

THE RHODODENDRON

THE RHODODENDRON

FALL 2014

EDITED BY:
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DON'T DELAY SEND TODAY!!!!!!!

It's never too early to send articles For the next news letter.

President's Message

Dear MSCB Members,

As I sit here writing this message, it is Election Day. I am relishing the fact that I was once again able to vote independently because of ACB members before me who actively and persistently advocated for accessible voting machines. Thank you, thank you, thank you! I do hope each of you had the opportunity to vote using your preferred method. It is hard to believe that another MSCB convention has already come and gone. While we were small in number, our convention in Charleston was a great success! Thank you to all who made it possible. I especially want to thank Jimmy and Betty Fisher for providing transportation, their willingness to do whatever needed to be done, and their endless enthusiasm. A huge thank you goes to Marcia Dillon for her creativity in making a lot of the banquet decorations as well as the gifts for Brian and Kim Charlson. You can read more about the convention later in this issue.

As we begin another MSCB year, I want to encourage each of you to serve on at least one of our committees. It is the hard work of these committees that help make MSCB be successful and recognized. Below is a list of the MSCB committees along with some of their responsibilities. Please indicate the committees on which you want to serve by either sending me an email at dandmbrown@atlanticbb.net or by calling (304) 822-4679.

Committees and responsibilities

Public Relations: publish the organization's newsletter quarterly in appropriate accessible `formats, supervise or offer advice in the publication of other appropriate materials.

Legislative Committee: keep the membership informed of any pertinent legislative matters at the state and national levels, and serving as the

organization's legislative representative at the request of the President.

Bylaws: receiving, considering and preparing amendments to the MSCB Bylaws for presentation to the Convention; report all written amendment submissions to the Convention, with or without Committee recommendation.

Budget and Finance: develop an annual budget for the upcoming calendar year to be approved or modified and adopted by the Board of Directors; develop the organization's financial policies.

Convention: work with the board to explore and secure the location for upcoming state conventions, including hotel accommodations and meals; plan the convention program.

Awards: establish policies and guidelines for the awarding of equipment and scholarships; establish policies for recognizing contributors to the activities of MSCB and the blindness field in general.

Website: work closely with our webmaster to ensure that our affiliate website is up-to-date and remains accessible to all users.

Fund-raising: explore and organize statewide fund-raising activities for MSCB.

Membership: explore ways for getting current members more actively involved in MSCB, contact prospective members.

Thank you for your willingness to serve. Enjoy this issue.

Donna Brown, MSCB President

Let Your Voice Be Heard

West Virginia is currently in the process of updating its Regional Public Transit Human Services Coordinated Transportation plan. We all know the importance of transportation services to access employment, health services, and community programs. We also know about the little to no public transportation throughout West Virginia.

In order to help identify the specific needs throughout the state, regional meetings have been scheduled this fall. Several MSCB members had the opportunity to attend the meetings in their areas.

I, Donna Brown, attended the region 8 meeting in ,Petersburg on October 31. This region services the counties of Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Mineral, and Pendleton. After each participant shared their concerns and goals, it was determined that Hampshire County had the most limited transportation services in this region. A follow-up meeting will take place on December 8 to discuss strategies to improve transportation services in these counties.

Region 6 held the second of what will probably be 3 meetings concerning its transportation issues on November 3. Counties represented were Doddridge, Harrison, Marion, Monongalia, Preston, and Tayler. I, Carol McGhee, represented MSCB and the Vandalia Chapter along with Debbie Cain, Ninetta Garner and Frank McGhee. There were agencies, consumer groups and persons who use the current systems present who expressed their needs and ideas. The third meeting will be held with time, date and location to be announced.

Monongalia County has the best transportation service of all the counties represented but still it is lacking in filling the needs of its ridership.

Let Your Voice Be Heard(con't)

I, Mucie Allred, attended a regional meeting concerning coordinated public transportation. Approximately 20 people from near-by areas and those from social services whose clients ride the bus were represented. I introduced myself as an envoy from MSCB and they were very welcoming.

