

“Sightings”

Wyoming Council of the Blind

<https://www.wycb.info/>

307 629-1916

January, 2023

President’s Message

From Cheryl Godley, PhD

Revive, Strive, and Thrive

It is my privilege and honor to serve as the president of WyCB. Thank you for this opportunity to serve and I look forward to working with you and the board. The motto I have chosen for the next two years for our organization is “Revive, Strive, and Thrive.”

It is imperative to Revive our organization. Building our membership is important, as without members, we do not have WyCB.

We want to develop a group of members who will Strive to support the purpose of WyCB.

It is through our efforts that we will Thrive. It is through the activities of WyCB that we may Thrive, seeing changes occur for individuals who are B/VI.

The purpose of WyCB is:

- To encourage and assist individuals to develop their abilities and potential, and to assume responsible positions in the community.**
- To offer a forum for the exchange of ideas, opinions, and information about its matters of concern.**
- To continue offering an annual scholarship for students with vision loss.**
- To support the development of low vision support groups around the state of Wyoming.**
- To continue to host an annual convention to provide training, sharing, and connection.**
- To advocate on behalf of B/VI to local, county, and state government.**

An example of how important our organization is, was evidenced last year when the Talking Books Program was cut by the State of Wyoming. It was reinstated through very hard work of WyCB and individuals who were willing to devote time and effort into ensuring this program was not lost. As a result, the program was not cut and people in our state experiencing B/VI may continue benefiting from this important program.

Please do not forget the importance of WyCB in advocating for our rights - not privileges. We need more members who support WyCB. Currently it is a handful of individuals who are dedicating their energy to the benefit of all. So, if you are approached to help or assist with a project, remember that your efforts are appreciated, no matter how large or small.

Building membership is key to our organization. I am asking that each member spread the word about our purpose and see if you can get one other person to join. If we do that, we would double our membership! How exciting that would be! I challenge each member to encourage one other person to join WyCB. Members do not have to be B/VI, but may have an interest in, or affiliation with, someone who is B/VI. Family members, partners, friends, educators, professionals, and anyone who has an interest, is welcome. Some of the places you might talk about WyCB might include senior centers, churches, other organizations, vocational rehabilitation, doctors' offices, schools, universities, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and so on. If you need brochures just call our number (listed below) and we will get them to you. The cost of membership is \$20 a year.

Please join us! We have our board meetings every second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM. Just dial the number below and then enter the code so that you can hear what we're doing. We would love your feedback, as well.

Call-in number: 605 472-5395 Code: 569373

My hope is that our members will become excited about the organization and what it has to offer. Membership in WyCB offers an opportunity to meet with the B/VI community, and this may serve as a forum to foster sharing, and to assist each other with challenges we face. We may share solutions with each other and assist each other in problem solving through learning about available resources.

Don't forget, we are a resource for individuals with B/VI. If you don't know where to go to receive services or support, call us! If you run into a situation in which you do not receive fair, considerate, and equal treatment because you have a VI, contact us! If you want to know more about your rights as a person with a VI, contact us!

My hope is that in our excitement to grow WyCB's membership that you, too, will become excited to join an organization that enables, supports, and works on the half of people with B/VI.

If you have any questions or if you would like an application for membership to WyCB, please call the WyCB phone number: 307 629-1916.

Applications are also available at our website
<https://www.wycb.info/membership-application>

Sightings FYI

It was decided at the October Board of Directors meeting that we would begin publishing “Sightings” only twice a year, ie; in January and July. Since this newsletter is our only way to reach out to our members, it is important that we continue to publish it, even though it has become very difficult without an editor. Each edition will probably be a bit longer due to this schedule.

If any of you have some skills that would allow you to assume the editors role we would sure like to hear from you. If you can help out in any way, please call our VP, Tom Lealos at 307 629-1916. He would appreciate receiving any news or article that you may want to submit.

Highlights of 2022 Convention

Our Virtual 2022 Convention was held on September 17th. It featured five presentations which were interspersed with four \$25.00 raffle drawings, followed by our annual Membership Business Meeting (see separate article). Here are the highlights and take-aways from the day-long event that was hosted by a Wyoming Independent Living Zoom Call.

Our first presenter was Leslie VanOrman, Program Manager for Vision Outreach Services. She updated us on VOS's successes with the Senior Blind program, which they now administer throughout the State, as well as their activities within schools in Wyoming. She also touched on their role in the recent effort to maintain the funding for the Talking Book Program. If you are in need of VOS services they can be reached in their new office in Lander by phone at: 307 856-5652 or by Email at: wde-vision-outreach@wyo.gov.

Cori Tanner, Disaster Relief Supervisor with American Red Cross of Wyoming, spoke to us about Emergency Preparedness in our homes and in everyday life. Her discussion of the importance of "Go Bags" being at the ready was very informative. As a take-away, she announced that the Red Cross will install smoke alarms in homes at no charge, accompanied by post-alarm instructions. To take advantage of this program in Wyoming, simply call Janet Lewis at: 307 274-2074 or Email her at: janet.lewisnovick@redcross.org.

Our very own, Dr. Cheryl Godley PhD, spoke about the psychological aspects of coming out of a two year period of being cooped up during the recent pandemic. She can be reached by phone at: 307 629-1916 or by Email at: president@wycb.info.

Ryan Rausch, Co-Mgr. with Wyoming Assistive Technology Resources (WATR), from the University of Wyoming in Laramie gave us a quick overview of what is new in the world of technology for B/VI folks. He focused on Aps for smart phones and new reading devices. If you are in need of their services, Ryan and his team of specialists can be reached by phone at: 307 766-6187 or by Email at: r-rausch@uwyo.edu.

