

# BayLines – Bay State Council of the Blind

Winter, 2018



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### **BSCB E-mail Lists:**

BSCB-L is an open e-mail list for discussion of topics of interest to BSCB members and friends. To subscribe, send e-mail to [bscb-l-subscribe@acblists.org](mailto:bscb-l-subscribe@acblists.org).

BSCB-ANNOUNCE is a moderated one-way e-mail list used to disseminate pertinent announcements to members and friends of the Bay State Council of the Blind. To subscribe, send an e-mail request to: [bscb-announce-subscribe@acblists.org](mailto:bscb-announce-subscribe@acblists.org).

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## **Announcing the 2018 BSCB Spring Conference**

Dear members and friends of the Bay State Council of the Blind,

It is time once again for our annual conference and convention. In addition to reuniting with friends, there will be many informative and educational speakers.

### **Where and when:**

The conference will be held from Friday, March 9 to Sunday, March 11 at the Boston Marriott Burlington, One Burlington Mall Road, Burlington, Massachusetts 01803. Telephone: 781-229-6565. Hotel reservations must be made no later than February 16, 2018 to obtain the special BSCB rate. If making reservations by phone, please mention that you are attending the BSCB Spring Conference.

### **What is included?**

Full registration includes convention materials, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday activities, Saturday morning coffee, Saturday afternoon beverages, the banquet, and a special "goodie bag" of gifts.

Friday evening hospitality suite and Saturday lunch are available at an additional cost.

### **How to register:**

To register on line, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/bay-state-council-of-the-blind-2018-spring-conference-and-convention-registration-40983293133>. If you cannot use the registration link provided above, please call Rick Morin at 617-633-7947. He will

be happy to take your reservation by phone. Registration is requested by March 2. Late registrations may be subject to an additional \$10 fee.

## **What will it cost me?**

Full registration without Saturday lunch: \$75.00

Single day (Friday, Saturday, or Sunday) registration without banquet: \$30.00

Banquet only: \$55.00

Saturday lunch: \$30

Friday evening hospitality suite: \$15

Accommodations: The room rates will be \$99 per night if made prior to February 23. Please verify the charges at the time of your reservation as some rooms may be at a premium. Please make reservations at least 15 working days prior to the conference as our designated block of rooms will sell out quickly. Dog relief areas will be available for service animals. Unfortunately, due to budget constraints, there will be no additional subsidy for guest rooms.

## **A note about sighted guides:**

Although all of the hotel staff are eager to help, and we always appreciate that, please remember that they each have their own job to perform. Sighted guides will be provided by BSCB to aid persons to locate specific locations within the main floor of the hotel. If you require assistance of a sighted guide, please wait outside one of the following areas for a BSCB volunteer to offer

help: the main meeting rooms; near the registration table area; the restaurant area; in front of the maître d' desk; the elevators near the UP/DOWN buttons; near the alcove outside the restrooms; and the front desk near the chairs and couches. If you wait in one of these areas, a BSCB volunteer will guide you to the destination of your choice on the main floor of the hotel. If you need assistance elsewhere in the hotel or in your room, please ask the BSCB volunteer to bring you to the hotel's front desk where they can assist you with bellhop service. Please make use of BSCB volunteers and not hotel staff whenever possible.

## **What will be served at lunch on Saturday?**

There are two lunch options for Saturday:

A: Lemon grilled chicken with roasted sweet peppers, shaved asiago, spinach, and sun dried tomato aioli on ciabatta

B: Roast portabella mushroom with grilled eggplant, zucchini, and yellow squash on Romaine hearts and hummus spread on whole wheat Kaiser

Both lunch choices include fruit, a cookie, and a soft drink.

## **What will be served at the banquet?**

Our meal will start with a classic Caesar salad. Entrée choices are:

A: Chicken piccata seasoned and sautéed with white wine and lemon caper cream on roasted potatoes and asparagus

B: Braised boneless short rib of beef in a rich veal stock with yukon gold mashed potatoes, steamed asparagus, and tomato concasse

C: Miso and honey glazed salmon with jasmine rice, steamed carrots, and bok choy

D: Grilled vegetable tower eggplant on polenta cake with tomato fennel fondue, portabella mushrooms, native squashes, arugula salad, and sweet peppers

Desserts with options for those with a diabetic diet will round out the meal. All meals will be served with potato, seasonal vegetables, fresh rolls, coffee, and tea.

If anyone has any dietary restriction(s), please bring it to our attention no later than Friday, March 2, 2017. Requests received after that date may not be honored and may be subject to a late registration fee.

## **How can I help the 2018 conference?**

There are two ways of helping the conference. The first is a direct monetary sponsorship. The second is to provide an item for our annual auction.

On the online registration page you will see several different sponsorship options. All sponsors will be acknowledged during the conference. The sponsorship levels are below.

