

**Insight: The Voice of  
The American Council of the Blind of New York, Inc.**

<http://www.acbny.info>

Summer 2019

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For ease of navigating the newsletter, use your find function and type ## to skip between the articles.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's Message – Lori Scharff [president@acbny.info](mailto:president@acbny.info)

Editor's Message – Annie Chiappetta [editor@acbny.info](mailto:editor@acbny.info)

2019 ACBNY Convention Registration Letter – ACBNY Convention Committee

ACB National Election Results – Kelly Gasque

On The 29<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ADA, Your Rights are at Risk – Meghan Parker

Dominos and the ADA – The Washington Post

RSVA Update – Karen Blachowicz

Chapter Round UP -- Capital District, ACBWNY, GDUES and WCBNY

Potpourri

News from the NYSCB – L. Murphy

Blind Runner and Guide Dogs Make History

Dialogue Magazine to Close Publication

NLS Gets a New Name

Passings

2019 ACB of NY Directory of Officers and Directors

##

President's Message  
My Final Rambling from the President's Desk

By Lori Scharff

Welcome to my final issue of INSIGHT as your President of the American Council of the Blind. We have covered a lot since I took office in 2014. I am happy that we have had membership growth in Utica as well as the Western NY regions of the state. I also am so pleased that ACBNY now has a guide dog user's chapter directly associated with ACBNY.

Whether we are the people who are blind or people who are sighted who support the betterment of people who are blind, we need to unite our voices and work together. It is critical that when advocating on an issue, we not make it about what "we" want as an individual, but about what would make it better for "all" people who are blind or visually impaired.

It was so nice to see many of you in Rochester at the American Council of the Blind National Conference and Convention. It sure was a busy week with lots of informative presentations and an exhibit hall packed with all kinds of accessible products and devices.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the ACBNY convention in October. Remember it is an election year. So, come and join us in Albany to have your personal vote counted.

##

Editor's Message – Annie Chiappetta

The ACBNY 2019 State Convention is coming soon and registration is open. This is an election year for ACBNY State officers, including president, first and second vice presidents, secretary and treasurer respectively. Only you can make a difference, so I hope to see many of you at the annual membership meeting in Albany to take action and vote.

Michael Golfo is the Nominating Committee chair. If you are thinking about running for a position, please contact him as soon as possible via email or phone: [mssg74@gmail.com](mailto:mssg74@gmail.com) or 914.631.4870. Chapters should each have appointed a person to represent the chapter at the upcoming nominating committee meeting taking place on Thursday evening, October 25. Please call Mike for more information.

Speaking of news, chapters still need to provide updates for the newsletter; only half of the chapters are submitting information. Please think of who in your chapter could be contacted for updates.

The articles in this issue were hard to choose, so much has been happening, from the National ACB elections to shifts in legislative positions supporting people with disabilities. The political landscape being what it is, please take note of Meghan Parker's incisive and cautionary article, "On the 29<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ADA, Your Rights are at Risk". I hope the variety of reading material is balanced to entertain and inform.

Finally, I welcome comments and suggestions on how to improve this publication. Comments can be emailed to [editor@acbny.info](mailto:editor@acbny.info)  
Bailey and I hope you enjoy the late summer weather and fall foliage.  
Your Editor,  
Annie C.

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##

Dear ACBNY members and Friends,

You are cordially invited to attend the 2019 Convention of the American Council of the Blind of New York (ACBNY), which will be held from Friday, October 25 thru Sunday October 27, at the Hampton Inn and Suites Downtown Albany, 25 Chapel

Street, Albany, New York, 12210; 518-432-7000. Room rates are \$101 per night. This room rate is available from October 24-27 and must be made as part of your convention registration; please see the 2019 ACBNY Convention Registration Form for more information. A single room list will be submitted to the hotel by the convention committee. If your name does not appear on the list submitted by ACBNY, you will be subject to the market rate plus all appropriate sales and room taxes. Please note that ACBNY will NOT be responsible for any incidentals charged to your room.