We were presented with a power point display of population density by age, income, and area. The discussion brought out opinions that more cooperation is needed of services such as public transportation and various vans in near-by towns. Also, the comment was made that a political representative should be attending our meeting to promote interest. With a budget in the millions and the funding at a standstill, the city of weirton could lose its bus service.

RIDE THE NEW BUS !!!

The West Virginia Division of Public Transit recently announced the addition of I-RIDE79 to the state's public transit system. It offers service between Charleston and Morgantown.

The I-RIDE79 bus service makes daily stops in Charleston, Clendenin, Flatwoods, Weston, Clarksburg, Fairmont and Morgantown. Fares start at \$3 and go up to \$15, each direction.

Passengers can board at any stop along the route.

Buses are ADA accessible and equipped with WiFi power, outlets, reclining seats, seat belts and restrooms.

"Our mission is to make travel in West Virginia safe and efficient for all, and this service will help us achieve that goal," Transportation Secretary Paul Mattox said. "It doesn't matter where you live, everyone will now have access to different parts of the state and surrounding region along with a variety of services in their communities."

The West Virginia Division of Public Transit has partnered with Barons Bus Lines, of Cleveland, as part of a nationwide effort to connect rural areas and urban centers.

The service will provide links with Greyhound in Charleston and Morgantown, from where passengers can travel on to Pittsburgh and Washington DC.

"It's a service which is going to be heavily used and is needed. We're excited to be able to help make travel accessible and affordable for all West Virginians," said John Goebel, vice president of Barons Bus Lines. The service will be funded with federal money appropriated to develop and support intercity bus transportation.

To view the bus schedule and reserve your seat, call 1-888-378-3823 or visit [barons bus.com](http://baronsbus.com).

MSCB Convention 2014

By Carol McGhee

"WAVES OF CHANGE, OCEANS OF OPPORTUNITIES" was the theme for MSCB's annual convention held October 10-12 at the Wingate Hotel in South Charleston, WV.

The convention kicked off with a working lunch during the leadership training seminar titled "Come Sail into the Future of MSCB", where various individuals led the group in activities and discussions geared to encourage growth.

Later in the afternoon attendees visited exhibitors who demonstrated their products and services.

A dinner of pizza was held in the hotel lobby for all to enjoy follow by the annual auction.

Saturday morning brought the beginning of a full day of activities, commencing with a report from Presenters: Donna Calvert, Special Services Library Director; and Shawn Lemieux, Technology Librarian, from the West Virginia Library Commission.

Next, Presenter Brian Charlson, Director of Technology of the Carroll Center for the Blind asked the group "How Can West Virginia Residents Benefit from the Services in Massachusetts?".

A report was given on the WV Randolph Sheppard Vendors Program presented: by Candice Ward, Program Specialist, Randolph-Sheppard Program.

MSCB Convention 2014

By Carol McGhee

Board the bus and ride the new wave to the Ocean of Opportunities was Presented by Kelli LaNeve, Mobility Coordinator, Mountain Line Transit, Morgantown
Following a box lunch, the group was treated to a tour of the Cultural Center.

Afterward it was time for the MSCB Annual Business Meeting where a change in the board of directors took place.

A delicious Banquet was held with the keynote speaker being Kim Charlson, ACB President.

The final activity for Saturday was the third annual Trivia Night.

The convention concluded on Sunday morning with the MSCB Board Meeting.

Lots of thanks to our sponsors and donors who have helped make this convention possible!

Chick-Fil-A

Little Caesars Pizza

Potomac Valley Chapter

Shanholtz Orchard

Good Family Pharmacy

Good Shepherd Veterinary Hospital

Stephen Cassis MD

Ronald and Susan Murad

Whittington Doctors of Optometry

Bowen and Bowen PLLC

Donald F. Teter and C. Jean Teter

“Can Your Medicine Bottles Do This?”

(Editor’s note: Excerpts from an article in the fall issue of DIALOGUE, written by B. T. Kimbrough and Marja Byers appear in this article.)

One of the significant disadvantages related to low vision or blindness is losing privacy in many aspects of our daily lives. The following thoughts and information provide the hope of resolving some of these concerns.

