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## October, November, December 2007 Newsletter

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### Director's Report

Greetings to all of you!

I am definitely a summer person. Give me the heat and humidity! However, the oppressive heat and unrelenting temperatures of this summer have made me cry "uncle" and welcome fall.

During the last quarter, BGCB has made 15 walk-in, phone, or email referrals. Through our website, we had 1,066 pages loaded, 721 unique visitors, 704 (of the 721) first time visitors, 17 returning visitors. The most popular pages accessed were: Index page, Current News Letter, Upcoming Events, News to Use.

I must admit, the monthly VIP meetings are the highlight of my position here at BGCB. I have never felt a dread or stress over finding speakers, and I love coming up with lunch menus. My favorite part of the meeting is the

friendly camaraderie and support that comes with the folks attending. I left yesterday's meeting chuckling to myself, a lump in my throat, and a warmth in my heart. Our speaker was forced to cancel but even that wasn't bad since he was rushing to the hospital to welcome a new grand child. The group welcomed a young woman blinded 14 months ago due to an illness. She arrived with her mom and 2 delightful daughters. The 5 yr. old immediately picked up on the fact that I needed a little one to dote on, and took advantage of the attention. It was obvious the 9 yr. old is mom's protector since she stayed very close to her. Everyone listened to her story and agonized over her struggle for support and services. All rallied to offer advice and resources. The family could hardly make it out of the meeting for everyone wanting to share with them!

As we waited for Wheels, members shared stories of how vision was

lost and experiences as a blind/visually impaired person. We laughed and teared up. I think we must schedule an "open mic" meeting for a future VIP get-together.

As I reported to you in the last newsletter, we are implementing an Equipment Distribution Program. This program will be funded through donations and grant monies, and will enable low-income individuals to apply for funding to purchase software and equipment. Recently, an advisory committee met to discuss the criteria for this program. Recommendations will be made to the Board on Oct. 9.

I encourage you to browse the next Braille Forum publication for a report on the ACB Conference held in Minneapolis, MN in July. Carol Porter attended the entire conference. Morry La Tour, Paul Wiese and I joined her during the conference. I am in agreement with Carol that the full benefit of the conference is gained by attending from beginning to end. We were all caught up in the election since Carla Ruschival was running for President. Carla was defeated by Mitch Pomerantz. Paul and Axel attended many functions with the guide dog users.

We divided our time to attend as many workshops as possible and meetings related to such issues as membership, fundraising, and technology. It was a time to renew friendships from past conferences and make lasting new friendships. The accommodations for the conference were outstanding. The closing banquet was, by far, the best I had ever attended. The food was delicious and the speaker was Lord Lowe, a member of Parliament, who entertained us by telling about growing up as a blind child in England. He also gave us some insight into the issues of the b/vi in his country.

A financial report and a summary of expenditure of grant monies for 2006-07 is included in this newsletter. If you have any questions, contact the office.

Paula

## **From The Board**

### **President's Message**

As some of you already know, I recently was diagnosed with breast cancer. The tumor was surgically removed, and the cancer was determined to be non-invasive.

Sometimes, life hands us a doozy - a setback, as it were - and we recover from this, as though from a bump in the road. Other times, life hands us a lollapalooza, and we are given the task of redefining ourselves. This cancer, for me, is such an opportunity. I begin to see myself as a survivor. I know I can't control everything, but there are some things within my control. In *Chicken Soup for the Breast Cancer Patient's Soul*, a cancer survivor writes "a survivor is a victim with an attitude." Surviving is a state of mind and it is something we choose.

Vision impairment is something I have dealt with all my life, providing me with many bumps on the road. It is also an example of how I define myself. For some of you, vision impairment may be a lollapalooza. Especially for those newly diagnosed, it can be an opportunity to discover hidden strengths.

My hope is that we all come through with better attitudes and continue to improve ourselves, our world, and the lives of those we love.

Susan Ament

## **Election of Officers for 2008**

The Officers elected to the BGCB Board at the September 2007 Quarterly Membership Meeting were:

President	Morry LaTour
Vice-President	Carol Porter
Secretary	Judy Potter

At Large Members:

Susan Ament  
Max Fiscus  
Gary Knack  
Sharon LaTour

There were no nominations for Treasurer, but Judy Potter agreed to serve as Secretary/Treasurer until a candidate is nominated and approved.

## **Upcoming Events**

### **VIP Fever**

You are cordially invited to the monthly luncheon meeting of the Visually Impaired Persons Support Group. VIP meetings are always held on the fourth Wednesday of each month at the BGCB office. Meetings are convened at Noon with lunch and socialization. At 1

PM the speaker is introduced followed by Q & A's.

We've invited some very informative speakers, and have a good line up planned for future meetings. Some of our very own members have provided valuable presentations to the group.

Did I mention we have a lot of fun over lunch? I'll warn you, if you come, you'll catch the fever and want to come back!

The speaker for October is Tim Brandewie from the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Division of Environmental and Emergency Management.

Wheels passes are provided. For more information, contact the BGCB office.

