

# **"Sightings"**

**Wyoming Council of the Blind**

**<https://www.wycb.info>**

**307-629-1916**

**January 2024**

## **President's Message from Cheryl Godley**

**Hello WyCB,**

**We had a successful 2023. Here are a few of the highlights: we increased our membership, awarded a \$1,000.00 scholarship to a Wyoming college student with B/VI, had a successful fundraiser at our Thankful Thursday event in Casper, acquired new board members, had an informative convention, and made significant improvements to our website. We have also created "WyCB Roundup," a monthly conference call that anyone can join to discuss B/VI issues or just to get to know each other in our community of B/VI individuals.**

**For 2024, we are looking to further increase our membership, further improve our website to provide more information on resources for the B/VI community, and offer a \$1,000.00 scholarship for a college or trade school student with B/VI. As always, we will continue to advocate on behalf of issues in**

**Wyoming related to B/VI as necessary, and will educate others (agencies, organizations, and individuals) about who we are and what we do. Another of our goals for this year is to seek financial support through fund raisers, donations, and potentially, grants. This would allow us to create a stronger voice for the B/VI to continue in Wyoming.**

**With your help we will achieve these goals and more. Here's to a successful and productive year for WyCB in 2024!**

**Editor's Note: As promised, below is the second of three take away articles from the "Less Techy Phones" presentation which was a part of our Convention held last September.**

## **Flipping into the World of the Lively Flip Phone**

**by Krista Zwieg, Project Coordinator, (WATR)**

**The Lively Flip is a smart flip phone that has a user-friendly design and many accessibility features. What is a flip phone? It is a small rectangular device that is about the size of a deck of cards when closed. It is compact enough to fit comfortably in your palm. When you open it turns into the size of a small notepad or the size of a passport. The Lively phone has a large dial pad that makes it simple and easy for individuals who rely**

**on touch rather than visual input. It also has a larger screen than a typical flip phone. The screen is not a touch screen, so everything is done with the keypad. On the right side of the device when you have the phone open you can find the volume buttons. On the left side of the device, you will find the auxiliary input which allows users to connect external audio devices, and the charging port. Lively can be Bluetooth-connected for those who like to use speakers for music or connect their phone to their cars. Lively's SOS button which lives at the bottom of the touchpad, allows you to contact the Lively team who are available 24/7 in case of an emergency. This phone also allows the ability to input a one-touch speed dial. Speed dial allows a user to assign a quick and easy-to-remember number to a specific contact.**

**Lively flip phones are designed with a range of accessibility features that enhance the user's experience. Here are some ways that the Lively phone can assist users.**

- Voice commands utilizing Alexa are available. Once it is set up Alexa can help you make calls, send texts, tell you the time, etc.**
- The phone has a static layout or list-based menu that makes it consistent and easy for users to memorize the location of items.**

- Lively has a feature called “Read Out” which will read the screen to you.
- Within the accessibility settings, you can also change the text size to make the text bigger.
- You can also go in and change the highlighting color for the list to find a color that makes it easier for you to see.
- Do I need a specific provider for this phone? The answer is no. You just pick from one of Lively’s 3 plans. These plans are as follows:
- The Basic plan- Includes unlimited talk and text, ask Lively, and Lively rides.
- The Preferred plan - Includes unlimited talk and text, ask Lively, Lively rides, urgent response, and Lively links.
- Premium plan - Includes unlimited talk and text, ask Lively, Lively rides, urgent response, Lively link, care advocate, and nurse on-call. It has a plan for everyone’s needs.

Lively uses Verizon’s cell phone towers, so you do not have to fear not having service. With the use of Verizon’s towers, you will have reliable service. By choosing a Lively plan, you are benefiting from Verizon's network without committing to a Verizon contract. When looking at plans I encourage you to explore the plans that will best fit your needs.

