

THE WHITE CANE BULLETIN

Florida Council of The Blind, Inc.



January – February 2024

Articles for the White Cane Bulletin must be submitted to Sally Benjamin no later than the 15th of the month before it is published. Sally's email is: salbenjamin60@gmail.com.

If you do not have access to a computer and email, please find someone in your chapter to help you. We want to hear from anyone who wants to contribute to our newsletter, so if you cannot find a way to submit your article, call Sally and she will be glad to assist you.

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Those much-needed contributions, which are Tax-deductible, can be sent to the Florida Council of the Blind Treasurer, Mark Lear, at:
P.O. BOX 214235, DAYTONA BEACH, FL 32121.

To remember the Florida Council of the Blind in your Last Will and Testament, you may include a special paragraph for that purpose in your Will or Trust. If your wishes are complex, please contact FCB at:
800-267-4448.

The FCB is a 501(c)(3) organization.

For other ways to support the Florida Council of the Blind, visit our Fundraising page found at www.fcb.org.

ARE YOU MOVING? – Sally Benjamin

If you are moving, please notify me of your new address so you will continue to receive your White Cane Bulletin. Also, if you know of anyone interested in joining FCB and who would like to receive the White Cane Bulletin and the Braille Forum, please contact me at: (850) 980-0205 or E-mail: salbenjamin60@gmail.com

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January-February 2024

President's Message

by Sheila Young

Dear FCB Family and Friends,
As I realize we are about to begin a new year, I
say WOW!!!

Where did 2023 go?
When you look back at this past year, once again,
FCB has accomplished many important things!

We, once again, held a successful hybrid state
convention, and I feel it was extremely well-done
and from what I heard, it was well-attended!

Our virtual legislative week was very nicely done,
thanks to everyone who participated, and I am
sure this next one will be just as awesome!

The community calls for all of our members have
been educational, as well as some have been
playing games, which I have really enjoyed! I am
always looking for suggestions for topics for those
calls, so please feel free to reach out to me if you
would like us to cover something in particular.

Our 2024 state convention is not that far away, so if you have ideas of workshops, please reach out to Kati Lear, the chair of our convention committee. Please remember that the American Council of the Blind will be held from July 5 to 12 in Jacksonville this year, so we are the host state! This means we have a lot of work ahead, and I hope you will all take part in helping us make Florida the best affiliate ever to host a national convention!

If there is a committee you might wish to join, please feel free to look at our web site, fcb.org, and reach out to that chairperson. We would love to have you take part in the inner-workings of our affiliate!

I hope you have the same goal as I do, and that is to encourage independence and enhance the quality of life for people in our state who are blind or visually impaired. We need to lead the way by advocating with our local, state and federal governments, increasing awareness of and providing education around the needs of the blind and low vision community. It is also important that we be available to support each other, as we don't know what others may be going through. I believe in giving a hand up not a handout! It is through those combined efforts that we will truly be able to make a difference in the lives of our future generations.

In making your New Year's resolutions, pray for all to be well and for us to continue to move ahead with forward thinking so we will remain the awesome affiliate that we are!

FCB 2024 Convention In Jacksonville **by Kati Lear**

This year our FCB annual convention is in Jacksonville. The dates are Thursday, May 16 through Sunday noon, May 19, 2024. Our convention hotel is the South Bank located at 1515 Prudential Drive; Jacksonville, FL 32207. Room rates are \$109 per night plus tax. The room block is not open yet, and I will send out an email when it is time for you to make your reservations.

The convention committee is seeking your thoughts and ideas for presentations for programs during our convention. This is your convention so it is very important that you let us know what you want to participate in and attend. Program write ups are due on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2024. We are also looking for convention theme

ideas. The winner of the convention theme will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card. So, put your thinking caps on and send us program information as well as convention themes. Please email them to floridacouncil@comcast.net.

I hope that you have a Happy New Year and that 2024 is a special year filled with blessings, happiness and love. Reach for those dreams and keep smiling.

The Florida Council of the Blind 2024 State, Chapter, & Special Interest Affiliate Awards by Julien Clement

The FCB Awards Committee is excited to honor all members who truly are deserving of recognition for their unwavering devotion to improving the lives of the blind and visually impaired community. As always, the Florida Council of the Blind is honored to receive nominations for our State, Chapter, and Special Interest Affiliate Awards. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to recognize those individuals who make an impact in our community!