“Those of us with limited vision often find ways to harvest the information from food and over-the-counter medicine labels when we really need to. Many of those ways involve help from sighted family members, friends or neighbors. But what happens when our packages contain prescription medication and arrive with customized print instructions that we would prefer to read for ourselves—without necessarily sharing the information with anyone else? . . .

“The United States Congress took a step toward addressing this problem a year ago when it passed the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) Safety and Innovation Act, which is scheduled to go into effect on the first day of 2015. The law requires that blind and low-vision patients must receive instructions they can read for themselves (without any extra cost) when they buy prescription medications either directly or via mail order.

“The legislation itself did not stipulate what does or does not constitute an accessible format. . . . the US Access Board held a series of meetings last year with interested parties, including consumers and major players in national pharmaceutical sales, such as Walgreens, Walmart and CVS. . . .

“ . . . there are actually three accessibility solutions available to drugstores and pharmacies in the US.”

We are unaware if any pharmacy offers multiple accessible solutions.

“Can Your Medicine Bottles Do This?”

Walgreens offers the Talking Pill Reminder which the pharmacist attaches to the bottle with recorded information and an alarm reminder or it can be purchased separately at any Walgreens retail store. Digital Audio Label which attaches to a bottle uses synthetic speech and is available to participating drugstores through a company called AccessaMed. En-Vision America provides the ScriptTalk Station to read a bottle label information generated by the pharmacist which is available on loan to eligible people with vision loss. Learn something about each accessible solution and select a pharmacy which offers your preferred accessible solution choice.

If a pharmacy does not offer any accessible solution by January 2015, it will be in violation of the new law. If it is your store of choice, provide information to assist the pharmacist in becoming compliant with the new regulations.

The following contact phone numbers will assist you in learning more about your options of choice. To request the Talking Pill Reminder through Walgreens mail orders call 800-345-1985 and ask for the customer advocate. Some Target outlets may have a pilot program using the Digital Audio Label. For more information, contact Chad Hazen of AccessaMed at 360-773-0060. To learn about and arrange for the ScriptTalk Station which is used with mail order prescriptions through CVS and Walmart, call En-Vision America at 855-773-2579. When selecting either of the above choices, always check with the pharmacist at a local store to find out if accessible prescription container labels are available.

2014 Disability Employment Awareness Fair

The Morgantown Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) and the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services held its annual Disability Employment Awareness Fair on Friday, October 17, 2014. Mountain State Council of the Blind, Vandalia Chapter, was represented by President Carol McGhee, Frank McGhee, Judy Lyons, Ninetta Garner, David Cain, Debbie Cain, Ashley McDaniel and Josh Metz. More than 25 service organizations, equipment vendors and governmental agencies participated. Information was available regarding employment for people with disabilities, and the public was able to obtain materials raising its awareness of the needs of people with disabilities.

Utilizing 2008 Census estimates, West Virginia had 444,545 non-institutionalized individuals reporting having a disability. Many of these people, although they desire employment, are not working for a variety of reasons. The Morgantown CAC seeks to call attention to this problem and to assist people with disabilities in obtaining or retaining employment.

Chapter News

Potomac Valley News

Greetings from the Potomac Valley Chapter

By Glen Pinkard

The Potomac Valley chapter Met on November 15 to have its monthly meeting and to have elections. Election results are as follows: Glenn Pinkard, President; Donna Brown, Vice-President; Dennis Dennison, Secretary; and Wayne Flenner, Treasurer. We also made plans to have a Dining in the Dark event, which will be held in February. PVC is also looking forward to the annual Christmas party on December 13! we hope everyone is having a great and happy holiday season!

For more information about The Christmas party or Dining in the Dark, call Vice-President Donna Brown at 304-822-4679.

Vandalia Chapter Update

By Carol McGhee

Six members of the Vandalia Chapter attended the MSCB convention in South Charleston in October. Our other activities, (the disability awareness fair and the transportation meeting) have been discussed in previous articles. Ninetta Garner is the hostess of our Christmas party which will be celebrated on December 12.

