**Dots and Dashes**

**October 7, 2024**

# **And the MMS Winners Are …**

As most of you know, the MMS Committee holds drawings for Amazon gift cards after each summer’s convention and we encourage people to sign up or increase their monthly donations. Everybody who has done one or the other since the end of the previous summer’s convention is eligible to win. This year, we decided to also include those of you who have been in the program for at least three years and at least five years. The drawings took place recently, and here are the winners!

For signing up between September 2023 and August 2024, William Deatherage and Bryan Dufelmeier will receive $100 gift cards.

Richard Johnson and Pamela Holloway increased their donations during last summer’s convention, and they’ll be receiving $150 cards.

Denise Colley and Geraldine Slusher have been with us consistently since 2021, so they will receive $100 gift cards. Mitch Pomerantz and Chris Prentice will receive $150 gift cards for being in the program consistently for at least five years.

Thanks to all of you who continue to support the Monthly Monetary support Program and congratulations to this year’s winners!

To learn more about ACB’s Monthly Monetary Support Program (MMS), visit ACB’s website, [www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org), or call ACB’s Minnesota office, (612) 332-3242. You just might find your name on this list next year!

# **ACB Partners with Global Perspectives**

The American Council of the Blind is collaborating with Global Perspectives, an IQVIA business, which specializes in recruiting patients for scientific studies. They are launching a new non-interventional study on Geographic Atrophy (advanced dry AMD).

The purpose of this study is to understand patients’ views and preferences related to treatments for advanced dry AMD (age-related macular degeneration), also known as geographic atrophy (GA), including some that are in development. No treatments will be administered in this study; we are only interested in opinions. In order to ensure people with advanced dry AMD can participate, a virtual moderator will complete the survey on behalf of participants. The moderator will screen share to show the survey with a large font size, which can be increased, or they can read study materials aloud.

As compensation for your time, you would receive $75 if you are eligible and complete the 40-minute online survey.

If possible, you are encouraged to provide confirmation of diagnosis (e.g., letter from your physician, proof of treatment for GA, or any other documentation confirming you have GA), for which we will provide an additional $50. You can still participate if you do not have a confirmation of diagnosis. We have a letter that you can use to collect this confirmation of diagnosis from your physician.

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with advanced dry AMD (age-related macular degeneration) and are interested in participating or would like more information about the study, please send an email to **bryan.pownall@iqvia.com**.

Please let the research team know that you have been referred by the American Council of the Blind for this study as we are collaborating on this project.

# **Sen. Markey, Rep. Eshoo Applaud FCC Vote Advancing Video Conference Accessibility Features**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 26, 2024 — Sen. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), a member of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee and author of the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA), and Rep. Anna G. Eshoo (D-Calif.), senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, today applauded the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) vote to approve rules to strengthen accessibility standards across video conferencing platforms.

“Today’s FCC vote is a critical step toward bringing our digital accessibility rules into the modern era,” said Senator Markey. “These new requirements — which mirror the proposal in the Communications, Video, and Technology Accessibility Act — will ensure platforms have essential accessibility features, such as accurate captioning tools and third-party sign language interpretation and will allow users to customize accessibility features to meet their individual needs. Thanks to today’s FCC action, people with disabilities will have better access to video conferencing services that are critical for work, education, health care, and keeping in touch with loved ones. …”

To read the full press release, visit [**https://tinyurl.com/y4aktpr4**](https://tinyurl.com/y4aktpr4).

# **WCB Newsline Now on Cartridge**

The Washington Council of the Blind’s “Newsline” has been officially accepted into the National Library Service collection and is now available as an audio magazine through the Braille Audio Reading Download service (BARD) website for subscription and immediate download, on digital cartridge for patrons of the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL), and through the national Talking Book program, for all to enjoy. If you wish to receive the magazine on cartridge, contact your cooperating network library. Our large print and email publications will continue to publish as usual. Expect our fall issue later this month.

We welcome your writing contributions. Particularly those about topics that might interest or affect blind and low vision ACB members in Washington State. Anyone who wishes may subscribe to the email version by sending a note to **Newsline-l+subscribe@WCBLists.org**.

