



“The Blind Spot”

**Newsletter of the Oklahoma Council of the Blind,
an Affiliate of the American Council of the Blind
P.O. Box 1476
Oklahoma City, OK 73101
1-877-578-6212 -- Website: www.okcb.org**

April 2017

OUR MISSION

To promote equal opportunities for blind Oklahomans to participate fully in society and achieve a better quality of life. OCB is a statewide organization of blind and visually impaired individuals, their families and friends. The organization works to encourage, empower, educate and enhance the lives of Oklahomans who are blind or visually impaired. OCB strives to empower blind Oklahomans to become full and independent participants in society through advocacy, leadership and public education on issues that affect the lives of citizens with visual impairments. By connecting, sharing ideas and common concerns, and working together, we build an alliance that, more than individuals working alone, has the power to “improve tomorrow, today” for all Oklahomans who are blind or visually impaired.



Why are We So Vigorously Fighting Legislation This Year? Message from President Joe Fallin

As I write this, OCB is desperately opposing two pieces of legislation which, if adopted, would strike a blow against two of the most important programs effecting blind and visually impaired Oklahomans. One of them, HB2230, which has already passed the house, is on the agenda for hearing in the Senate very soon. The bill would remove the jail commissaries from the Business Enterprise Program. In reality, there is only one location being considered, and that is in Tulsa. The Sheriff's department wants to use the profits to help fund the jail. The argument is taxpayers are paying their hard-earned dollars to support one operator while there's not enough money to subsidize the jail. We have already seen litigation over the commissary in the 1990s, and the Sheriff lost in the courts. Now they want to take it through legislation.

There are two and a half reasons why this bill should be defeated. First, though we're sympathetic to the plight of the taxpayer, it should be pointed out that the county voters approved a sales tax question which included more money for the jail, and it seems that an additional \$150,000 could have been included without jeopardizing the

program.

Second, we are concerned that removing this facility would be only the first step in removing all of our major facilities. We have already lost the state capitol facility.

This program is a great opportunity for blind people to earn a decent living, rather than having to rely on government benefits and, parenthetically, to be one of those taxpayers.

The half reason is suggested in reason 2. There is an unspoken feeling of resentment by many that a blind person in this location is making really good money.

The second issue is HB1861, and SB733, which, in its original form, would require the Department of Rehabilitation Services to contract with a community non-profit organization, which turns out to be NewView Oklahoma. NewView would operate the Older Blind Independent Living Program. NewView does a lot of things very well, and we support them wholeheartedly. But this effort is a mistake. NewView doesn't have the professional staff who are skilled in teaching independent skills to those who need the Older Blind Program. There are other flaws in NewView's plan which space does not allow me to discuss.

There is a positive side to all this, however. Our members have taken on the task of defeating these bills. Lots of letters have been written, and lots of visits have taken place. Even the

National Federation of the Blind of Oklahoman (NFB) of Oklahoma is working on the same side as we are. That alone says a lot. Our tactics may be different, but our goals are the same.

By the time you read this, the outcome will no doubt have been determined. Win or lose, though, we're not going away. OCB will always be there to fight for blind people in Oklahoma. I am very proud of our leadership team, and our members who have expressed their opinions to their legislators on these issues. I am proud of the way our members have conducted themselves. We have been forceful but respectful. We know better than to make political enemies intentionally. We will have to work with the authors of the bills and they may be on our side next time. Meanwhile, I have never been more proud to be an OCB member.



**Saddle Up to OCB
2017 Oklahoma
Council of the Blind
Conference and Convention
By Vicky Golightly, Convention Chair**

The 2017 Oklahoma Council of the Blind Conference and Convention will be on September 22-24 at the Tower Hotel in Oklahoma City. The Tower Hotel is located at 3233 Northwest Expressway, in Oklahoma City.

4 Sleeping room rates are \$73 per night plus

applicable taxes for one to four occupancy. Make reservations by calling the hotel at (405) 842-6633 and let them know you are with the Oklahoma Council of the Blind.

