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Editor's Note

by Bob Collier

Warm greetings to you as we embrace the arrival of spring! Spring is a season that awakens our senses, inviting us to enjoy the beauty of nature's transformation. Unfortunately, the sighted often take for granted the vibrant colors, fragrant blossoms, and gentle warmth. But I realize that for those who are blind or visually impaired, the arrival of spring may present unique challenges and opportunities.

Through our collaboration, we can explore various ways to make spring more accessible to the blind and visually impaired community. Whether it's through descriptive audio guides for outdoor activities, tactile experiences to appreciate the textures of blooming flowers, or accessible gardening workshops, there are countless possibilities to enhance your engagement with the season. I hope that each of you finds ways to enjoy the upcoming season!

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any ideas, suggestions, or projects you would like to explore in upcoming issues of the Chronicle. Not being visually impaired, I don't always have a good handle on topics that

you need or enjoy. I am excited about the potential for a magazine that is really useful and relevant to all of you.

In this issue, I am testing a new idea that was suggested by a previous editor of the Chronicle. I have asked fifth grade students at Carthage, Missouri Intermediate School to write articles relevant to the blind or visually impaired. With the help of their teacher (my daughter-in-law, Amy Collier), I have chosen the essay that I think is best. I hope you will let me know if this is something that we would like to do again in the future. I feel it is important to know what our youth know and feel about people with disabilities.

Please remember that you can move smoothly and quickly to different articles by performing a control click on any table of contents item.

President's Report

by Chip Hailey

Greetings MCB family and friends. It's been a very busy and active start to the first quarter of the year. I've been involved in so many different projects that there never seems to be enough time in the day to get everything done.

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Last December I attended the first SSP Support Service Provider) Task Force meeting in Jefferson City sponsored by the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The objective of the Task Force is to come up with ways that might improve the services of the SSP Program for all of the deaf-blind participants.

I also participated in Descriptathon 10 which began last November and continued until February 8, 2024. A Descriptathon is a hackathon-like collaborative workshop and competition designed to create more inclusive public places. The participants this time were mostly from U.S. National Park Service sites, aquariums and zoos around the country, the Blinded Veterans Association, the Royal National Institute of Blind People, and the Canadian Council of the Blind. This Descriptathon happened in a walled garden, under standard research protocols to protect the anonymity of the participants. Yet it also is a public research project, with its findings shared liberally.

I served on the Big Hole National Battlefield Team and also served as a Justice. I had participated in Descriptathon 7 a number of years ago and found it to be very informative and engaging and was asked if I would participate in Descriptathon 10.

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I was hesitant to do it considering my busy schedule, but nevertheless, I decided to once again participate.

I am also very pleased to announce that we have our MCB website back up and running again although not quite full functioning, but we're getting much closer. I encourage you to check it out and send any feedback to Debbie and Tobie Sanders, our new MCB Multimedia co-chairs who have been doing an outstanding job since taking over the position.

We also have two of our e-mail listservs back up and running again and could really use your help to alert anyone you might know that we would love to have them subscribe to our MCB-Chat and MCB-List.

I'm also continuing to participate in "Hump Wednesdays" which is a weekly Zoom call for all ACB State and Special Interest Affiliate Presidents, which is designed to be a platform for sharing ideas of ways to resolve common issues as well as to serve as a means of communicating and offering words of encouragement.

I've also been working with the MCB Strategic Planning Committee on updating our strategic plan. While things have been a bit slow, I'm confident by the time we've

completed the entire project, MCB will be the much better for it.

I've also been working closely with the Fundraising Committee, the Special Services Committee, the Public Relations Committee, and the Convention Committee, as well as assisting with some of our other committees when I can.

I have also been enjoying the Leadership Development course being conducted by Debbie Sanders and have found John C. Maxwell's book *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork*, an absolute marvelous book and would strongly encourage anyone interested to sign up for the next course and be sure to get a copy of John C. Maxwell's book. You won't be disappointed, I guarantee it! (Available on Audible).

By the time you get this issue of the MCB Chronicle, I probably will have gone and returned from Washington D.C again for the ACB mid-year meetings and legislative seminar and will have attended our MCB Legislative Days in Jefferson City. Perhaps I'll have more to say about the mid-year meetings next time but will leave the legislative part up to our MCB Education and Advocacy Chair, Kim Reese.

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I'll be attending the Power Up Conference and Expo again this year in April and am eager to hear and learn what new devices are available to those of us with visual impairments. The dates are April 8-9, 2024. If you have any questions or need any additional information regarding the Conference, please contact Jamie Schieber/Valerie Gohring, Custom Meeting Planners at jamie@custommeetingplanners.com or valerie@custommeetingplanners.com.

I'm also very much looking forward to our in-person April Board meeting to be held at the Hilton Garden Inn in Independence. If you're in the area, please feel free to stop by and listen in on one of our Board meetings and enjoy our Friday evening get-together. The dates are April 19-20, 2024.

I'll also be attending this year's MOKA Conference for the Blind, a consumer-focused regional conference for those dealing with vision loss. MOKA stands for Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Arkansas. This year's Conference will be held at the University Plaza Hotel in Springfield, May 28-30, 2024.

At the time of this writing, I'm once again the Chair-elect for the Missouri Assistive Technology Advisory Council and will take over as Chair in the fall. I've been serving on

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this Council for quite a number of years and have thoroughly enjoyed it and absolutely love working with my fellow Advisory Council members.

I'm also representing MCB on the Governor's Council On Disability. I've been doing this for the past several years and will continue as long as I'm able to do so.

In closing, I would like to once again encourage you to attend our Friday afternoon MCB Board Office Hours. The call is open to anyone who wishes to attend. Participants are free to ask questions and make comments. The time is 2:00 pm and the call-in number is 206-806-9756. Everyone is welcome and free to invite a friend or family member.

Should you wish to contact me, please feel free to do so at: Chiphaley52@gmail.com or 417-540-9703.

Have a great spring everyone, and we'll catch you right back here next time.

"Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement; nothing can be done without hope." Helen Keller

Affiliates Reporting

Library Users Group of Missouri

by Brian Wekamp

The Library Users of Missouri met by way of conference call on January 22, 2024. There were about 10 people on the call. We would like to thank the people who participated in the fundraiser with Farmstead Nuts and Treats. Look for another fundraiser later this year.

The Library Users of Missouri will be providing funds to Wolfner library for the first Mail-and-Make Adult Crafts. The Library Users of Missouri held elections for 2024. The following were elected: Kerry Smith, President; Daniel Lagoo, Vice President; Susan Sanderson, Treasurer; and Joe Dobbs, Secretary. Two directors are Brian Wekamp and Kathy McCracken.

Our next meeting will be sometime in April; watch the list serv for time and date.

A.T.I.

by Bev Kaskadden

The Adaptive Technology Inc. special-interest affiliate is strong and doing well. Since COVID caused us to work virtually, our membership, like other organizations, has dropped. We need your help to get it back to be one of the largest special-interest groups. We still meet monthly via zoom.

Thanks to Linda Coccovizzo, our guest speakers have presented us with new ideas and interesting information. From time to time, we have a “question-and-answer session.” We always have questions, and if you are lucky, we have answers. If you miss a meeting, you can always call the MCB information line to hear the call later. That number is 773-572-6387.

Every quarter we award an attendance prize to one of our members. Debbie Plumley was January’s lucky winner.