# **NLS BARD on the Smart Speaker**

The topic for the Thursday, October 10, 2024, Many Faces of BARD program will be NLS BARD on the Smart Speaker. The program will start with a discussion of using the new My Talking Books (known to Alexa users as a “skill”) to access BARD via smart speakers and will include a demonstration. After the presentation, we will entertain questions about the presentation or anything else relating to BARD.

The program will begin at 7 p.m. Eastern time and last for one hour. NLS will record this program. The session can be joined by going to [https://loc.zoomgov.com/j/1608139852?pwd=mktSe41nRXVbqzT0WzRnZKd3DOZYPY.1](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/loc.zoomgov.com/j/1608139852?pwd=mktSe41nRXVbqzT0WzRnZKd3DOZYPY.1__;!!EDx7F7x-0XSOB8YS_BQ!aPxdl1zFlWYlpMleyqR0UnEroYL5D7bUEN40r7NBHi_BfZFdVdwKz_QU9h22JskcsW-mRq2Gjmx3Ja49Rrf3Z0wQKvLr$). If you’re joining by phone, dial (312) 626-6799 and use the following codes:

Meeting ID: 160 813 9852

Passcode: 686586

# **M-Enabling Conference – Not Too Late to Register!**

ACB is proud to be a supporting organization for the 2024 M-Enabling Summit, organized by the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies (G3ict). This year’s event will take place on October 15-17 in Washington, D.C.

The M-Enabling Summit is the leading global conference and showcase covering the technology innovations that enable people with disabilities to access digital content and services in new ways. The in-person Summit will feature a hybrid track, general and break-out sessions, interactive roundtables and workshops, panel discussions, and more.

Visit <https://m-enabling.com> to learn more. To register, visit <https://m-enabling.com/registration-pricing-2024/>.

# **Screening of ‘Feeling Through’**

On Tuesday, October 15th, National Industries for the Blind will be hosting a screening of the movie “Feeling Through” as part of its AccessTech conference. This is the first film to star a DeafBlind actor. “[Feeling Through](https://ha9nk5cab.cc.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001B-jequSzcziL5_U9wqgtqp-PGWcrzFBxM7g8q01UELsWUR4Id2RoVOf5PqFWmvRup4fXpy3wkiiNegvfXAvLFMriB3qGbMU4gXDz-Kx308FP8GE0ez7ROMSSKZ_Yveg3CXElQOyWvK0QMzPsHiLcLf-lHZmJFMoG&c=ahFbPX6gGUG-UUZq41i6qzZQI6H_TKfoz9t_baMduInTB1xGlpJA-g==&ch=KyfTQtT-xta_PqbaoNzrO-GPzipWp9GSemwM0RO-cEtuMMwkeVcx3w==)” is the story of how a late-night encounter on a New York City street led to a profound connection between a teen in need (Steven Prescod) and a DeafBlind man (Robert Tarango).

After sharing the film with audiences around the world, filmmaker Doug Roland and NIB associated nonprofit agency Helen Keller Services continued their collaboration alongside the DeafBlind community to build “Feeling Through Studio,” a learning platform where disabled presenters teach users about disability through an entertaining, video-based approach.

To register, visit <https://tinyurl.com/bdcmmshe>.

