

BayLines
Summer, 2014

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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@acb.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@acb.org.

Message From the Editor

Believe it or not, BayLines is back! We apologize profusely for the absence of our newsletter. I will be the new editor and BayLines will be published three times per year. I encourage each and every one of you to consider writing an article for BayLines. We really want more articles from our members to help make BayLines a well-rounded newsletter. Topics could include experiences at work, at play or almost anything in between. Also, please send to me any articles of interest to the blind or visually impaired taken from local newspapers or magazines.

If you read the title page, you noticed that the cassette format has been replaced with compact disc. It is getting harder and harder to find cassettes, so we will be seeking to move away from that format. For those of you listening to this newsletter on cassette, we will be contacting you individually to see if you would be willing to accept compact disc or email format. We will try to make this transition as painless as possible.

Finally, I welcome any feedback you may have regarding BayLines. This is my first time editing and I hope that I can rise to the level of past editors of this newsletter. My contact information is located on the title page. Enjoy the rest of BayLines.

President's Message by Marcia Dresser

Hello, everyone! I'm glad to finally have the chance to chat with you in these pages as your BSCB president. Unfortunately, for technical and personal reasons, BayLines has not been published in over two years. We are very happy to be back now, however, and plan to publish on a regular schedule, with three issues per year. I am very grateful to Bob Hachey for taking over the editorial duties, with assistance from Jerry Berrier and Steve Dresser. Bob has put together an excellent magazine for your enjoyment.

I was honored to be elected as your president at the spring conference in 2012, and for a second term in 2014. For those of you who do not know me, I am totally blind and attended public school here in Massachusetts. I worked as a rehabilitation teacher and, for most of my career, as a teacher of visually impaired students. I am an avid reader, Red Sox fan, and NASA buff. Radio has been a lifelong passion, and it is my pleasure to host "Council Connection," which is broadcast monthly on the Talking Information Center (TIC) network and on ACB Radio Mainstream, and available for download from the BSCB Web site.

Many of you know that I have been sick for almost two years, battling pancreatic cancer. I am very thankful that I have an extraordinary board of directors who have very generously picked up the slack for me when I needed it. I am working with fabulous highly skilled doctors at MA

General, and I am confident that I will beat this.

One of my major goals as your president is to increase membership in BSCB, and to encourage more involvement in BSCB activities. I am very excited to tell you that our new student chapter, Bay State Council of the Blind Students, is up and running. (You'll read more about this in Bob's convention summary.) Also, Jerry Berrier and I hope to start a chapter on the North Shore.

Also in this issue, you'll read about our strategic plan. We've revamped the committee structure and identified short- and long-term goals. Please take a look at the list of committees, which you'll find in the convention summary, and let me know if something piques your interest.

Plans are well underway for our fall convention, which will take place on Saturday, November 15, at the Grousbeck Center on the Perkins School for the Blind campus. Please stay tuned for all the details! I hope to see many of you there.

In closing, I want to remind you that contact information for the board of directors and the chapter presidents is located at the end of the newsletter. Please contact us any time with your ideas, comments, or questions. We look forward to hearing from you!

BSCB Board Briefs

by Bob Hachey

(Editor's note: This is a new section that will appear in all future editions of BayLines. It is a brief summary of recent BSCB board meetings.)

In December, the board authorized funding for four BSCB members to attend the ACB legislative seminar in February of 2014. We also authorized donations to Our Space Our Place and the ACB First Timers fund that allows first timers to attend the ACB convention with expenses paid. We also agreed to stream our 2014 convention on ACB Radio.

Much of our January meeting was taken up by planning of the upcoming 2014 BSCB convention. We also discussed our upcoming strategic planning session. Both of these items are featured in an article later on in this newsletter. We decided to begin the process of moving our website away from the ACB server which will allow us more space and flexibility on the web.

We authorized funding for the Social Committee which will be planning fun activities on a regular basis.

In March, the board once again spent much time planning for the upcoming convention. The Social Committee put plans in place for a beep ball demonstration in Boston. Unfortunately, this event was postponed due to rain, but, like major league games, this demonstration will be rescheduled in the future. We also discussed the Rehabilitation Council of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind. We authorized a donation to the John F. Kennedy Library which had generously waived all fees for our tours in February. These tours were very well received and a good time was had by all.

Our April meeting began with a heartfelt thanks to Sharon Strzalkowski for her many dedicated years of service on the BSCB board. A convention debrief took up a good bit of the time. Work is proceeding with the new BSCB website. BSCB now has a presence on Twitter; we can be found at [@twitter.com/baystateblind](https://twitter.com/baystateblind). PJ Fernandes and Jim Denham will be managing our Twitter account. We authorized funding for a donation to the Boston Red Sox Foundation as a thank you for presenting the 2013 World Series trophy at our recently held convention.

In May, we authorized funding for our delegate and alternate at the upcoming ACB convention. We also authorized donations to the Disability Law Center, the ACB Forum Raffle and the gubernatorial forum on disability to be held at Perkins in June. Last but certainly not least, we happily approved of the purchase of an ACB life membership for Kim Charlson. We worked on our committee structure and began planning for the BSCB fall conference.

In June, we spent most of our time discussing and putting together BSCB committees. We authorized funding for two items, a Legal Seafood certificate for the ACB auction and support for White Cane Safety Day on October 15 at the State House.

Save the Date!

The 2014 BSCB fall conference will take place on Saturday, November 15 at the Grousbeck Center located on the Perkins campus. Please put this date in your calendars.

