

# **"Sightings"**

of the

## **Wyoming Council of the Blind**

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### **President's Message from Tom Lealos**

I'd like to first call your attention to our new newsletter editor, Sandy Behounek. She is one of our newest members and likes to write. I think you'll enjoy her writing style. Thank you, Sandy, for volunteering for this important job.

**For those of you who attended our state convention last month, you heard me ask the question, “What do you want us to do?” You all are hearing it again here.**

**We’ve spent the last two years getting organized and putting things in place in order to “strive for the betterment of blind and visually impaired individuals in the state of Wyoming.” It’s time we moved on to this task.**

**Your newly elected Board of Directors has already had it’s first meeting, at which time many thoughts and ideas were generated, in large part thanks to the six new Board members. We’d like to hear from you, however, to assist us in setting our priorities for advocacy for the year. Please contact me or any of our Board members with your recommendations. Remember, we’re all in this together.**

**Lastly, I’d like to thank you for the opportunity to serve as your President for two more years. I’m looking forward to working with our new Board on your behalf. Hopefully, we’ll all be able to look back on some real accomplishments two years from now.**

# **WyCB Annual Convention June 2014**

**By Sandy Behounek**

**An enjoyable and enlightening convention has come to a close. We wish to express our thanks to the hard work, and dedication of all those involved in its planning and execution.**

**Please visit our website at [www.wycb.info](http://www.wycb.info) to enjoy photographs of the convention, and a more detailed account of the WyCB board meeting minutes.**

## **A Special Thank You**

**We wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to Casper Mayor Paul Meyer for opening our Convention, and Alan Peterson, from North Dakota, for his presentation as the ACB representative. It was a long bus ride and we are grateful to you Alan for joining us.**

**Thank you Wendy and J.P, with WATR (Wyoming Assistive Technology Resources), for their interesting and informative presentation of iPad Applications for the Blind or Visually Impaired. WATR made the iPad sound less like an intimidating piece of technology and more like a friendly helper.**

**Our thanks to Dr. Morse, a Casper optometrist, for his engrossing, and eye opening lecture on “Eye Supplements-Which One Is Right for Me?” I’m sure a greater number of us will be eating healthier, exercising more, and taking our eye vitamins much more diligently.**

**To Dr. Cheryl Godley for her presentations, “Adapting Emotionally to Vision Loss”, “Issues of Sighted Partners,” and “Understanding and Countering Stress Responses.” Everyone benefited greatly from your classes Dr. Godley. We all need help coping with our disabilities at times. Thank you for being there for us.**

**Last, but not least, a thank you to Ken Hoff, Executive Director of WILR (Wyoming Independent Living and Rehabilitation) for his informative explanation of “WILR: Who Are They? What Do They Do?” WILR is an organization that is so important to individuals coping with disabilities. You are so many things to so many people. We are fortunate indeed to have you on our side.**

## **The WyCB Auction**

**Tom Lealos, assisted by the beautiful, and delightful Cleo Lealos, and the lovely, and absolutely amazing Jacquie Flatley, began the second WyCB auction. A wide variety of treasures were donated for this occasion. The bidding was lively, fast paced and often rollicking. Tom may have stumbled onto a new career, for he shows the makings of a truly outstanding auctioneer! Through this auction \$420 was raised for WyCB.**

## **The WyCB 2014 Annual Board Meeting**

**The annual 2014 meeting of the WyCB Members was convened June 20, at 3 p.m. Six members of the former Board were retired and six new members were elected in their place. The membership list of the 2014 Board is as follows:**

## Officers

**President – Tom Lealos**

**Secretary – Daniel Behounek**

**Vice President –Howard Hein**

**Treasurer – Muriel McNeely**

## Directors

**Sandy Behounek**

**Linda Johnson**

**Jacquie Flatley**

**Pat Litton**

**Betty Hazen**

**Nina Stairs**

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. The By-Laws were presented and passed by the members of WyCB vote.

## Special Recognition Awards

**Plaques were awarded by WyCB President, Tom Lealos, to three individuals retiring from the Board, for their dedication and outstanding service. The awards are as follows:**

## **John Groves**

John is a charter member of WyCB. John will retire after twenty-two years as a faithful Board member. He has served two terms as President, and the remaining years as a director.

“It was our goal from the very beginning,” John says, “to get information out to the blind people of Wyoming. We’ve tried to divide our meetings, and conventions as evenly as possible across the State, so everyone could be represented fairly.”

John remembers, “I was one of the founders of the Scholarship fund. It was originally set up as a memorial. When members passed away, mourners were encouraged to donate money to the scholarship fund in remembrance of their loved ones, instead of buying flowers.”

“Membership has fluctuated over time,” John explained. “Some years we had twenty members, and as many as sixty in other years.”

“I was sure surprised to get this award,” laughed John. “I certainly wasn’t expecting it!”