Denise Russell, owner of Speak To Me Catalog, in Renton, Washington, walked us through a list of her many marvelous products starting from the front door to the kitchen. All of her products speak to you and because she is also Visually Impaired, she can explain every product she sells and vouches for all of them. If you would like to visit with her or have a look at her catalog, she can be reached by phone at: 800 248-9965 or by going to her website at: <https://speaktomecatalog.com/>

If you mention that you heard her at our convention, you will receive free shipping for any order you place.

At our short lunch break, we announced the name of this year's recipient of WyCB's annual scholarship. Congratulations to Trent Slade, who will receive \$1000.00 which will be used to continue his education at the University of Wyoming, where he is majoring in Engineering.

The virtual convention went well, but there is still the need for us to meet in person. To address this issue, the Board of Directors will be discussing what format we will use for our 2023 convention.

Thanks to all of you who participated in the 2022 Convention. We hope you received some useful information that you can use in your daily lives.

2022 Annual Membership Business Meeting Highlights

Later in the day after the presentations, outgoing President, Sherry Leinen, called the Annual Membership business meeting to order. After approving the previous year's minutes and Treasurer's report and going through some committee reports and announcements, Sherry called our attention to the following proposed By-Law Amendment and that it be added to Article V-Board of Directors and Officers - Powers and Duties as a new section.

Board Members shall attend all Board Meetings or be excused by a two thirds (2/3) vote of the members present at any given meeting. The Board shall consider each absence of a Board Member as a separate circumstance and may expressively waive such absence by a two thirds (2/3) vote of the members present at that meeting.

Any elected board member with two consecutive unexcused absences from regular meetings of the Board of Directors during a calendar year is encouraged to re-evaluate with the President his/her commitment to the organization. After re-evaluation with the President any Board Member that has unexcused absences from two more regular meetings of the Board of Directors shall be asked to vacate the seat on the Board and the vacancy shall be filled as provided by these bylaws. Board members who are unwilling or unable to fulfill the duties required of them will be subject to dismissal by two thirds vote of the board members present at a Board meeting.

The Amendment was approved unanimously.

Our By-Laws call for a staggering of the terms of Officers and Directors, which has us electing about half of the board each year. WyCB's newly elected Board of Directors is as follows:

Officers

President – Cheryl Godley

Vice President – Tom Lealos

Secretary – Sherry Leinen

Treasurer – D'Anna Feurt

Directors

Debra Thompson

Sharon Byers

We did not receive any more candidates, so our Board is short of members. If you would like to be considered for a seat on the Board, please let President Godley know. The Board can fill the vacant seats by appointment until our next convention. New faces with new ideas are always welcome.

Membership Renewal Time Again

This will serve as a quick reminder that it is time to renew your membership in WyCB. To accomplish this you will find a renewal form enclosed with this newsletter. We kindly ask that you return it along with the annual membership fee to D'Anna Feurt, our Treasurer/Membership Chair no later than February 28, 2023. Her address is shown on the form.

As mentioned in the President's message, we have made growing our membership ranks a priority. If WyCB is going to thrive, we need to reach out to more and more B/VI folks around the state.

So, if you know of any of your friends or family who might want to join us, please let D'Anna know and she will get a membership form to you for this purpose. Simply call the WYCB number: 307 629-1916.

White Cane Law Advocacy

Prior to the pandemic we had begun to look into the inequities that seem to exist in Wyoming's White Cane Laws. Now that things have settled down and gotten back to a new normal, we have resumed these efforts. You may remember that the fines and penalties for injuring or abusing an animal in Wyoming are much more severe than those for injuring a pedestrian with low vision, is blind, deaf, or hearing impaired who is traveling with a white cane with red markings and/or a dog guide. A quick summarization of our proposed recommendations to rectify this problem is shown here:

1st Offense: a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not to exceed \$2500.00 and imprisonment for not more than six months or both.

2nd Same Offense: a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not to exceed \$5000.00, imprisonment for not more than one year or both, as well as the loss of driver's license for not more than six months

3rd Same Offense: a felony punishable by a fine not to exceed \$10,000.00, imprisonment for not more than two years or both, as well as the permanent loss of driving privileges.

These punishments equal or exceed those for injuring or abusing an animal, and rightfully so.

We have, and are still soliciting testimonials from anyone who has been injured by a motorist who has not recognized travelers using white canes and/or dog guides. If you or anyone you know has experienced such an accident, please contact us soon, as we will use these testimonials to strengthen our arguments to get the statutes changed.

In addition, we are proposing changes in the state's Driver Safety Training Manuals which would increase drivers' awareness to cane and dog guide travelers. We would also be available for white cane safety presentations in schools around the state.

All of our proposed updates will go a long way towards making it safer for pedestrians using canes and/or dog guides to travel on the streets, roads, and highways in Wyoming. We will supply a full report of our endeavors in the July edition of Sightings.

WYCB Phone Number

In these days of scams, high risks, security issues, and the like, the WYCB Board has determined that it would be best to limit the exposure of their personal contact information. In this regard, we maintain a separate cell phone which can be used to contact anyone for any reason in a leadership position within WYCB. The phone number is: 307 629-1916. It has already been mentioned in some of the articles above. Sherry will usually answer or will check for messages regularly. She will see that your message gets to the appropriate individual for a return call to you. Unfortunately, this type of precautionary measure has become only too common in these times. We hope you understand.