ACB Radio and Publications Now On Your Phone

The American Council of the Blind (ACB) is proud to announce that its Internet radio service, ACB Radio, and its major publications, "The ACB Braille Forum" and "The ACB E-Forum" are now fully available by phone.

"This is a fabulous way for anyone to listen to the great offerings on ACB Radio, anytime from just about anywhere, and does not require using a computer," says ACB president Kim Charlson. "We can now reach many more people who are blind who cannot afford to purchase costly computer equipment or who are not comfortable using the Internet, but who could greatly benefit from information and entertainment offered on any of ACB Radio's six channels."

To listen to ACB Radio by phone, dial (231) 460-1047.

To listen to the Braille Forum or the E-Forum, call (231) 460-1061. You can rewind or fast-forward within an article, or skip articles by using the buttons on any touch-tone phone and following the prompts.

Note that long-distance phone charges may apply for both services.

Thousands of "Currency Readers" in the Pipeline for the Blind

by Anne L. Kim

June 11, 2014

While a \$1 bill means something entirely different than a \$100 bill, they might not feel too different to the visually impaired. The government is ready to do something about that challenge, though.

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing expects to distribute between 100,000 and 500,000 "currency readers" to the blind and others who are visually impaired, says Larry R. Felix, director of the bureau in written testimony for a House Financial Services Committee hearing today.

In a report last year, the Government Accountability Office described the gizmos as "portable electronic devices capable of speaking the denomination of a bill out loud."

The effort is part of a response by the Treasury Department to a court ruling several years ago that directed the department to provide the blind and visually impaired with meaningful access to currency.

"We plan to launch a pilot program this summer and roll the program out nationally in 2015. The project plan is under joint development and will be operated by the BEP and the LOC/NLS," Felix said in his statement. LOC/NLS is the Library of Congress' service for the blind and physically handicapped. Felix said the office helped to develop the readers.

(Editor's note: On July 11, I received the following note regarding ordering a currency reader.)

The U.S. Bureau of Engraving will initiate a four-month pilot where NLS patrons can pre-order a currency reader. A press release from July 3 states "To receive a currency reader eligible individuals who are currently patrons of NLS need only call 1-888-NLS-READ (888-657-7323). Your account will be noted and a currency reader will be delivered to the address on file." However, calls to the number provided for the purpose of ordering the currency reader will not be accepted until September 2, 2014. NOTE: the delivery of the readers will not begin until January 2015.

BSCB 2014 Convention Highlights **by Bob Hachey**

The 2014 BSCB convention was held on the weekend of March 28-30 at the Marriott Hotel in Burlington. This year's convention started earlier than past conventions. There were three presentations on Friday afternoon all related to technology. The first was on how to use the iPhone, presented by Frank Ventura and David Kingsbury. The second offered the opportunity for attendees to tell us about their favorite iPhone and iPod apps; it was moderated by Carl Richardson, David Kingsbury and Frank Ventura. In the

final presentation, Brian Charlson put the accessible Kindle Fire HDX through its paces. This device is more than just a book reader.

Friday evening featured two meetings. The first was the usual meeting of Guide Dog Users of Massachusetts. Goodie bags contained treats for both dogs and humans. There was a short business meeting where we discussed advocacy issues including guide dog access at community colleges and at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary.

We elected new officers. They are: President Amber Percy, Vice-president, Kay Rausche, Treasurer Joe Yee and Secretary Rosemary Teehan. We had an interesting and informative discussion regarding international travel with a guide dog. There was plenty of time for fun and fellowship at this meeting.

The second meeting was held by the newly formed Bay State Council of the Blind Students chapter. BSCB Students was officially approved as a BSCB chapter just before the beginning of this convention. BSCB students held an election. Those elected included President Nick Corbett, Vice-President Dianna Leonard, Treasurer Daisy Russell, Secretary Carey Scouler, and board members Ashley Bernard, Josh Pearson and Steven Max-Faults. PJ Fernandes serves on the board as immediate past president. PJ deserves lots of credit for leading the effort to start a student chapter of BSCB. It is wonderful to once again have a state chapter of students.

Our first speaker on Saturday morning was a very special guest. Marla Runyan was an Olympic distance runner and marathon runner. She specialized in the 1500 meters and the 5000 meters. She was the American champion at 5000 meters for the years 2001-2003.

Running on a track was one thing, but running a marathon would be more challenging for a visually impaired runner. Marla chose to try the New York marathon because that marathon features a blue line that marks the entire course. She did very well finishing fourth in a field of elite marathon runners most of whom had much more experience than she running marathons.

Marla was diagnosed with Stargardts disease, a form of macular degeneration. Initially, doctors claimed that Marla was falsifying her vision loss. They seemed to believe that it was all in her head. Unfortunately, during the 1960s and 1970s, many visually impaired children experienced similarly cruel ignorance on the part of medical professionals. I sure hope things are better now for children with visual impairments. At first, Marla's parents were devastated by the idea that Marla didn't have normal vision. Fortunately, her mother quickly changed her attitude and became her strongest advocate. Initially, Marla had to endure many arduous tests done by many doctors until one specialist correctly diagnosed her condition. She also received important support from one of her teachers of the visually impaired. I encourage anyone who wants to learn more about Marla's story to read [No Finish Line: My Life as I See It](#), which is available from the Perkins Library. Marla was blessed with a strong drive to excel which she did academically and on the track. She says that the three most important characteristics one needs to succeed as a blind person are the right tools, the right attitude and a good support system. Marla mentioned that before her presentation, she took a look at the items in the exhibit room. She wished some of those items were available when she was younger. Marla is now a teacher at Perkins.