**MEALS**---The Hampton Inn and Suites provides a continental breakfast for its guests every morning. There are two gourmet restaurants independent of the hotel on the premises; you do not need to go outside to get to them. Food for both of these restaurants, and all catered events at the hotel, comes out of the same kitchen. For everyone's convenience we are offering plated meals for lunch and dinner on Friday and Saturday. Each meal will feature one meat and one vegetarian entree.

The menu is as follows:

Friday Lunch: (\$22, \$25 if paid after September 16)

Wraps (turkey, tuna or grilled veggie), tossed salad, pasta salad and potato chips

**Warm cookies** on each table.

Friday Scholarship Dinner: \$50, \$60 after September 16)

**Caesar Salad** with crispy garlic croutons and Reggiano Parmesan

**Chicken Piccata:** lemon, butter, wine sauce or

Vegetable Stir Fry over Rice

Warm cinnamon bread pudding with caramel sauce and whipped cream.

**Saturday Lunch: (\$22 \$25 after September 16)**

Vegetable Soup

**Monte Kristo** sandwich or

**Poached Pear and Pecan salad;** Crumbled Bleu Cheese, Candied Pecans, Mixed Greens and Balsamic Vinaigrette

Brownies/Raspberry Crumble minis on each table.

**Saturday Banquet: (\$40 \$50 after September 16)**

**Seasonal Salad** with Champagne Vinaigrette

**Bakmi Goreng:** (Indonesian Vegetarian noodle dish: Shallots, Asian Cabbage Trio, Celery, Onion, Sweet Soy) or

Hangar Steak, Mashed potatoes, chef's inspiration vegetable

Triple chocolate layer cake, chocolate ganache filling, chocolate mousse icing.

We are offering a slight discount if you order all four meals. The price for this package before September 16 is \$125, after that date, \$145. If you prefer to attend the entertainment portion of the scholarship event, but not the dinner, the price is 25 dollars.

AGENDA--Our convention will begin on Friday morning, October 25 at 10 a.m. with our annual New York State Commission for the Blind Town Hall meeting. Lunch will be served around 12:15 and will be followed by our annual business meeting. This is an important meeting as it is an election year. Consider running for an officer position yourself or nominating someone you think would be a great leader for our organization. Our Scholarship Dinner followed by entertainment and Silent Auction will take place Friday evening.

Saturday morning is being reserved for our special interest chapters; NYSCCLV, GDUES, and possibly a new one, Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of New York (RSVNY). After lunch, Ann Chiappetta will speak about her work as an author. She has had three books published so far: Upwelling: Poems; Follow Your Dog, A Story of Love and Trust; and Words of Life: Poems and Essays. Satauna Howery will talk about the work she does as a voice-over artist (she's the voice at the Tampa Airport); and we will watch a documentary produced by Day Al-Mohammed, a former national ACB staff member, about people with disabilities who served in the Civil War. Day will also be Skyped in as our banquet speaker. Our convention will end with a board meeting on Sunday morning, which all are invited to attend. And, as always, we will have a Hospitality Room open where you can visit with old friends and make some new ones during your free time.

Fundraisers--ACBNY is selling red, blue and black "I (heart for love) ACB" hoodies, sizes medium through 4X, convention price one for 30 dollars, two for 50. If you

would like any, please order them on your registration form so we will know how many to have on hand. We'll also be raffling off a mini iPad at the banquet. Tickets are five dollars apiece or a book of five for 20 dollars. Contact Kathy Casey for more information or be prepared to purchase them at the convention.

REGISTRATION--To register for the convention go to our website, [www.acbny.info](http://www.acbny.info). To register via pay pal or by check, both options are available. Payment for the weekend may be made thru PayPal or by sending a check made out to ACBNY 2019 Convention to:  
ACBNY C/O Kathy Casey  
1 Twiller Street  
Albany, New York, 12209-2127.  
Kathy's phone number is 518-462-9487, and her email address is [kathycasey623@gmail.com](mailto:kathycasey623@gmail.com) Please call or email her with any questions.  
Registration forms and payments MUST be received by Monday, September 16. Registrations received after that date will be subject to late fees. Registrations will not be confirmed until full payment is received.