New Comcast service boosts TV for the blind
Excerpted from article written
By Hiawatha Bray

November 12, 2014

Perkins student Cullen Gallagher and Kim Charlson, library director. Kim Charlson is blind, but she loves television. Her favorite show is "NCIS," the naval crime series. And thanks to new technology from Comcast Corp., it will soon be a lot easier for Charlson and other blind fans to tune in. The cable television provider's X1 digital service will soon feature a "talking guide" that will

read out channel listings and program descriptions in a lifelike electronic voice. Blind users who "view" TV programs by listening to them will now find it easier to change channels, track down their favorite programs, and program their digital video recorders to copy shows. Charlson demonstrated the new talking guide at the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, where she works as library director. She said the talking guide lets her channel-surf like any sighted person. "I always wondered why they would say there's 200 channels and I can't find a thing to watch. That's how I always felt," Charlson said. "At least now I can identify what's on all those channels.

The talking guides will become available to all X1 subscribers nationwide over the next few weeks. Users won't have to get new equipment; the system runs automatically over Comcast's data network. "It's cloud-based, so we didn't have to worry about installing additional hardware or software in a box," said Tom Wlodkowski, Comcast's vice president of accessibility. He is also a veteran of the National Center for Accessible Media at the public television station WGBH in Boston. Cullen Gallagher, a 16-year-old from Quincy who's an 11th-grader at Perkins,

isn't a big TV fan. But the new talking guide could change that, he said. "I want to see what's out there on the TV networks," Gallagher said. "I'm just going to play around and look at the menus. I'm a geek. I like to play with technology. Comcast said the talking guide is the first offered by any cable company in the United States. It was developed in response to the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, a federal law enacted in 2010.

The legislation requires cable companies to start offering audible menus to make onscreen commands usable by people who have vision problems. The talking menu system works in conjunction with another federally mandated service, descriptive video. This is a service in which a voice describes on-screen action during a TV show, saying things like, "Jack Bauer draws his gun. The nation's nine most popular broadcast and cable channels must offer these descriptive services on at least four hours of programming every week. The combination of descriptive video and spoken channel guides will make TV a more immersive experience for about 8 million Americans with vision disabilities. "TV is more than just a box with a picture in it," Charlson said. "It's our culture and our society, and people spend a lot of time talking to each other about what they watched on TV last night. It's important to be a part of that conversation.

HELPFUL HINTS

by Mucie Allred

EDITOR'S NOTE:

This is the first of what we hope will be a fun and informative column where your participation is essential.

1. Mark microwave food cover so that when it comes in view again, you will know the plate is revolving. Sometimes It is difficult to see.
2. Place a sticker on the power end of the cell phone, either a tactile or visual clue so as not to press the wrong end.
3. Tactile hangers indicate which are dress outfits in the closet.
4. Place a piece of tape on the upper side of the cord of an electrical appliance so that a frequently plugged in device is not a struggle.

NEWS to KNOW

POLO SHIRTS

The Mountain State Council of the Blind is seeking your input in whether or not you would be interested in buying a polo shirt! This blue shirt with gold lettering would have the same MSCB logo on the left chest, although it would be smaller, due to the front opening. The shirt has a collar and there are buttons on the front and it has no pocket. The price is \$20 per shirt with an additional \$2.50 if you should want it mailed to you.

If interested, contact Ninetta Garner at 304-381-2729 or email her at garner9@frontier.com .

iBill CURRENCY IDENTIFIER and APPS

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing is now distributing the iBill Talking Money Identifier as an interim step in the process to eventually develop tactile currency. This fall, a program has been launched for individuals who are blind to obtain a money identifier free of charge. Those interested in receiving the currency identifier should contact their cooperating Talking Book Library, and they will place your name on the list. The number for the library is (1800) 642-8674. Currency readers will be mailed over the next three months by the National Library Service directly to your home address.

The bureau will roll out the currency reader nationally on Jan. 2, 2015. A four-month pilot program began Sept. 2, where NLS patrons may pre-order a currency reader.