Our next speaker was Kim Charlson who updated us as president of ACB. She manages 42 ACB committees. Kim expressed her appreciation for the many BSCB members who are serving on ACB committees. Kim travels to speak to an ACB affiliate at least once per month. Kim informed us that Senators Elizabeth Warren, (D. MA) and Orrin Hatch, (R. UT) introduced the TEACH Act in March, which will improve access to digital textbooks and tests for college students.

Kim wants to make braille on package labels for consumer goods a priority. Europe is already doing this. Kim also updated us on ACB's many structured negotiation initiatives. It is Kim's goal as president of ACB to bring more of what happens at the national level home to all of us at the state and local level. To that end, Kim made the decision to broadcast the ACB president's meeting via ACB Radio.

Saturday afternoon began with David Kingsbury reporting to us regarding the activities of the Social Committee. Since David became a BSCB member, he believed that we ought to get involved in more social activities. David formed this committee in his first year as a member of the board. The first event organized by the committee was a very well-attended lunch at Boston Beer Works in the fall of 2013. The second was an accessible tour of the JFK Library in February. Unfortunately, the beep ball

demonstration scheduled for Boston Common was rained out but it will be rescheduled. David believes that socialization serves important purposes such as giving our members a chance to get out and have fun and to promote social cohesiveness and promote accessible cultural events. David asked the convention attendees for ideas for future social events to plan. Ideas suggested: Demo of accessible soccer, a summer picnic, a trip to Tanglewood for a Boston Symphony Orchestra concert, a pre-convention recreation, swimming or workout, a tour to the Boston Harbor islands, and a family activity including young children.

Nancy Jodoin gave us a brief update on the Carroll Center's Sail Blind program including recreational and competitive sailing.

Next we heard from Martha Steele, Deputy Director of the Bureau of Environmental Health at the Department of Public Health, (BEH). Martha is a new member of BSCB; she has Usher's Syndrome and uses a hearing aid and a cochlear implant. Her department monitors things like air and water quality. Her department monitors disease clusters, where a certain illness is more prevalent than normal in a given area. When this is caused by pollution, her department manages the cleanup. Martha mentioned the book A Civil Action that told the story of drinking water pollution in Woburn during the late 1970s that caused spikes in leukemia. Currently, BEH is investigating a cluster of childhood cancers in Wilmington. BEH regularly monitors the air quality in Massachusetts schools and makes recommendations for the benefit of children's health. On Saturday, May 10, 2010, Martha was called into work after a water main break which caused untreated water to enter the drinking water supply for the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority system impacting much of Metropolitan Boston. BEH ordered impacted residents to boil water until the main was repaired. BEH is very busy monitoring and trying to control Eastern Equine Encephalitis which is spread by mosquitos. BEH monitors our environment for radiation. Massachusetts was the first state to detect radiation that originated in the Fukushima earthquake a few years ago. Finally, BEH regulates places such as swimming pools and camps in an effort to reduce the occurrence of avoidable injuries and deaths.

Milissa Garside told us about Project Starfish, a new initiative to offer training and project-based employment to blind and visually impaired individuals and low-cost services to small businesses. Project Starfish offers employment in the following areas: Sales and marketing; customer service, social media; internet research and writing. Subhashish Acharya, the founder of Starfish, began the venture out of frustration over the lack of employment opportunities for blind persons. Learn more about project Starfish at <http://www.pstarfish.org/>.

Next we heard from our newest chapter, Bay State Council of the Blind Students. Nick Corbett, chapter president, told us about his vision for the chapter's future. Nick wants not only to make life better for blind students in Massachusetts; he also wants to contribute to the wider community. Josh Pearson, president of ACB Students, the national special interest affiliate, updated us on national student news. They are well into planning their national convention. Josh wants ACB Students to organize regional conventions for ACB student members. He wants younger students to be mentored by older students so that everyone benefits.

Frank Ventura shared with us his experiences upon attending his first legislative seminar. By the way, Frank was one of the winners of the ACB First Timers contest in 2013. That awarded him an all-expenses paid trip to the 2013 ACB national convention. Frank told us about ACB's two legislative imperatives for 2014, the Cogswell Macy Act and the Low Vision Devices Act. Please encourage your national senators and representatives to support these important pieces of legislation. Frank was one of six members of the BSCB delegation sent to Washington, DC for this year's event. This involved 1.5 days of meetings and one day spent visiting the offices of our nine representatives and two senators. The delegation split into groups of two; Frank visited the offices of Senator Elizabeth Warren, Representative Joe Kennedy, and Steve Lynch, his representative. Frank was impressed that his voice, that of a "regular person" was taken seriously in these offices. He was excited to be a witness to democracy in action.

Kim Charlson once again stepped to the podium, this time wearing her hat as Director of the Perkins Library. The iPhone app for downloading BARD books is extremely popular here in Massachusetts and around the country. The online catalog for ordering locally produced books from Perkins has been improved, especially for screen reader users. NewsLine now offers 350 newspapers and 50 magazines. NewsLine now includes access to the programming of the Talking Information Center. NewsLine has also added grocery store sales fliers. Kim is trying to get NewsLine to offer sales fliers for national chains such as CVS and Walgreens. Library without Walls offers the opportunity for library patrons to interact with local authors via the telephone.

