out any resulting fundraising activities.

Legislative Committee - To keep current on legislation within and outside the state, update the membership, and contact legislators to present and support our needs. Plans the annual DC advocacy trip.

Membership Committee - To devise ways of increasing new membership and maintaining current membership.

Newsletter Committee - To help solicit and gather items for the *Ohio Connection* each quarter. Organizes, edits, and lays out articles.

Nominating Committee - Solicits candidates for incumbent and open officer and board positions prior to the annual convention. Prepares the slate for publication in the fall newsletter and to the ACBO list at least 30 days before the annual business meeting and conducts elections.

Program Planning Committee - Plans and prepares the program for the conference and convention. Works with the site and exhibits subcommittees. Acquires speakers and presenters and arranges transportation and/or accommodations as necessary; plans meals and other activities; prepares hard copy programs; promotes the convention throughout the state; plans for and records events during the convention for placement on the website.

Scholarship Committee - Disseminates information about our scholarships throughout the state. Receives and vets applications, chooses recipients, and confers awards during the conference and convention. Arranges transportation and accommodation for winners and a parent/guardian as needed. Ensures that recipients are registered and that other requirements for attendance are taken care of.

Sports and Recreation Committee - Promotes and plans the summer and winter sports retreats and other activities in which members may participate.

SAVE THE DATE! THE 2025 ACBO CONVENTION IS NOVEMBER 14–16

By Rachel Densmore, Convention Site Committee Chair

The convention site committee has been hard at work behind the scenes, and we are happy to announce the 2025 convention will be Friday, November 14 through Sunday, November 16 at the Best Western Plus in Strongsville (15471 Royalton Road, Strongsville, Ohio 44126, phone 440-238-8800).

We hope you will join us—it's our first convention in the Cleveland area since 1992! Please stay tuned to future editions of the *Ohio Connection*, the ACBO website, and the ACBO email list for more announcements as we draw closer to the event, which is sure to be a great time!

CONGRATULATIONS 2024 ACBO AWARD WINNERS, PART 1

By Vicky Prahin

ACBO has seven awards for which anyone can nominate people or entities each year. Go to <https://www.acbohio.org/convention/awards/> to find out what the criteria are and see a sample nomination form. This year we were privileged to give four awards.

Heather Greminger is an infrastructure analyst for the Marriott call centers. Her focus is accessibility. Niral Sheth, who met her through his job at Marriott, says that he nominated her “because she spent so much time making sure that JAWS would work with our reservation platform. She literally learned all the keystrokes and figured out how JAWS works with the software.” Heather learned enough to rework JAWS scripts to ensure accessibility for those who need it. We are delighted to award Heather the Ruth Davidson Award for 2024.



Niral Sheth and Ruth Davidson Award winner Heather Greminger

VOICEcorps received the Community Service Award. VOICEcorps offers listeners the opportunity to hear firsthand about what is going on in the world. Volunteers read the Columbus Dispatch, magazines, and current books; interview people who serve the community in a variety of ways; and give listeners the chance to share views and opinions on sports, health, and other topics of interest. Programs are up to date, professionally produced, and available through special radios, cable networks in nursing homes and hospitals, and on the website voicecorps.org. For the past several years, they have given an hour once a month to ACBO on the Morning Exchange so that we can keep blind and visually impaired listeners up to date with what ACBO is doing and provide information on topics from across the nation. It is truly an honor to give an award to an organization that has consistently served the blindness community well.

Our other award recipients will appear in the next issue of the *Ohio Connection*.

Newsletter Committee: Katie Frederick, Caleb McKinsey, Malaina VanderWal, Michelle Spillan, Editor

As always, thanks to the contributors: **Brant Adams, Catherine Bister, Rachel Densmore, Katie Frederick, Jen Grim, Liz Lizanich, Caleb McKinsey, Deb Mosier, 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 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.**

HELP SPREAD THE WORD: ACB-OHIO IS NOW ACCEPTING SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS!

By Rachel Densmore, Scholarship Committee Chair

It's a crisp fall day, and you grab your backpack and cane, and hope the hard work of your O&M specialist and you pay off as you hurry off to your first class. Or, you grab your laptop, log on, and activate ZoomText before logging into your online portal to start the very first module of your new class. Either way, you are excited, nervous, eager, and confident as you begin the next chapter of your educational career. For many of us, this brings back memories, and this is an experience we want all the students in our lives to have, especially those who are blind, low vision, or sighted students in fields impacting the BVI community.

For some, a barrier to making the above situation a reality is financial access. Whether that's paying for tuition, room and board, or the necessary equipment to be a successful student, college is expensive. ACB-Ohio is proud to offer scholarships to break down that barrier, and help hard-working students achieve their educational and employment dreams.

We are accepting applications for the 2025 ACB-Ohio scholarships. We are offering two scholarships:

\$1000 "FRIENDS OF FRESHMAN" SCHOLARSHIP:

Presented to a blind or low vision entering freshman in any field of study.

\$3,000-\$5,000 ACB-OHIO SCHOLARSHIPS:

Awarded to one or more blind or low vision student(s) in any field of study, or sighted student in a field of study directly benefiting the blind and low vision community. This scholarship is open to students in trade or technical schools, 2- or 4-year undergraduate degree programs, graduate degree programs, or other postsecondary study, such as for continuing education, special certification, or licensure. If the applicant does not have a visual impairment, they should clearly indicate how their course of study will benefit the blind and low vision community.