The deadline to submit nominations for all FCB awards is Friday, March 15th, 2024.

The state awards are as follows: R. Henry P. Johnson, Dolly Gamble, W. A. Ouzts, William (Bill) Ferrell (Just Bill), Legislative, President's Award, Outstanding High School Senior, and Mobility Award.

Chapters and Special Interest Affiliates wishing to recognize a member, must send that person's name to the Awards Committee with a nomination letter by March 15th, 2024.

R. HENRY P. JOHNSON AWARD

The person that this award was named after trained as a lawyer. He had very little formal training when it was necessary for him to adjust to substantial visual impairment. Nevertheless, he remained active in his community and constantly sought to extend the boundaries of activities that he and other blind persons could become involved in.

CRITERIA

The R. Henry P. Johnson Award will be presented to a legally blind person who has, through his or her work and through service to his or her community, demonstrated the kind of pioneering spirit and exemplary adjustment that Mr. Johnson demonstrated. Individuals who are likely to be considered for this award must succeed far beyond the average visually-impaired person.

DOLLY GAMBLE AWARD

This award was named for a lady who, by her actions and example, was able to establish a climate in which the Miami Lighthouse could be started. Throughout her adult life, Ms. Gamble worked tirelessly to promote the betterment of blind people in her community, state, and the nation.

CRITERIA

The recipient of the Dolly Gamble award must have demonstrated a commitment to and success with

the extension of services for the blind and visually-impaired people of this state. The recipient may be blind or sighted, but should, in general, represent a high level of expertise and commitment to serving blind individuals.

WILLIAM ALFRED OUZTS AWARD

William Alfred Ouzts, known as W. A., was a member of FCB from 1971 until the time of his death in 1992. He held state office for 20 of those years, including 12 as treasurer and 4 years as president. For many years, he had the White Cane Bulletin printed, prepared and mailed. whatever his official status, W. A. was always quietly working and networking with other members behind the scenes. Officer, consultant, advisor, supporter, worker, whatever his role, W. A. never sought recognition for what he did.

CRITERIA

While no one could replace W. A., a recipient of this award would display many of the superb qualities exhibited by W. A., including dedication to

FCB, responsibility and effectiveness. The individual must have taken a leadership role in numerous FCB projects and actively participated in the organization for a minimum of 10 years. This award would only be given to an outstanding FCB member, an individual we would all wish to emulate.

WILLIAM (BILL) FERRELL "JUST BILL" HUMANITARIAN AWARD

Bill Ferrell worked at the Tennessee Agency for the Blind for many years. He was first employed there as a counselor, and proceeded up the ladder to hold the position of Director.

Retiring did not mean stopping for Bill. He helped to organize the Brevard chapter in 1981. Although he was a simple man in his estimation, he had a huge impact on the forming and continuation of FCB.

Bill was involved in visual impairment issues for much of his life. He was a Project Insight peer advisor since that program's inception. He worked

endlessly both locally, in Brevard County and at the state level, serving as a member of several vital FCB committees and representing his chapter on the FCB Board of Directors for many years.

Bill was a calm, introspective man, yet nothing got by him without thorough examination. If the need arose, he would give his view of an issue with an informed politeness and in a politically correct manner.

When addressed as Mr. Ferrell, he would invariably respond, "I'm just Bill." So, Bill, our tribute to you is to try to be more like you. "We will communicate, educate, facilitate and update to ensure equality, independence and dignity for all! Bill, we will always love and respect you!"

CRITERIA

The recipient of this award may be blind or sighted but must have gone to great lengths to better the quality of life of people, be they sighted or not.

The recipient should have demonstrated a sincere

concern for his/her fellow humans, just as Bill always did. A good candidate for this award would be one who has worked in the field of rehabilitation i.e. mobility instructors, teachers, or rehab councilors, for example. Membership in Florida Council of the Blind is not a prerequisite for this award. Anyone who, over the years, has contributed their time and caring for others, especially people who are blind or visually impaired, may be a candidate for this award.