It is not too late to join A.T.I. The annual dues are \$15.00 for individuals and \$25.00 for married couples. One good benefit of being a member is receiving the A.T.I. newsletter. Thanks to April Gray for getting this out for us. She does an awesome job writing this publication. We will

be putting this out on the Missouri list and the chat list just this one time to let non-members see what they are missing.

Remember, the monthly A.T.I. call is held on the third Thursday of each month. If anyone has any suggestions for a monthly topic, please contact me. Beverly Kaskadden, bkaskadden@gmail.com, 636-561-6947 or 636-541-2503

Missouri Braille Revival League

by Kerry Smith

I would like to announce The Missouri Braille Revival League's officers for 2004: President, Kerry Smith; Vice President, Donna Siren; Treasurer, Jack Lenk; Secretary Sabrina Fowler; and Directors Anna Schell and Mike Hamm.

We would like to invite you to join this affiliate in order to help promote braille. In 2024, as President, I would like to have new and old members to go into the schools and promote braille to the public.

"A person who is severely impaired never knows his hidden sources of strength until he is treated like a normal

human being and encouraged to shape his own life."
Helen Keller

Committees Reporting

Bylaws/Resolutions Committee

by Janelle Edwards, Committee Chair

Several changes were made to our bylaws at our last convention. To receive a copy in your MCB format-of-choice, contact the MCB office.

Proposed bylaw or standing rule amendments, or resolutions, may be submitted by two MCB members, an MCB committee, a regular affiliate, or a special-interest affiliate. Proposed bylaw amendments and resolutions must be submitted to me by July 15. These proposals, as well as proposed standing rule amendments received by July 15, will be distributed in preferred formats to all MCB members, get a passage recommendation from the bylaws and resolutions committee, and can be passed with a majority vote by the assembly at convention. Proposed amendments to the standing rules submitted after July 15 may also be passed by the assembly at convention, but a two-thirds vote will be required.

If a regular affiliate does not have a member on the bylaws and resolutions committee, or the designated member has changed, the affiliate's president must notify the office by September 1 concerning which member will represent the affiliate. A change may be made later in some circumstances.

Member of the Month Committee

by Wanda Matlock, Chair

We would like to congratulate the November 2023, December 2023, and the January 2024 Member-of-the-Month Recipients! We also want to thank everyone who sent in nomination letters. We welcome and appreciate every letter we receive, so keep sending them in. Below this report, please find the recipient letters for November 2023, December 2023, and January 2024. If you wish to read previous letters, you can find them in the December 2023 issue of the MCB Chronicle.

Happy Spring to everyone from the Member of the Month Committee!

If you have any questions about this program, please contact one of the committee members listed below.

Nancy Hodson: (417) 569-0802

Bob Jaco: (314) 989-9196

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Wanda Matlock: (573) 379-3880

Wmatlock561@gmail.com

November

Hi Wanda,

I would like to nominate Treva Patton for member of the month. Treva currently serves as our Treasurer for AGAPE Council of The Blind in St. Louis, Missouri. Not only is Treva an officer, but she is also an exemplary leader, and of the utmost highest standard. She helps the visually impaired community in many ways by serving as a guide, proofreader, decorator, and assisting with many activities. She always makes herself available and goes above and beyond to help. Even though she works a full-time job that requires her to travel back and forth from St. Louis to Kansas City, she stays up late nights planning and organizing our events. Treva deserves to be recognized as a member of the month.

Thank you,

Tracy Anderson, AGAPE Council of the Blind

December

To the Member-of-the-Month Committee,

I would like to nominate Debbie Sanders for Member of the Month. She has only been in MCB a few years, but has already helped MCB out numerous times. She has served as Scholarship Committee Chair and filled in as MCB State Secretary. Debbie, along with her husband, Tobie, now serves as co-chair of the Multimedia Committee. She has stepped up numerous times to help MCB during a critical time of need. Last year at our State Convention, Debbie also helped her husband Tobie with the sound system and is now assisting with the formatting of the Chronicle. We very much appreciate everything Debbie has and continues to do for our organization.

Submitted by Linda Gerken

January

I would like to nominate Ginger Fremont for member of the month. She is with Saint Charles County Council of The Blind. She is a wonderful person. She goes above and beyond. She will go out of her way to pick people up. She goes out of her way at a function to help you. If you need anything, she is right there. She is very sweet and

soft-spoken. But she is willing to help wherever possible. If any of us call her for a ride, she does not hesitate to give us a ride. She is a great asset to Saint Charles County Council of The Blind. And she is very much appreciated. All of us love her so much. We are so glad that she is there in our organization.

Submitted by Kim Reese

Sports & Recreation (S&R)

by Wilma Chestnut-House

Well, MCB people, I have some important dates listed below:

We have permission to start water aerobics at Missouri School for the Blind. We do not have a date for this yet. I need to see how many people are interested. Get with me and let me know if this is for you. The class will start once a month in the evenings. I am working on transportation for this.

We will have a float trip on June 14-16, 2024, at Bass Resort in Steelville, MO. We have enough space for 17 people; I am person number 18. We will arrive on Friday, spend the night in 2 cabins (9 people per cabin), float on Saturday, and spend the night again. We will depart on

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Sunday. If you want a cabin, there is a 2 night minimum. There is a kitchen in each cabin and bonfire pits.

We will have three, 8-person floats with 6 people in each float. That gives us room for coolers for water, soda, and fruit while on the ride. Food will be included. All of this is at a cost of \$150 per person. If you don't mind, no kids this time! The adults need to try it out before the kids come. If you want to participate, your first payment of \$50 is due by March 1. The second payment of \$50 is due by April 1, and the last payment of \$50 is due by May 1.

The second date is September 12-15, 2024. This is for camping again. After the last camp trip, it was suggested that we add an extra day, so I added Thursday. This extra day will add \$5 more (\$80 for adults and \$40 for children).

We have a leader for archery, the same person for swimming, and the same guy for fishing and drumming. We will actually play some beep baseball (just for fun) and do some more zip lining. We will still have horseback riding and some nice walks. We might do some other things. We posted some of our camp pictures on the MCB web site. Take time to check them out. Your full payment will be due by July 15, 2024.

If you have any questions about either of these trips, please feel free to contact me at (314)873-9022. Once again, I am asking all affiliates to have someone in your group to contact me about any activities you would like.

Multimedia Committee

by Debbie and Tobie Sanders

We are happy to report that as the newly-appointed Multimedia chairs, we have successfully migrated the website over to a new host and have moved all the email lists back over to the Groups.io platform – a platform that is easier to administrate. We will be working on revamping the website back to the WordPress platform over the next few months in order to allow our newly formed Multimedia team the opportunity to maintain and update in order to help save on expenses. If you or someone you know has some HTML or WordPress experience and would like to serve 2-5 hours a month to help build and maintain the content of the site, please email Tobie or me at mylimitlessvision@gmail.com. If you are currently not subscribed to the MCB-List or MCB-Chat list and would like to be, simply send a blank email to MCB-List+subscribe@groups.io, or MCB-Chat+subscribe@groups.io, respectively. If you no longer

wish to be on the lists, you will need to unsubscribe by sending a blank email to:

MCB-List+unsubscribe@groups.io or MCB-Chat+unsubscribe@groups.io respectively. If you need something added on to the website or see something that needs to be changed, just email us.