The application deadline is March 31, 2025. We hope that if you are a student, you will complete an application, and if you know a student, you will share this information. To learn more, please visit <https://www.acbohio.org/scholarships/>, email scholarships@acbohio.org, or call 614-261-3561. Finally, thank you to all those who have donated to make these scholarships possible. If you are able, please consider making a donation to the ACBO scholarship fund. Every dollar helps to make educational dreams a reality.



THE TIME IS NOW—RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP OR JOIN ACB-OHIO!

By Rachel Densmore, Membership Committee Co-Chair

We are officially in the membership renewal season, meaning it's time to renew your ACB-Ohio membership or join us as a new member. We are also excited to announce that early birds will be entered to win a free 2026 membership.

Q: **When should I renew?**

A: You can renew today. The deadline for renewals to be counted towards our ACB affiliate total, and to be eligible to vote at national convention is February 15.

Q: **When is the "early bird" renewal period?**

A: Anyone (except board members) who renews on or before January 15, 2025 will be eligible to win the free 2026 membership.

Q: **How can I join or renew?**

A: Renew by filling out the form at <https://www.acbohio.org/> or by calling the ACBO office at 614-261-3561.

Q: **How can I pay?**

A: You can pay online via PayPal, credit card, or debit card, or by sending a check to the ACB-Ohio office at American Council of the Blind Ohio, 3805 North High St., Suite 305, Columbus, OH 43214.

Q: **What if I pay via my chapter?**

A: As long as the chapter turns in your membership by January 15th, that works as well. We have contacted chapter treasurers to make sure they know about the contest.

Q: **How much is membership?**

A: Membership dues are \$15. If you pay online, there is a \$1 processing fee to cover the cost of our online payment system.

Q: **What are the benefits of membership?**

A: By paying ACB-Ohio membership dues, you are a voting member of ACB at the national, Ohio affiliate, and if you choose, one of the local chapters. Additionally, you are able to serve on our committees, which contribute meaningfully to the work of the organization. We are also considering how we can increase the benefits of membership, and any changes would automatically apply to current members. Furthermore, chapters have additional roles and benefits open only to their members. Finally, by joining ACB-Ohio, you are supporting our mission to "increase the independence, security, equality of opportunity, and quality of life, for all blind and visually impaired Ohioans."

If you have more questions contact me at rachel@acbohio.org, contact Michelle at acbo.director@gmail.com, or call the office at 614-261-3561.

RESOLVE TO DRINK COFFEE THAT HELPS IN 2025!

By Caleb McKinsey

Coffee That Helps is a one-of-a-kind gourmet roaster that only produces small batches to satisfy the most discerning coffee connoisseur. That, ACB-Ohio friends, is you. Through this new fundraiser, you can buy great coffee while helping a small company with a mission that aligns with that of ACBO. Coffee That Helps is an initiative started by Uniquely the Same, a nonprofit that employs people with disabilities. The coffee is ethically sourced from small family farms around the world, with key principles of quality, fairness, and sustainability guiding their practices from bean to brew.

Any purchase from January 5th through 20th will support ACBO as well, since 20 percent of the sale will go toward the chapter designated by the purchaser. Additionally, if a chapter chooses to have a designated point where coffee can be shipped to and buys \$100 worth or greater of coffee, that percent is boosted to 25 percent. Have I perked your interest yet?

In short, this fundraiser benefits ACBO chapters and supports Coffee That Helps. Each chapter has been given a code and dedicated link to shop on the Coffee That Helps site. All members of ACBO and their friends and families are welcome to participate, just click on the link for the chapter you want to support and you will be directed to the online store. If you want more of a scoop on the coffee before buying, please check out <https://coffeethathelps.org/pages/faqs>. Here are the links for placing your order:

To support the Cincinnati Chapter, use code ACBO-CIN24
<https://coffeethathelps.org/discount/ACBO-CIN24>

To support the Cleveland Chapter, use code ACBO-CLV24
<https://coffeethathelps.org/discount/ACBO-CLV24>

To support the Columbus Chapter, use code ACBO-COL24
<https://coffeethathelps.org/discount/ACBO-COL24>

To support the Medina Chapter, use code ACBO-MED24
<https://coffeethathelps.org/discount/ACBO-MED24>

To support the Stark County Chapter, use code ACBO-STA24
<https://coffeethathelps.org/discount/ACBO-STA24>

If you are a member at large, use code: ACBO-ATL24
<https://coffeethathelps.org/discount/ACBO-ATL24>

The owners of Coffee That Helps are friends of mine, and I am excited that we can support each other's organizations. I am available if anyone has questions (caleb.mckinsey@gmail.com). This will be announced on the ACBO listserv and all chapters will be notified. This fundraiser runs January 5th through the 20th.





American Council of the Blind of Ohio
3805 N. High St., Suite 305
Columbus, Ohio 43214

FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND

ACB-OHIO DATEBOOK

JANUARY 4, ACBO BOARD MEETING, 2:30 P.M., VIA ZOOM (USE MEETING CODE 6142613561)

JANUARY 8, ACBO ON THE RADIO, 11 A.M., VOICECORPS.ORG

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

JANUARY 15, MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL CONTEST DEADLINE

FEBRUARY 5, ACBO ON THE RADIO, 11 A.M., VOICECORPS.ORG

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

FEBRUARY 15, SPRING NEWSLETTER AND MEMBERSHIP DUES DEADLINE

MARCH 5, ACBO ON THE RADIO, 11 A.M., VOICECORPS.ORG

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

MARCH 14-18, ACB LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE AND LEGISLATIVE SEMINAR, WASHINGTON, DC

MARCH 31, ACBO SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION DEADLINE