Bronze Sponsor: \$25

Silver Sponsor: \$50

Gold Sponsor: \$75

Sapphire Sponsor: \$100

Emerald Sponsor: \$200

Ruby Sponsor: \$500

Diamond Sponsor: \$1000

The other means of helping the conference is to donate an auction item. On Saturday evening, we will hold our traditional fun-filled auction. If you would like to donate an item to the auction, please bring it directly to the registration table on Saturday morning. We ask that each item have a value of at least

\$25, and is either new or in like-new condition. For questions about the auction, please contact Nina Kagan at [nina@littlebreezes.com](mailto:nina@littlebreezes.com), or by phone at 617-699-4714.

### **Transportation:**

The MBTA RIDE goes to Burlington. Also, you can take the bus to the Burlington Mall, and the hotel shuttle will pick you up there if you make arrangements with the hotel in advance. There is no charge for this, but tipping the driver is customary.

I look forward to seeing all of you at our 2018 BSCB spring conference.

Sincerely,  
Frank Ventura, 2018 BSCB Spring Conference Coordinator

### **Introducing Emily Luz**

Emily Luz is a professional visual and performing artist, writer/blogger, teacher of technology at the Carroll Center, and President of the Central Massachusetts Chapter (CMC), affiliate of the Bay State Council of the Blind. She is legally blind since birth due to optic nerve gliomas which are benign brain tumors that have also caused a temperature disorder along with migraines. She was born and raised in Massachusetts, later moving to Vermont where she attended high school, and then college at the University of Vermont. Emily majored in Studio Art which allowed her the opportunity to learn many different artistic mediums. Her limited vision and the way she views the world around her is part of her artistic work.



Since childhood, Emily has studied dance, singing, art, and writing and is turning her passion into a vocation. Her faith in the Lord gives her strength to meet any obstacle with grace and positivity. Knowing about the limited job market after her college graduation, she began to study business and online marketing to become an entrepreneur. She has started a few businesses, learning from her failures, and is now working on a new direction in ministry utilizing her various skills in art, technology, social media, business, and healthy living.

Recently, she was elected President of CMC. Better still, she started a new job at the Carroll Center as a technology teacher/evaluator. These opportunities are allowing Emily to strengthen her leadership skills, learn about the needs of the legally blind, and network with those in the blindness community. She is a strong advocate for disability rights, health issues, and those in domestic abuse/poverty situations.

Emily believes that life is a journey that should be honored no matter the limitations because it is a gift. Newly wed to her husband Walter, she is also growing her family, having international adventures, and never forgetting those in her life that mean the most.

If you would like to contact Emily Luz, feel free to email her at [emilymirandaluz@gmail.com](mailto:emilymirandaluz@gmail.com).

## **BSCB Chapter Reports Compiled by Bob Hachey**

### **Boston Chapter**

On Saturday, January 6, the brave souls of the newly formed Boston Chapter held their first formal business meeting on one of the harshest winter days in many years. Officers elected were Frank Ventura, President and Tim Cumings, Vice President.

"As a member of the newly-formed Boston chapter of BSCB, I'm very happy that we now have a Boston chapter. I think it's important to have a Boston chapter to focus on issues for members and consumers living in the greater Boston area." said Vice President Tim Cumings. President Ventura says that the chapter plans to work on educating the public regarding accessibility for blind and visually impaired persons. For now, they wish to concentrate on increasing the number of Boston restaurants with braille and large print menus. For this summer, the chapter is considering either holding a July barbecue or taking a trip to Rhode Island for a Pawtucket Red Sox game. The Boston chapter meets on the first Saturday of each quarter. The next meeting is scheduled for Saturday, April 7. The meeting location is 285 MLK BLVD, Roxbury. For further information, please contact Frank Ventura. His contact information and that of all BSCB chapter presidents can be found at the end of *BayLines*.

### **Central Mass Chapter**

The Central Massachusetts Chapter of the Bay State Council of the Blind was officially formed on October 15, 2017. Currently with 20 members and growing, we are a group dedicated to the advocacy and socializing of people from Central Massachusetts who are blind, vision impaired, and sighted. This is a lively group

of people from a variety of backgrounds coming together for a greater cause. This year, we are focused on a few issues. One is the understanding and advocacy of accessible transportation options for those in Central Massachusetts. The second is the accessibility and availability of audio described movies in local movie theaters. Third, and most importantly, is the socialization and networking of members.

This group will meet quarterly on or near the last Saturday of an assigned month at the Worcester Public Library, 3 Salem Square, Worcester, MA 01608. The next meeting will be March 24 from 10 am-12 noon. All are welcome to attend, but only paid members can vote. If you plan on attending, please try to arrive at 9:30 am so the meeting can start on time. Rick Morin will be our guest speaker talking about transportation issues in Massachusetts with time to answer questions. If you are interested in learning more about this and future meetings, how to become a member, and receiving the full meeting agenda, please contact Emily Luz at 508-523-7303 or email her at [emilymirandaluz@gmail.com](mailto:emilymirandaluz@gmail.com).

## **South Shore Chapter**

The South Shore Chapter is taking shape as it makes for more interaction between our members.