Refund Policy--The registration fee is non-refundable. Refunds for all events are subject to the reselling of the ticket(s) for each event. If you need to cancel your room reservation, you MUST do so more than 48 hours in advance of the canceled date(s) through the hotel. Any and all refunds will be addressed after the conclusion of the convention.

We saw many of you in Rochester, and we hope to see many more of you in Albany.

##

#### ACB National Election Results – Kelly Gasque

The American Council of the Blind elected new officers, a new board member, and a new member of the board of publications during its 2019 annual conference and convention. Learn more about them below:

#### **President: Dan Spoone, Orlando, FL**

Dan is retired; he formerly worked as a senior project manager for Siemens.

**First Vice President: Mark Richert, Arlington, VA**

Mark is the Director of Public Policy for the National Disability Institute and the founding President of Excelsis, LLC, a public policy consultancy.

**Second Vice President: Ray Campbell, Glen Ellyn, IL**

Ray is a Senior Accessibility Analyst for United Airlines.

**Secretary: Denise Colley, Lacey, WA**

Denise is a retired Disability Program Coordinator for the state of Washington. She serves as president of the Washington Council of the Blind.

**Treasurer: David Trott, Talladega, AL**

David is retired; he formerly worked for Alabama Industries for the Blind, dealing with contracts, budgets, employees and supervising daily operations of various programs in his area of responsibility.

**Board Member: Donna Brown, Romney, WV**

Donna is a Technology Integration Specialist at the West Virginia School for the Blind.

**Board of Publications Member: Zelda Gebhard, Edgeley, ND**

Zelda is an administrative assistant at Wright Insurance Agency. She also serves as president of the North Dakota Association of the Blind.

##

**On the 29<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ADA, Your Rights Are at Risk**

**By Meghan Parker**



Friday, July 26 marked the 29th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For blind people, protections and benefits of the ADA has been more limited than for some other disability groups. However, the ADA does ensure people with guide dogs can enter public spaces, large print/high contrast and braille signage is posted in key locations, and more recently, has protected access to websites and apps. Yet, access to websites and apps is under attack. Newspapers are running stories almost daily about the explosion of website lawsuits, most with the tone of blaming blind people for bringing those suits.

The ADA was passed before businesses and other institutions used websites to do business and provide services and was certainly passed well before smart phones. As a result, the ADA is not explicit when it comes to website access. And despite calls on the federal government to pass regulations, they have failed to do so. We have been relying on the courts to decide on the responsibilities of businesses and other institutions to make their websites and apps accessible.

It is now very possible one such case will be going to the Supreme Court. Domino's Pizza was sued by a blind gentleman who was unable to order a custom pizza using their website or app using his screen reader. Rather than make their website and app accessible, they have been fighting this case for years, and have now petitioned the Supreme Court. They are hoping the Supreme Court will find that the ADA does not apply to websites and apps. With a court that heavily favors businesses and corporations over civil rights, we all need to be crystal clear, if the Supreme Court takes up the case, our rights are likely about to be stripped away. The Supreme Court will decide whether to take up the case in the fall when they return from their summer recess.

Meghan is the Director of advocacy for the New York Association of Independent Living; her email address is [mparker@ilny.org](mailto:mparker@ilny.org)

##

## Protections for People with Disabilities Apply Online

### Domino's Asks High Court

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/courts\\_law/do-protections-for-people-with-disabilities-apply-online-dominos-asks-high-court/2019/07/20/984c685e-a7fd-11e9-a3a6-ab670962db05\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/courts_law/do-protections-for-people-with-disabilities-apply-online-dominos-asks-high-court/2019/07/20/984c685e-a7fd-11e9-a3a6-ab670962db05_story.html)

By [Robert Barnes](#)

July 20

Domino's sells more than 2.5 million pizzas every day, and the company says it offers at least 15 ways to order one. But Guillermo Robles, who is blind, said neither the company's website nor its mobile app allowed him to order the pizza he wanted, or receive a discount for ordering online.

