

# WINDS OF CHANGE!

**ACB**  
• • •

**American Council  
of the Blind**

Together for a bright future

**ANNUAL REPORT 2023**



# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**Deb Cook Lewis**  
*President*



**Dan Spooone**  
*Interim Executive  
Director*

ACB continued to thrive in 2023 with a full and growing lineup of programs and services and a comprehensive legislative agenda with four national imperatives. Things were truly back to a new normal following the pandemic, with no evidence of slowing down. Change was a prominent order of the day, with the election of a new president and hiring an interim executive director.

The 62nd annual American Council of the Blind Conference and Convention took place both virtually and as a hybrid event in Schaumburg, Illinois. ACB held the first blindness community listening session with representatives from Uber during the convention. This provided an opportunity for Uber to share the work they are doing to make their service more accessible and usable by people with disabilities, and it allowed ACB members to raise issues of both praise and concern with ride share services.

The ACB scholarship class for 2023 was brimming with talent, intelligence and enthusiasm. Recipients included the president of Seedlings Braille Books for Children, a blind hockey player, and an investigator with the Illinois Department of Human Rights in Chicago. Our collaboration



with the American Foundation for the Blind makes it possible to give approximately 20 scholarships each year.

To kick off the 2023 Leadership Conference, ACB held a rally in Washington, D.C. on March 10 to demand more accessible currency for people who are blind or low vision. It included a march from the White House to the U.S. Treasury. Its goals included joining the more than 100 countries that already have accessible currency and ensuring that U.S. paper currency is accessible and inclusive.

The 2023 ACB Audio Description Awards Gala aired on November 14, recognizing outstanding achievements in audio description in entertainment and educational media. Recipients included Jim Stovall, Netflix, Naughty Dog/Sony, Imagination Storybooks, and Hallmark Media.

ACB Media continues to be a central source of communication in the blind and low vision community, with 10 streams broadcast over the Internet. There is an increasing demand for podcasts, with 250,000 podcast downloads annually for ACB Community events, state affiliate conventions, and recurring content of interest to those who are blind or low vision.

The Community Events platform has presented more than 15,000 events since its inception four years ago. There were over 100 virtual events per week, which were held using Zoom and Clubhouse, with many streamed on ACB Media 5 and made available via podcast. A daily schedule of events is sent out via email to subscribers, and a pre-recorded schedule of events may be accessed via telephone. The Community is truly designed to be a support network for people to have a safe, welcoming, and respectful environment.

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023

- Elected Deb Cook Lewis, ACB president, and hired an interim executive director.
- ACB's Community platform held its 16,300<sup>th</sup> event, providing a safe, respectful and welcoming environment for the blind and low-vision community to gather.
- ACB held a rally in Washington, D.C. on March 10 to demand more accessible currency for people who are blind or low vision, which included a march from the White House to the U.S. Treasury. ACB's leadership team continues to meet with the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and receive updates on the production of the first accessible \$10 bill.
- Held the second hybrid national convention in Schaumburg, Illinois and on the ACB Media Network with over 150 breakout sessions, tours, and an inspirational banquet.
- Held the third annual ACB Audio Description Awards Gala featuring presentations from Janet Yang (Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences) and Shawn Levy (Director of All the Light We Cannot See).
- ACB Media Network produced 1,300 podcasts with 243,500 listens on topics of interest to the blind population around the world.
- ACB members contribute 1.1 dollars million in volunteer hours.



