

"Sightings"

Of the

Wyoming Council of the Blind

September, 2018

President's Message From Sherry Leinen

Hello everyone from your new President. I'm excited to work with the board and look forward to an exciting year. One of my goals as the new President for WyCB is to get more members involved. I look forward to getting to know some of you better and hopefully working with some of you on committees and fundraisers. We want everyone to know what is going on in the organization. We have included a summary of our board meetings and will continue to add them to each publication of our newsletter. We want to hear your ideas, questions, and concerns. You are always welcome to join our monthly board meetings. They are the second Tuesday of every month at 7 PM. The meetings are done by conference call and you can join by calling 1-605-472-5395. The access code is: 569373. We ask that if you do call in, that you please announce yourself so that we may add you to our minutes. If you have something specific you would like to discuss, please call or email me before hand so that I may add you to the agenda. My email is:

wycbpresident@gmail.com and my phone number is 307-746-6166.

We are always updating our website, www.wycb.info. Please let us know if you have any ideas on how to make it better.

You can find out what is going on across the country by checking out the American Council of the Blind (ACB) link on our website.

Recap of our 2018 Convention

The 2018 Convention was held in Casper on June 23 in the Fellowship Hall of Bethel Baptist Church.

A huge Thank You goes out to everyone who helped with the Convention.

Approximately 50 people attended the Low Vision Equipment expo on Friday evening. Nine low vision vendors/agencies provided equipment demonstrations and information. Additionally, 9 other agencies provided literature and other resource materials.

23 members attended the convention, including 8 of the 10 officers. Also in attendance were 16 guests, 3 of them enjoyed it so much that they became members of WyCB.

The scholarship winner this year was our very own Vice-President, Mikaela Piasecki, who is attending Sheridan College to major in massage therapy.

Vince Ulstad, our keynote speaker, gave a thought-provoking and inspiring message regarding the loss of his vision resulting from an auto accident. This tragic event has subsequently resulted in his adopting a whole new attitude regarding life; hence, the title of his presentation, "Life's flourishing with Vision Loss". He continues to do many of the outdoor activities that he enjoyed prior to the accident and finds joy and fulfillment in many new tasks learned. He stays busy with speaking engagements and teaching opportunities.

48 people (including members, speakers, vendors, kitchen staff and other volunteers) enjoyed the delicious lunch that was planned and prepared by Ilene Whiteley and served by her group of volunteers.

Our annual 50/50 raffle resulted in \$129.50 added to the treasury. This included \$50 that was donated back by the winner from Casper from her half of the proceeds.

New for 2018 was our fundraising-raffle. 7 raffle packages were offered across the state. It was a huge success; over 600 tickets were sold resulting in raising \$3350. The board had fun competing with each other for tickets sales. Jacquie Flatley of Casper sold the most tickets (189) and won the prize of 4 pounds of home-grown, organic ground beef, donated by Gary and Cheryl Godley of Casper.

The new board members were voted in at the annual business meeting. Here is a list of our current board.

President: Sherry Leinen (2018-2020)

Vice-President: Mikaela Piasecki (2017-2019)

Secretary: Julia Mason (2018-2020)

Treasurer: Ilene Whiteley (2017-2019)

Directors:

Kendall Bays (2017-2019)

Marti Blough (2018-2020)

Dolores Dolbare (2018-2020)

Jacquie Flatley (2018-2020)

Cheryl Godley (2017-2019)

Chris Johnson (2017-2019)

It was a full day of information and resources and it seems safe to say that everyone went home with new knowledge and friendships.

Getting to Know Your Board

Julia Mason became a member of the Wyoming Council of the Blind in 2016 and became the Secretary in June of 2018. She also attends the local Support Group in Casper.

Julia was born in Kansas and reared in Colorado. Her father was an underground hard rock miner. Her mother was a stay at home mom with five kids until Julia was sixteen years old and a baby sister arrived.

She came to Wyoming via Greyhound bus in 1965 and found a job in Shoshoni and became stranded there. It was a great place to rear a family with values.

Julia describes herself as a late bloomer. She was a three-time high school drop-out. In 1977 she requested permission from the Shoshoni School Board to allow her to attend school to earn her diploma. It was granted and she graduated with honors with the class of 1978 at the age of 32.

She worked for the school district for 10 years and was laid off from her job as a teacher's aide. She applied and was accepted in the two-year nursing program at Central Wyoming Community College and graduated and passed her state boards in 1990 at the age of 44.

She likes telling people she graduated with her youngest son, but the college wouldn't let them walk together, so she threw spit wads at her son during services, for which he was scolded for not raising her well.

In 2011 she began to write her memoirs and published her own in 2016. Then she woke one day and sat down to write a novel in late 2016 and published her novel on Amazon called "Night Creatures" in 2017.

She is now working on a sequel to “Night Creatures” and it should be ready before the years end.

Julia has served as secretary for the PTA as her sons grew up and went away to college. She also served as treasurer for one year while she was in high school. It is now a job she doesn’t want to do again. It gives her hives.

She worked many different jobs from cleaning toilets to nursing. Her favorite jobs were nursing of humans and nursing sick newborn calves back to health. She washed dishes, ironed, and cleaned other’s homes. These are jobs she really dislikes in her present life.

Presently she is enjoying retirement and enjoying a rest from over 50 years of serving others.

Summary of Board Meeting Minutes

July 10, 2018

There were nine of ten members present and two guests.

Guest Allan Peterson spoke about the American Council of the Blind (ACB) Convention that was held in St. Louis this year. He suggested and encouraged that someone from Wyoming attend next years Convention to be held in Rochester, NY, July 5-11, 2019. There are funds available to help with expenses.