He sued.

Now Domino's, backed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the nation's largest retailers, wants the Supreme Court to step in to decide whether the Americans With Disabilities Act, which has transformed America's physical landscape, applies equally to the Internet.

The ADA "says nothing about the accessibility of websites or applications on smartphones, whether standing alone or in connection with restaurants, stores, or any other brick-and-mortar establishments that qualify as public accommodations," wrote Washington lawyer Lisa S. Blatt, who represents Domino's.

"When Congress passed the ADA in 1990, websites were in their infancy, and apps did not yet exist."

Lower courts have said the statute does apply, although they have disagreed about exactly when and to whom. As a result, the number of lawsuits has exploded: 2,250 federal suits asserting ADA violations based on website inaccessibility were filed in 2018, nearly triple the number from the year before, according to the Domino's brief.

Beyoncé's [website](#) has been targeted. So have art galleries in New York.

And the National Retail Federation tells the Supreme Court in a friend-of-the-court brief that its website doesn't comply with industry standards, either.

The group ran *supremecourt.gov* through a free online resource that applies Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) developed by private parties and found "19 'known problems' and 411 'potential problems.'"

"Only this court's intervention can establish a true nationwide standard establishing the proper scope" of website accessibility, writes Washington lawyer Pratik A. Shah, representing the retailers. "It is time for this court to bring order to a chaotic legal landscape marked by unpredictable and unworkable accessibility standards that run counter to the goals of the ADA, consumers, and the retailers who serve them."

Businesses have rallied around the Robles case in their effort to persuade the Supreme Court to intervene, even as they profess that it would be in their best interests to make their goods as accessible as possible.

Robles sued because he said his attempts in 2016 to use the Domino's website and mobile app to order a pizza for delivery were unsuccessful.

A federal judge in California agreed with Robles that the ADA covered websites but dismissed the lawsuit. He agreed with Domino's that its due process rights would be violated because the Department of Justice has never made good on its obligation to issue guidance on exactly how websites and apps should comply with Title III of the act, which concerns public accommodations.

## ADVERTISING

But earlier this year, a unanimous three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit disagreed.

"At least since 1996, Domino's has been on notice that its online offerings must effectively communicate with its disabled customers and facilitate 'full and equal enjoyment' of Domino's goods and services," [Circuit Judge John B. Owens wrote](#). He added: "While we understand why Domino's wants DOJ to issue specific guidelines for website and app accessibility, the Constitution only requires that Domino's receive fair notice of its legal duties, not a blueprint for compliance with its statutory obligations."

The judges sent the case back for the lower court judge to decide whether Domino's has complied with its obligations, saying "courts are perfectly capable of interpreting the meaning of 'equal' and 'effective.'"

Domino's and the business interests urging the court's intervention said the decision in the 9th Circuit — which covers California and most of the western United States — was a game-changer.

"Virtually every national business and non-profit offers its goods and services at physical locations within the Ninth Circuit," [Domino's tells the court](#), so its rule "will apply nationwide no matter what. No one can tailor their online presence to fit different rules in different circuits."

But Eve Hill, a Baltimore attorney who has worked on website accessibility cases for the National Federation of the Blind and at Justice, said the decision "breaks no new ground."

Courts across the country have found that websites and apps must comply with the ADA, she said. Companies may not like the message, but that doesn't mean there is a need for the Supreme Court's attention.

And she said the Justice Department's inability to issue guidelines for compliance — it announced in 2017 that it was giving up the effort — does not mean companies are helpless. The lack of a national standard could be seen "as a feature, not a bug," freeing companies to comply in different ways, Hill said.

In the Domino's petition, and the accompanying amicus briefs, is a familiar battle between companies and lawyers who sue them.

