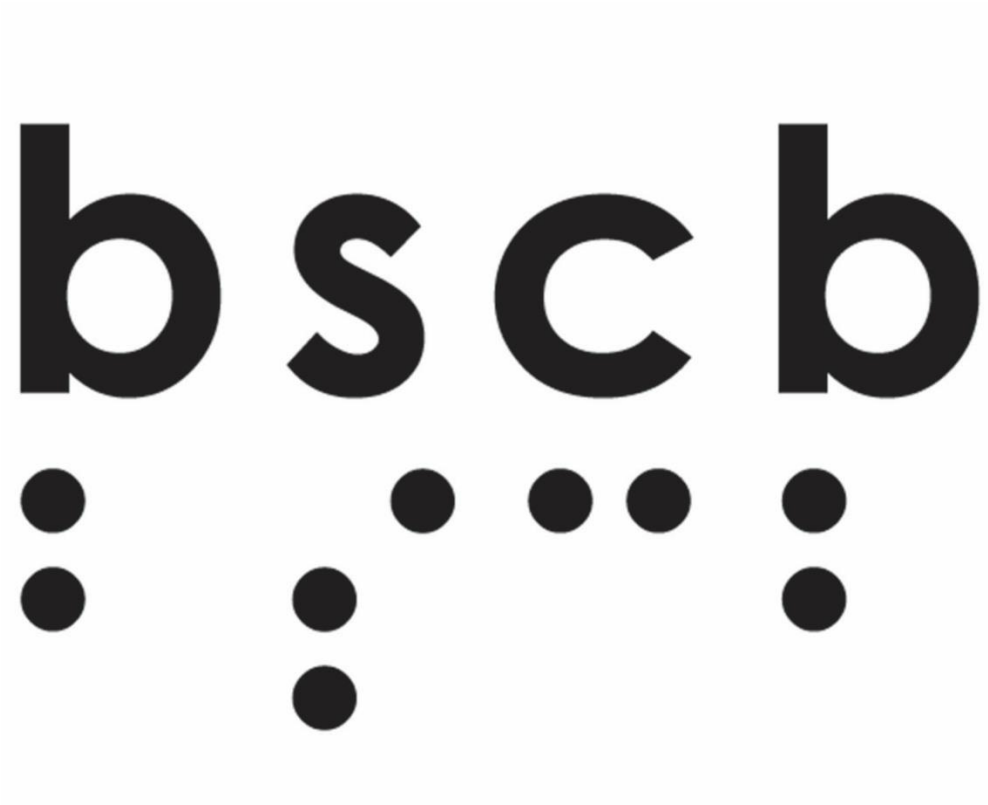
BayLines

Fall/Winter, 2018



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BSCB E-mail Lists:

BSCB-L is an open e-mail list for discussion of topics of interest to BSCB members and friends. To subscribe, send e-mail to bscb-l-subscribe@acblists.org.

BSCB-ANNOUNCE is a moderated one-way e-mail list used to disseminate pertinent announcements to members and friends of the Bay State Council of the Blind. To subscribe, send an e-mail request to: bscb-announce-subscribe@acblists.org.

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Note from the Editor

Hello Everyone,
As we approach the end of another year, I am thinking back upon the year that was. BSCB continues to make progress in our mission of making our state, our nation, and our world a more accessible place for blind and visually impaired persons. I am enjoying editing this newsletter, but I have one complaint. I really wish I had articles from more of our members. I like to write and I love to express opinions, but I'd be happier if I had articles from more of our members. These articles could range from your experiences as advocates to your experiences traveling, learning a new skill, or simply an expression of the frustrations you feel as a blind or visually impaired person. Given the high unemployment rate among the blind and visually impaired, I'd be particularly interested in hearing how you obtained your job, or what it is like for a blind person to run his or her own business.

I would be happy to assist any of you who might have good ideas for articles but who might feel you need help in putting your ideas into written form. My contact information is on the front page of this and every issue of *BayLines*. Please feel free to contact me.

Here's wishing to all of you a safe and happy holiday season and a happy and prosperous new year.

An Afternoon at the Theater
by Brian Charlson

Live audio described performances are nothing new. Large and small venues have been offering occasional described shows for several years.