We next heard from Paul Saner, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB). Commissioner Saner began by updating us on retirements and promotions of current MCB staff. Saner is overseeing new training programs for all MCB staff. MCB anticipates placing 100 interns during the summer. Saner invited us to check out the recently enhanced MCB website at www.mass.gov/mcb. Saner shared with us his view of the financial condition of three MCB line items which are the ones that we who are consumers generally track most closely. He told us that the vocational rehabilitation account, (line item 4110-3010) and the deaf-blind multiply disabled account, (line item 4110-2000) are in good shape. But he then told us that the community services account, (4110-1000) is in tough shape, still reeling from a 25 percent cut since 2009. It was refreshing to hear this kind of candor from an MCB commissioner. Saner hopes to make a case for the need to increase this account and I think we can be

sure that BSCB will be in the forefront of a campaign to do just that. MCB will be working more closely with both MAB Community Services and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs to increase services to the rapidly growing population of elders who are losing their vision. Much of the cost for these services is Medicare reimbursable. MCB is working with the Carroll Center and Perkins to revive the Braille literacy Advisory Council.

The Saturday afternoon session ended with elections and BSCB business. The following officers were elected for two year terms: President, Marcia Dresser; First Vice-President, Brian Charlson; Second Vice-President, Jennifer Harnish; Treasurer, Rick Morin; and Secretary, Jerry Berrier. This left one open position on the board of directors that needed to be filled for one year. Nina Kagan won the election for that director position. It was good to see that a number of BSCB members were interested in running for the Board of Directors. A few minor adjustments were made to the BSCB Constitution.

Before our Saturday evening banquet, we had a tremendous opportunity to touch and have pictures taken with the Boston Red Sox 2013 World Series trophy. I was lucky enough to be the first to check out the trophy. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience including the chance to banter with the two nice gentlemen whose job it is to exhibit the trophy in numerous public locations. They said the job was a bit like being Santa Claus as everyone is always excited to see them and the trophy. The World Series Trophy was quite an enhancement to the 2014 BSCB cocktail hour before the banquet.

After a delicious meal, BSCB gave out three awards. Steven Rothstein, former president of Perkins, received the Outstanding Service Award for his 11 years as president and for his excellent outreach and collaboration with the consumer community including BSCB. Amy Ruell received the Community Access Award for her many years of outstanding leadership of the Visually Impaired and Blind Users Group (VIBUG). Mary Haroyan received the Betty Gayzagian Advocacy Award for her tireless efforts to be sure that Charter Cable TV offered audio described programming. Her sister Nona received honorable mention. This was Nona's first convention. Nona is not yet a member but we hope that she will become a member very soon.

Our banquet speaker was Pete Gustin who does voiceover for many radio stations and corporations including WEEI Sports Radio. Pete is legally blind and that was a major obstacle for him when he first tried to get voiceover work. Employers mistakenly believed that there was no way Pete could quickly deal with the printed materials needed to be successful in this field. Initially, Pete had to fight hard and experienced a fair bit of rejection. But Pete persevered and is now a very successful voiceover artist. Pete is not only gifted with a fabulous radio voice, but he is extremely resilient and resourceful. As a fan of sports talk radio, it was a personal pleasure to meet Pete after the banquet.

The 2014 BSCB auction may have started late, but it was the most successful ever thanks in large part to Frank Ventura. BSCB raised \$3,680.00. Thanks also go out to all who ran the auction and to our generous donors.

Before the Sunday morning session, BSCB hosted a first timers breakfast for 10 attendees for whom it was their first convention. A hearty thanks goes out to Frank Ventura for thinking of this idea. I think this will become a regular part of future BSCB conventions.

The first Sunday presentation featured Joe Abely, President of the Carroll Center for the Blind, and Bruce Howell, Coordinator of the Carroll Center's Access Project. Their topic was "When Do We Start Complaining?" It is Bruce's job to test websites for accessibility and to advise the owners of sites where accessibility could be improved. Bruce has worked extensively with both governmental and private organizations in an effort to help them improve accessibility of their websites. Bruce learns about web accessibility issues mostly from consumers. If you're having problems accessing a website, first you should try to work with the site's owner to improve accessibility. If you are not successful going this route, please contact Bruce at the Carroll Center either via phone at 617-969-6200 or via email at bruce.howell@carroll.org. Bruce will first work with you to begin to evaluate the issues. If necessary, Bruce will reach out to the site's owner and attempt to improve the site in question. Bruce may also give you advice on techniques you could use to make the site work better for you. Bruce wants to hear from us and learn which sites we like to use and which ones are giving us problems. Bruce also tests new products such as prototype accessible cable boxes.

Next, Treasurer Rick Morin encouraged us to donate to ACB via the Monthly Monetary Support program which has been described extensively in the ACB Braille Forum. The MMS benefits ACB and the affiliate of your choice. Rick also mentioned the annual ACB walk that occurs in conjunction with the national convention. Finally, he mentioned other ways to donate to ACB national including bequests, donations and the forum Raffle.

Next, Jennifer Harnish, Rick Morin and David Kingsbury led us in a discussion of a long term strategy and planning session the BSCB board held back in January of this year. The board is seeking to more clearly identify goals and objectives. This process will hopefully allow BSCB to act in a way that is more effective and efficient. In the past, we have tended to act mostly in the short run.

We decided that our overall goal should be: “to enhance the quality of life of blind and visually impaired residents of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and beyond.” To that end, we came up with the following objectives:

1. Advocacy. To effectively advocate for full access to employment, services and cultural and recreational resources of importance to blind and visually impaired persons;
2. Communication and Outreach. To raise the awareness of blind and visually impaired people of policies, services and other relevant initiatives with potential impact on their lives and to educate the sighted community about the realities of blindness;
3. Social Integration. To facilitate social interaction among BSCB members and promote full participation in accessible social, cultural and recreational events by blind and visually impaired people;
4. To retain and increase membership while also ensuring financial sustainability.