Gregory G. Garre, representing the Chamber of Commerce, told the court that an "opportunistic plaintiff's bar" has discovered "a lucrative sue-and-settle practice against businesses."

"Businesses now face a rising sea of litigation that flows from one venue to another as plaintiffs' lawyers seek out the most favorable local precedent, leaving companies unable to tell what standards they should meet in order to provide access and avoid liability," he wrote.

Domino's said the firm representing Robles has filed 14 suits on his behalf, and more than three dozen for a Montana resident. Joseph R. Manning Jr., the

Newport Beach, Calif., lawyer who represents Robles, said in an email that he was not discussing the pending case.

He is due to respond to the pizza chain's petition to the high court next month.

But Hill said the explosion in the number of lawsuits was simply a result of the explosion in new websites and apps.

Her client, the National Federation of the Blind, is not interested in "stick-up lawsuits," she said, but securing companies' compliance in opening the web to people with disabilities.

##

RSVA Update -- Karen Blachowicz [karenablachowicz@gmail.com](mailto:karenablachowicz@gmail.com)

The American Council of the Blind had its annual national convention in Rochester New York. During that time, Karen Blachowicz was appointed to the Board of Directors for Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America (RSVA).

<https://www.acb.org/affiliate-RSVA>

Randolph Sheppard Vendors of America (RSVA) will have a New York State affiliate coming soon. We are just waiting on our charter. Our first meeting will be at the American Council of the Blind of New York's State convention at the end of October, in Albany.

Karen Blachowicz has also agreed to be on the RSVA Publications Committee and the Sagebrush committee as she enjoys her new appointment. Karen is also available for public speaking anywhere on the east coast. Topics include, but are not limited to, changes in practices, technology, Randolph-Sheppard law and how it applies to people in business, product and price shopping and many other topics. You can reach Karen at 716.510.4560 or via [karenablachowicz@gmail.com](mailto:karenablachowicz@gmail.com)

##

Chapter Round-Up

Capital District News and Events

By President Kathy Casey

In July we hosted our annual chapter picnic at Nancy and Bill Murray's house. Ten members were in attendance. Thank you, Nancy and Bill for all you do.

September and October are busy for us. We wanted to share some of the events we are participating in this fall.

September 11 & 12: Capital District members will be participating in a first responders disability awareness training.

September 14 our members will be hosting a table and handing out information during the Albany County Citizen's Corps block party. The purpose of the block party is to promote awareness for emergency preparedness.

September 21 & 22, we will be hosting a table at the Albany County Traffic Safety Day at the cross gates Mall.

October 15 we will celebrate White Cane Safety Day with a table at NABA's annual tech fair.

October 16 Capital District's President Kathy Casey will be speaking to the New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) staff at the main office in Rensselaer. Informational presentation on ACBNY.

And finally, October 19 is our annual Dinner in the Dark fundraiser being held at the Albany Colony Elks Club.

See you at the 2019 State Convention.

##

ACB of Western New York (ACBWNY) Submitted by Secretary Marie Lyons

Our chapter has been quite busy in its work toward advocacy for blind people. First, we would like to congratulate Ian Foley on becoming legislative chair for New York State. Congratulations Ian!

Our pedestrian safety committee has been advocating for increasing the number of audible pedestrian signals (APS). This work has included attending town hall meetings, phone calls to the traffic engineers, letter writing, and even an editorial

in the Buffalo News. Hats off to our Pedestrian Safety Committee chair, Kathy Lyons.

Our chapter has been volunteering in local nursing homes to teach staff appropriate methods of helping visually impaired residents.

Two of our members appeared on a local news program, WKBW, with their service dogs in honor of National Service Dog Month. They were joined by their sister from another ACB affiliate who happened to be visiting with her service dog.

Kudos to our chapter president, Karen Blachowicz, for being appointed to the Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America (RSVA) Board of Directors. She will be doing speaking engagements for them in New York State and New England. Congratulations Karen!