Registration includes five meals and a meal sponsored by the local OCB chapter, visiting vendors, attendance at all meetings and the privilege of telling us your expectations for OCB in the future.

Your Convention Committee is hard at work planning a bang-up, fast-paced conference this year. Our theme is “Saddle Up to OCB”.

A representative from the American Council of the Blind will conduct a special training seminar on Friday for clients, consumers and Visual Services staff. Topics will be geared to how the Workforce Investment Act affects services to Visual Services clients and how Visual Services staff can more productively and efficiently meet the needs of their clients. We will explore the complex strategy of advocacy, transitional skills and so much more.

Convention highlights will include:

- The Educational Training seminar on Friday during the day;**
- BBQ dinner sponsored by Heartland Council of the Blind;**
- Western games on Friday night;**
- Very important Resolutions and Bylaws committee meetings on Friday night;**
- Exhibits from vendors across Oklahoma**

during the day on Saturday;

- **Blindness agency updates;**
- **Special breakout sessions on the latest available technology, workshops on how to cope with vision loss, and much more;**
- **Special OCB Banquet on Saturday night featuring Scott Taylor, a western cowboy poet/singer/storyteller;**
- **Nondenominational church service Sunday morning; and,**
- **Most importantly, the OCB Annual business meeting where we present resolutions about issues affecting people who are blind, adopt constitutional amendments, and elect our Board of Directors for the next year.**

More information about registering to attend the convention and a specific agenda will be forthcoming in the next newsletter. Feel free to contact Vicky Golightly for further details at (405) 740-6227 or email her at vgolight@yahoo.com.



ACB 2017
Conference and Convention
By Jay Doudna

I encourage you to seriously consider making plans to attend the 2017 ACB National Convention at the Nugget Casino Resort in Reno, Nevada. If you attend one convention,

6 **you will want to go again; there is nothing like**

it anywhere else in the blindness community. Convention dates are Friday, June 30th through Friday, July 7th.

During convention week you can attend approximately 200 workshops, seminars, programs and focus groups held by our affiliates, committees and business partners. Every convention gives you the opportunity to learn new things and meet new people.

One of the highlights at the Convention is the opening session Saturday night, featuring the President's report, lifetime member recognition, the affiliate roll call and more. You will want to attend the General sessions Sunday through Thursday with speakers, and panel discussions.

For many convention attendees, a visit to the exhibit hall is a must. There, you will find approximately 60 vendors featuring cutting edge technology for blind and visually impaired users, items for daily living, personal items such as jewelry, candles and more.

You will be staying at the Nugget Casino Resort, where there is always fun in the casino. All rooms at the Nugget have refrigerators and safes. Room rates are \$89 (single or double occupancy), with an additional \$10 per person for up to four people per room. Room tax is currently 13.5%. Effective June 2017, there is also a \$2 per day tourism tax added to each room. When you book your reservation, one night's stay will be charged to your credit

card.

Included in the room rate is the hotel resort fee, which covers:

- * Round-trip shuttle transportation to and from Reno-Tahoe International Airport**
- * Complimentary wireless Internet in guest rooms**
- * Daily complimentary bottled water, 2 bottles per room per day**
- * Unlimited use of the year-round Atrium Pool**
- * Unlimited use of the Fitness Center**
- * Full-service concierge**
- * Valet and self-parking in the secured covered parking structure**

Attending a national ACB Conference and Convention is always fun and educational; it's a vacation you will always remember. So, start putting money aside now; there is still time. I can guarantee you won't regret it. See you in Reno.

For additional information go to acb.org and click on 2017 convention.

Sustaining Sponsor Program

By Jeanne Meyer

The sustaining sponsorship program is a voluntary program which doesn't affect actual membership in ACB/OCB. Your contributions help to offset expenses of OCB and are tax deductible.