We realized that we needed to involve more of our members on various committees in order to achieve our objectives and our goal. The board encourages all members to let us know where their interests lie and on which committees they may wish to serve. The board will then try to involve as many members as is feasibly possible. We hope this will help BSCB to more effectively serve all blind and visually impaired residents of the Commonwealth. Here is a list of committees. They are: Constitution and Bylaws; Resolutions; Legislative; Membership; Advocacy; Fall Conference; Spring Convention; Social; Finance; Strategic Planning; Transportation; Website; Publications; Fundraising; and Publicity.

Rick Morin next presented us with his treasurer’s report. BSCB has a current net worth of approximately \$151,000.00. BSCB has been benefiting from infusions of funds from Major League Baseball as a result of structured negotiations, but this funding stream is coming to an end. Without new infusions and if we spend at our current rate, BSCB will spend around \$12,000 more than it will take in next year.

Last, but certainly not least, Marcia Dresser presented a president’s report. She began by thanking the board for all of their assistance to her during a long illness. In 2013, Marcia was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Things did not look good for a while but Marcia battled hard and is now doing much better. She also thanked her husband Steve for seeing her through this most difficult ordeal. Marcia is pleased that we had many new members at the 2014 convention.

Marcia told the group about BLIND Day and updated us on the FY 2015 state budget. MCB was level funded in the governor’s budget proposal. The Special Education line item needs a 1.53 percent increase to account for inflation costs. The governor’s proposal offered a small increase to the Perkins Library to increase outreach services.

Marcia asked us to request accessible prescription labeling from our local pharmacies. She next updated us on audio description. Comcast now has opened a center for customers with disabilities; even better, Comcast now has a prototype accessible talking cable box that is being tested in a few selected residences. Verizon was supposed to release a similar prototype on July 1, but we have still not heard that it came out as scheduled. The on demand section on Verizon's cable guide contains a folder with movies that are described.

Marcia wants more members to get involved in our committees. She believes that our strategic plan will help us to do what we do more effectively and get more of our members involved. She thanked Rick Morin for his hard work on getting our information put into the ACB national database. Marcia asked for members to contribute articles for publication in BayLines.

Signs of Major Progress on Accessible Prescription Drug Labels by Bob Hachey

In 2012, the FDA Safety and Innovation Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama. This new law is now yielding very good results for all blind Americans. Walmart was the first major chain to offer accessible prescription labels through its mail order pharmacy. Below are detailed initiatives by three more large chains to do likewise. I encourage all of you to ask for prescription labels from your favorite pharmacies.

New Talking Prescription Initiative At Big Y: Free Talking Prescription Bottles Rolling Out To More Stores and Online By Michelle Bragassa-Holman

January 27, 2014

Big Y joins Walmart with talking prescription bottles free of charge for the visually impaired.

Walmart initiated their pilot program in three stores; Alabama, Massachusetts, and Colorado, and through their mail order service.

Big Y is doing likewise, offering this service in Connecticut and Massachusetts, as well as adding an online marketplace for blind users to obtain the service outside of their state for a small fee.

The innovative system is easy to work and comes with the required reading device from En-vision America, the maker of ScripTalk.

ScripTalk labels work with an embedded microchip which has been programmed with all the normal label information found on prescriptions. Blind and visually impaired people can easily obtain vital information by simply placing the medicine bottle onto the handheld reader, and a natural-sounding computerized voice will read any and all label information for them.

The department of Veterans Affairs started using this same type of program ten years ago, and found that it offers blind and visually impaired consumers the benefit of privacy that all other customers receive.

More than that, the talking prescriptions provide both safety and awareness. No longer do patients have to rely on a third party to read them information and directions for their medication.

Have you used or know of anyone that has used talking prescription bottles? For more information contact 1-800-828-2688.

CVS Pharmacy Now Offers “Talking” Prescription Labels For Individuals With Vision Impairments Through Its Online Pharmacy

New service on CVS.com is the result of a collaboration with state and national organizations for the blind

**Woonsocket, Rhode Island
March 18, 2014**

CVS/pharmacy announced today that it now provides ScripTalk talking prescription labels for prescriptions ordered for home delivery through its online pharmacy, CVS.com. The ScripTalk labels

provide a safe and convenient way to access information on prescription labels for individuals who cannot read standard print. The ScripTalk labels are free to CVS.com pharmacy customers who are blind or visually impaired. Customers can also obtain a free ScripTalk reader from Envision America that will enable them to listen to the information on the ScripTalk label.

"We are pleased to offer the ScripTalk service to our online pharmacy customers who are visually impaired," said Josh Flum, Senior Vice President of Retail Pharmacy at CVS Caremark. "Enhancing access to important information about prescriptions is in keeping with our purpose of helping people on their path to better health."

Today's announcement is the result of collaboration between CVS/pharmacy, the American Foundation for the Blind, American Council of the Blind and California Council of the Blind. These groups applauded CVS/pharmacy's actions.

"The lack of accessible labels on prescription drug containers puts people with vision loss at serious risk of medication mishaps," said Paul Schroeder, Vice President of Programs & Policy at the American Foundation for the Blind. "We applaud CVS/pharmacy for taking steps to provide speech access to label information for customers with vision loss along with its willingness to evaluate methods to improve large print labels."

"This agreement is a positive step that allows for a greater level of privacy, safety, and independence for blind and visually impaired Americans of all ages who take prescription medications," said Kim Charlson, president of the American Council of the Blind.