## Sandy Herman

**Sandy is one of the organization's sighted members and is also retiring from the board this year. She too is a Charter member of WyCB, which began in Gillette in 1992.**

**"I've been on the board of directors from the beginning," Sandy told me, "and have held the offices of Secretary and Secretary and Treasurer several times. Sometimes we didn't have many members on the board," she went on to explain, "and we had to double up on our jobs. That's how I became both the Secretary and Treasurer."**

**Sandy said, "I became involved with WyCB when I lived with a woman for five and a half years who was blind. "These were some of the best years of my life. I used to drive her to and from the Blind Camp on Casper Mountain."**

**"WyCB purchased a new P.A. System for the Blind Camp. We helped with other equipment too, as well as monetary donations. We worked with the Lions Club to make the Blind Camp the best it could be."**



**“When WyCB began, we used to drive to a different town each month,” Sandy recalled, “We would meet at one another’s homes and would enjoy a pot luck dinner before our Board meetings. The meetings would be held in one room and the members’ friends, and families would go off into another room to talk. We really got to know one another! Conference calls on the telephone aren’t the same as meeting in person.” She sighed. “They’re more convenient, but I miss the comradery.”**

### **Lois Boyd**

**Lois will also be stepping down from the board this year, to go on to meet new challenges. She has been a member of the WyCB board for ten years. During her years on the board, she has served as the President, Vice President and has also served as the Scholarship Chairman several times. Lois is very involved in low vision matters in other ways.**

**Lois leads the Casper Area Low Vision Support Group (CALVS). CALVS was the driving force, along with WyCB, in getting the audible traffic lights installed in downtown Casper. This is a service that greatly benefits individuals who are blind or have low vision in crossing busy streets.**

**“When I joined the board, I was a new and bewildered newcomer” Lois remembers. I gained confidence and experience as time went on. I will say that several of the hardest and most difficult tasks I’ve had to face turned out, in retrospect, to be some of my most productive and rewarding experiences.”**

**Lois recalled, “I had a ninety year old friend who was on the board and whose one regret in life was never to have been President. The following year, the board elected her President. When she was unable to complete her term due to health issues, I was called to finish my friend’s term, and went on to be the President for another term of my own. I truly enjoyed the years I spent serving on the WyCB Board.**

## **2014 WyCB Member of the Year Award**

### **Muriel McNeely**

**Muriel was the recipient of the “2014 Member of the Year” award. Muriel was presented this award for her unflagging dedication, hard work, helpfulness, cheerfulness, and courtesy to one and all. This will be Muriel’s sixth year as a Board member and she has served as the Treasurer all six years.**

**“I don’t know why they gave me this award,” Muriel said. “I don’t think I do that much. It’s good to have a job I can do out of my home. I helped to get the traffic lights in downtown Casper and that is something I’m proud of.”**

**The board does not agree with this statement however. Muriel handles the WyCB finances, pays the bills, keeps the books, juggles the accounts, keeps track of the board, and membership mailing lists, helps with local conventions, and assists with various board projects. In our opinion Muriel, that’s quite a job! Muriel and WyCB is very lucky to have you!**

## **A Technology Moment**

**MIT Develops Finger Reader - A Smart Audio Book Reader For The Visually Impaired.**

by [\*\*Sharvari Panchbhai\*\*](#), Jul 11, 2014

**Scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have come up with a novel device that will help the visually impaired to easily read books.**

**Known as the “Finger Reader”, this amazing gadget will not only help the people with low vision read through texts in a hassle-free way, but also guide them by providing instant feedback via tactile sensations. Reading becomes easier for people with visual impairments by pointing their index finger at a text. Keeping this idea in perspective, the MIT scientists designed the Finger Reader to be worn on the index finger so that they can read newspapers, magazines, books, computer screens, etc. While reading, the users can vary their speed and they can also come to know when they stray from a particular line of a text.**

**The special software traces the finger movement and processes the data after identifying the words of the printed text. Vibration motors alert the readers when the users veer off the line of the text.**

**The device will not replace Braille. Instead, the device will be used as an alternative for the materials which are not written in Braille.**

**The researchers want to make the device more reliable, smaller, and faster and also explore its applications so that it can support not only the people with visual impairments but also older persons, children and language learners.**

**(sourced from: [web.mit.edu](http://web.mit.edu))**

## **The iPad**

**There is a myriad of available, affordable, and helpful apps for the iPad to aid people who are blind, low vision or physically handicapped. An app is a program designed to allow the user access to a variety of helpful tools to accomplish our individual goals.**

**An iPad, through menu choices and different finger taps, is able to access speech, zoom text, use voice recognition, change color options along with several other helpful aids that can benefit many of us.**

**There are different apps to help us label our belongings, read audiobooks, help with money recognition and/or color identification, an app, with the help of its small camera can copy our mail and read it back to us. We can use these programs to assist us to navigate around a town or state, listen to music, watch a movie, have access to news programs, talk to one another, dictate our thoughts, connect to libraries, enable us to track our diabetes and diets. We can listen to weather alerts or forecasts, we can set alarms or find out what time it is, here or anywhere in the world. These are only a few of the helps available to you. Check them out!**

## **The Sightings News Letter**

**This newsletter belongs to all of us. We are one family, joined by our special needs. It's the obligation of each and every one of us to help each other. If you have questions or suggestion, or come across knowledge that may help a friend, please share it!**

**I can't promise everything you bring to my attention will make it into the newsletter, but I will read every email. You may contact me at: --[sbehounek@bresnan.net](mailto:sbehounek@bresnan.net)**