To conclude, the Lively Flip phone has many amazing capabilities that can assist with communication and

**independence. That Is why I like the Lively flip phone. If you are interested in learning more or would like information about phone pricing and plans, please contact Wyoming Assistive Technology Resources (WATR) by email at: [watr@uwyo.edu](mailto:watr@uwyo.edu) or by phone at: 307-766-6187.**

## **Announcing Our Annual Scholarship**

**By Debra Thompson, board member**

**The Wyoming Council of the Blind's (WyCB) annual scholarship for visually impaired or blind students is now open for applicants. The deadline for applying is April fifteenth.**

**Please let everyone you know who is qualified and preparing to go to college or a trade school to go to our website and apply for our scholarship. The address is:  
<https://www.wycb.info/wycb-scholarship>**

**If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact our scholarship chair, Debra Thompson at 307-389-2060. We are looking forward to getting applicants for this scholarship.**

# **Mindfulness**

**By Sara Sexton, board member**

**For several years before I lost my eyesight, I had been exploring and practicing with the realm of Buddhism. I adored the empathetic and nurturing methods instilled by this world view.**

**Two of the many cornerstones of Buddhism are gratitude and mindfulness. The practice of gratitude came to me easily. Mindfulness, however, always seemed just out of reach.**

**Defined, mindfulness is: a mental state reached by focusing on the present moment while calmly acknowledging one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations. It is commonly used in therapeutic settings to help reduce anxiety and ease intrusive thoughts.**

**It wasn't until I was plunged into total darkness in October of 2019 that I was afforded the chance to become mindful. I learned very quickly that without the guidance of my eyes, I had to be mindful of what my other senses were telling me. If I chose to not be mindful, things went poorly very fast.**

**When I choose to not be mindful, I knock over full cups of hot tea or walk into door jams or bend over into tables, or put caramel sauce on my hot dog instead of mustard.**

**When I choose mindfulness, I can finely dice an onion, light a roaring fire, locate a pen that has dropped on the floor, or cross a busy street without incident.**

**Being able to deeply practice mindfulness has been truly enriching and gratifying. Pairing my gratitude practice with my mindfulness practice has made this new path that I have to navigate more manageable and less frightening.**

**One of my favorite Zen proverbs is: “let go or be dragged.”**

**If I cling to my once sighted life, I will not be present here and now. I will not have gratitude. I will miss out on the warmth of the sun on my face as I walk my guide dog through the snowy streets of Buffalo. I would not hear the deep and steady breathing of my child at night. I wouldn't notice the distinct yet subtle scent of the snow melting into the decomposing leaves.**

**To miss out on any of that would be tragic. So, I choose to be present and grateful for all of the sensations that so richly inform my moments.**

## **Update on Funding for Talking Books Program**

**By Tom Lealos, Vice President**

**As you may recall, back in 2021/2022 WyCB, along with help from other state and federal agencies, organizations, and many of you, our members, waged a very successful effort to convince our state legislature to continue the funding for the Talking Books Program (TBP) in Wyoming into June of 2024. Since the TBP is not a line item in the state budget, the funding for this program must be considered during each budget session which is coming up again in 2024.**

**To this end, we contacted the Superintendent of Public Instruction office in October of last year to see if the funding for the TBP was in doubt for the next two-year time frame. A reply from Linda Finnerty from that office indicated that the funding was not in jeopardy. This is great news.**

**WyCB will continue to monitor this funding issue. If a situation arises that would cause Wyoming's TBP patrons to mobilize again we will contact you. As important as this program is to all of us, it cannot be taken for granted.**



**In the meantime, please use and enjoy the wide variety of books provided by the NLS system using the TBP. The folks at VOS are available to help you get signed up to participate in this outstanding program.**

## **Don't be Afraid to Try**

**By Gary Olson, board member**

**While I was growing up, I didn't have many opportunities to learn how to cook. So, after my wife Ilene and I got married, I asked her to assist me in acquiring some cooking skills. I did this in part because I wanted to learn how to cook for my own enjoyment and increase my independence. However, I also wanted to learn how to cook so I could assist her and hopefully make her work as a wife and mother easier. At this time my cooking skills are still fairly limited, and although I don't practice them all of the time, I've had some fun and a few good laughs over the years as the result of various circumstances that have taken place surrounding the preparation of different foods.**

**Several years ago, Ilene had to attend a business seminar in South Dakota. She had a friend watch our children while I stayed at home to work. Part of the time when I was alone was on a weekend, so I had some extra time on my hands. On**

Saturday afternoon, I decided that I was hungry for a steak. I knew the way to a local grocery store and decided to grab my cane and walk to the store to purchase my steak. I knew the owner well and was confident that he would select a good piece of meat for me. I had never cooked steak before, but I had fried lots of hamburgers. I felt sure I could cook a steak because I didn't think it would be much different than preparing hamburgers. When I purchased my steak from Mr. Toponce, I asked him how to prepare it. He told me how to set the stove dial and said, "if you begin to smell smoke, call the fire department and get out!" Upon returning home, I was able to cook my steak without incident and enjoyed a nice meal. Afterwards I sat back feeling proud that I had prepared it independently and it had tasted so good.

