**Dots and Dashes**

**December 16, 2024**

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# **ACB Offices’ Holiday Schedules**

The Alexandria office will close at 1 p.m. Eastern time on December 24 and reopen on January 2.

The Minneapolis office will close at 1 p.m. Central time December 24th and 31st. They will be closed December 25 and January 1, and open the 26th, 27th and 30th.

We wish you a safe, healthy and happy holiday season.

# **February Forum Deadline Is This Friday**

We know everyone is getting excited for the holidays. But that doesn’t stop the deadlines for the Forum. The deadline for February 2025 is this Friday, December 20th. The theme is love and proposals. Do you have a great story about how you met your spouse? Or about how he/she/they proposed — or you proposed? We’d love to hear it! And how about how you met your true love? I know there are some amazing stories out there. Don’t leave out the wedding details. Other love stories are also welcome.

Looking ahead, here are the themes and deadlines for March through June. Please mark them on your calendars on whatever device you’re most likely to notice the reminder.

**March 2025:** theme: spring into action/Get Up and Get Moving; deadline: January 24, 2025

**April** – MCAC: How your cultural background, race, ethnicity and/or vision loss affected your education; deadline: February 21, 2025

**May** – Older Americans, AAVL; deadline: March 21, 2025

**June** – All Things Convention; deadline: April 23, 2025

# **Advocacy Update**

In the December 5th edition of the Advocacy Update podcast, Claire and Swatha speak with ACB’s Audio Description Project Coordinator, Tabitha Kenlon, in addition to Brett Oppegaard from the University of Hawaii about the Descriptathon, a three-day hackathon-like event to make National Park Service brochures and exhibits accessible for blind and low-vision visitors. Recruitment for Descriptathon 11 is currently underway, and these two, with the assistance of two ADP members, Pat Sheehan  
and Renee Arrington Johnson, talk all about it. Learn what it is, what it’s like to participate in it, why you should sign up, and how to sign up.

# **Exercise Your Creativity and Help Make National Park Brochures Accessible**

Join the 2025 Descriptathon and help make national parks more accessible! ACB, the National Park Service, and UniDescription (UniD) are recruiting volunteers on the blindness spectrum to create audio descriptions for selected national park brochures. Teams are composed of people who are sighted and people who are blind or have low vision, all of whom will collaborate to describe maps, paintings, and visual images within park brochures. All meetings are held remotely, so you might find yourself learning about a park in your state or across the continent.

The Descriptathon will take place February 25–27, 2025. Volunteers are expected to attend all three full-day sessions. Participants will likely spend ten hours of prep time in the five weeks before the kick-off on February 25 (approximately two hours a week). During this prep time, team members will learn about audio description, how to use the UniD tool to describe their brochure, and get to know their teammates. Four to six hours might be needed to finalize the brochure description after the three-day event. Volunteers should have solid computer skills and be comfortable learning new technology.

If you’d like to get in on the fun, please complete this short online form: [**D11 Registration form**](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://mandrillapp.com/track/click/31066765/forms.office.com?p=eyJzIjoiSnJTdWtEaXFpTWhoU0VHNTkwRFN4R3Q0OVBrIiwidiI6MSwicCI6IntcInVcIjozMTA2Njc2NSxcInZcIjoxLFwidXJsXCI6XCJodHRwczpcXFwvXFxcL2Zvcm1zLm9mZmljZS5jb21cXFwvcGFnZXNcXFwvcmVzcG9uc2VwYWdlLmFzcHg_aWQ9dXJXVEJoaExlMDJUUWZNdlFBcFVsTzlLa1lOWjN4bER0ZGE5eHZqd3dWTlVRMFJaVGtwYVRrNDVRMUpLUWpGYVZrdzRUVVkzTWtRelR5NHUmcm91dGU9c2hvcnR1cmxcIixcImlkXCI6XCIyNjM2ZjhjYWQ4MDI0NWM2YTg4YmExNDBhYTUyZWFmNVwiLFwidXJsX2lkc1wiOltcIjY3MGQ0MjYwNGEwMjZkNzhjMWU5MWIzMjBjMzgzZTU1OGMxYjhjOTlcIl19In0__;!!PvDODwlR4mBZyAb0!S0Rwcjj3EuV0ZgiEtvPGqCvN7k_5NTfwHhpHi_3eD3SwKry55SZaPIvl97zomI6pi0zBMztub9AoDatOlgtoWoRk48gkBUiSJg$) or email [**brett.oppegaard@hawaii.edu**](mailto:brett.oppegaard@hawaii.edu)and tell him ACB sent you!