### **Membership Drive**

October 1, 2007 kicked off the 2008 BGCB Membership Drive. In the past, membership renewal has been held at the quarterly holiday luncheon meeting. The Board felt this change would relieve some of your holiday expense and give the Membership Committee extra time to process

applications before the March ACB deadline. October is a significant month with the celebration of National White Cane Safety Day.

Ruth Ament and Jim Weber have worked diligently to update the current membership list. We are 92 members strong.

Again, your October payment will establish you as a member in good standing for 2008.

### **Quarterly Membership Meeting/Holiday Luncheon**

The BGCB Quarterly Membership Meeting and Holiday Luncheon will be:

Saturday, December 1, 2007  
The Springs Inn  
2020 Harrodsburg Road  
11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

As always, for BGCB Members, the luncheon is complimentary. Details such as entertainment and cost for non-member guests will be made available as soon as they are finalized.

### **White Cane Safety Day**

Monday, October 15 is National White Cane Safety Day.

On October 6, 1964, a joint resolution of the Congress, HR 753, was signed into law authorizing the President of the United States to proclaim October 15 of each year as "White Cane Safety Day." This resolution said: "Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives...., that the President is hereby authorized to issue annually a proclamation designating October 15 as White Cane Safety Day and calling upon the people of the United States to observe such a day with appropriate ceremonies and activities."

Within hours of the passage of the congressional joint resolution authorizing the President to proclaim October 15 as White Cane Safety Day, then President Lyndon B. Johnson recognized the importance of the white cane as a staff of independence for blind people. In the first Presidential White Cane Proclamation President Johnson commended the blind for the growing spirit of independence and the increased determination to be self-reliant that the organized blind had shown. The Presidential proclamation said:  
The white cane in our society has become one of the symbols of a blind person's ability to come and

go on his own. Its use has promoted courtesy and special consideration to the blind on our streets and highways. To make our people more fully aware of the meaning of the white cane and of the need for motorists to exercise special care for the blind persons who carry it, Congress, by a joint resolution approved as of October 6, 1964, has authorized the President to proclaim October 15 of each year as White Cane Safety Day.

Now, therefore, I, Lyndon B. Johnson, President of the United States of America do hereby proclaim October 15, 1964 as White Cane Safety Day.

In celebration of White Cane Safety Day, Independence Place is planning to have a display in the Main Lobby of the Central Lexington Public Library, and a walk through downtown Lexington to help make the public more aware of the blind and visually impaired. For more details, contact Independence Place at 859 266-2807.

## **Fundraising**

The BGCB Fundraising Committee needs your help! We are asking

each member to sell or buy one \$10 coupon for a photography sitting with Knickerbocker Portraits. The coupon entitles you to one free portrait. BGCB must sell 50 coupons to participate in this activity. The sale of 50 coupons earns the council \$500 and a percentage of any photo package purchased by participants.

To receive your coupon(s), contact the BGCB Office. All sales must be finalized and returned to BGCB by Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>. The Committee will contact participants to schedule sittings for Sat., Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>.

If you have questions, contact the BGCB office.

## **News to Use**

### **Commission for Citizens with Disabilities Board**

Wednesday, September 26<sup>th</sup> was the second meeting of the newly appointed Commission for Citizens with Disabilities Board formed by Mayor Jim Newberry. One of our first items of business was a presentation by Nancy Marinaro of the LFUCG Building Inspection Office. She gave us a description of the ordinance relating to the

downtown sidewalk café rules and restrictions in relationship to guidelines established in the ADA laws. There was a period of discussion and chair Morry La Tour asked for individuals to serve on an accessibilities committee to look into some options and recommendations that we could present to the city council members to make the downtown sidewalks accessible for all people with disabilities.

Some other items we discussed were to set up committees to research and recommend ways to improve the public and Para-transit service in Fayette County. Our meeting is held the last Wednesday of the month, starting at 9:00 A.M. at the Central Library in downtown Lexington. Anyone is welcome to attend any of the meetings. If you have any questions or comments about the board feel free to talk to me.

Morry La Tour

### **Action Alert: Time to Show Some CLASS Spirit!**

On July 10, the **Community Living Assistance Services and Supports Act** (CLASS Act) was introduced in the House and in the Senate (H.R. 3001, S. 1758) as vital legislation

that would help fund long-term services and supports for people with disabilities. On the same day as its introduction, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a hearing on long-term care, which highlighted the CLASS Act. Since then, no Congressional actions have been taken, and only a couple of new co-sponsors have joined the legislation.

It's time to show some CLASS spirit to gain additional co-sponsors and get this bill moving! Show your CLASS spirit, and call your Members today!

**WHO:** Contact your Members of Congress and urge them to support the CLASS Act. (Go to [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and to [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and type in your zip code to find your Representative, then select your state from the drop-down menu to find your Senators).

**WHAT:** Tell them that people with disabilities and their families want a way to invest in and plan for their own long-term care needs so they can maintain independence and live in the community, and that the CLASS Act will help this happen.