Summer Camp Committee

by Bev Kaskadden

The Summer Camp Committee has been working hard this year with changes from Cobblestone. These changes are not coming from MCB, but hopefully they will benefit everyone in MCB.

The first change is the deadline date for the first session in June. We have been asked to submit deposits and cabin placement for the first session by April 3rd. With that in mind, we must have all applications for the first session in by March 15th. I will be notifying all affiliates of this major change, and hopefully word will get out in time.

The next change is the date for the extended weekend session. Cobblestone will not be available after the middle of August, so we will be combining the weekend with the week-long sessions. In other words, if you want to come for Thursday through Sunday, you can do that during

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either first or second week sessions. I am encouraging you to choose the second week since we have a minimum count to pay to Cobblestone. I realize this is probably more information than you want to know, but I want everyone to understand the need for these changes.

The dates for first session are June 3 through the 9th; extended weekend during this week is June 6 through the 9th. Second session is July 29 through August 4th; extended weekend is August 1 through the 4th.

The good news is the member cost has not changed from last year, \$100 for adults and \$90 for children. Extended week-end cost is still \$75.00. If you choose the extended weekend, the check-in time and departure time is slightly different. You can check in on Thursday at 3:00 p.m. and check out after breakfast at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday.

More good news: I requested \$500 from MCB to be added to the Otella Grant account since we were running low. This was approved. The grant has been such a successful opportunity for first-timers to attend camp, that I felt it should be continued. We did have to make a guideline change for this grant. The guidelines now state that recipients must have never attended camp.

I realize that there may be questions concerning these changes, so please contact me with your questions. Change is good, right? We do not want to get stale. I am ready to get my swimsuit and shorts out for Cobblestone! Camp is such an inspirational program provided through MCB. Spread the word.

Again, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or my committee.

Beverly Kaskadden, bkaskadden@gmail.com 636-561-6947 or 636-541-2503

Celita White at the MCB office or Tammie Schnelle, 314-255-9367

Transportation

by Robyn Wallen, Transportation Chair

The transportation committee did not have a meeting in November or December last year because of the holidays, but that doesn't mean things did not go on behind the scenes. We continue to look for new transportation resources to be added to the transportation list and will be trying to remove any no longer in business. Unfortunately, with the new transportation challenges since the pandemic, companies trying to fill the void come and go. It

is quite costly to run any kind of transportation service even with the best intentions.

One of our members, Debbie Platner, is working hard in the Joplin area to attend meetings and advocate for new transportation and the reinstatement of the local trolley. She is a very dedicated worker, and her passion will go a long way to making this happen. Unfortunately, as we all know, those wheels often turn slowly, but just showing up to meetings and contributing her thoughts goes a long way. Deanna Noriega has been sharing any transit information she receives.

The St. Louis area is still facing major problems with our Metro Transit Call-A-Ride Program. MCB members as part of the S.M.A.R.T (St. Louis Metropolitan Alliance for Reliable Transit) participated in a virtual rally along with other community members where we sent over 165 public comments to the Bi-State Development Board of Directors expressing our dissatisfaction with the current service. A little earlier in the fall, Barbara Sheinbien (MCB), Jeanette Mott Oxford (J-Mo Paraquad), Elton Thomas (Lighthouse for the Blind), Lori Becker (Starkloff Disability Institute), Seyoon Choi (NFB), Jenny Carmack (NFB), Etafia Unami (MCB) and I testified before the St. Louis County Council to ask that \$200k of the \$128M dollars St. Louis County

gives to Metro Transit be used to hire an independent consultant to look over the current service model and hold Metro accountable. We testified at 3 different county council meetings, but in the end, we could only push so far because we did not want them to lose all of the funding. The result was that only one council member voted against funding them, and the council did not feel that they had the authority to tell them how to spend their money. The good news is that they do intend to ask for more frequent reporting and are going to watch very closely to see if anything has changed in the coming year. They gave very firm warnings that they would be watching their progress. While it was not exactly what we asked for, Metro did indeed hire an ADA consultant. (We had hoped for someone not paid for by them directly so they would not have complete control over who it was, but that did not happen).

They hired a man named Jeff Segovia also known as the ADA Guru. He has worked with several systems across the country on ADA issues. While Metro has tried to limit his access to the public, I was able to connect with him, and we had two very productive Zoom meetings with him. I do feel really good about him. He will be onsite in St. Louis this week. On Thursday evening, S.M.A.R.T had our weekly group Zoom with Mr. Segovia as the guest so that he could speak directly to community members.

Several MCB members including Anna Schell, June Smith, Etafia Unami, Robert Jaco, myself, and others were on that call, and many of us shared information with him.

S.M.A.R.T will also be going to hold another virtual rally before the next Metro Transit Board of Commissioners meeting in February. In case you don't know what S.M.A.R.T is, it is a coalition of community organizations, service providers, and citizens working for better transit. The group is co-facilitated by Jeanette Mott Oxford, Seyoon Choi, and Teowna McGraw of Paraquad with assistance from myself. There are currently 74 members of this coalition who represent MCB, NFB, the Lighthouse for the Blind, and St. Louis Arc. We meet every Thursday evening via Zoom; so any St. Louis members who would like to join our efforts, please email me at robynwallen@gmail.com. We also have a Facebook page. You find a link to the Metro Complaint form on both the MCB website and the S.M.A.R.T Facebook page.

Another win for S.M.A.R.T was that no more routes were cut in December, and in January Metro did add some frequency back in bus service. They are supposedly upgrading their phone system and looking into new scheduling software. We will continue to push for better service in the area.

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We have concentrated a lot on the St. Louis issues this past year because they were the most crucial; however, we do care about the rest of the state. That being said, we need your help. Too often I only hear about problems in other parts of the state through the grapevine, but people are not reaching out. I cannot help with problems that I am not aware of. To that end, we have been reaching out to find some new committee members in Kansas City as well as more rural communities. I have sent out multiple emails asking for volunteers. I only ask you to let me know your past experience in advocacy so that I can put together the best team. When there are problems in local communities, it is always better for those community members to speak up. You don't have to have a lot of experience, but you do have to have a commitment to show up at meetings and do the work. So even if you have never been an advocate before, let me know why you are interested. The only thing I ask is you show up to committee meetings and if there is a need, be willing to attend community meetings. We can help you with the rest. If you want to be a part of better transportation across the state, please email me at Robynwallen@gmail.com. Tell me about yourself, whether you have advocated for transportation, why transportation is important to you, and anything else that you think would make you a good committee member.

We just recently welcomed one new member, Brian Wekamp. Our current committee members are Chair Robyn Wallen, Debbie Platner, Deanna Noriega, Sheile Styron, Tracey Anderson, and Brian Wekamp.

Youth Services

by Linda Gerken

We have been busy helping parents and teachers getting the items that are needed for their students. The Missouri School for the Blind will be hosting the Braille Challenge in February. Working with P.R., we will be giving an information bag to all the students and a prize to the winners. Anna Schell has agreed to help working at the table.

The Children's Vision Summit is also coming up. It is in April in Jefferson City. Again P.R. will be working with Youth Services to give information bags. It is so great when several committees can work together.

As you read this, it is time to be checking the camps that your child may want to attend. Please get those applications in so they can be approved. It is also time to see if your teacher knows what your child may need for

next year. Please let us know as soon as you can. Thanks for letting my committee help you with your child.

"Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadows." Helen Keller

Youth Essay Contest

As I mentioned earlier, I thought it would be interesting to get some young people's ideas on blindness and people with disabilities in general. Therefore, I asked my daughter-in-law, Amy Collier, if her 5th grade class would be interested in participating in an essay contest with the winning essay to be published in this issue of the Chronicle. Her students were very excited to do this. In fact, Amy said that this contest had stimulated more interest than any class project in a long time! We asked the students to respond to the following prompt:

"Persuade your classmates to support the implementation of inclusive practices and tools in schools to ensure blind students have equal access to an excellent education."

Many of the students submitted very good essays, but the following was selected as the most outstanding:

Why We Should Help People that are Blind or Have Another Disability

by Lola James Lightfoot

We should support blind people or someone with a different disability. All of us should be able to have fair and equal opportunities, and be nice to each other. Even if someone else is different, we should include them. Differences do not matter! Here are 3 reasons why we should help and support blind and other people with disabilities.

First is empathy. Learning empathy is important. We should learn empathy so we can learn to understand and share feelings with another and know that sometimes it's hard for someone. Empathy means putting yourself in someone else's shoes. You can learn empathy in different ways, like learning how a blind person does something or how another special-needs person does things. We can encourage people to have empathy by showing them what it is and (and get them) to know how hard it can be for other people.

Second is to provide an equal opportunity for anyone and everyone. In an inclusive classroom, general-education teachers and special-education teachers work together to

meet the needs of a student. According to the article, “Four Benefits of Inclusion,” because special education teachers and regular teachers work together, we are all able to provide equal opportunities and learn the same things. Special students get the opportunities to do what normal students do.

And the third reason is that it's the law. It's the law and morally right to be protective of our rights and for understanding people's rights. According to the article, “Disabilities and Special Education,” it is a federal civil rights law that gives protections to individuals with disabilities. It is illegal to discriminate against people with different disabilities. The law says that people with any kind of disability have to be treated the same way as anyone else. If you treat anyone differently, you could get in big trouble.

I might not know what it is like to be blind or have autism, but I do know what it is like to have a disability. I have a disability that I cannot control called dwarfism. I know what it is like to feel different and be made fun of, but I just brush it off some of the time. Being a little person is not the same as being blind, but we both go through lots of struggles. The struggles that I go through are not being able to reach things or not being able to do what other kids do, like certain sports or things on the playground.

But that's not a problem, because I have the coolest friends that help me. My grandpa, my mom, my sister, and one of my super cool uncles have the same disability that I do. When my grandpa was little, he did not have anyone at home that really understood how it was to be a little person. That is why I am so grateful to have someone that understands.

In conclusion, these are the reasons why we should help and include students, to not make fun of them and to have empathy with vision impairment or any other disability. We can all have fair and equal opportunities, if we all work together, and include everyone, even if they are different.

Please let me know if you would like to have other essays from young people in the Chronicle.

mcbchronicle@gmail.com

Tips, Advice, and Miscellaneous Information

Gardening Tips and Techniques for the Blind

Gardening while blind may require experimentation and adaptation to find the methods and techniques that work best for you. Here are some ideas.

1. Create an Organized Garden Layout

Creating an organized layout for your garden as a blind gardener involves careful planning and utilizing tactile and auditory cues.

Begin by measuring the available space in your garden area. Use a measuring tape or step count to determine the dimensions and layout of your garden beds, pathways, and other areas.

Designate clear and wide pathways throughout your garden to provide easy navigation. Use materials such as gravel, mulch, or stepping stones to create a distinct texture or sound that can be sensed underfoot or with a mobility cane.

Lastly, consider using raised beds or containers for planting. These provide a defined and accessible area where you can concentrate your gardening efforts. Use tactile markers or distinctive textures to identify each bed or container.

2. Use Tactile Markers

Tactile markers can be incredibly useful for individuals with visual impairments to navigate and identify different elements in the garden. Here's how you can use tactile markers effectively:

Select the Right Markers: Choose markers that have a distinct texture or shape, making them easily distinguishable by touch. These could be small objects, textured tiles, raised labels, or even natural materials like stones or shells.

Plant Identification: Place tactile markers near plants to help you identify and differentiate them. You can attach the markers to stakes or insert them into the soil next to each plant. Consider using markers of different shapes or textures for various types of plants, making it easier to recognize them by touch.

Pathways and Boundaries: Create tactile markers to indicate pathways, borders, or edges within your garden. This can be done using materials like rope, twine, or raised strips that provide a tactile guide for navigation.

Labels and Information: Use Braille labels, large-print labels, or raised lettering to provide information about plants, locations, or gardening tools. Attach these labels to pots, garden beds, or tool storage areas for easy identification.

Colors and Contrasts: Choose markers with high-contrast colors or incorporate paint, tape, or other visual elements that can provide additional cues for differentiation and identification.

Regular Maintenance: Ensure that tactile markers are regularly checked and maintained. Replace any markers that have become damaged, faded, or worn out to maintain their effectiveness.

3. Choose Sensory Plants for Your Garden

Sensory plants play a crucial role in creating an immersive and engaging gardening experience for individuals who

are blind. These plants not only provide delightful experiences but also serve as markers and cues for navigation and exploration within the garden.

Here are three categories of sensory plants that are particularly well-suited for blind gardeners:

Fragrant Plants: Fragrance-rich plants provide a captivating olfactory experience. Consider including herbs like lavender, rosemary, or mint, which release delightful scents when touched or brushed against. Additionally, flowering plants such as jasmine, gardenia, or roses can fill the air with their intoxicating fragrance. By focusing on plants with distinct aromas, blind gardeners can enjoy the sensory delight of various scents and even use them as markers to navigate and identify different areas of the garden.

Textural Plants: Plants with interesting textures offer a tactile experience that blind gardeners can appreciate through touch. Incorporate a variety of textural plants, such as lamb's ear with its soft, fuzzy leaves, succulents with their smooth and fleshy surfaces, or ornamental grasses that sway gracefully in the breeze. Additionally, plants with unique bark textures, like the peeling bark of birch trees or the rough bark of certain shrubs, provide added tactile interest.

Auditory Plants: Choose plants that produce sound or respond to touch, creating an auditory dimension in the garden. Wind chimes, when strategically placed, can

create soothing melodies as the wind passes through them. Ornamental grasses rustle and sway, producing gentle whispers in response to even the slightest breeze. Bamboo plants can clack together, creating rhythmic sounds when brushed against. These auditory cues enhance the sensory experience and provide an additional layer of engagement for blind gardeners.

4. Pick the Right Gardening Tools

Blind gardeners can benefit from a range of tools and equipment specifically designed to enhance their gardening experience. It's essential to explore adaptive tools specifically designed for individuals with visual impairments, as they often incorporate innovative features that make gardening tasks more accessible and enjoyable, such as ergonomic, tactile, and audible features.

Look for gardening tools with ergonomic designs that provide a comfortable grip and reduce strain on the hands and wrists. These tools often have cushioned handles or non-slip surfaces for better control. Tactile features such as textured handles or grooves can help blind gardeners differentiate between different tools by touch. Additionally, tools with high-contrast colors or reflective surfaces can make them easier to locate and identify.

Tools that provide audible feedback can be valuable for blind gardeners, too. For instance, pruners or shears with

a built-in click or snap sound when they cut through branches or stems allow users to hear the progress of their actions. Watering devices with audible clicks or changes in sound as the flow adjusts can help regulate watering. These auditory cues provide reassurance and guidance during gardening tasks and help blind gardeners gauge their actions more effectively.