On Oct. 2, Brian Charlson and Mary Haroyan organized a meeting of chapter Presidents to share information and ideas. We're hoping to have more of these in the future.

Our last Chapter meeting was on Nov. 11, at Jamie's Restaurant in Holbrook. We collected our annual dues, and discussed the Fall Conference which had been the week before at the Carroll Center.

Our next meeting is scheduled for April 2, 2018 at Bob and JoAnn Kershners' house. We are planning a potluck, and will be discussing our spring convention, which will have been a month earlier.

For more specific information, you can contact me, Chris Devin. My contact information is found at the end of the newsletter.

## **Guide Dog Users of Massachusetts**

Guide Dog Users of Massachusetts has been quite productive over the past few months. In September, we hosted a "Puppy Potluck Picnic" at the Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library, which was well-attended by guide dog users and local puppy raisers from Guiding Eyes for the Blind, Leader Dogs for the Blind, Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, and the Guide Dog Foundation. Thanks to the generosity of the Panera Bread in Watertown, we were able to provide food to the attendees, and everyone brought either an appetizer or dessert to share. The event was extremely popular and we are hoping to repeat it in 2018.

We also planned a holiday party to be held at the Bus Stop Pub in Allston on January 6, but due to the blizzard the previous Thursday as well as the below zero temperatures, we postponed the event with safety of humans and canines in mind. However, we will have a mini holiday party at our annual business meeting at the BSCB Spring Conference on Friday, March 9th at 7:00 PM. Further details will be forthcoming about this meeting. For further information, contact Minh Ha, GDUM president.

## **Charles River Chapter**

Hi to all CRC Members and Friends!

The Charles River Chapter of BSCB has had a variety of things going on. During August we had our annual Pool Party at the Charlson's and Vicki Vogt's home where we swam, chatted, and enjoyed a variety of picnic foods—from hot dogs and hamburgers on the grill, salads, and many desserts. A huge thank you to Vicki, Brian, and Kim for the great time.

In early October, Jim and Caroline Denham moved to Wisconsin so Jim could take on a position in Madison, WI. Thanks to Jim for his able and enthusiastic leadership of our Chapter during his Presidency. I moved from Vice President of CRC to President, and appointed Jerry Berrier as our Vice President. We will have elections in early spring of 2018.

Our last fun event of 2017 was our Chapter's holiday party held at John Brewer's Restaurant and Tavern where we enjoyed good food, fellowship, and our annual Yankee Swap, led this year by Jerry Berrier's fiancé Lee Spatafore. Her enthusiastic and upbeat approach continued the tone of fun and congeniality. We had a wonderful time, with lots of fellowship and fun. We will announce our next Meeting on CRC-announce, or BSCB-Announce, and we will connect with any of our members by phone that do not have email. Safe traveling in this winter weather.

Please feel free to email me Anne Donna at [annem donna@aol.com](mailto:annem donna@aol.com), or call me at 617-926-8836 with any questions.

# **Thoughts on Unemployment Among the Blind and Visually Impaired**

## **by Bob Branco**

(Editor's Note: This article wrestles with what I believe to be one of the most frustrating problems for we who are blind and visually impaired. Obviously, there are no easy answers as to why our unemployment rate continues to be so high even in tight labor markets. I invite any of you who are reading this newsletter to send me your thoughts on what could be done to increase employment among our population.)

Thirty-six years ago, when I joined one of the two most popular consumer organizations of the blind in this country, I was told that the unemployment rate of the blind was 70 percent. After being with this particular consumer organization for a while, I assumed that the organization would work hard to try lowering that rate because it's the organization's job to let the public know how the blind can lead independent lives. Despite my assumption, the unemployment rate of the blind today is 70 percent, exactly the same as it was 36 years ago. In fact, some say it's gone up to 80 percent.

With all the accomplishments made by these blind consumer organizations and other advocates who believe in what the blind can do, how could one think that the unemployment rate of the blind would stay the same or even increase as time goes by? It should be the other way around. More and more blind people should be joining the work force.

While I ask these consumer organizations why they have yet to lower this terrible statistic, I also have to consider other factors that contribute to the status quo of the unemployment rate of blind persons. In Massachusetts alone, a former governor closed down

a workshop that employed 25 blind workers, and prior to that, a well-known agency shut down its braille program, resulting in the removal of a blind executive or two. I realize how bad the economy is in general, so I don't expect the blind to find jobs that no one else can find. All I expect is for the blind and the sighted to compete equally for available jobs. With the adoption of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the belief by the consumer organizations that the blind can compete on equal terms with the sighted in a job setting, again I must ask the question, "Why the status quo in the blind work force?" Are the State Commissions for the Blind working closely with their clients to help them with self-advocacy? Are these same Commissions doing more to sell their clients' skills to companies? If for no other reason, they should be doing that to convince the companies that it's not a challenge to have a blind person on the job.

I would like to hear feedback about this topic.

## **BSCB Board of Directors**

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