##

News from GDUES By Bailey the Guide Dog

We were happy to be at the National ACB convention this year which took place in Rochester, NY. GDUES members worked together to sell signature tote bags and fleece tug toys. We want to send our thanks to Cheryl Lawyer for donating her hand made unique Adirondack braided fleece tug toys to help GDUES raise some much-needed dollars. Thanks, also to all our GDUES members who helped sell our products in the exhibit hall and in the marketplace outside of general sessions. Mike Golfo was there bright and early, and most of every day the exhibits were open.

To thank her, we made Cheryl a GDUES member. Part of the money we raised will go toward creating an E-commerce plug-in for our website so we can sell merchandise.

Our president, Annie Chiappetta, and Cheryl received awards from GDUI at their annual luncheon.

We can't wait to see you all at the 2019 State convention in Albany, our program will be sent out soon.

##

WCBNY Update by Maria Samuels, President

What has WCBNY been up to? All kinds of stuff. First, there was a major unresolved issue from 2018 that came to a head in early 2019. We had met with leaders of the county government in October 2018 to voice our concern about the lack of accessibility on all the County's government websites. Promises were heard. Yet we saw little progress by the time 2019 was well underway. This led us to join forces with the Disability Rights Advocates (DRA) attorneys, and our push became more forceful. In April the county issued a press release that it will comply and make its websites fully accessible by the end of 2019. We are thrilled that our advocacy made this happen but remain cautiously optimistic until we see the final results in January 2020.

The annual picnic could have been a disaster. A hot and humid disaster. The temperature threatened to rise to 101, and, that Saturday, it nearly did. So indoors became the only sane option. The picnic moved to the spacious air-conditioned hall of the church where we meet. We didn't have to worry about ice cream melting and keeping drinks cold. Tasty food, games and a raffle were all part of the fun for 25 of us.

We are one of the leaders of the second annual REV UP Westchester campaign to get all people with disabilities to register and vote. On July 26, which was also the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ADA, we launched the campaign at the Rye Playland amusement park, along with other organizations such as the League of Women Voters. The event was marked by the appearance of the County Executive, George Latimer. It was the perfect day to reach the maximum amount of people with disabilities, and the park was packed for a good reason. That Friday was the county's annual disability day, and people with disabilities get to ride all day for free. Yup. This is a really cool county to live in.

Another highlight of the year was the ceremony on June 14 to award the two \$500 50 Plus Technology Grants. Technology is no longer a luxury, nor is it an option. But for many seniors, neither the hardware nor the training is affordable. This need gave birth to the grant for those in our county fifty and over who are financially eligible but not eligible for Commission of the Blind services. Thanks to our Dining in the Dark fundraising success, we were able to help two people take



the first step to connecting to their technological needs. The two recipients happily posed in the White Plains library with our members, the Director of the Westchester County office for People with Disabilities, and the mayor of White Plains.

In June and July, WCBNY had their own reserved classes at the Apple store. Members brought their iPhones and iPads and questions. The healthy turnout was not a surprise since Apple devices are the hands-down favorite in our community. We are lucky we have members who never miss a Paratransit Advisory Committee meeting or the county's emergency management meetings and come back with reports. Our active participation in both committees is essential for WCBNY as we attend not only for the blind but for all people with disabilities.

We get calls from the community for help. Our website number has received several calls that could either be answered directly or were referred. One came from a social worker at a local hospital for a patient who recently lost his sight. Hard to imagine, but she never heard of the New York State Commission for the Blind and screen readers. If only we had the funding to educate our county better

Although our community outreach slowed down, there were still some visits to nursing homes and to a disability advocacy group.

we have had two WCBNY Leaders Lunches; this informal gathering is new to the group and is a work in progress. However, it gives the chapter's officers, directors and committee chairs a chance to socialize and talk about subjects not discussed in detail during regular membership meetings.

Our website is routinely updated with new articles. Two new features were added: *Resources* and *Our Stories, Our Voices*. The *Resources* link is an ever-growing list of organizations or websites that can help us. *Our Stories, Our Voices* highlights a person in our community who is special or unique or doing something unusual or just has something interesting to say.