Recipients of this award will be selected based upon their demonstration of humanitarian qualities, which emphasize efforts to improve the quality of life for others, having communicated, educated, facilitated and updated to ensure equality, independence and dignity for others.

LEGISLATIVE AWARD

The purpose of this award is to honor a Florida elected official who through his/her statewide and/or federal legislative efforts must have made a significant and positive impact on the welfare of blind and visually-impaired people in Florida.

COOK CHAPTER PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Each chapter may nominate a chapter president from the previous year to receive this award.

The following accomplishments will be considered when selecting a recipient for this award: regularity of meetings, effective programs, increases in membership, cooperation in local and state projects, participation in community organizations.

Overall leadership skills, including innovation and cooperation with neighboring chapters, as well as the state organization will be considered when assessing the performance of a nominee.

OUTSTANDING HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR AWARD

This award is intended to honor a legally blind high school senior in Florida, who in academics, school and community has performed better than all his/her peers. The award may consist of a plaque.

At the time of graduation, the student will be presented the plaque. Should the student choose to attend FCB's Annual Convention FCB will offer to pay the student's transportation expenses.

CRITERIA

The name and address of the school, as well as the names of the principal and teachers must accompany the narrative nomination. Evidence of superior scores on the SAT, ACT, College Boards or an equivalent instrument shall be presented with the nomination. The narrative should include details of the student's involvement in extra-curricular activities, student government and community service. Supporting letters from teachers, employers, etc. would be helpful.

MOBILITY AWARD

This award is intended to honor a high school senior at the Florida School for the Deaf & Blind who has demonstrated the most improvement in orientation and mobility while at the school. Two nominations will be solicited from the head of the

mobility department.

The FCB Awards Committee will make the final selection. The award consists of a plaque to be presented to the student at graduation. FCB shall pay the student's transportation expenses if the student chooses to attend FCB's Annual Convention.

CRITERIA

This award is intended to honor the Florida School for the Deaf & Blind senior who has made the most improvement and succeeded in overcoming greater than usual barriers to effective mobility. The mobility department should consider such factors as multiple impairments, perseverance and attitude as well as excellence of orientation and mobility skills.

CHAPTER/SPECIAL INTEREST AFFILIATE AWARD

Each chapter or special interest affiliate may submit the name(s) of local recipient(s) they wish

to honor. The criteria for the selection is up to the chapter/special interest affiliate. All that is required by FCB's Awards Committee is the name of the recipient, as the chapter/special interest affiliate wishes it to be printed, and the name of the chapter/special interest affiliate submitting the name. Each chapter/special interest affiliate shall pay for each plaque they desire to present.

Information regarding the current price of plaques, as well as the deadline for ordering plaques, will be sent to each chapter/special interest affiliate.

All awards will be presented during FCB's Convention in Jacksonville, Florida during the Awards Banquet to take place on Friday, May 17, 2024.

For additional questions or for assistance in submitting any nomination(s), please contact Julien Clement, Awards Committee Chair at: Jclement335@gmail.com or by Phone: 305-680-2215

FCB Officer Candidate for First Vice President by Cassandra Jessie

My name is Cassandra Jessie, and I currently serve as FCB's Second Vice President. I am running for FCB's First Vice President, and I would like to tell you about my qualifications and experiences.

I am currently the President of the Halifax Council of the Blind in Daytona Beach. I am active in the community and have held several offices in the Halifax Council of the Blind, including 1st and 2nd Vice President; and I have served on the following committees: Bylaws, Fundraising, as well as the White Cane Committee.

I currently serve as an alternate on our Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board, as well as the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee. I hold an office on the Quality Assurance Committee and the Grievance Committee for riders needing mediation with paratransit. I am also the chair of the board of directors for Disability Solutions which is a Local Provider in Daytona Beach, FL.

Prior to moving to Daytona Beach, I held the office of 1st and 2nd Vice President of the Tallahassee Council of the Blind. I served three years as president of ACCESS; an organization for disabled students at Florida State University. The role of ACCESS is to ensure accessibility for disabled students on the FSU campus.

For the past six years I have served as your Second Vice President of the Florida Council of the Blind. For the last few years in this position I have worked with the First Vice president, who is the hotel Coordinator, as well as collaborated with the President and fellow Board members to ensure that everyone is taking care of. I have also worked hard at insuring that everyone who attends the Convention or Board meeting never has to wait for long for any type of assistance.