"The California Council of the Blind applauds CVS's willingness to offer access to the information on prescription medication labels. As a result of this initiative, persons who are blind or visually impaired who use CVS mail order to fill their prescription needs will have the same direct, and independent access to label information as do sighted customers," stated Donna Pomerantz, President, California Council of the Blind.

To request the labels with a prescription ordered through cvs.com, the number to call at cvs.com is 888-227-3403. Questions about the ScripTalk system should be directed to Envision America at 800-890-1180. It is recommended that you call cvs.com first.

Markey Commends Walgreens on New "Talking" Prescription Devices to Aid Blind and Visually-Impaired **by Giselle Barry**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Giselle Barry, 202-224-2742.

Senator is author of Prescription Drug Labeling Promotion Act to ensure safe, independent access to prescriptions

Washington

June 9, 2014

Senator Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) today praised steps taken by Walgreens pharmacies to make it easier for the blind and visually-impaired to access their prescriptions with its “Talking Pill Reminder,” technology that reads prescription labels and audibly reminds patients to take medication. In 2012, Senator Markey’s “Prescription Drug Labeling Promotion Act” was passed as part of the FDA Safety and Innovation Act, ensuring that the blind and visually impaired have safe and independent access to the information on prescription drug labels. The law established a working group of pharmacists, patient advocates, and federal regulators that issued recommendations of best practices for pharmacies to ensure that people who are blind or visually-impaired have access to prescription drug labeling. The law also instructs the Government Accountability Office to analyze the degree to which pharmacists are adhering to the law and whether there continues to be a lack of access to prescription drug labeling for the blind and visually-impaired.

“I applaud Walgreens for taking this important step to help the millions of Americans who are blind or visually-impaired have safer and independent access to the information on their prescription drug labels,” said Senator Markey. “Walgreens’s action underscores the purpose of my law - to help encourage pharmacies to partner and empower our visually impaired citizens to take full control of their health. I encourage all pharmacies to adopt policies, technologies and services that are readily available and will help promote and protect the health of all customers.”

(Editor’s note: I visited my local Walgreens on July 19 and was informed that, in order to receive the Walgreens Talking Pill Reminder free of charge, the customer must fill out a voucher. You must present a photo ID when filling out the voucher; a pharmacy staff member will be happy to assist you in filling out the voucher. The voucher’s text appears below:

“This voucher entitles you to a Talking Pill Reminder, a wellness benefit brought to you by Walgreens
Information below must be completed prior to receiving your Talking Pill Reminder.

Name, date of birth and address.

I certify that I am a person who is blind or visually impaired within the meaning of the Americans with Disabilities Act. I acknowledge that a Walgreens staff member has demonstrated the operation of the Walgreens Talking Pill Reminder.

Signature: -----“

To find a location near you, call 800-925-4733 or visit walgreens.com.)

FCC Adopts New Rules to Make Video Devices Accessible to People with Disabilities

Order Represents Final Milestone in FCC’s Implementation of Landmark Law Making Digital Communications More Accessible

October 29, 2013

Washington, D.C.

The Federal Communications Commission today adopted rules that will enable people who are blind or visually impaired to have easier access to digital video programming on a wide range of electronic devices. The rules will also enable consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing to activate closed captioning on their devices with greater ease.

This action represents the final major step in the FCC’s implementation of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA), enacted in 2010 to bring people with disabilities access to the modern and innovative communications technologies of the twenty-first century. The CVAA is the most significant accessibility legislation since the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result of the FCC’s implementation of the CVAA, more than 50 million Americans will have greater access to advanced communications.

Devices covered under the rules adopted today include navigation devices – devices used to access cable or satellite services, such as set-top boxes and TiVos – as well as other devices used to receive or play back digital video, ranging from televisions and computers to tablets and smartphones. All covered

devices are required to provide on-screen text menus and guides that are audibly accessible, as well as a mechanism that is comparable to a button, key or icon for activating certain accessibility features, such as closed captioning. Devices other than navigation devices are also required to make their other built-in functions accessible.

The Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking implements Sections 204 and 205 of the CVAA. Its provisions include flexibility for small entities through extended compliance deadlines, outreach requirements to inform the public about the availability of accessibility options, and a procedure for complaints. The Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeks comment on a number of areas where the current record is insufficient.

The CVAA has helped ensure that people with disabilities are not left out of the digital revolution by requiring design features that improve accessibility in telephones and television, as well as on the Internet and in new devices, applications, and services. The FCC has played a key role in implementing the Act through initiatives that have already provided enormous benefits to consumers, including the following:

More than 50 million Americans with disabilities have greater access to advanced communications services, such as text messaging, e-mail, and distant messaging and the equipment used with these services, such as smartphones, personal computers, laptops, and tablets.

36 million Americans who are deaf or have hearing loss can watch television programs with closed captions when those programs are re-shown over the Internet, and soon they will be able to use their cell phones, tablets and other portable wireless devices to watch these programs with captions.

25 million Americans who are blind or visually impaired can enjoy TV programs with video description and send an email or instant message on a smart phone.

Thousands of people who are deaf-blind can receive accessible communication devices so they can make telephone calls and access the Internet, to work, learn, and shop, like everyone else.

Americans with disabilities are able to locate accessible communication products and services through the Commission's new accessibility clearinghouse at <http://apps.fcc.gov/accessibilityclearinghouse/>.

And, as a result of today's actions, 25 million Americans who are blind or visually impaired will be able to navigate menus on a range of devices that show video programming, with access to captioning facilitated for an additional 36 million Americans.