5. Seek Assistance and Support

Seeking guidance and support as a blind gardener can provide valuable resources, knowledge, and a sense of community. Here are a few ways to do so:

Local Gardening Organizations: Look for local gardening organizations, clubs, or community gardens in your area. These groups often offer gardening workshops, classes, and events where you can learn from experienced gardeners. Connect with them to inquire about any resources or support available for blind or visually impaired gardeners.

Online Communities: Join online forums, social media groups, or mailing lists dedicated to gardening for the blind or visually impaired. These communities allow you to connect with like-minded individuals, ask questions, share experiences, and gain insights from others who have faced similar challenges in their gardening journey.

Horticultural Therapy Programs: Explore horticultural therapy programs or initiatives in your region. These programs integrate gardening as a therapeutic activity and

often provide guidance, support, and specialized techniques for individuals with visual impairments. Participating in such programs can offer structured learning opportunities and a supportive environment.

Accessible Gardening Resources: Seek out books, websites, and podcasts that specifically cater to gardening for individuals with visual impairments. These resources may offer practical tips, adaptive techniques, and success stories from blind gardeners. They can provide valuable information and inspiration to help you navigate your gardening journey.

Local Rehabilitation Services: Contact local rehabilitation services or agencies that assist individuals with visual impairments. They may offer specialized training or resources related to adaptive gardening techniques. They can also connect you with professionals who can provide guidance on modifying gardening practices to suit your specific needs.

Gardening When Blind: Final Thoughts

Gardening offers a world of possibilities and joy for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Through adapting techniques, utilizing sensory cues, and accessing resources and support, blind gardeners and gardeners with visual impairments can fully engage in the beauty and therapeutic benefits of gardening journey of gardening as a blind individual may present unique

challenges, but with determination, creativity, and a supportive community, the joys and rewards of tending to a garden are within reach. So, step into the world of gardening and let nature's beauty unfold through your senses as you cultivate and connect with the vibrant world of plants and the joy that it brings.

<http://www.accessiblegardening.com/gardening-guides-articles/gardening-when-blind-visually-impaired/>

"Many of us delude ourselves with the thought that if we could stand in the lot of our more fortunate neighbor, we could live better, happier and more useful lives...It is my experience that unless we can succeed in our present position, we could not succeed in any other." Helen Keller

Member Spotlight

Kerry Smith

K.S. Transcription Service

Kerry has a BA degree in Social Science from Trinity International University and a Computer Office Certificate from Missouri College.

He started his own business in 2001 with the help of a computer and braille embosser equipment provided through Rehabilitation Services for the Blind. He had

training on this equipment from Job Accommodations for the Blind. He has produced a number of documents over the years including: menus, theater programs, documents for blind patients, church materials and much more. He recently has translated to braille a variety of materials for St. Louis Society for the Blind.

If you would like documents put into braille, they must be sent as a Word Document in an e-mail. Kerry will quote a price according to the number of copies and pages involved. He will proof each document for accuracy and quality. He can send documents out in the mail in a timely manner. Kerry can be reached at: 314-591-6537 or by e-mail: Kerry9236@att.net

Officer Spotlight

William Hawkins, MCB Treasurer

William Hawkins, President and CEO of Hawkins Financial Service, has been in the financial field for over 21 years. In those 21 years, he established himself in the insurance field and in the banking field with UMB and also as a financial planner. From the insurance field to the banking field, he began his work providing financial advice and guidance to people of all backgrounds in the Kansas

City community seeking to better their economic situation. His many years as a Sales Manager gave him the experience to provide his employees with the type of leadership that builds a great workforce and instills strong responsibility and accountability measures. He went on to become State Treasurer for the Missouri Council of the Blind and the local organization, The Allied Workers for the Blind. Hawkins is married and has an adult daughter.

He has been a member of MCB since 2001 and is serving as Treasurer for the third term. His accomplishments have included creating an investment policy and helping to open a thrift store that served MCB well as a fundraiser. When asked what his goal for this term is, he said that he wants to stabilize the financials and insert a plan for long-time security.

When asked how membership in MCB has been beneficial to him, Hawkins responded that he has learned about other programs for the blind, has become acquainted with many technological advancements, and has learned more about advocacy for the blind. The message that he would have for other MCB members is to appeal to youth so that the membership in MCB can be replenished.

History and Culture

Don Mahoney: Television Star
By Peggy Chong

The author's research into the early days of television was eye-opening for me. I didn't realize how poorly paid the TV stars of the 1940s and 1950s were. Don Mahoney was one of these hardy pioneers—and my respect for him goes even higher because he was blind. The author asks a number of challenging questions, such as, “Do we, disabled and non-disabled alike, change our view of a person when we label them?” and “Do we see the label first?” Perhaps our answers today are more enlightened than they were in Don Mahoney's time, when he felt compelled to hide his disability from the world, for fear of losing his livelihood.

This is a touching biography. Don grew up a rowdy, fun-loving and goodhearted Texas boy who made his way to Hollywood, where he sang and did stunt work. When his eyesight continued to deteriorate, Don landed a job as a ranch hand, since good eyesight wasn't crucial for that kind of work. Six feet tall, lanky, handsome, and with bright blue eyes, Don appealed to people—especially children and ladies. Later, he became a dance instructor

and manager of a nightclub. In 1948, Don started his radio career with a kiddie show on a Houston station, where he sang and played the guitar. He also married a sighted Texas farm girl named Christine. The couple had four daughters over the years that followed, as Don went from radio to a television career. He was eventually outed by the media as a blind man, but carried on as usual, being his witty, somewhat outrageous self. He made many personal appearances, founded a portrait studio, produced albums, and started a restaurant chain. Blindness never stopped this guy! His life story is inspiring. Just as inspiring, the author herself is blind. theblindhistorylady.com

"We are never really happy until we try to brighten the lives of others." Helen Keller

Inspiration

This is an inspirational interview with Paralympic medalist Susannah Scaroni. Susannah is a paraplegic whose spinal cord was snapped in a car accident when she was five. She is a prime example of just what can be accomplished by persons with disabilities.

Congratulations! You just qualified for your fourth Paralympic Games. How do you feel?

Susannah Scaroni: I feel so great. I'm honored to make the team for USA and I'm really excited! We have an incredibly strong women's field so I'm really excited for next year.

Does the feeling of qualifying for the Paralympic Games ever get old? What is it about the Paralympic movement that is so special?

Scaroni: Absolutely not! It's so challenging to make the Paralympic Games. It's the peak opportunity for me as an athlete and so it's an honor. It really speaks to all the amazing training that I get to have, my incredible support systems, and it's very exciting. This is my fourth Games, as you said. I can remember back to my very first Games in 2012, being a new young athlete, it was just as hard to make that team. Now to be in my fourth games and know there are so many young women who are here because parasports have been embraced and they've allowed opportunities for people with disabilities to be the best, strongest version of themselves. For the impact that it's had not only in my world but in my country, the world—which I've been able to travel all over—and to see the impact of parasports on the disabled community at large. I think the Paralympic movement does so much for every aspect of society and that to me is the most important part.

Aww I love that! What are you looking forward to most about Paris 2024?

Scaroni: First, the competition! There is such a strong women's field right now so there will be incredible racing. But also, there will be a French bakery in the Olympic village so that is almost as exciting for me.