I received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and a Minor in "Independent Living" from Florida State University in 2009. Additionally, I received an Associate of Arts Degree from St. John's River Community College in St. Augustine, Florida in 2004. I am currently employed with the State of Florida's

Division of Blind Services where I hold the title of Senior Rehabilitation Specialist. In this position, I am the case Manager for all the students that are attending the Career, Technology, and Training Center. In this role, I partner with all the district counselors around the state to ensure that their consumers are receiving the necessary training to maintain a job or to prepare for college.

Additionally, I oversee the Consumers that express to become Independent or have lost their Sight later in life. I have collaborated with persons with disabilities for almost 30 years in various capacities, including Camp Counselor for the Florida Lions Camp and Senior Residential Instructor at the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind. I have also worked as an Administrative Assistant for the Division of Blind Services, Teacher Aid for Leon County Schools, and as a Training Instructor for Leon County ARC program where I collaborated with people with various degrees of Disabilities to ensure that they were ready for work every day and could maintain their apartments.

I participate in my local church. My interests include recreational reading, horseback riding,

listening to music, spending time with family, and advocating for people with disabilities.

In closing, I would appreciate your consideration for nomination for Florida Council of the Blind's First Vice President. I will provide you with service and dedication to this office. It would be a pleasure to serve the visually impaired people of this state to collaborate about political, educational, social, and economic changes and raise awareness of accessibility issues.

FCB Officer Candidate for Treasurer by Mark Lear

My name is Mark Lear. I am interested in serving as the Treasurer of the Florida Council of the Blind for another term. I have been FCB's treasurer for the past six years and would like to continue serving you

I have served as the treasurer for other local organizations. Currently I am the treasurer of the Daytona Beach Blind Bowlers and I have held this office since 1990. In December I stepped down

from the office of Treasurer of the Halifax Council of the Blind where I served as Treasurer since 2008.

I have been married to my wife and FCB executive assistant, Kati, for 42 years. We enjoy taking vacations together, and we are making plans to attend both FCB and ACB conventions in Jacksonville. My recreational interests include spending time on my computer looking up information, walking, bowling, swimming, listening to music, reading books and watching TV.

I would like to be your treasurer for another term. If elected, I will continue to perform the duties of this office to the best of my ability. If you have any questions, please contact me by phone at (386) 788-0463 or by email at learn52@icloud.com.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

**FCB Officer Candidate for Membership
Secretary
by Sally Benjamin**

I wanted to let you know that I am running for Membership Secretary once again. I know it is a job but I do enjoy it, especially when all chapters get it all in on time and correct. I have learned a lot about people during this time and it has made me a better person.

My Contact Information is:

salbenjamin60@gmail.com or 850-980-0205

I would appreciate your vote in May for Membership secretary!

Jottings From Jacksonville by Paul Edwards

The Future Past

It is a common belief among historians to which I subscribe that every generation creates its own history. That doesn't just mean that we work at what we do and then write about it! It instead suggests that we alter the way we think about our

past. We look differently at who we are, where we came from and how we got to where we are!

I think this is as true of those of us who are blind as it is for others. We may not be "historians" but we all have an idea about who we are and where we came from!

Most of the younger members of FCB don't think about mainstreaming. They just went to school! Our younger members can't imagine a life without access technology while those of us who are older think in terms of slates and styluses! "sheltered workshops" played an important and not always negative role in the history of employment for people who are blind but most younger members will know nothing about it!

Only half a century ago mainstream and blind schools in Florida were segregated! The very first lighthouse in Florida only opened in 1926. (Some sources don't claim it started operations till 1929.) Before that there was no adult training or services available for people who are blind! The Division of Blind Services only happened after the second

world war and what it offered at the start was very different from what's available now!

I invite you to join me over the next year as we explore together how we see our past today. At the end of the year I will write an article about our future and then I hope we can start a dialogue, readers! I am old and my notion of what is to come may be very different from yours!

It is difficult to know how to write in a series of short articles about our past! I certainly do not intend this series of articles to be more than just a scratching at the surface of reality. We will look at education. We will explore employment! We will talk about disability and civil rights! We will explore training and rehab and then, as I suggested earlier, we will see where we are and maybe imagine where we might be a generation from now!