# **CCLVI Scheigert Scholarships**

The Council of Citizens with Low Vision International (CCLVI), an affiliate of the American Council of the Blind, annually awards four scholarships in the amount of $3,000 each to full-time college students. Scholarships are awarded to freshman, undergraduate, and graduate students, all of whom must be low vision, maintain a strong GPA and be involved in school/local community activities.

Application materials must be received by **11:59 p.m. Eastern time February 15, 2025.** Scholarship monies will be awarded for the 2025-2026 academic year. To access the guidelines and application, visit [**http://cclvi.org**](http://cclvi.org) and click on the Scheigert Scholarship link.

Applications will be available to complete and submit online from **January 1, 2025 to the February 15 deadline.** Questions may be directed to 1-844-460-0625. Incomplete applications will **not** be considered.

# **ACB-Ohio 2025 Post-Secondary Scholarships**

The American Council of the Blind of Ohio offers several scholarships each academic year. The application and reference forms may be accessed at [**www.acbohio.org/scholarships**](http://www.acbohio.org/scholarships). See the included checklist at the end of the cover letter for a full list of requirements.

The scholarships are:

* $1,000 Friends of Freshman Scholarship: Presented to a blind or low vision entering freshman in any field of study.
* $3,000-$5,000 ACB-Ohio Scholarships: Awarded to one or more blind or low vision student in any field of study, or sighted student in a field of study directly benefiting the blind and low vision community. This scholarship is open to students in trade or technical schools, 2- or 4-year undergraduate degree programs, graduate degree programs, or other post-secondary study, such as for continuing education, special certification, or licensure. If the applicant does not have a visual impairment, they should clearly indicate how their course of study will benefit the blind and low vision community.

Applicants must:

* Be an Ohio resident or attend an Ohio postsecondary school.
* Be blind, low vision, or in a field of study directly benefiting the blind and low vision community.
* Have a 3.0 or higher GPA on a 4.0 scale

## **Application Process:**

Following the application deadline (March 31, 2025), the scholarship committee will reach out to you via e-mail to schedule an interview with two committee members. This interview will take place via Zoom or phone call during the second half of April on a mutually agreed upon date and time.

Finalists will be notified by May 15.

All scholarship recipients will be asked to complete a short audio recording with a scholarship committee member for use during the ACBO state convention.

## **Additional Information:**

Past scholarship recipients are eligible; however, an application must be completed each year to be considered. Additionally, all scholarship recipients will be given complementary or discounted admission to an ACBO event or an event of one of the five ACBO chapters (located in Cleveland, Medina, Stark County, Columbus, and Cincinnati).

Send completed forms to [**scholarships@acbohio.org**](mailto:scholarships@acbohio.org)with your last name and "Scholarship Application" in the subject field, or send application packet to:

ACB-Ohio Scholarships

3805 N. High Street

Suite 305

Columbus, OH 43214

Degree of financial need is not the sole determinant in the selection process. Completed applications must be postmarked no later than **March 31, 2025**, if mailed, or no later than 11:59 p.m. on that date if e-mailed.

# **Touch of Genius Prize Application Deadline Nears**

The Touch of Genius Prize was developed to inspire entrepreneurs, educators, or inventors to continue the promotion of braille and tactile literacy for blind and deafblind people worldwide. This prize can be granted for innovative and accessible computer software applications, tactile hardware, or curriculum that promotes braille and/or tactile literacy. NBP encourages all applicants to think outside the box for what can be used to help improve the lives of blind people. Even if you have applied in previous years, we encourage you to apply again! The winner of this prize will receive up to $10,000, which will help them to continue to innovate in the fields of technology and education for the blind community. The Touch of Genius Prize for Innovation is provided by the support of the Lavelle Fund for the Blind.