# FINANCIALS

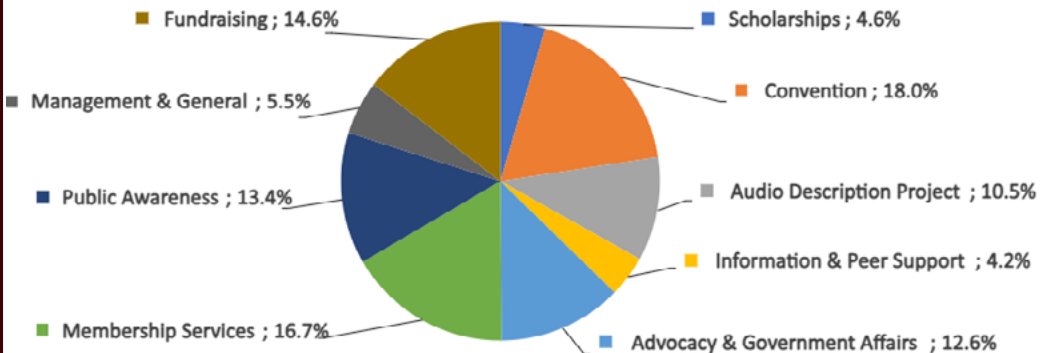
REVENUE	
Contributions and Grants	\$775,891
Program Fees	\$583,162
Membership Dues	\$47,342
Net Investment Return	\$470,064
Other Income	\$605,146
Thrift Stores	\$253,532
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$2,735,137</b>

ASSETS	
Current Assets	\$499,418
Investments	\$4,403,570
Other Assets	\$383,830
Property & Equipment	\$46,754
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,333,572</b>

EXPENSES	
Program Services	\$2,170,387
Management & General	\$148,811
Fundraising	\$396,132
<b>Total Expenses by Function</b>	<b>\$2,715,330</b>
<b>Total Net</b>	<b>19,807</b>

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	
Current Liabilities	\$748,264
Net Assets (Unrestricted)	\$3,231,700
Net assets (Restricted)	\$1,353,608
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,333,572</b>

ACB Program Expenses



# ACB PROGRAM UPDATES

## **ADVOCACY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

Held the annual Leadership Conference as a hybrid event which included ACB's first accessible currency rally. ACB submitted comments on several proposed rules and worked in coalition with other disability organizations to get key legislation reintroduced in Congress. Major areas of advocacy included the Websites and Software Accessibility Act and the Communications, Video, and Technology Accessibility Act.

## **MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION SERVICES**

Affiliates were strengthened through peer support and formalized leadership training. ACB's community platform trained over 100 volunteers who hosted over 5,000 community events which provided social, educational, and topic-driven support. More than 34,300 volunteer hours were contributed.

## **CONVENTION**

The 62nd ACB convention was a hybrid event. Eligible members had the opportunity to vote on proposed resolutions and elect board members during the business meeting. There were over 150 workshops, seminars, and business meetings; individuals attended sessions live or listened later to podcasted sessions.

## **AUDIO DESCRIPTION PROJECT (ADP)**

A broad range of activities were sponsored to build awareness of audio description. In 2023, ACB served on the FCC's Disability Advisory Committee, sponsored its annual essay contest for students, and held the 3rd Audio Description Awards Gala and conducted two sessions of the Audio Description Training Institute. ACB also participated in the UniD project's effort to create audio description for national park service brochures.



## **PUBLIC AWARENESS**

Significantly increased Spanish language content for events. The 3rd Audio Description Awards Gala was broadcast live on YouTube and Peacock. ACB Media's 10 radio stations reached 21,100 listeners for a total of 164,800 listening hours, and 1,500 podcast feeds were downloaded over 250,000 times.

## **ACB SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS**

Awarded \$80,950 across 20 scholarships to blind post-secondary students ranging from \$2,500 to \$7,500. JPMorgan Chase leadership fellows and DKM first-timer awards helped to foster future leaders through mentoring, training, and peer development. They were able to connect with one another, discuss issues of importance, and develop leadership skills by attending the convention.

## **INFORMATION AND PEER SUPPORT**

Provided vital information and referral services to those experiencing vision loss and seeking support in areas including accessible technology services, daily living skills, and advocacy-related inquiries. These services have been expanded over the past three years by building a virtual peer support community event platform, which provided over 100,000 individual connections.