Going back in time, give me one word to describe Susannah Scaroni at your previous Paralympic experiences. Let's start with The London Games.

Scaroni: Excited. I was so excited to be able to race in a marathon—the longest event possible—in an entirely new field for me. It was my first year of marathon racing. I was excited to go into the unknown in something that I love doing.

What about Rio 2016?

Scaroni: I would say motivated. I was really motivated in Rio to put those four years of what I had learned in wheelchair racing on the line that day, and to see what I could do against women who I respect so much, yet had a little more experience racing with.

The Tokyo Games.

Scaroni: I was fearless in Tokyo. I had so much more experience under my belt, but we were going from not

racing with other athletes for like, almost two years at that point. I had gotten to train solo during the pandemic. I had all of that just pent up. I was confident in what I had trained for and I was just planning to do and put everything on the line. I didn't really feel like I had much fear.

How will this Paralympics be different for you the fourth time around?

Scaroni: I think Paris will be different because I am so much more acutely aware of my own strengths and weaknesses. I'm more in tune to my competitors strengths and weaknesses. I have more confidence in myself than I've had in other Games, but I also know that I need to be planning, preparing, and reserving that confidence for when it really matters.

You've really overcome a lot over the last 2 years to get here. You were hit by a car in 2021 yet somehow you were able to come back better, winning several major marathons since. You said you feel like you were given a chance to be here again after your accident. How did it impact your perspective and purpose?

Scaroni: After what happened in 2021, even on a race like [this year's NYC marathon], I did have quite a few race jitters in the morning and that's not very normal for

me. But what I was able to think about was how awesome and what a blessing it is to be alive and to get to be on a start line next to all the people who I love being around. I really attribute a lot of that to picturing myself that morning [after the accident] and how thankful I was to have survived. That really is able to help you quell a lot of nerves that I think are important, but also can't overtake your psyche. That thankfulness to be alive and get to be here was something that I know has helped me for the better since then.

Thank God that you're okay and you've recovered! It's so impressive how you've been able to significantly improve since then. How have you been able to get so much better? What's changed in your training?

Scaroni: I think just having that ultimate gratitude to get to be here is really important. If there is a negative thought of fear or stress, gratitude really is able to overshadow those [feelings]. Being in my training environment at the University of Illinois with an amazing wheelchair racing coach has contributed a lot throughout that process.

From a technical standpoint have there been any small tweaks that you've made to your strategy?

Scaroni: Yes, before Tokyo I did. I went to smaller handlings. That was one thing I do attribute to getting a higher top speed which is really important in our sport.

After 2021, I did actually move into a different racing chair that was a different seating position. While it wasn't what I was planning to do, I did it while I was recovering. That was my only option to train [at the time]. I think I was able to use my gratitude of being able to train to really learn wheelchair racing again in a new position. That has worked out really well for me, clearly.

Every American that qualified for the Paralympics at the NYC marathon went to the University of Illinois. Can you talk about the strength of that program and how much pride you have in being a part of it?

Scaroni: I have so much pride to be a part of that community. The University of Illinois has such a long-standing history of adaptive sports. Not only in sports but it's translated into professional and just human quality of life in that we have some of the most accessible college campuses for people with disabilities. It's just a community of understanding that people with disabilities are humans that need to live their best life. To get to be there where so many incredible athletes have started and have come from...I owe everything I am to those who come before me.

My coach who's incredible, Adam Bleakney, he's still there, humbly encouraging us to be our very best versions of ourselves. It's all really incredible to get to represent the

University of Illinois and how it has impacted wheelchair racing.

You and Tatyana McFadden are two household names in wheelchair racing. Can you talk about your relationship and what you've learned from each other?

Scaroni: When I started back in 2011, at the U of I, I was surrounded by so many amazing wheelchair racers, Tatyana being one of those very important ones. She not only is incredible out on the racecourse, but she welcomed me immediately as I arrived and has been such a great and loyal friend. By getting to train with her every day and race with her, she showed me a lot of things about wheelchair racing that have really served me well. She's a great advocate for the sport and for people with disabilities.

I love that! Switching gears - you passed your registered dietitian exam recently. Congratulations! Can you talk about your passion for nutrition and where that comes from?

Scaroni: I've had a passion for nutrition for a very long time. It actually started inadvertently in high school. I did experience a pretty severe eating disorder. It was really through eating more food and feeling stronger and getting faster that I actually realized the really essential role and function of food for athletes.

Ever since then, it's sparked this interest in what ways in which food can function as a tool in sports. Sports nutrition is a really incredible and evolving field. I love the ability to learn and then as an athlete to apply what I learned and help others also benefit from a great nutrition strategy.

If you could go back in time and give the younger Susannah who was struggling at that time with an eating disorder advice, what advice would you say to your younger self?

Scaroni: I would say that instead of waiting so many years, try eating more and then look at your times and look at your speeds. You're an eighth grader but you have a growing body that's an incredible powerhouse. You need to fuel that growth and it will serve you to get stronger and faster, which are your ultimate goals.

Excerpt from "Blessed to be Alive" by Mary Omatiga
November 22, 2023, nbcsports.com

Quotes

Here are some of the most inspiring quotes of all time:
"The only way to do great work is to love what you do." -
Steve Jobs

“The best way to predict the future is to invent it.” - Alan Kay

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” - Franklin D. Roosevelt

“The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.” - Nelson Mandela

“The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.” - Socrates

“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.” - Helen Keller

“Believe you can and you’re halfway there.” - Theodore Roosevelt

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” - Eleanor Roosevelt

“The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today.” - Franklin D. Roosevelt

Calendar Of Upcoming Events

March 21, 2024

Legislative Day, Jefferson City, MO

May 28-30, 2024

MOKA Conference for the Blind

The MLV (My Limitless Vision) Foundation is excited to announce the upcoming MOKA Conference for the Blind,

scheduled to take place in Springfield, MO, from May 28th to May 30th. This annual event aims to bring together individuals who are blind or visually impaired, along with their families, friends, supporters, and professionals to promote independent living and technology education, advocacy, and community-building.

This year, the MOKA Conference has lined up an extraordinary treat for all attendees. We are thrilled to host a special concert by the incredibly talented Gordon Mote, a Nashville recording artist, pianist, and vocalist. Gordon Motes' exceptional musical abilities have won over hearts across the globe. He has shared stages with some of the biggest names in the industry and promises to be a truly extraordinary experience as he shares not only his talent his blindness journey. Not only will attendees witness his awe-inspiring musical talent, but they will also have opportunities to connect with and celebrate the achievements of other blind individuals, sharing in their experiences and triumphs at the conference. What better way to foster an atmosphere of togetherness and support?

Throughout the MOKA Conference, there will be a range of workshops and panel discussions led by experts in the field, all tailored to address the unique challenges faced

by those with visual impairments. These sessions will cover a wide array of topics, including independent living tips, navigation, accessible technology, personal empowerment, cooking and more. Whether you are visually impaired yourself or a supporter of this vibrant community, there will be something for everyone.

The MOKA Conference provides an ideal platform to network and forge new connections, both on a personal and professional level. Attendees will have the chance to engage with representatives from various organizations and vendors, who will be on hand to share resources, services, and assistive technology options available to the blind and visually impaired community as well as looking at opportunities for employment at our mini job fair.