Levels and Dollar Amounts

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| I Care | \$10 - \$49 |
| Bronze | \$50 - \$99 |
| Silver | \$100 - \$199 |
| Gold | \$200 - \$499 |
| Platinum\Corporate | \$500 and above |

**How Can I become a Sustaining Sponsor of OCB?
Send your contribution payable to OCB Sustaining
Sponsorship Program, c/o Treasurer Jeanne
Meyer, 814 North F Street, Muskogee, OK 74403.
Challenge!!! I challenge the officers and chairmen
of OCB to become Sustaining Sponsors in 2017.
Come on. Let's make a difference for OCB!**

Tips and Tricks Compiled by Elaine Boykin

Tips and Tricks: This small column is going to provide you with information that might make life a little easier. We all have those little "tips and tricks" that help us through our daily life. If you have something you would like to contribute please email me at elaine18@cox.net.

This time Debbie Sanders has a tip to share with us.

I always seem to have a mess on my nightstand. I have my iPhone and charger cable, my CPAP machine and hose, my glasses case, hand lotion and lip balm and undoubtedly, I end up losing

things, knocking stuff off and then trying to find it. Well, the other day, my husband and I were at Wal-Mart scouting around for different organizers and we found a handy gadget that is working out well. It's the InterDesign Sponge Caddy, Brushed Stainless Steel (even though it's acrylic). The SKU# is 552621039 and it costs \$5.50 online. At our store, it was \$4.97. What makes it so nice is that I can put my plugged in iPhone 6 (upside down) on one side, and on the other I put my trial size hand lotion and lip balm. Now I can easily find my lip balm and hand lotion and not have to hunt for them on the floor.

Calendar of Events

April 21

Ray Kirk Memorial Sensory Garden Dedication at the Oklahoma School for the Blind in Muskogee beginning at 10 am. OSB 3300 Gibson St., Muskogee, OK 74403 Contact Linda Graber at OSB.

May 18

Oklahomans for Special Library Services Annual meeting. A complimentary lunch will be served beginning at noon. Speaker, Scott Taylor, singer/poet/storyteller. Held at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation, 1000 N. Broadway Contact Vicky Golightly, (405) 740-6227 or email

10 vgolight@yahoo.com.

May 20

Dining in the Dark sponsored by the Heartland Council of the Blind, 5:30pm, Cowboy Western Heritage Museum. Contact Sandi Webster, (405) 722-8749.

May 26-28

**Oklahoma School for the Blind Alumni Reunion. 3300 Gibson St., Muskogee, OK 74403
Contact Jeanne Meyer, jmeyer194@gmail.com**

June 3

Hooks, Oars and S'mores for VIP's from 8 - 3 pm. Sponsored by the MLV Foundation and the Department of Wildlife. Learn to fish at Lake Arcadia in Edmond, Oklahoma. Excursions on the lake. End the day with a fish fry. Event free to a blind or visually impaired person and companion. Add'l companions, \$5. ea. To register or for more information, contact: Debbie Sanders, (405) 547-2044.

September 22-24

2017 Conference and Convention of the Oklahoma Council of the Blind in Oklahoma City at the Tower Hotel Contact Vicky Golightly, (405) 740-6227 or email vgolight@yahoo.com.

Contact Katie Ng with NewView Oklahoma about computer and smart phone classes. (405) 232-4644.

CHAPTER UPDATES

Azalea Council of the Blind (Muskogee)

Our March meeting was Friday, March 10 at 1pm at Civitan Park. Instead of a speaker this month, we “spilled the beans” and shared our favorite tips and tricks on living independently. Members brought their favorite low tech or high tech aid and shared ways to organize the kitchen, handle mail, and talked about businesses in town that are helpful. Current legislative bills we oppose were reviewed and legislator’s contact information was distributed. Recipes for the Oklahoma School for the Blind cookbook were solicited. Upcoming activities include attending the Muskogee Area Quilters Guild Quilt Show on April 7, the Azalea Annual Picnic on April 22, and the annual pizza party for juniors and seniors at the Oklahoma School for the Blind on May 4 hosted by the Oklahoma Council of the Blind. All meetings are the second Friday of every month at Civitan Park at 1 pm.