I, myself, have attended shows at more than 15 different theaters over the years, some dramas, some musicals, and some comedies. Most of them have been described by professional describers but a few were described by volunteers.

On the night of September 23, I attended a sold-out performance of “Hamilton” at the Boston Opera House. This beautifully restored theater boasts red and gold silk wallpaper, plaster ornamentation, chandeliers, and marble columns. My wife Kim and I along with our friends Vicki and Rick were seated in red velvet upholstered seats in row W in a side box near the far right of the stage, what they call obstructed view seats.

Elsewhere, dozens of other blind or visually impaired people were seated with headsets on, ready to enjoy Boston’s most talked about show in years. Each one of them had early access to tickets as an accommodation to the difficulty they would have had trying to get tickets on-line. Some were holding braille programs embossed at the Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library, but all were able to listen to a well-constructed “Pre-show” describing the staging, costumes, and lighting that would take place over the next two and a half hours.

Because of the rapidly sung and spoken lyrics of the hip-hop styled show, many people had prepared themselves by listening to the sound track and/or by reading the libretto. Without any dialogue, the music and lyrics had to tell the entire story.

Because there was seldom a moment of silence where the describer could slip in a description of action on the stage without talking over the music itself, most description consisted of quick indications of who was singing, who came on stage or left the stage, and who changed costume and therefore changed character. Lighting changes and the use of the central turn-table on which actors stood from time to time were described as time

allowed. Little was lost to those who could not see in that the words and power of the music truly told the story.

Applause followed every song, and tears shown in the eyes of many. Those who came expecting to get lost because of the hip-hop nature of the music quickly found themselves caught up in the unique rhythm of the words and the power of the message.

While going to an audio described play is no longer unusual, going to one of this importance is. What may be of even more importance may be that nearly every theater in greater Boston will be hosting at least one audio described performance. Many other theaters in Massachusetts outside of Boston will be offering audio described performances of their own.

It has taken us many years and many hours of advocacy to get where we are today. When theaters offer these shows with audio description, we need to go. When we go, we need to take others with us. When we hear of a play being performed without audio description, we need to ask why.

When you want to know when and where there will be an audio described play, look at the web site of the Bay State Council of the Blind, acbofma.org, where you can not only read the current listing of audio described plays, but when and where movies and television shows are audio described as well. Sign up to receive announcements from BSCB-Announce about activities of interest to those who are blind or visually impaired throughout Massachusetts. Call in to Philmore, 773-572-6312 if a computer isn't handy, and you can access much the same thing.

For now, please come and enjoy the show, whether it is on the stage, on a movie screen or on your own television. Audio description is there for you and it can make you a part of what is happening in your family, your community and in your world.

Save the Date!

BSCB's 2019 Spring Conference and Convention will be held at the Burlington Marriott Hotel, Burlington, Massachusetts from Friday, March 8 through Sunday, March 10, 2019. Details will be announced as the conference date approaches.

Introducing Gerard Boucher: Leader of Blinded Veterans, Advocate and Generous BSCB Member by Bob Hachey

Sometime around 20 years ago, I was attending a monthly meeting of the Disability Policy Consortium, (DPC) at the State House in Boston. All of the voices in the room were familiar to me except one, that of Gerard Boucher. He introduced himself as a member of the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) of Massachusetts. Immediately, I could hear the passion in his voice. At the time, we were working on our annual budget campaign for the three smaller disability agencies, the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, (MCB), the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, and the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Gerard was not as familiar with the state budget as the rest of us in the room, but he asked a lot of very good questions and was eager to learn about the budget and work on our issues. When the meeting ended, Gerard introduced himself to me and informed me that he was a veteran of Vietnam where he was blinded, and that he was very interested in helping MCB to get more funding for its programs and services.

Boucher graduated from Haverhill Vocational High School in 1966. He then joined the Marines. He took special training in guerilla warfare and went to Vietnam as a Lance corporal. On

October 11, 1967, Boucher was wounded in a mortar attack, which also killed one of his comrades. He was blinded, lost some of his hearing, and sustained nerve damage. Boucher received rehabilitation training from the Veterans Administration in Illinois and joined the BVA shortly thereafter. The death of his comrade in the mortar attack motivated him to advocate on behalf of veterans, “to keep the honor alive of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.”