For additional information, contact Adam Copeland at (202) 418-1037 or Adam.Copeland@fcc.gov or Maria Mullarkey at (202) 418-1067 or Maria.Mullarkey@fcc.gov.

New Website and Blog for People New to Vision Loss by Hannah Fairbairn

www.visionlossandpersonalrecovery

I have started a new website and blog especially directed towards people who are losing vision. The website is simple to use and in large print and clear simple contrasting colors. It can be accessed on the internet using JAWS or another screen reader, or more simply, on an iPod Touch or iPhone with Voiceover.

It can also be accessed from the Facebook page called Vision Loss and Personal Recovery.

Please take a minute or two to read the home page and the latest post and let me know what you think. You can post a comment, or email me direct from the website.

Please also like it on Facebook.

Most important of all, send the link to anyone you know who is losing vision, or better, place the icon for the website on their iPod or iPhone desktop for them.

Thank you.

“Can’t Someone Read That to You?” Dissolving Stereotypes of Blindness by Lainey Feingold

(From llegal.com)

The need for accessible information has been at the core of many of the settlement agreements reached as a result of Structured Negotiations. Many of those negotiations began with stereotypes about blind people and their right, desire, and need to read independently. In removing copyright barriers to reading materials, the WIPO treaty will help eliminate those stereotypes, and serve as another step toward full recognition of the rights of people with disabilities to read all materials independently.

Stereotypes about people with disabilities, no matter how unconscious those stereotypes are, often lead to legal problems. Well-meaning companies can invest in accessible technologies and adopt new policies, but if the staff that interacts with the public still holds unsupported, unfair and outmoded views of people who are blind, legal issues will continue to arise. That is why customer service training is an important part of an effective accessibility policy, and often a key component of a Structured Negotiations settlement. There are many aspects of a good training program, but one of the most important is dissolving stereotypes about blind people that all too often lead a company into legal trouble.

What are some of the most pervasive stereotypes? The erroneous assumptions that all blind people live with a sighted person, have constant and continuous access to a sighted person, or just plain need a sighted person to conduct their daily lives. That they don’t want to read independently, and don’t need to because a sighted person is always available. These assumptions lead directly to the insulting and dangerous idea that blind people don’t need, aren’t entitled to, don’t want or simply can’t benefit from privacy.

Privacy is a basic human right regardless of disability. Failing to recognize the privacy rights of people with visual impairments leads to bad policy, bad practice, bad customer service and lack of accessibility. It also results in forced disclosure of sensitive financial and health information that should be confidential.

Here are some comments that blind people have heard from those inside companies large and small:

Can't your mother read you that document?

Don't you have a friend who can read you that material?

Can your child's nanny read you that information?

Let me have your PIN; I'll enter it for you.

Can't your shopping assistant enter your PIN?

Can your husband/wife help you with that webpage?

Very often (you could even say most often) the stereotypes underlying these types of comments are unconscious, so deeply embedded and pervasive that the holder of them is unaware of their impact. By avoiding the defensiveness inherent in litigation, Structured Negotiations provide fertile ground for dissolving stereotypes.

Structured Negotiations offers the opportunity for corporate decision makers and customers who are blind to meet at a round table, instead of across a deposition table, encouraging direct communication. One of the best ways to dissolve a stereotype is to meet, work and form a relationship with someone whose life is impacted by the misconceptions at the heart of that stereotype. Structured Negotiations can provide the fertile ground for relationship building in the context of resolving complex legal claims.

The WIPO treaty, once ratified and adopted, will help readers around the world access the information they need and want without having to overcome arcane copyright hurdles. Congratulations to the advocates who worked tirelessly on the treaty. And thanks to blind advocates here in the U.S. who have used Structured Negotiations to break down barriers and dissolve stereotypes to improve access to information.

T station technology for visually impaired to debut in '16 **by Martine Powers**

Boston Globe, March 16, 2014

Navigating a T station can be challenging enough -- even without a visual impairment.

A new technology designed at the University of Massachusetts Amherst might make subway orienteering easier for blind people -- or more likely, for people who lack that innate Bostonian I-know-exactly-where-I'm-going sixth sense -- by offering step-by-step instructions on how to get to their destination inside a T station.

The electronic navigation system, called PERCEPT, uses a smartphone application to help people detect landmarks inside a station and provides verbal directions for moving from one spot to another.

The technology is still a long way off from becoming ready for the public -- it will debut in Arlington Station in 2016 -- but it offers a glimpse at a means of helping people with visual disabilities that could spread system wide.

Aura Ganz, a professor in the university's electrical and computer engineering department, has been working on this system since 2004, trying to develop a way that visually impaired people could walk into a strange building and find their way around without another person guiding them. She explained that GPS, while helpful for long-range navigation, is rarely exacting enough to orient people in a small space.

Instead, she realized electronic tags could be installed at spots throughout a building, using technology that's a close cousin to the radio-frequency identification chips that MBTA fare gates use to read a Charlie Card. Tap the phone to these signs, and the phone will offer suggestions to the next spot en route to the final destination. The tags are placed behind existing signs or on fixed structures, and do not need to be plugged into a power source.

"It's not one long instruction," Ganz said. "It's an instruction that leads you from one landmark to another."

In tests so far, 19 out of 20 people who tried the smartphone app were able to reach their final destination.

"The advantage of the system is that it will re-route you from anywhere to your destination," Ganz said. "It doesn't assume that you will always follow the correct path."