Registration is currently open. The cost is \$225 and includes all meals but one. Can't attend the whole conference? Purchase a \$50 day pass and have access to the exhibit hall and breakout sessions. Go to <http://www.mokacfb.com> and register today. This transformative event is an opportunity not to be missed as we come together to learn, grow, and celebrate the strength and resilience of the blind and visually impaired community.

June 5-11

Summer Camp, Cobblestone Lodge

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June 30-July 7

ACB Convention, Schaumburg, IL

July 2

Cardinals vs. Yankees game - Win tickets in the Take Me Out to the Ballgame raffle.

July 31-August 7

Summer Camp, Cobblestone Lodge

February 14-18, 2025 (Date Change)

2025 Fundraising Cruise with Dave Steele, the Blind Poet
MLV Foundation will host a fundraising cruise on Norwegian Cruise Line's Jewel ship. Dave Steele, The Blind Poet, will join us as our special guest and share his poetry and blindness journey. MLV Foundation will receive \$50 -\$100 per cabin booked under our group package rate. Let's fill up this ship! Here are the details for the 5-day cruise:

Dates: February 14 – 18, 2025

Ports of Call: Tampa, FL, Key West, FL, Great Stirrup Key, Bahamas, and back to Tampa, FL

Deposit: Deposit of \$125 due within 7 days of booking.

The final cruise payment is not due until October 17,

2024. Payment plans are available.

Inclusive rates include unlimited beverage package, specialty dining (1 for each cabin member), 75 minutes free WIFI, \$50 shore excursion credit, prepaid gratuities, plus fundraising donation to MLV, travel insurance, taxes, and fees.

Balcony rate: \$2,418.90 per cabin (\$1209.45 per person)

Oceanview rate: \$2,202.90 (\$1011.45 per person)

Interior rate: \$1,710.80 (\$855.40).

Call Debbie at 405.939.0573 or e-mail her at blindcruising@gmail.com for more details.

“I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.” - Thomas Edison

On Your Own

In this section, I am including links to articles or services that may be of interest to the visually impaired. You may access them at your convenience. Just click on the links below:

<https://dss.mo.gov/fsd/rsb/seniors.htm>

<https://www.donnajodhan.com/tbln/2022/08012022/>

https://blog.feedspot.com/visually_impaired_blogs/

Board Minutes

November

MCB Board Teleconference - November 30, 2023

Meeting Called to Order at 7:00pm by President Chip Hailey

Prayer: Sabrina Fowler

Roll Call:

Chip Hailey, MCB President

Linda Gerken, MCB Vice President, Blind of Central Missouri

Tracy Anderson, Secretary, AGAPE Council

William Hawkins, Treasurer, Allied Workers for the Blind

Rob Albro, Southeast Missouri United Blind Club

Carl Chappell, St. Louis Northern Lights

Sabrina Fowler, River City Workers of the Blind

Beverly Kaskadden, Director, St. Charles County Council

Wanda Matlock, Director

Anna Schell, Director, United Workers for the Blind

Celita White, MCB Office Manager

Craig Ancell, Delta Area Blind

Not Present:

Roger Jewell, Public Relations Director, Lake Stockton Council (Representing Lake Stockton,

Larry Graves, observing only)

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Wendell Wilcox, Joplin Service Club of the Blind

Welcome online listeners and welcome new secretary, Tracy Anderson, and new Treasurer, William Hawkins.

Approval of Agenda:

Linda Gerken moved to accept the agenda as presented with the exception of Debbie Sanders Leadership Development Course Report. The motion was seconded and passed.

Debbie Sanders Leadership Development Course Report was sent to the Board, but Debbie could not attend the meeting. President Chip Hailey will post the report on the announce list tomorrow.

Approval of Board Meeting Minutes: October 5, 2023, and October 26, 2023 open board meeting minutes:

Carl Chappell moved to accept the minutes, seconded, motion passed.

President's Remarks, Chip Hailey, President:

President Chip Hailey asked MCB committee chairs to take full responsibility for their committees and their administrative duties, instead of contacting the office. The chairperson's duties include tracking, filing, expense reporting, following procedures, and reporting to the

board. The President sent the Board the list of board responsibilities that included an excerpt on fundraising responsibilities as it relates to the promotion of the Raffle Ticket Fundraiser. President Chip Hailey is leading the way with ticket sales, having sold to his friends, family, and local professionals. Other board members are helping promote and sell tickets as well.

Treasurer's Report, William Hawkins, MCB Treasurer: Treasurer William Hawkins stated that over the past 30 days, he and President Chip Hailey have been taking a very close look at the finances and uncovering some issues. They will be working to put together procedures going forward that will make MCB more financially secure over the next year.

The stock account balance as of today, November 30, is \$3,195,710.00. The BMO Harris deposit for today is \$36,366.79. We made a deposit from Raymond James for \$50,000 and paid off our hotel expenses for the Springfield State Convention and paid the credit card balance to zero. The credit card balance was \$19,357.52, and the remaining balance for the hotel was \$18,488.99. Everything for the convention in Springfield is now paid in full.

William also stated that he will be meeting on the MCB open board office hours meeting with Hunter Martiniere on December 1, 2023, discussing how to improve the MCB portfolio and maximize the funds.

Next order of business is getting board approval to move the bank account from BMO Harris. The purpose of the move is a lack of institutional control of the authorizations on the account. They have the responsibility of making sure the appropriate parties on the account are signing MCB checks. We have given the board information on moving the account back to US Bank. US Bank has branches in most of the cities where our members reside. The main account will be set up specifically for a Not-For-Profit organization. It offers both free checking and 1,800 free transactions per year. We will join that together with a Money Market account that will pay 4.5%. There is also an issue with outstanding checks that we have not been able to reconcile back to December 2022. The treasurer and office will provide assistance with financial reporting for committee chairs to present to the Board.

The Treasurer, William Hawkins, stated that in the future there may be some budget cuts to programs.

On our investments, we are receiving a 6% return from our account. We need to be budgeting 4% on the 6%. For

example, if we receive \$100,000 from the Bowman Foundation Fund, we can't spend the \$100,000, only the interest. So, we would need to reduce our expenses to 4% of the 6% return to remain profitable. Based on that information, there are some programs that may need to be cut. We think every program is important; however, we feel that a sacrifice will need to be shared across the board. We think fundraising will help, and we will be putting together a capital campaign letter that will go out to corporations in St. Louis to support MCB programs. Our goal by the end of the year will be to make sure each program has a corporate sponsor. Treasurer William Hawkins recommended the board approve moving the bank account balance from BMO Harris to US Bank. The motion was seconded and passed.

The budget and finance committee includes Treasurer, William Hawkins, President, Chip Hailey, and MCB office manager, Celita White.

Beverly Kaskadden made a motion to extend the time by 10 minutes to ask questions. The motion was seconded and passed.

Budget Ratios:

William Hawkins stated we will have a follow-up meeting to discuss the finances within the next couple of days.

Auditor:

William Hawkins will be researching a new state auditor and will present three proposals for the board to vote on. William Hawkins stated the importance of having an auditor to maintain our program funding.

Approval of Board Standing Rules:

Beverly Kaskadden moved to accept the standing rules additions. The motion was seconded and passed. The new additions adopted will become a part of our agenda standing rules going forward.