As we start on our journey into the past here are some things to keep in mind. As people who are blind we constitute a tiny minority of the population. That's important for two reasons. First it explains why the rest of our society took no

notice of the systemic discrimination that we have faced forever. Second, though, we represented a small enough population that enabled those wishing to provide charity for others to see us as a group that was small enough to be helped!

Whether we like it or not much of our history involves having "our betters" determine what is best for us! What goes along with that is the notion that we, as blind people, did not have the capacity to think for ourselves and it was okay for others to tell us what we should do and how we should see ourselves!

I know this sounds foreign to every notion of ourselves that we currently hold but it's important that we understand just how far we have come! Many blind men and women accomplished a lot in the past but they did so with handicaps we cannot imagine! They lived in a world where their inferiority was a given! They lived in a world where speaking out or asking for more was a blasphemy! They lived in a world where people who were blind were expected to know their place, to be grateful for what they got and to be content with the limits their betters set for them!

I make these points not to denigrate people who were blind a hundred years ago but instead I want to make clear that blind people had both the courage and the unmitigated gall to say to those who would tell them who they were that they wanted to find that out for themselves what their identity was. As we will see when we get to civil rights, people who were blind were asking for more long before others did either in the civil rights movement or in the disability rights movement.

I want to ask you to take one more journey with me in this introduction. Florida was a virtually uninhabited wilderness until the beginning of the 20th century! Before the railroad came horses and shanks pony were the only way to traverse a swampy and impenetrable wilderness! what would take hours on a train took days before the railroad came along. This is important because it is hard for us to imagine just how isolated blind people were in Florida! We grew up in tiny communities surrounded by the prejudice that all small towns have. If we were black we grew up with even more of those prejudices! Any exploration of the early

history of schools for the blind shows that the only way many students got there was because folks from the school went out into the wilderness to seek students! For the most part, blind people were not seen as capable of being educated and they were kept at home with very limited expectations placed on them. In our next article we will look at education and see how it revolutionized options for people who were blind. Stay tuned!

Recipe Corner **by Sheila Young**

Taco Soup Recipe

2 pounds ground beef
1 large onion, chopped
1 can pinto beans
1 can whole kernel corn, drained
1 can stewed tomatoes - Mexican style
1 can Rotel tomatoes
1 pkg. taco seasoning mix -(opt.)
1 pkg. original hidden valley ranch dressing(dry)
2 1/2 cups water or more, to make soup broth

Brown ground beef and onions in a large pan, drain off fat. Add remaining ingredients and simmer for an hour or so. When ready, serve in big soup bowls,
and have a skillet of hot cornbread to eat, too.

Food For Thought

by John Richards

The All-American Hot Dog, We Love Them;
However, Do We Know How The Meat Is
Processed!!

Despite the myths that have been circulating around for years, hot dogs do not contain eye balls or sex organs. In reality, whether it be turkey, chicken or beef, meat byproducts are used as the meat source when processing hot dogs. As you have most likely already guessed, meat byproducts are the trimmings that are left over after all of the select cuts and lesser quality cuts have been rendered. Most brands of hot dogs and lunch meats contain "mechanically separated meat". This process is achieved by forcing leftover meat and bone fragments through a sieve, resulting in a

paste-like substance consisting of a mix of muscle, skin, and bone fragments. Some brands may use dark meat from the thighs and legs and trimmings from the poultry breast and wings. In some brands, skin and fat are used, also small amounts of organ meat such as liver, gizzards, or hearts. Brands of all beef hot dogs use a similar process. The more expensive brands use the byproducts and do not use the mechanically separating process. Read the label on your favorite brand for a list of ingredients.

At the time of the posting of this article, Spring will be rolling around in a few weeks and the outdoor grills will be sizzling and admitting the aromas of your favorite cuts of meat. Hot Dogs will remain supreme as a favorable snack for millions Americans; including me.

Portions of this article were derived from the article: What's Really Inside? The Anatomy of a Hot Dog – By Melissa Breyer; Additional contributions to this article were submitted by John Richards

<https://www.treehugger.com/anatomy-hot-dog-whats-inside-4858328>

The Importance of Project Insight

by Paul Lewis

I am a member of the Project Insight Committee and each month a committee member will submit an article to the White Cane Bulletin. In this article I hope to show the value and importance of Project Insight as well as the reasons that led me to want to be a member of this committee.