For more information, contact Sandy Evans, President, at sandy@csjevans.com. Like us on Facebook Azalea Council of the Blind or visit us at www.azaleacounciloftheblind.org

Heartland Council of the Blind

HCB has been very busy during the last six months. Future activities include our annual Beeping Easter Egg Hunt on April 15 at New Hope United Methodist Church for children who are blind or who have other disabilities, Dining in the Dark on May 20 at the Western Heritage Cowboy Museum, the annual picnic in June and Coping with Vision Loss on August 20 at New

Hope United Methodist Church. We will be taking a few field trips during the year and are always searching for ways to assist people who are recently embarking on the journey of vision loss.

One of our hopes is to network with the Lions of Oklahoma. The President and Secretary recently exhibited at a district Lions Conference and they will be speaking to the Westside Lions Club in Oklahoma City on April 28.

For more information, contact President Frances Poindexter at (405) 742-1068 or email her at lisspo@aol.com.

Lawton Council of the Blind (celebrating one year old in September as a recognized OCB chapter.)

In January, we set up our tentative calendar for 2017 including an Easter Egg Hunt, fund raising activities, annual picnic and preparing for the 2017 OCB Convention.

The Noon Lions and LEOS recently presented LCB with a check for \$500 with a pledge to more support for LCB projects.

We are also helping the Duncan Council of the Blind get their group fully functioning so they can apply for their chapter membership at the OCB 2017 Conference and Convention in September.

For more information, contact President John Simon at jaygee81289@yahoo.com.

Tulsa Council of the Blind

The Tulsa chapter has been quite busy and plans to stay that way in 2017!

In January, we discussed possible activities and outings for the year, some of which were a picnic,

a trip to a water park, the zoo, and a ropes course. We also discussed possible fundraising opportunities. We began a Penny War game to raise money for our general account. This has been very interesting and there is already a lot of cash and change in the jugs.

February, we had a Valentine's Party/meeting where we played the Battle of the Sexes game – the girls won of course. Our March meeting was spent discussing the current House and Senate Bills that would have negative consequences for the blind citizens of our state. In April, we have decided to go as a group to the Azalea Council annual picnic in Muskogee on April 22. We do not have specific dates for other activities for the following months yet, but plans will be made very soon.

The Tulsa Council of the Blind meets the second Thursday of each month at Town Village, located at 8222 S Yale Ave in Tulsa. We often have activities and outings, and try to have a guest speaker 3 or 4 times throughout the year.

For more information, contact President Julie Bailey at 918-231-0202, or email at j.bailey@cox.net.

The Duncan Council of the Blind (our newest chapter)

We meet every 3rd Saturday of the month at 1:30 pm. We meet at New Hope Baptist church located at 200 South 42nd. We will meet in the parlor on the southwest corner of the building. We hope you will take notice of the new ramp near our entrance and on the inside next to the parlor we also have new handicapped restrooms. We have been blessed with a great place to meet.

We hope you will come and check us out. We are happy to have new members and welcome many

more. We have elected officers, have a post office box, a bank account, (although small), and finally received our tax number which made us complete. We are learning from our speakers and each other, the vision impaired, blind and handicapped. It is good to discuss related subjects and to assist in having a better life. We have the services of the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) from Oklahoma City, who have many ways of helping us with our disabilities.

For more information, call (580) 252-6404 or (580) 467-293.

Newsletter Committee: Vicky Golightly, Editor; Elaine Boykin, Debbie Sanders, Pam Holloway, Kay Love and others. Printed by Sanders Group.

Donations Appreciated

Contributions, which are greatly appreciated, may be sent to Oklahoma Council of the Blind, Treasurer Jeanne Meyer, 814 N. F. Street, Muskogee, OK 74403.

Address and Contact Changes Requested

Please update us with your current address, email and phone number to make sure we can contact you. You can contact elaine18@cox.net or 405 942-3413.

Join our listserv at www.okcb.org or contact Jeanne Meyer at jmeyer194@gmail.com.

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**FREE MATTER FOR THE
BLIND AND HANDICAPPED**