Applications for the Touch of Genius Prize for Innovation are due in just one month, on **January 10, 2025!** Full application details and more information can be found at [**www.touchofgeniusprize.org**](http://www.touchofgeniusprize.org/). All questions can be directed to [**geniusprize@nbp.org**](mailto:geniusprize@nbp.org).

# **ACVREP Posts Proposed OT Certification Criteria**

The Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals (ACVREP) has posted the OT certification proposed certification criteria on its website under News and Information. It is open for public comment until January 30, 2025. You will be able to download the documents from the news article, which may be found at

[**https://www.acvrep.org/newsitem?id=96**](https://www.acvrep.org/newsitem?id=96).

If you would like to comment on the criteria, send an email message to [**comments@acvrep.org**](mailto:comments@acvrep.org?subject=CVROT),and place the word CVROT in the subject line of your email.

# **Participants Needed for Workforce Engagement Survey of Adults with Vision Loss**

* Are you an adult under 65 years of age?
* Do you have a vision impairment that qualifies as legal blindness?
* Do you presently reside in the U.S?

If you answered YES to these 3 questions, we invite you to participate in a research on employment-related decisions and outcomes of Americans with vision loss.

We are an interdisciplinary team of researchers affiliated with the Envision Research Institute and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee that is investigating how to enhance the labor force participation of working-age, legally blind Americans. Over 56% working age Americans living with vision loss are out of the labor force. However, why so many of them choose not to participate in the labor force is still a conundrum. To address this knowledge gap, we are conducting a nation-wide survey of working age, legally blind adults about the deterrence, motivations, and outcomes of labor force participation. Findings of the survey will guide the development of research strategies, best practices and programs to make the labor market more attractive and inclusive of Americans with vision loss.

## **What does participation involve?**

Complete an online questionnaire (containing a series of objective-type questions) independently or with assistance. Those opting to complete independently will receive step-by-step instructions. Those opting for assistance will be interviewed by a member of the research team.

## **How much time is needed to complete the survey?**

Between 30 to 45 minutes. Actual time spent may vary depending on individual circumstances.

## **What are the risks and benefits?**

There is no major risk or direct benefit for participating in the survey. Participant feedback will contribute towards enhanced labor force participation of working age adults with vision loss. Anyone completing the survey will have the option to enter their name into a raffle drawing to win prizes.

## **I’m interested. What should I do?**

Tell us a bit about yourself and how to contact you by visiting [**https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/59PQ6CX**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/59PQ6CX)**.**

# **Casting Call**

Producers of the upcoming short film Cathedral, Florida are searching for a lead male actor who is either blind or has or has had a visual impairment. The character, Dennis, is in his 30’s-50’s.

* All ethnicities welcome
* Shooting 4-5 days in Los Angeles in May/June 2025
* Travel/housing can be provided

The synopsis of the short film is: A young boy joins his girlfriend on vacation, but finds he is more drawn to her father, who is blind.

For more information and instructions on how to apply, visit [**www.ebcastingco.com/post/dennis**](http://www.ebcastingco.com/post/dennis).

# **EEOC Sues Alto Experience, Inc. for Disability Discrimination**

WASHINGTON — Alto Experience, Inc., a ride hailing company that currently operates in Texas, Florida, and California, and previously operated in the District of Columbia and Virginia, violated federal law when it denied reasonable accommodations and employment to deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals who applied to work as personal drivers, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) alleged in a lawsuit filed today.

According to the lawsuit, Alto refused to hire qualified deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals for its personal driver position, despite the ready availability of technological accommodations, and, in some instances, despite previous experience as drivers for other ride-hailing companies. The EEOC also alleged that some qualified deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals who were denied accommodations or employment as personal drivers were steered into less desirable car washing positions. During the hiring process, Alto also failed to provide communications accommodations, such as American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, the EEOC said**.**

The EEOC filed suit (EEOC v. Alto Experience, Inc., Case No.1:24-cv-2208), in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia after first attempting to reach a voluntary, pre-litigation settlement through its conciliation process. In the lawsuit, the EEOC seeks back pay, compensatory and punitive damages for the aggrieved individuals, and equitable relief to prevent future discrimination.

To read the full press release, visit [**https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-alto-experience-inc-disability-discrimination**](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-alto-experience-inc-disability-discrimination).