# STATE AFFILIATES

Alabama Council of the Blind

Arizona Council of the Blind

Arkansas Council of the Blind

California Council of the Blind

Colorado Council of the Blind and  
Visually Impaired

ACB of Connecticut

Delaware Council of the Blind and  
Visually Impaired

District of Columbia Council of  
the Blind

Florida Council of the Blind

Georgia Council of the Blind

Hawaii Association of the Blind

Illinois Council of the Blind

ACB of Indiana

Iowa Council of the United Blind

Kansas Association for the Blind &  
Visually Impaired

Bluegrass Council of the Blind

Kentucky Council of the Blind

Louisiana Council of the Blind

ACB of Maine

ACB of Maryland

Bay State Council of the Blind

Michigan Council of the Blind &  
Visually Impaired

ACB of Minnesota

Mississippi Council of the Blind

Missouri Council of the Blind

ACB of Nebraska

Nevada Council of the Blind

New Jersey Council of the Blind

ACB of New Mexico

ACB of New York

North Carolina Council of the Blind

North Dakota Association of  
the Blind

ACB of Ohio

Oklahoma Council of the Blind

ACB of Oregon

Pennsylvania Council of the Blind

South Dakota Association of  
the Blind

Tennessee Council of the Blind

ACB of Texas

Utah Council of the Blind

Vermont Council of the Blind

ACB of Virginia

Washington Council of the Blind

Mountain State Council of the Blind

ACB of Wisconsin

Wyoming Council of the Blind



# SPECIAL-INTEREST AFFILIATES

Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss

American Association of Blind Teachers

American Association of Visually Impaired Attorneys

ACB Diabetics in Action

ACB Families

ACB Government Employees

ACB Lions

ACB Next Generation

ACB Radio Amateurs

ACB Students

Blind Information Technology Specialists

Blind LGBT Pride International

Braille Revival League

Council of Citizens with Low Vision International

Friends-in-Art of ACB

Guide Dog Users, Inc.

Independent Visually Impaired Entrepreneurs

Library Users of America

Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America

Visually Impaired Veterans of America

**ACB wishes to extend a special thanks to all our generous contributors with particular thanks to the following foundations:**

Aid Association for the Blind of the District of Columbia

Delta Gamma Foundation

National Park Services

Dr. Scholl Foundation

Royal Bank of Canada Foundation



## **OFFICERS**

### **PRESIDENT**

Deb Cook Lewis

### **FIRST VICE PRESIDENT**

David Trott

### **SECOND VICE PRESIDENT**

Ray Campbell

### **SECRETARY**

Denise Colley

### **TREASURER**

Michael Garrett

### **IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT**

Kim Charlson

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Christopher Bell

Jeff Bishop

Donna Brown

Gabriel Lopez Kafati

Terry Pacheco

Doug Powell

Rachel Schroder

Kenneth Semien Sr.

Koni Sims

Jeff Thom

## **BOARD OF PUBLICATIONS**

Penny Reeder, Chair

Jeff Bishop

Cheryl Cumings

Zelda Gebhard

Cachet Wells

## ACB STAFF

### **Interim Executive Director**

*Dan Spooone*

### **Chief Financial Officer**

*Nancy Marks-Becker*

### **ACB Editor**

*Sharon Lovering*

### **ACB Media and IT Manager**

*Rick Morin*

### **Administrative Assistant**

*Nancy Feela*

### **Administrative Assistant**

*Kaitlyn Herrera*

### **Advocacy and Outreach Specialist**

*Swatha Nandhakumar*

### **Audio Description Project**

#### **Coordinator**

*Tabitha Kenlon*

### **Associate Director of Development**

*Jo Lynn Bailey-Page*

### **Development Officer**

*Kolby Garrison*

### **Manager of Membership Engagement**

*Cindy Hollis*

### **Membership Services**

#### **Administrative Assistant**

*Natalie Couch*

### **HR & Payroll Specialist**

*Sayuree Naik*

### **Thrift Store General Manager**

*Chris Sawyer*

### **ACB Media Coordinator**

*Larry Gassman*

## CONSULTANTS

### **Accounting Consultant**

*Lane Waters*

### **AD Television Listings Coordinator**

*Timothy Wynn*

### **ADP Webmaster**

*Fred Brack*

### **Director of ADP**

*Joel Snyder*