Now, the network of electronic tags and a corresponding smartphone app is coming to Arlington Station, funded by a two-year \$238,321 grant awarded by the T, using money from the Federal Transit Administration.

Larry Haile, system-wide accessibility coordinator for the MBTA, said he first learned about PERCEPT at a conference on disabled issues in 2011. His immediate reaction: That's what we need on the T.

"This would take a bit of the guesswork out of navigating around a station environment," said Haile, who knows from experience as he is visually impaired.

"The beautiful thing is that it doesn't just have to be for people with visual impairments," he continued. "Tourists would be able to get information about how to get to where they need to go."

A video of the technology in action demonstrates how the app could be used in an office building. It's not hard to see how they could be modified for a train station.

"This building is composed of one long hallway with exits at either end," the smartphone declares audibly, in a robotic voice, after it is tapped against one of the tags. "Your first destination is Mail Room. Proceed until the end of Floor Rug, approximately 10 feet, then turn right until reaching the wall. Swipe next for further instructions."

Haile said that other more modern transit systems tend to have a more standardized design throughout their stations -- usually, an escalator that carries passengers down to the center of the platform. But anyone who's ventured into Boston's system of stations -- many dating back to the early 1900s -- knows that's not so here.

The T currently offers group training classes for people with disabilities who need extra assistance learning to use the public transit system; in some cases, T staff also provides one-on-one lessons.

But an app, Haile said, would provide riders with an option that allows them to exercise their independence, learning to navigate local T stations on their own terms.

"The T, in terms of transferring from train to train, can be complex for people," Haile said. "You have to go through corridors and across platforms and down stairs -- that's a lot to keep in mind."

Haile said Arlington Station was chosen for the test run because of its simple layout. But if the trial is successful, it could expand to other stations in the system -- even Haymarket and State Street, which he said can be the most challenging station for someone who can't see. (Or even for someone who can.)

New DOT Rules Make Flying Easier for Passengers with Disabilities **by Bill Mosley**

Monday, November 4, 2013

Contact: Bill Mosley

Tel.: (202) 366-4570

WASHINGTON – U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx today announced that the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), in its ongoing effort to ensure equal access to air transportation for all travelers, is requiring airline websites and automated airport kiosks to be accessible to passengers with disabilities. In addition, DOT will allow airlines to choose between stowing wheelchairs in a cabin compartment on new aircraft or strapping them to a row of seats, an option that will ensure that two manual, folding wheelchairs can be transported at a time.

The new rules are part of DOT's continuing implementation of the Air Carrier Access Act of 1986.

"All air travelers should be treated fairly when they fly, regardless of any disabilities they may have," said Secretary Foxx. "These new rules build on our past work in ensuring that our air transportation system is accessible for everyone, while balancing both airlines' and passengers' need for flexibility."

Under the new websites-and-kiosks rule, covered airlines are required within two years to make pages of their websites that contain core travel information and services accessible to persons with disabilities, and to make all of their web pages accessible within three years. Websites are required to meet the standards for accessibility contained in the widely accepted Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The requirement applies to U.S. and foreign airlines with websites marketing air transportation to U.S. consumers for travel within, to or from the United States.

The rule also requires ticket agents to disclose and offer web-based discount fares to customers unable to use their sites due to a disability starting within 180 days after the rule's effective date. Airlines are already required to provide equivalent service for consumers who are unable to use inaccessible websites. Under the new rule, airlines must also offer equivalent service to passengers with disabilities who are unable to use their websites even if the websites meet the WCAG accessibility standards.

In addition, any automated kiosks installed at U.S. airports for services -- such as printing boarding passes and baggage tags -- must be accessible to passengers with disabilities until at least 25 percent of all kiosks at each airport location are accessible. Even if no new kiosks are installed, 25 percent of kiosks at each airport location must be accessible within 10 years. The standards for accessible kiosks are based on those set by the U.S. Department of Justice for ATM and fare machines in its 2010 Americans with Disabilities Act rule as well as the Section 508 standards for self-contained closed products, such as copiers.

DOT's wheelchair rule provides airlines with more flexibility because it permits airlines to transport passenger wheelchairs by strapping them across a row of seats using a strap kit that complies with applicable safety standards, in addition to stowing them in a closet or similar compartment. In 2008, DOT issued a rule prohibiting airlines from using the seat-strapping method on new aircraft as an alternative to stowing the manual wheelchair in a closet or similar compartment. In that same rule, DOT allowed the use of a seat-strapping method on existing aircraft. Based on a fuller evaluation of the costs

and benefits, DOT has now revised its position to also allow the use of seat-strapping on new aircraft subject to certain conditions. For example, if an airline chooses to use the seat-strapping method to stow a wheelchair, it must transport two wheelchairs in the cabin if requested unless stowing the second wheelchair would displace other passengers.

If an airline chooses to use a closet to stow a wheelchair, then it will still be required to stow only one wheelchair in the cabin. However, in this case it must install a sign or placard prominently on the closet indicating that a wheelchair and other assistive devices are to be stowed in this area with priority over other items brought onto the aircraft by other passengers or crew, including crew luggage.

The rule on accessible websites and kiosks is available on the Internet at www.regulations.gov, docket DOT-OST-2011-0177. In addition to accepting public comments on the web and kiosk rule through this website, the Department partnered with Cornell University's eRulemaking Initiative (CeRI), Regulation Room, designed to improve the public's ability to understand and participate in the rulemaking process. A goal of the CeRI team is to make Regulation Room as accessible to as many users as possible. This partnership supports President Obama's open-government initiative. The final rule on wheelchairs is available at the same website at docket DOT-OST-2011-0098.

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