Boucher took a few postgraduate courses at Perkins in 1969 and 1970 and graduated with a bachelor’s degree from Haverhill Community College in 1973. He next worked for Kurzweil, the maker of the first reading machines for the blind for a few years. In the late 1970’s, Boucher became a real estate broker and had a long and successful career. Meanwhile, he remained very active in the BVA of Massachusetts where he held many positions on the BVA of Massachusetts Board of Directors, including President. As of this writing, he serves as their Secretary/ Treasurer.

In 1981, Boucher married Janet and they remained together for 33 wonderful years. Gerard obtained his Masters degree from Bradford College. Over the years, he began to advocate for services provided by MCB and the Talking Book Library.

Gerard hit a low point in 2014 when Janet passed away. But he quickly pulled himself out of that slump and obtained his PhD from Atlantic International University. Boucher credits his love for advocacy and continuing education for helping him to thrive once again as a single person. He continues to advocate on the local, state and national level for blinded veterans and for blind persons generally. He has spent many hours on the phone with elected officials and in meetings in pursuit of these efforts.

Today, Gerard is a very active member of BSCB. He is also one of our most generous members. His generosity has helped to provide funding for BSCB conventions for the last three years. I want to personally thank Gerard for a number of things:

1. for his service to our nation;
2. for his advocacy on behalf of veterans and persons who are blind; and
3. his generous contributions to BSCB conventions.

BSCB Chapter Reports

South Shore Chapter

The South Shore Chapter last met on Saturday, October 27 at Café Connection in Holbrook. Chris Devin gave reports on the most recent conference call of chapter presidents, the upcoming BSCB fall conference, and tours to be offered at the 2019 ACB Conference and Convention in Rochester, New York. Chapter members enjoyed good food and fellowship. The following chapter officers were elected: President Chris Devin; Vice-President David Baharian; Secretary Jessica Barr, and Treasurer Bob Kershner.

Central Mass. Chapter

Central Mass. Chapter members have been busy, as many have just completed a four-week self-defense course offered through the generosity of a local grant and the efforts of our local treasurer. It was fascinating and informative, and we all enjoyed the young karate kids who assisted us in learning the moves.

We will have a holiday luncheon for our December meeting, and are delighted to participate in a tour of the new Easter Seals Adaptive Technology Center in March, 2019. We enjoy socializing together and recently were pleased with presentations by Kim Charlson on Perkins Library programming and a demonstration by

Brian Charlson of the AIRA visual interpreter service. We are always on the lookout for new speaker ideas, and may discover an advocacy project of interest.

BSCB Students

BSCB Students has a few projects and events in the works, but our focus has been on one project in particular and we would like to share a bit about it. Currently, the chapter is compiling a list of blindness-related resources for consumers who are visually impaired. These resources are assessed by members to ensure that they are of good quality. Places to find braille books, assistive technology, braille jewelry, adaptive equipment, and materials of that nature will be on the list as well as places for technology and vocational training. So often people are unaware of what resources are available to them especially after losing their vision and often they only learn about these sources through research or personal experience. As a chapter, we decided to compile our collective experience and knowledge to assemble a handy list that once complete, will be made available to everyone for perusal and periodically updated as new resources are discovered. Members are welcome to send ideas of resources to be included on the list via our chapter email: bscbstudents@gmail.com.

We have more projects and events in the planning stages, including a Skills Trade-Off. If you would like to learn more, the chapter has its monthly conference call the third Sunday of every month at 8:00 PM. We would love to have you join us. Send a message to the above email address and the call-in details will be sent to you.

Boston Chapter

The Boston Chapter has had an eventful quarter. In August, we had our first fellowship opportunity at the home of Nina Kagan and Frank Ventura. We enjoyed a meal together after our quarterly meeting.

We all agreed that we wished to pursue other social events and are looking at options. As a result, we have agreed to plan an outing at a restaurant in February.

We have had lively discussions about both traveling to the National Convention either by plane or train, and the issues surrounding making bus stop announcements, and safety getting on and off buses. We also learned a great deal about resources available through the Attorney General's office. Our plan is to make the information available to all BSCB members.

We all agreed that we would pursue using the meeting space we have accessed for much of the past year.

We will be discussing our constitution in our next meeting, and expect to have more social activities in the future.