Summer Camp Fees:

Beverly Kaskadden stated that she cannot recommend increasing summer camp fees at this time. The camp has to pay for a minimum of 50 adults, and Beverly felt that increasing the cost will decrease participation. Treasurer William Hawkins agrees with Beverly's statement. He stated that this would be a great opportunity for a corporate sponsor. No decision will be made tonight on increasing the fees.

Fundraising:

Jeff Creech, Fundraising Chair, stated that the fundraiser has made \$6,000 so far. It needs to make \$15,000 to break even. Jeff has been promoting the fundraiser on the radio in St. Louis. He is also working on having a booth at the Working Women's Survival show in February. He is hoping to generate monthly revenue from that expo. He will be hosting four trivia nights. The first trivia night will be in March in Columbia, the second one will be held in Springfield in April, the third trivia event will be hosted in Kansas City in August, and the fourth and final will be held in St. Louis in September. Jeff believes that each trivia night will cost \$2000 and will generate \$10,000 each. Jeff will be working with a professional trivia company that will host the trivia at no charge. We are working on sponsorships for the state convention. He's proposing to sell an ad booklet that businesses can purchase ads.

Jeff asked to have a regenerating budget that whatever is spent from his budget for setting up and promoting the trivia or other events, he would like the money to be reimbursed back into his committee's budget. The recommendation was seconded and passed.

Treasurer, William Hawkins stated that there is no line item for a raffle, but that there is a line item for 50-50.

President Chip Hailey asked the Treasurer to add a new line item for a raffle. Wanda Matlock moved to extend the time by 5 minutes. The motion was seconded and passed.

Treasurer, William Hawkins stated that the fundraising budget is actually \$5,000.00 under the new budget.

Adaptive Technology Program Grant:

Joe Morgan stated that his committee received a grant request for an adaptive television 55 inch with audio and a voice remote. The committee voted no because they weren't sure if it falls under adaptive technology guidelines, so they were asking the board to decide. The applicant requested two TVs, but the application was for one. Carl moved to accept the presentation to buy one adaptive television. The motion was seconded and passed.

Debbie Sanders' Leadership Course:

President Chip Hailey had stated earlier in the meeting that he will post the Leadership Report on the announce list.

President Chip Hailey asked if we wanted to pursue looking into a new building location for MCB. The board decided that since MCB owns the building and only pays for the maintenance of the building and at this time would

not wish to take on a mortgage of a new building. Some believe that there are problems with the building, repairs are needed, and there's unused space. But the expenses of maintaining the building in its current condition would be less than renting another space or buying a new building with a mortgage. MCB owns the building, free and clear and is not required to pay taxes due to its tax-exempt status. Anna made a motion to drop the suggestion of selling or renting another space. The motion was seconded and passed.

On October 26, there was a discussion regarding our MCB email list. We would look into the cost of maintaining the complete email list. There is no cost for maintaining the list. Beverly, made a motion to drop the announce list. The motion was seconded and passed.

Linda made a motion that we maintain Missouri L, Chat, Strategic Plan, and President's Lists.
Seconded and passed.

New business:

No new business was presented.

Wanda Matlock made a motion to go into closed session.
Seconded, passed.

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Closed Session

Adjournment

Next Meeting: December 28th, 2023

December

Call to order- President Chip Hailey

Prayer- Beverly Kaskadden

Roll Call - Tracy Anderson

The following Board Members were present:

President Chip Hailey

Vice President Linda Gerken, Blind of Central Missouri

Secretary Tracy Anderson, AGAPE Council

Treasurer William Hawkins, Allied Workers

Rob Albro, Southeast Missouri

Carl Chappell, Northern Lights

Sabrina Fowler, River City Workers

Director Beverly Kaskadden, St. Charles County Council

Director Wanda Matlock

Director, Anna Schell, United Workers

Also present:

Chad Rohr, Co-host

Debbie Platner, Scholarship Committee Chair

Not present:

Public Relations Director Roger Jewell, Lake Stockton

Craig Ancell, Delta Area

Welcome special guests and online listeners. We welcome everyone to join us each month on the fourth Thursday unless it falls on a holiday.

Chip Hailey, President

Approval of Agenda

Linda made a motion to accept the agenda with exceptions. Debbie Sanders was not present to give a Committee Chair list recommendation and there was no information regarding the hotel from Brandy Jones for the April Spring board meeting. A professional personnel issue was added to the closed session. Seconded. Passed.

Approval of Board meeting minutes, November 30, 2023

Linda made a motion to accept the November 30 meeting minutes as written. There was discussion about the auditor proposal as stated in the minutes and whether to amend the motion. Treasurer William Hawkins clarified he will speak with a previously used auditor, Stopp and VanHoy, as well as others to make a recommendation to the board in January. He stated no auditor had been hired. The motion was seconded and passed.

President's Remarks,
Chip Hailey President

The president attended the SSP Task Force meeting on December 21, 2023, in Jefferson City at the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing. The purpose of the meeting was to share ideas to improve the SSP program, which stands for Support Service Provider for the Deaf-Blind. The Task Force will meet every other month. He was also asked to participate with an audio description technology company called Descriptathon to develop audio descriptions for the Blind and Visually Impaired, who visit state parks. He is also looking forward to attending the ACB mid-year meeting and Legislative Seminar from March 1st through the 6th in Washington, DC, along with the Education and Advocacy Chair, Kim Reese.

The president gave an update on the website and email list; he then invited everyone to subscribe to the lists. The website will be managed by a new webmaster, Koral Martin and Beau Barnhart temporarily and should be fully functional within the next couple of weeks.

Treasurer's report - William Hawkins MCB treasurer. The treasurer stated that the financials for 2022 and 2023 were completed ahead of schedule and are ready to be audited. A financial policies manual was created for the office staff and anyone who works there. A copy of the manual will be sent to the Board. The Treasurer also

stated definitions were added to each Chart of Accounts describing what goes in there for tracking purposes. The credit card and checking accounts are balanced for 2022-2023 and are ready to move to US Bank. A report of outstanding checks will be sent to the committee chairs. Celita was trained and organized with the help of Jerry and account temps.

The BMO Harris bank account balance as of the close of business on December 28, 2023, was \$23,515.14, and the Raymond James account was \$3,275,201.00. The total including all assets is \$3,298,716.15. The annual return from Raymond James account from January 1 through the close of business on December 28 was 6.72%. William stated the account has done well across the board.

Beverly clarified a policy of choosing a new auditor every five years. She will locate a finance-and-accounting policy document from 2016 regarding auditors and proposal submissions to share with the board members. William expressed concern with the five-year policy. The Treasurer will ask the Policies and Procedures Chair to review.

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Establishing an email list for all MCB committee chairs: a recommendation from Debbie Sanders was tabled.

Hilton Garden Inn proposal for our in-person April Board meeting: this proposal has been tabled.

Report on the 2024 MCB Scholarships -Debbie Platner
MCB Scholarship Committee Chair

Debbie had questions regarding committee procedures, scholarship budget, and membership questions. Wanda agreed to provide information to Debbie regarding scholarship procedures. Debbie stated she would like to contact potential members in her region. The President suggested Debbie contact William Hawkins, Treasurer, and Patrick Patton, Membership Chair with questions.

Resignation of Raymond Bishop - former Multi-Media
Committee Chair

Linda moved to accept Raymond Bishop's resignation and keep the letter on file. Seconded. Passed.

New Business

There was no new business.

Closed Session

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Announcements

Next Meeting: Thursday, January 25th, 2024 at 7 PM

Adjournment

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