And lastly, we chose to be called WCBNY and not WCB. Perhaps Shakespeare might have thought that a rose by any other name is still a rose but the chapter decided that's not always the case in the real world. For years the name of the chapter flip-flopped between Westchester Council of the Blind (WCB) or

Westchester Council of the Blind of NY (WCBNY) in press releases, marketing material and even in the bylaws. In June the chapter decided that it only needed one name from now on and “of New York” was going to be permanently added on.

I’m sure we’re overlooking something in this near year-end wrap up but stay tuned to our website as Westchester is always up to something.

##

Potpourri

From the NYSCB – Laura Murphy

The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) is hosting a White Cane Awareness Day on October 16, 2019 at its Home Office location in Rensselaer, NY. The event will include presenters, including Commissioner Sheila Poole of the Office of Children and Family Services; Associate Commissioner of NYSCB, Brian Daniels and other presenters, including representatives from American Council of the Blind (ACB), National Federation of the Blind (NFB), Northeast Association for the Blind (NABA), a Business Enterprise Program store manager and Orientation and Mobility instructor demonstrations. NYSCB will be displaying a road sign at the event that can be installed at intersections and crosswalks frequently used by blind or visually impaired persons. Requests for the sign can be coordinated through Laura Murphy, Outreach Coordinator at the NYSCB. For further information about the New York State Commission for the Blind, please contact Laura at (518) 473-5852 or [Laura.Murphy@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:Laura.Murphy@ocfs.ny.gov), or call the NYSCB toll free number (866) 871-3000 or visit their website: [visionloss.ny.gov](http://visionloss.ny.gov)

##

**Blind runner, guide dog trio makes history in NYC Half Marathon**

Article Link: <https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/16/us/new-york-marathon-guide-dogs-trnd/index.html>

Thomas Panek and his running guide dogs Westley, Waffle and Gus made history on Sunday in the 2019 New York City Half Marathon.

Panek, the president and CEO of [Guiding Eyes for the Blind](#), was the first blind runner to complete the half marathon with guide dogs.

His trio of Labrador Retrievers -- who took turns pacing him along the 13.1-mile course -- were the first four-legged athletes in the race.

"It's really a team," Panek said.

According to the race website, Panek's team [finished the race](#) in just shy of two hours and 21 minutes.

An avid runner, Panek had no intention to give up the sport, even after losing his eyesight in his early 20s.

Thanks to volunteer human guides, he has since completed 20 marathons. Still, Panek missed the feeling of independence, which ultimately inspired him to start a formal training program for running guide dogs.

"It never made sense to me to walk out the door and leave my guide dog behind when I love to run and they love to run," he said. "It was just a matter of bucking conventional wisdom and saying why not."

### **Journey to the finish line**

In 2015, Panek established the first-of-its-kind "Running Guides" program at Guiding Eyes for the Blind, a certified nonprofit school in Westchester County, New York that has trained guide dogs for the visually impaired for decades.

Twenty-four dogs have completed the program and another 12 are halfway to graduation. Once trained, Guiding Eyes matches each dog with an applicant and helps train the new team free of charge.

But only a handful of the dogs are cut out for the Running Guides program, which requires an even more rigorous level of fitness and discipline. Running outside presents a unique challenge -- the dogs have to navigate terrain changes, stairs and curbs all while tuning out city distractions and noise.

When it came time to choose his team for the race, Panek turned to the Guiding Eyes' team of professional trainers, who handpicked sister-brother duo Waffle and Westley, two of the most active dogs in the pack.

"The bond is really important. You can't just pick up the harness and go for a run with these dogs," Panek said. You're training with a team no matter what kind of athlete you are, and you want to spend time together in that training camp."

They've been training together for many months, rain or shine. Even the arctic blast that gripped New York in January didn't stop Panek and his canine companions, who took to the Armory Track.