Minutes from the 6-12-18 meeting were approved as read and the minutes from the 2018 Convention were accepted with the changes.

The treasurer was unable to attend so no treasurer’s report was given. It was decided that for future reports that if a member is unable to attend the meeting they need to supply a report for someone to give in their place.

Committee Reports:

Scholarship: no report

Convention: Jacquie reported that she made an evaluation for feedback on the convention to see where we can improve and see what we are doing right.

Fundraisers: Need to brainstorm for ideas for fundraisers

Communications: Sherry will ask Tom Lealos if he wants to continue doing the newsletter. He had suggested that it should be written by a board member.

Old Business:

The brochures for WyCB need completed. Jacquie and Mikaela will work together on them.

New Business:

Sherry is working on getting members on committees. Sherry mentioned that she would like to have a retreat in Casper with the board. Everyone needs to be checking their calendar for dates in September and October.

Sherry requested \$75 for office supplies to do her job. It was voted on and granted. The funds will be used for paper, stamps, envelopes, etc. Meeting adjourned.

The August meeting minutes haven't been approved by the board yet so they are not included in this newsletter.

Tech Talk

With Chris Johnson

Text to Speech

Ever get those long-winded emails or articles that you just don't have time for or perhaps your eyes are too strained to read. Enter TEXT-TO-SPEECH or TTS software. With TTS you can listen to those emails, as well as documents and digital "ebooks" while doing other things like

the dishes, etc. It differs from a full-fledged screen reader for the blind (e.g. JAWS, Voiceover or NVDA) in that only certain selected text is read. A screen reader reads anything on the screen and requires remembrance of a command set to control various computer parameters. The free NVDA was discussed in a previous newsletter. It was launched by two blind programmers from Australia. In order to use NVDA comfortably, the first thing to change in settings is the horrible Australian voice, (unless you like hearing robotic-sounding Australian voices barking at you when at your computer).

On iPhone the TTS feature is called Speech, it can be found and turned on under General-Accessibility settings. There are two ways to use it: Speak Selection and Swipe to Speak, which reads the whole screen or page. Activate TTS on Android phones in the Accessibility settings. Same with Mac computers.

On Windows computers the best option I've found is Balabolka, which in Russian means "chatterer". But don't worry, as far as I can tell no one has hacked into my computer since installing it. Then again, I don't have any emails to hide 😊. Jest aside, Balabolka is a safe, free, text-to-speech software that allows one to hear selected text or documents. You may want to set it up to "copy the clipboard" so that it reads just selected text and is activated by a keyboard command (e.g. Control C). Balabolka must be open for this key command to work.

Lastly, if the voices provided in these programs are still distasteful to you, there are some very clear-sounding realistic computer voices available for download today.

As always, if you need assistance with setting up some of these things or have questions, feel free to call or email me at (307) 277-0582 or chris@expressable.org.

If you need help setting up screen dimming, color filters or any other assistive technology on your computer, you could contact Chris. Services are made affordable to individuals not eligible for government services or finding them too difficult to access.

Chris Johnson

Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA)

The ATIA annual conference was held at the end of January in Orlando. There were some interesting new technologies and updates to existing technologies demonstrated at the conference.

A Touchscreen Phone with a Numeric Keypad

The iPhone is the most popular mobile device used by blind and visually impaired individuals.

Irie-AT developed the Kapsys SmartVision2, an Adroid-based phone which attempts to combine the best of both worlds by including both a touchscreen and physical buttons. The device features a traditional touchscreen on the top of its face with a full numeric keypad, arrow keys, and other dedicated buttons such as Home and End Call below the screen. It includes a simplified interface which can be used for making calls, browsing contacts, or sending texts. Other features include a magnifier function that can enlarge up to 7X, a remote assistant mode for those needing help with their device, and full access to Android apps with Google Play. The SmartVision2 Premium includes a book reader, GPS and optical character recognition apps.

Smart Glasses are Getting Smarter

Smart glasses can provide a magnified view of your surroundings for those with usable vision and audible information for anyone wearing one of these devices.

MyEye from OrCam, is a virtual reality headset which can enlarge text, discern faces of nearby people, identify barcodes, and read printed materials. OrCam has made improvements to the system with the MyEye 2.0. The bulky and wired control box has been replaced by a thumb-sized, wireless remote which attaches magnetically to the glasses. The camera is on the end of the remote, and still performs the same functions as its predecessor.

A company called Cyber Timez, has smart glasses called Cyber Eyez, which includes many of the same functions as other smart glasses, but uses mainstream hardware in the form of the Vuzix Smart Glasses. The glasses run Android 6.0 and include a variety of applications as a part of the Cyber Eyez suite including object recognition, Skype video calling, and text recognition. The glasses can recognize 16 billion objects, read text in 100 languages without an internet connection, and identify a wide range of bar codes.

The National Braille Press, in conjunction with Squirrel Devices released the Tactile Caliper, a simple device which can be used to measure objects with precision down to 1/16 of an inch. The measurements are displayed in Braille as the mechanical portion of the caliper moves from end of the device to the other. It sells for \$18. A metric version is being released with similar specifications. It will measure to the nearest millimeter and sell for about \$20.

Technology is constantly changing and improving.

Resources

Casper College Occupational Therapy Assistant Program is partnered with the University of Wyoming WATR Program.

They offer a Lab that is open to the community. It is every Thursday from 10-12 at the University of Wyoming in Liesinger Hall, Rm 114. For more information you can contact Theresa Robinett at 307-268-3112 or theresa.robinett@caspercollege.edu. She will even come to your home for evaluations and help with any equipment needed.

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