Charles River Chapter

The Charles River Chapter met on September 22, 2018 at the Talking Book Library's Administration Building on the Perkins Campus. Jerimias (Jerry) Feliz, from MABVI's Vibrant Program, spoke concerning this fairly new program which teaches technology to blind and visually impaired people. At our meetings we usually have BSCB and ACB Updates. The Holiday Party Planning Committee will be making decisions concerning location of the Holiday Party, and the date it will be held. The Group agreed that a possibility might be to hold the Party after the holidays. The Holiday Party Notice will be sent to our members on the CRC-announce List

We always enjoy time to chat over goodies and soda. Happy Holidays to all.

All Walgreens Stores are Now Free Aira Access Locations

[Editor's Note: The Aira SMART Phone app may now be used free at all Walgreens locations. Here are more details from the Aira Team.]

Walgreens has a history of breaking new ground to meet its customers' needs and improve their health, from offering self-service stores beginning in the 1950s to developing a 5-star rated mobile app today. In its pharmacies, Walgreens was the first major drugstore chain to put prescriptions into child-resistant containers in the 1960s (long before it was required by law) and in 2016 was the first to offer safe medication disposal kiosks in its stores.

Today, Walgreens continues their tradition of innovation by becoming the first healthcare retailer and pharmacy chain to enable free Aira access – meaning that you can connect with an agent whenever shopping at one of their stores.

Fun fact: As of August 31, 2018, Walgreens operates approximately 9,560 drugstores with a presence in all 50 states – and you can use Aira for free in every one of them.

To read more about our latest addition to the Aira Access network, visit http://aira.io/.

What can you do with Aira at Walgreens?

- Find specific items in the aisles
- Find a staff member to help address your specific needs
- Navigate to the pharmacy
- Identify the shortest checkout line
- Identify items on sale

- Sort coupons to get the best deal

Some FAQs

How does it work?
If you have allowed Aira notifications, your Aira app will notify you that you've entered a free Aira Access location. While in an Aira Access location, tap on the notification or open your Aira app to connect with an agent for free.

Can my friends use it too?
Absolutely! They can download the Aira app and register for free as a guest to navigate the store with their phone.

Do I need to use my Aira smart glasses?
As an Explorer, you can use your smart glasses or your phone. Guests can only use Aira for free in Aira Access locations by using their smartphone.

Is there a limit to how long I can use Aira at Walgreens?
No! You can use Aira for as long as you need during your Walgreens experience.

Get ready to explore Walgreens in a whole new way.
Happy Exploring!

BSCB Member Advocates for the Right to Vote Privately and Independently by Bob Hachey

Howard Sumner is relatively new to blindness. Before the election of 2016, he had always voted as a sighted person. In 2016, he decided to have his wife help him fill out his ballot. But, as he

became more independent, he decided that he wanted to vote privately and independently.

About three weeks before voting, he contacted the Bedford town clerk's office to be sure that the AutoMARK would be available. He was told that the machine didn't always work well and the clerk suggested that he may want sighted assistance in order to vote. Remembering the article that appeared in the Fall 2016 issue of *BayLines,* Howard contacted Bridget Simmons Murphy in the Elections Division of the Massachusetts Secretary of State's office. Ms. Murphy thanked Howard for his call and informed him that she would look into the matter and get back to him shortly. Meanwhile, she contacted the Bedford town clerk and offered her assistance in making sure that their AutoMARK machines would be working properly for the 2018 election. Ms. Murphy assured Howard that he would be able to use the AutoMARK to vote this year. The town clerk then contacted Howard and offered to show him how to use the AutoMARK. They agreed to meet at the polling location and she showed Howard how to use the machine and he voted all by himself.

Howard said that it felt great to once again vote with no assistance. Howard says that in the future, he will help the town of Bedford to offer accessible voting for all of its citizens. He will be attending trainings of elections officials so that all of them get the chance to see a blind person voting privately and independently.

I was very happy to hear that our 2016 article helped Howard to advocate for accessible voting in his community and hope that all of you were able to vote privately and independently in the 2018 election. I would encourage any of you who have not tried using the AutoMARK to do so in future elections. Please let us know if you are having any problems in your attempts to use the AutoMARK.

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