# **Access Board AI Findings**

As part of the Developing Artificial Intelligence (AI) Equity, Access & Inclusion for All Series, the Access Board will present its preliminary findings on the risks and benefits of AI for people with disabilities. The presentation will take place virtually on Tuesday, January 14, 2025, from 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. (ET).

To attend, use the following:

Zoom Link: [**https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1601731944**](https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1601731944)

Meeting ID: 160 173 1944

Passcode: 524293

For more information, visit [**https://tinyurl.com/2k9d7dt4**](https://tinyurl.com/2k9d7dt4).

# **EEOC Workshops**

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is pleased to announce its first workshop series of the new year on the Americans with Disabilities Act. Join experts in the field for these exciting learning opportunities.

The topic for January 14, 2025 is the ADA and Accommodations: What Employers Need to Know. In Part I, you will learn ADA basics, common challenges, effective strategies, and how to handle complex accommodation requests. Visit [**https://tinyurl.com/23tc8zuu**](https://tinyurl.com/23tc8zuu) to view the agenda.

February 6th’s topic is Tackling Employer Defenses Under the ADA. During Part II, you will master employer defenses under the Americans with Disabilities Act, including undue hardship and direct threat analysis, by utilizing current court decisions and case studies. To view the agenda, go to [**https://tinyurl.com/4j7dwz5r**](https://tinyurl.com/4j7dwz5r).

Visit [**https://bit.ly/EEOCTraining2025**](https://links-1.govdelivery.com/CL0/https:%2F%2Fbit.ly%2FEEOCTraining2025%3Futm_content=%26utm_medium=email%26utm_name=%26utm_source=govdelivery%26utm_term=/2/01000193648c97ef-da80377d-e0c4-46b2-a2b0-96305517e03e-000000/PbVpM_3mVoQgLtDtiem1CyKVARQSrCxxyI6Xmkjv8mU=380) for more information about each workshop and to register.

# **Company Voluntarily Recalls Their Previous Bottles of Eyedrops**

Regener-Eyes LLC, the distributors of Regener-Eyes Professional Strength and Regener-Eyes LITE, recently launched their new preservative-free bottles with back flow prevention. The previous bottle design did not provide backflow prevention. After consulting with physicians and industry experts, Regener-Eyes developed and launched this improved bottle design.

"Following last week's discussion with the FDA, we are confident that our new preservative-free bottles meet the standards for back flow prevention for preservative free multi-dose bottles, and we are voluntarily recalling any remaining stock of the previous bottles," a company spokesperson stated.

If you have any of the previous bottles or any questions, contact the company at 1-877-206-0706 or via email at [**sales@regenereyes.com**](mailto:sales@regenereyes.com).

# **Advancing Global Vision Care**

Paris, France and Geneva, Switzerland (December 6, 2024) – The OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation is proud to announce its collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) as a global collaborating partner on the WHO’s SPECS 2030 initiative.

The SPECS initiative builds on the world’s first-ever global target to increase effective refractive error coverage by 40% by 2030.

This collaboration between WHO and the Foundation represents a significant step forward in addressing refractive error, preventing myopia, and improving access to vision care worldwide, particularly in low resource settings.

The collaboration will focus on knowledge sharing, technical input, and data provision to scale impactful solutions and ensure the effective implementation of United Nations’ ‘Vision for Everyone’ resolution. By leveraging their respective expertise, WHO and the Foundation aim to make sustainable vision care accessible to millions, improving health outcomes and social inclusion.

# **AT&T to Eliminate Most Traditional Landline Phone Service by 2029**

AT&T plans to eliminate its traditional landline phone service across nearly all U.S. states in its service area by 2029, according to an official announcement.

The wireless carrier has said its copper wire infrastructure is antiquated, maintaining it is costly and better service is available through fiber and wireless broadband networks.

However, consumer advocates nationwide have objected to the removal of traditional phone service. They say access to basic landlines is important for the country's most vulnerable people, including senior citizens who don't want to use cellphones, consumers who can't afford cell service and those in rural areas who may not have good access to cell or broadband internet.

Read the full article at [**https://tinyurl.com/285d7ctz**](https://tinyurl.com/285d7ctz).