Since its inception, there have been an amazing number of advances of materials pertaining to vision loss and the resources that are available for accessing them.

As you read this article, I hope that you will understand the passion that I have developed for Project Insight as an individual, new division loss, and how those experiencing additional loss of vision can receive guidance and assistance in meeting those challenges. For myself, I have developed something that I call the Triple A's Vision Loss, and while it may not be original, here they are: Acceptance, Adaption/Adjustment, and Achievement.

If you would indulge me, I would like to provide you with some personal history as to why I developed a passion to be part of the Project Insight Committee. In the mid-1980s, I became a diabetic, and as we all know, one of the outcomes of diabetes can be vision loss. In the 90s, I began receiving treatment for diabetic retinopathy, receiving laser treatment, and eye injections. It was a long process before I reached the level that I was classified as being legally blind, which included me as a member of the low vision community. In 1998, I received my first eye surgery when my right retina completely detached, and was reattached. In 2000, the ophthalmologist that I was seeing, felt that my case was beyond his qualifications, and reached out to his mentor and trainer who worked at Bascom Palmer. I had my first surgery with him in 2000 and had two succeeding surgeries in the next few years. an interesting sidenote about this ophthalmologist, he serves on the board of the Miami Lighthouse and wrote an article about my case. I showed up for one appointment, and he showed me this picture of an eye and said that it was my eye. I stayed under his care until Covid, when it became unsafe

to travel to Miami. When I had that first surgery in 2000, I had no idea what level of vision I would still have, or if I was going to have any. However, I feel very fortunate and lucky because I had a significant amount of remaining vision after my recovery. While I received significant loss of my peripheral vision, I would be classified as a high partial. Quite a number of years later, I developed glaucoma, but it is still in the very early stages. I consider myself very lucky and fortunate with a remaining vision that I retain, and because of that I had a strong desire to pay it back or give it back.

In February 2005, I went on disability due to another chronic medical condition I developed. In 2007 I began attending the local lighthouse and joined the local chapter of Southwest Florida Council of the Blind. I attended my first FCB Convention held in Daytona Beach and have been attending stake conventions ever since. At this state convention, I was intrigued by the fact that there was a special interest affiliate dedicated to those individuals with low vision, which began my relationship with the Florida Council of Citizens with Low Vision. In addition, I also served as a volunteer for a number of years at the local

Lighthouse. with each passing year I became more active in both my local Chapter as well as in the state. I had also begun to attend the midyear board meetings, which proved to be a very positive experience for me, as I developed friendships with many of those members who were involved in leadership in the FCB. I developed a strong desire to want to give back which drew me to the Project Insight Committee. When an opening on that committee became available, I became a member of Project Insight and for the most part have remained a member of this committee.

As I mentioned earlier in this article, since the creation of Project Insight, there have been many changes and advances in technology and how individuals get their information as well as accessing resources. One particular area that has definitely affected the operation and role of Project Insight has been the development of the Internet. For myself, I joined FCB's and Project Insight Facebook groups. I have probably joined over 100 different pages on Facebook that have a connection of one aspect or another to the blind and low vision community. These pages were

created by individuals who are either members or offer support to the blind and low vision community. Due to this fact, the outreach by individuals seeking information, and/or support has drastically dropped off. However, I truly believe that Project Insight continues to provide a valuable and important resource to individuals who are meeting the challenges of vision loss. Project Insight provides a necessary role that can offer a personal response which can include compassion and understanding. There is certainly power that should not be underestimated for an individual experiencing vision loss, especially for the first time to be able to talk to somebody who has already had those experiences.

My final thought is at Project insight is only a phone call away, 800-267-4448. I would also like to offer a salute and shout out to those members of FCB who were the creators of Project Insight from its beginning. I certainly have great respect and admiration for your hard work and dedication.

Chapter News

GOCB Update

by Martha James

On November 15, GOCB held a Dine and Donate at Tijuana Flats. It had been originally scheduled for October, but needed to be changed. Also, in November the chapter held elections for next year.