The bureau of engraving and printing (BEP) has developed the iNote application to allow individuals to scan and hear the denominations of United States currency. The app is free and runs on all iPhones 3g and later, iPads, and iPods. Version 2.0 was released in December 2013 with a feature that automatically identifies the bill. BEP also has available an app for Android-based mobile devices, the Ideal Currency Identifier, which can be downloaded from Google Play. For more Information, call 1-844-815-9388 or visit ourmeaningful.access.bep.gov.

SOCIAL SECURITY 1.7 Percent Raise

Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for nearly 64 million Americans will increase 1.7 percent in 2015, the Social Security Administration announced.

The 1.7 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with Benefits that more than 58 million Social Security beneficiaries receive in January 2015. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries will begin on December 31, 2014. The Social Security Act ties the annual COLA to the increase in the Consumer Price Index as determined by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Some other changes that take effect in January of each year are based on the increase in average wages. Based on that increase, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) will increase to \$118,500 from \$117,000. Of the estimated 168 million workers who will pay Social Security taxes in 2015, about 10 million will pay higher taxes because of the increase in the taxable maximum.

The Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level for blind recipients will increase to \$1,820 per month.

Information about Medicare changes for 2015 is available at <http://www.Medicare.gov> . The Social Security Act provides for how the COLA is calculated. To read more, please visit www.socialsecurity.gov/cola.

2014-15 CALENDAR of EVENTS

Thursday November 27: Thanksgiving Day

Monday December 8: 9:00 PM MSCB Conference Call. Phone (1832) 551-5100. Pass Code 186679#

Thursday December 25: Christmas Day

Thursday January 1: New Years Day

Sunday January 4: Louis Braille's birthday

Monday January 12: 9:00 PM MSCB Conference Call. Phone (1832) 551-5100. Pass Code 186679#

Monday January 19: Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Google Voice Number: 304-933-9540

MSCB OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Treasurer: Dennis Dennison
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Board of Directors:

Carol McGee

Debbie Cain

Josh Metz, 2014

Glen Pinkard, 2016

MOUNTAIN STATE COUNCIL OF THE BLIND,
INC

PO Box 834
Ridgeley, WV 26753

www.msbcwv.org

Membership Form

Updated January 2015

In order to update our records, it is most important that you complete this form and return it promptly. Please make sure you fill in the format preferences and visual status for **each person**. You are encouraged to make extra copies to share with others.

Please return this form with appropriate dues to your local chapter contact, OR to Dennis Dennison, MSCB Treasurer, at the above address, OR email to treasurer@msbcwv.org. For questions or more information, call President Donna Brown at (304) 822-4679 or Treasurer Dennis Dennison at (304) 738-8930. Please Print:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS(street): _____

CITY: _____ **STATE:** _____ **ZIP:** _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

I LIVE IN COUNTY _____

PREFERRED FORMAT: (indicate 1st and 2nd choice)

___ Braille, ___ email, ___ large print, ___ cassette

Please check all that apply:

- MSCB Dues: \$10.00
- Local Chapter Dues: \$5.00
 - Potomac Valley Chapter (Romney and area)
 - Tri-County Chapter (Eastern Panhandle area)
 - Vandalia Chapter (Morgantown and area)

We are in the process of starting a chapter in the Charleston area. If you want to be contacted about joining, please check here:

- MSCB Junior Member (12 to 18): \$5.00
 - Junior Member Local Chapter: \$2.50
- Organization Support: \$25.00
- Donations (please specify): \$ _____
 - Barbara Fierst Memorial Technology Scholarship
 - Anna M. Hunt Memorial College Scholarship
 - General Expenses

MSCB is an IRS 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Donations are tax deductible.

TOTAL AMOUNT: \$ _____

Please make check or money order payable to MSCB and return as indicated above.

We also accept payment through Paypal at www.msbcwv.org.

Would you like to be included in our members-only (information not released) directory? ___Yes ___No

If you'd like to be contacted by one of the local chapters, check here:

- Potomac Valley Tri-County Vandalia

Thank you for joining MSCB!