The next day I decided to resort to my specialty of hamburgers and hash brown potatoes for my main meal and chose to heat up a can of cream corn for a little treat, as cream corn is one of my favorite foods. When it was ready to eat, I decided to add a bit of salt to it. When I tasted the corn I found, much to my dismay, that it contained enough salt to gag a maggot. To my surprise and disgust, I found that someone had taken the lid off of the saltshaker. I hate to waste food, so I stirred the corn hoping to mix the salt in enough so I could stand to eat it. I ate as much of the corn as I could handle without becoming nauseated from the salt and had to throw the rest away.

**After dinner, I decided to bake a chocolate cake to surprise my family with a treat when they came home. I had received training on how to bake a cake from a good friend a few months earlier and thought this would be the perfect time to see if I could bake a cake and frost it independently. Because of the success I had enjoyed the night before in preparing my steak, I had increased confidence that my cake would turn out well. To make the cake, I used a cake mix and canned chocolate frosting. After I got the cake out of the oven and it was cooling, I felt it and saw that it felt normal. It was rounded in the middle and sloped evenly to the edges of the pan just like the beautiful cakes Ilene makes. Since all was well, I proceeded to frost the cake. After it was frosted, I put it up in the cupboard. Although I was hungry for a piece of it, I decided not to spoil it by cutting into it. I wanted my family to see the whole cake just as I had made it and be the first people to enjoy eating it.**

**When they arrived at home, I told them that a surprise awaited them in the cupboard. No one said too much about the cake. This was surprising to me, because I thought that Ilene would complement me on the appearance of the cake. Nevertheless, the children seemed to think it was good. Later I learned, after quizzing our two older boys, who had said nothing about the cake, that when my "masterpiece" was discovered, it looked**

like the Mount Saint Helens eruption had taken place in the middle of it! To my surprise, the boys said it was all torn up and had little resemblance to a chocolate cake. Some areas had lots of frosting and some parts had no frosting at all! When I learned this, I was bummed out to the max! I couldn't understand what had happened to my beautiful cake. After all, I had been so careful in frosting it, or so I thought!

When I asked her what I had done wrong, Ilene explained that the cake was probably too warm when I had tried to frost it. In addition, she suggested that because the frosting was cool and stiff, it was hard to spread it evenly without tearing the cake. Ilene told me that I would have had an easier time frosting the cake and would have had better results if I had warmed the frosting just a little in the microwave beforehand.

Shortly after my cake-baking episode, I saw it as a negative experience overall, because the cake didn't turn out exactly like I planned. My family didn't see the experience in the same light, however. Ilene thought it was good that I had tried something new on my own. Of course, the children probably enjoyed the taste of the cake as much as they would have if the cake had looked perfect.

**Now I look back on the experience differently. I'm glad I made the cake because it was a way in which I could show love to my family. My actions certainly achieved this despite the way the cake looked. My hope is that from reading this story, you will realize that you can try new tasks you might otherwise be hesitant to tackle. Attempting new tasks is how we grow. If our efforts don't always bring us the results we seek, we must try not to become discouraged. All is not lost! Sometimes the experiences we have that do not turn out exactly as we plan are the spice of life! They are often for our good, especially if we learn from them.**

## **Articles for our Newsletter are Encouraged**

**By Editor Tom Lealos, Vice President**

**From its beginning, “Sightings” has been for, and by, our members and other interested folks in Wyoming. It is not just a “newsletter.” Consider it to be more of a means for us to share useful, interesting, uplifting, motivational, techy, sad, and funny information and stories with each other.**

**The submission of articles is not limited to just officers and directors. There must be other members out there who would**

**like to share some information. So, c'mon, boys and girls, jump in and help us out with an article.**

**If you are so inclined, your articles can be sent to me at: [twlealos47@gmail.com](mailto:twlealos47@gmail.com) or to [editor@wycb.info](mailto:editor@wycb.info).**

**We are currently publishing three newsletters a year. They will come out at the end of February, June, and October, so your articles should be submitted by mid-January, mid-May, and mid-September. If you have any questions about an article that you might be considering, you can reach me by phone at our WyCB number: 307-629-1916 or at my home number: 307-764-3664. I look forward to hearing from you.**