

"Sightings"

Of the

Wyoming Council of the Blind

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Editor's Note: Before getting started, it should be noted that the August and November, 2013 editions didn't get published. For this I apologize. Life, in the form of a family medical trip, home remodeling, and a computer crash, got in the way. I can only hope that you will understand. I'll try to catch you up.

President's Message

By Tom Lealos

DON'T BE AFRAID! I've found myself thinking or mumbling this on various occasions lately and I'll bet I'm not alone.

The majority of WyCB members are partially sighted; not totally blind yet, and as such, are progressing thru what I call "visual limbo-land." At first, it was easy for us to adapt to our visual impairments by figuring out different ways to accomplish the tasks that we once found easy to do. As we

got older and our vision continued to decline it became harder to cope with this, once minor inconvenience. Everything was becoming more frustrating and time consuming.

In the waning days of our sight loss journey it became quite obvious that there may be some things that we just wouldn't be able to do any more. Our minor inconvenience has finally become a real life problem. Now it was time to actually deal with it. I was confronted with this stark reality last summer when I got lost in my very own yard, a yard that I had worked on and landscaped every square foot of. I stood there not knowing which way to go. I remember mumbling "don't be afraid, dummy, you can figure this out." I did get back to the house and resolved to take something to probe with from then on, be it my cane, a shovel, a rake, or just a stick.

The lesson I learned that day and which I'd like to share with each of you is to DON'T BE AFRAID! You can do it, if you let your other senses kick in and allow other people to help you. Just DON'T BE AFRAID to ask for help when you need it. If you don't keep going you'll lose your self-respect and soon become irrelevant. Don't let yourself bottom out; instead take heart in the little victories you achieve each day. Use them to balance out the negatives you have to deal with.

Losing your sight may be very tiring so get a good night's sleep and DON'T BE AFRAID to take a nap when you need one. Also, I have found that helping others can quickly lift one's spirits and help get you thru a troubled time. DON'T BE AFRAID to go thru this journey without a fight, as you will regret it if or when "your lights go out" for good.

State Convention 2013

Last year's state convention in Casper was the first ever joint effort between WyCB and NFB of Wyoming. Since neither of our organizations have large numbers, it seemed like a good idea to join forces. The feedback proved us to be right.

After going thru the frustrations of helping to plan the convention at the eleventh hour, Jacquie Flatley was asked to run the whole program at virtually the very last second. Without her leadership the convention would have been a bust. For this, she is owed a tremendous note of gratitude.

Congratulations to Matthew Stairs for being our 2013 Scholarship winner. He is studying Theatrical Arts at Casper College. Best of luck in your chosen profession, Matt!

Some new directors and officers were nominated and elected at the Annual Meeting held in the afternoon. The results are as follows:

Officers

President – Tom Lealos, Powell

Vice-President – LeRoy Erickson, Casper (new)

Secretary – Shelie Erickson, Casper (new)

Treasurer – Muriel McNeely, Casper

Directors

Lois Boyd – Casper

Ron Brehmer – Casper (new)

Jacquie Flatley – Casper

John Groves – Gillette

Sandra Herman – Gillette

Matthew Stairs – Casper (new)

Alternate Director

Betty Hazen – Casper

A Hearty “thank you” to the four new Board members for stepping up to serve our organization.

SERVE ON THE BOARD! JUST CALL TOM AT (307)754-3789.

Museum Focus Group

Last July members from the low vision support groups from Powell (SOS) and Cody participated in a focus group at the renowned Buffalo Bill Center of the West (BBCW) located in Cody. The Center is participating in a Multi-Site Museum Accessibility Study conducted by the Art Beyond Sight Institute.

The purpose of this Study is to collect information from blind and visually impaired persons which will help the Center design more educational and engaging programs for future visitors from around the world. A brief summary of their comments includes:

- The lighting in the hallways and galleries is low, which makes it difficult to walk around the Center.**
- The push-button audios at some displays made it nice for those who can't see well enough to read.**
- Push-buttons with contrasting colored circles would make it easier to locate the buttons.**
- One on one, or tours in small groups were preferred.**
- Video or audio pre-tours prior to entering the galleries would be very helpful.**
- These folks were more likely to visit in the off season.**

Mark Your Calendars

Circle June 20 & 21, 2014 on your calendar as a reminder for this year's state convention to be held at the Northwest Community College in Powell. Our Annual Meeting, which will include the election of new directors and officers, will be held on Friday afternoon. That evening we will be hosted to a supper and sight-seeing boat ride at the Yellow Tail Reservoir near Lovell. The program consisting of various speakers, brunch/lunch, door prizes, and an auction will be held on Saturday.

Arrangements are being made for attendees from out-of-town to stay in dorm rooms at the College or at local motels. Watch for your registration packets in the mail. Folks in the Big Horn Basin look forward to "SEEING" you in June.

Membership Renewal Reminder

By now, you will have received your 2014 Membership Renewal form in the mail. Our Treasurer, Muriel McNeely, is asking that you please return the form with your annual dues to her by March 1st. This will give her time to send our information into ACB, our parent organization, in a timely manner. Thank you for your promptness.

Annual Scholarship

If you know of a college or trade school student in need of a \$1000 scholarship, please refer them to our website: www.wycb.info. Direct them to the scholarship link for application details or they can call Lois Boyd at (307)234-3980.

Fundraising Help Needed

We have been presented with a wonderful fundraising opportunity and we are looking for volunteer ticket sellers from our membership, especially those who live in the Casper area. The Casper "Cavalry," will be playing Nebraska's "Danger" in arena football on May 9th in the Casper Events Center.

We will be selling the tickets at the discounted price of \$15.00 each, \$5.00 of which will be donated to WyCB. Since all ticket proceeds need to be turned in by April 28th, it is important that we start selling ASAP. Please contact our Vice-President, LeRoy Erickson at (307)259-1773 if you can sell tickets. Thank you in advance for your willingness to help.

"Sightings" is published quarterly and is distributed in Large Print and electronically. For submissions, contact the editor, Tom Lealos, at (307)754-3789 or by email at: tlcranch@bresnan.net.