### **Race day**

The dogs set their own pace and each tackled a different leg of the race. Gus, Panek's longtime guide dog, was chosen to run the final 3.1 miles and retire at the finish line in Central Park.

"It's a little emotional for me because he's been there with me the whole time," Panek said.

Panek hopes his 14-legged team will inspire others with ambulatory and visual disabilities to keep pushing the bounds of what they think, or are told, is possible.

"Running with your dog is wonderful and if they can do a job while they're doing it and sure, it happens to be 13.1 miles through the streets of New York city but we're going to get it done. I know we will."

##

blindskills, Inc.

July 15,2019

Dear DIALOGUE Reader,

I am very sad to have to tell you that, as of June 2019, we have been forced to suspend publication of our beloved DIALOGUE Magazine. As you probably know, DIALOGUE has lately been faced with some big challenges, such as the retirement of our Editor and our longtime office assistant; but I can assure you that there is

only one thing that could cause us to even consider taking the step of suspending publication, and that one thing is a serious shortage of funding.

There was a time, somewhat before I joined the Blindskills Board just over ten years ago, when the organization had a small reserve to draw on in times of crisis. But the reserve was gradually used up to keep DIALOGUE going along with the other important work of Blindskills. More recently—over the past year—we have had increasing difficulty in meeting the cost of producing DIALOGUE; four of the past five issues were paid for by donors, who stepped forward at the last minute, once we quietly made them aware of the seriousness of the situation.

In late May, with only a small amount of remaining operating funds, we were faced with a difficult choice—continue to publish until nothing was left and Blindskills was completely closed down or pause and regroup in the hope of restarting publication at some later time. Faced with that dilemma, the Blindskills board has voted to suspend publication of DIALOGUE "until such time as financial resources are in place to resume publication on an orderly basis."

I dearly wish I could tell you if or when that time might come. If it does, it will be our joy to contact all current DIALOGUE subscribers to let you know that DIALOGUE is a living, breathing publication once again. Should you have questions after reading this. For now, at least, our usual contact information remains in effect. It may take us some time to respond, but phone us at either 800-860-4224, or 503-5814224. Email us at [blindskills@gmail.com](mailto:blindskills@gmail.com). Our mailing address continues to be PO Box 5181 Salem, Oregon, 97304.

I have no dramatic words of closure with which to end this letter. I can Only offer a sincere thought that it has been a life-changing experience for all of us to share in this DIALOGUE of ours over these many years, and a fervent hope that another chapter of that experience might lie somewhere out there in the future.

Sincerely,

John C. Pleasants, President Blindskills Board of Directors

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NLS is pleased to announce that we have received final approval from the Librarian of Congress to change our name. This move will help us address the use of outdated language in our current name and more clearly communicate the breadth of those we serve. Beginning on October 1, our name will change officially to "National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled," though we will continue to be referred to by the abbreviation NLS.

Both NLS and Library of Congress sought input on this change from stakeholder groups and gathered data through various public channels. In keeping with the strategic plan of the LOC, our new name is patron centric. Visit <https://www.loc.gov/strategic-plan/> to learn more about the Library's "user-centered" goal in the strategic plan.

We have already taken the first steps in our name-change implementation plan to ensure the transition goes smoothly. If you have questions or concerns

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## Passings

ACBNY stands ready to assist loved ones with memorializing those who have passed by creating the Remembrances and Tributes program. We want loved ones to be able to memorialize past ACBNY members and others with the creation of this program. Please contact [tributes@acbny.info](mailto:tributes@acbny.info) to find out more or visit <https://www.acbny.info/remembrances-and-tributes/>

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## American Council of the Blind

### Officers and Board of Directors Contact List

The following is the most up to date list of members of the ACBNY Board of Directors. If there are any errors, please notify Lori Scharff at [president@acbny.info](mailto:president@acbny.info) and your newsletter editor, Annie Chiappetta at [editor@acbny.info](mailto:editor@acbny.info)

January 2018

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End of INSIGHT Summer 2019