The slate of officers was Sheila Young for president, Tom Babcock for first vice president, Dan Spooone for second vice president, Martha James for recording secretary, Asli Goncer for membership secretary, and Marcia Bukala for treasurer. Congratulations to all the officers. We look forward to an exciting year.

In December, we will have our annual Christmas luncheon at the home of Sheila Young. It will be from 2:00 to 5:00 and will be catered by Sonny's. GOCB wishes everyone a safe and happy holiday.

Manatee Council of the Blind

by Jean Marcley

The members of Manatee County Council of the Blind and guests gathered near the old courthouse at Manatee Avenue and Old Main Street in Bradenton. There were about 14 of us walking on Old Main Street toward the River Walk. We chatted and some shopped at the Market as we enjoyed the lovely weather and each other's company.

The River Walk was invigorating. The breeze made the water just a little choppy and able to hear as it slapped lightly against areas of the walk, especially under the bridge. A train went by which just added to the whole experience.

We took our time walking east on the River Walk until we got to the place to cross to Madison's Restaurant. Deborah, our sighted member, was making sure everyone was headed in the right direction, as some of us had never been there before.

Madison's was ready for us and our waitress, Brandie, was helpful and friendly and knew how to

serve blind and visually impaired guests at the restaurant. She made sure our dog guides got water as well as the human guests.

Jennifer, another sighted helper, (who is joining our group, by the way) read everyone at our end of the table the menu and assisted us when necessary.

Deborah read the menu to the other end of the table. The choices were almost endless; breakfast or lunch; soups, salads, sandwiches; entrees, omelets, etc.

All in all this was a great outing for our group. I am hoping we can do this more than once a year-maybe twice. Several people at the Market and on the River Walk made comments about us. We were, after all, using guide dogs, canes, or some sighted assistance. It is good to be out in public raising awareness.

Let's get out more so people don't think we are let out only once a year.

Tech Tips by John Richards for the Technology Committee

The Amazon Empty Box Scam

In the January/February 2022 edition of The White Cane Bulletin, holiday scams was the subject matter for the Tech Tips article. The Amazon empty box scam is just another clever and diabolical way of initiating outright thievery. Basically, here is how it works. When viewing a particular product on the Amazon web site, in many cases, you will see the product you are viewing offered by third party vendors for the same price or relatively close to the price offering from Amazon listed on the same page as the Amazon product. In some cases, the product you are considering is offered only by a scammer posing as a third-party vendor listing on the Amazon web site. When the criminal sends an empty box to the buyer, the buyer signs for the empty box; According to the website's rules, the fact that the box arrived at the destination empty makes the buyer ineligible for the 'A to Z Guarantee'.

This scam is a world-wide problem for Amazon and unsuspecting buyers.

A couple of safeguards you can utilize to prevent yourself from becoming a potential victim include: Be very wary of the 'Just Launched' products, especially if they come from vendors that sell absolutely everything and are not specialized in something specific; also, not having any feedback is another suspicious sign to consider. If the price is significantly lower than the same offering elsewhere on the web; that offering price is most likely to good to be true.

Several years ago, I purchased a product from a third-party vender listed on the Target web site; the price was significantly lower than other listings on the web. After numerous attempts, I was unable to recover anything out of the deal. I lost some money and never received the item; however, my shopping skills are significantly more refined as a result of this incident.

portions of this article were obtained from The Scam Detector web site; additional comments were submitted by John Richards

<https://www.scam-detector.com/amazon-empty-box/>

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Handy Telephone Number References

Project Insight: (800) 267-4448

Bureau of Braille & Talking Book Library:
(800) 226-6075

Division of Blind Services, State Office: (800)
342-1828

American Council of The Blind: (800) 424-8666
(Available 3:00 to 5:30 P.M. EST Monday-Friday
only)

ACB Legislative Hotline: (800) 424-8666
(Available evenings 8:00 P.M. to 12:00 Midnight
EST and weekends 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. only)

AT&T Disability Services: (800)872-3883
Press 00 and speak with your long-distance carrier,
or Florida only: (800)982-2891

BellSouth Disability Services: (800)982-2891
(From anywhere)

Social Security: (800) 772-1213
(24-hour voice and touch tone accessible)