**WHEN:** Showing grassroots support for the CLASS Act is ongoing.

**BACKGROUND:** Today, there are approximately 10 million Americans who need long-term services and supports to maintain independence, employment, and remain in their communities. And that number is only going to rise as the population ages.

Most private-sector insurance plans are constrained in the protection they can offer at an affordable price, and neither Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) nor Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) programs take the extent and character of disability into consideration when providing benefits.

As a result, most Americans who have or develop significant functional limitations can only access coverage for the services they need to maintain their independence through Medicaid. Relying on Medicaid for critical supports means lots of people with disabilities have to "spend down" their assets and remain poor and unemployed to maintain their eligibility.

The Community Living Assistance Services and Supports Act (CLASS Act) will offer an alternative to Medicaid by creating a national insurance program through a voluntary payroll deduction to help adults who have or develop functional impairments to remain independent, employed, and stay a part of their communities. Those who are working and voluntarily contributing to the program will have access to benefits, on the basis of their ability to perform daily living activities or an equivalent cognitive impairment. The benefits received may be spent however the individual feels is most appropriate toward their long-term needs, be it a housing modification, transportation modification, assistive technology, or personal assistance services.

The large risk pool created by this program will make additional coverage much more affordable than it is today, which will give individuals a chance to invest in their own futures and gain access to supports without requiring them to become impoverished to qualify.

We hope that the CLASS Act will help generate a broad, national discussion on how to promote

independence and dignity and keep people out of institutions.

## **BGCB Spotlight**

### **Happy Birthday!**

We'd like to wish the following Council Members with birthdates in the fourth quarter a very Happy Birthday!

Janet Pence	November 4
Virginia Allen	November 8
Andrew Thomas	November 10
Carol Porter	November 13
Don Ament	November 14
Amanda Bowman	November 14
Carolyn Wyckoff	November 25
Susan Parsons	November 30
Karen Pickard	December 8
Paula Wiese	December 8
Susan Ament	December 11
Dan Wiese	December 11
Robert Hoover	December 17
Paulana Mutters	December 20
Vivian Todd	December 29
Judy Potter	December 30
Mabel Johnson	December 31

### **Thanks!**

A special thank you to Walter Graham for his donation of a computer monitor to BGCB. Walt's donation allows us to resurrect a

CCTV unit that was previously unusable.

Thanks also to Fred and Ruth Ament for their donation of a filing cabinet.

## **New Additions to BGCB's Technology Room**

Thanks to a funding grant from The Lexington Junior League, BGCB has been able to purchase a new portable LCD screen CCTV and upgrade our computer network. It's wonderful to have up-to-date technology available for our community's blind and visually impaired.

## **About The Blue Grass Council of the Blind**

The Blue Grass Council of the Blind, Inc., a United Way agency, is located at 1093 South Broadway, Suite 1220, Lexington, KY 40504. The Council provides the only full-time information, education, advocacy, and referral service in Fayette County for individuals and their families who are blind or visually impaired, without regard to gender, race or religion.

Among the services offered are peer counseling, referral to appropriate agencies or programs to assist individuals in their adjustment to blindness, educational and social activities, advocacy services for the blind as well as a speakers' bureau to acquaint the community with the potential of the blind and visually impaired.

Our office offers demonstrations of many aids and appliances to help the blind and visually impaired cope with their loss of vision. We also provide catalogs and brochures describing thousands of aids and devices that can be purchased directly from the supplier. The Council sends a newsletter, every three months in large print, on cassette tape, or via email to all who request inclusion on our mailing list. This newsletter makes interested persons aware of the various activities of the Council, of current legislative actions affecting the blind and other items of interest to the community. All services offered by the Council are free of charge.

The Blue Grass Council of the Blind seeks to promote awareness of the abilities, rights, and specific needs of blind/visually impaired (b/vi) people. We encourage and motivate b/vi individuals to become

productive, involved citizens of their community. Another challenge is to educate the public about the needs, aspirations and achievements of the visually impaired.

Please call 859 259-1834 for more information on the following services for the visually impaired:

- Agencies and programs
- Counseling
- Educational and social activities
- Advocate or speaker
- Aids and appliances
- Newsletter

**Blue Grass Council of the Blind  
Membership Application**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. Number \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday (mon/day) \_\_\_\_\_

Membership category

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 Regular member          | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Sponsoring member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Contributing member     | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Benefactor        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Supporting member       | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Patron            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Friend of the council |  |

Would you like to be on our mailing list (for newsletters, etc.)?

Yes  No

If so, would you prefer  Large Print  Cassette  Email

VIP Support Group  Yes  No

Are you a Wheels rider?  Yes  No

Are you  Blind  Vision Impaired  Normal vision

**Blue Grass Council of the Blind  
1093 South Broadway Suite 1220  
Lexington, KY 40504**

**Free Matter for the  
Blind and Physical  
Handicapped**

**Notice of change:**

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**STREET** \_\_\_\_\_ **PHONE** \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY** \_\_\_\_\_ **STATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_

**Newsletter:**  **Large Print**  **Tape**  **Email**

**Remove name from mailing list**