# **More Hot Tech News**

[Envision](https://ha9nk5cab.cc.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001prX61Mi8qehwByc137jCwd3GUkoL2Or8vvFFqlPMvP7rZvpr-nmBD87jailPT1a--vXF_PW32hoFAb4rBnT2fOGIkhyK5z9CZ3lvgyOpYnxvkukFq9RM2wGW6xStrf1SSV2mT7mNNUsvwGrKlZLvUF_Ms4Rm7cqQ&c=yymxgxS_LeiT7cfSalHzHB8pjpuaxQOfBMl4xdYkCX_yR-7BxNh3tQ==&ch=u9yrlUtCJiKMZHinPtz8vNSmGCh_eSCSLRo2qEzZdBoxtojeGWUR_g==) recently announced the public beta launch of [ally](https://ha9nk5cab.cc.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001prX61Mi8qehwByc137jCwd3GUkoL2Or8vvFFqlPMvP7rZvpr-nmBD87jailPT1a-Relcf6o5ITIcwB4YcNFLAXDvpCgBR97d-6ICoDm6EtYEsPARARbOiQxTVac9JjD3-9Bm0StDc67KJYKTkdikAqcQiCOdy1PvTCsV8Ov0Ylc=&c=yymxgxS_LeiT7cfSalHzHB8pjpuaxQOfBMl4xdYkCX_yR-7BxNh3tQ==&ch=u9yrlUtCJiKMZHinPtz8vNSmGCh_eSCSLRo2qEzZdBoxtojeGWUR_g==), the first personal and conversational artificial intelligence (AI) assistant designed to help everyone, everywhere.

[**Be one of the first to learn about ally at AccessTech!**](https://ha9nk5cab.cc.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001prX61Mi8qehwByc137jCwd3GUkoL2Or8vvFFqlPMvP7rZvpr-nmBDzA6fSRjTs9iNTT4ewCeQ5M0qzelzoWOA7Z8m9OGCf6UOX0pVr6xicYcftKU05ffK_-RrbVk7miFPHMEzCv4aXC3SJumqb0Q5A==&c=yymxgxS_LeiT7cfSalHzHB8pjpuaxQOfBMl4xdYkCX_yR-7BxNh3tQ==&ch=u9yrlUtCJiKMZHinPtz8vNSmGCh_eSCSLRo2qEzZdBoxtojeGWUR_g==)Envision will hold a special public demonstration of ally on Wednesday, October 16, at 10 a.m.

ally is not just another AI assistant. It’s an innovative tool designed to support people of all ages and abilities, including those who are blind, have low vision, or are elderly. Initially, ally will be available as a mobile app on both iOS and Android and as a new feature on Envision Glasses.

# **Be My Eyes and Meta Partnership**

Be My Eyes recently announced a groundbreaking partnership with Meta to provide its award-winning technology on Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses.

This partnership will allow the user to initiate Be My Eyes’ “Call a Volunteer” experience entirely by voice command. Saying “Hey Meta, Call a Volunteer on Be My Eyes” will connect users to a sighted volunteer, who speaks the user’s language, via a one-way video, two-way audio call. Through this integration, the volunteer will see through the lens of the smart glasses in order to provide a real-time description to the user through their open-ear speakers, for everyday tasks such as setting a thermostat, finding the right supermarket aisle, or preparing meals — all while keeping the user's hands free. The Be My Eyes service is completely free for the end user, and already available any time of the day or night.

Read the full press release at [**https://tinyurl.com/e4b492rz**](https://tinyurl.com/e4b492rz).

# **ANNOUNCING: Glide’s Washington, D.C. Demo Day @ St. John’s Community Service**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 18, 2024: We’re over the moon to announce our first D.C. Demo Day on October 18th, from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the St. John’s Community Service head office, right next to the Smithsonian. We are incredibly fortunate to have the support and partnership of St. John’s Community Services, a 150-year-old nonprofit dedicated to empowering individuals with disabilities and mental health challenges through personalized support, community engagement, and advocacy, promoting independence and inclusion in society. Their belief in empowering independence aligns perfectly with our mission at Glidance.

To register for the event, visit [**https://glidance.io/glidance-demo-day-dc-october-18th-2024/**](https://glidance.io/glidance-demo-day-dc-october-18th-2024/).

# **Glidance Demo on the West Coast**

Don't miss out on the free, interactive "Virtual Demo Day" hosted by Vista Center in partnership with Glidance on Monday, Oct. 21st at noon Pacific. Experience the groundbreaking Glide, the world's first self-guided AI-powered mobility aid designed specifically for the blind and low-vision community. This innovative tool aims to enhance navigation skills, boosting confidence, comfort, and safety.

Join us for this exciting opportunity to meet the Glidance team, learn the inspiring story behind Glide, and explore its features and real-world applications. Plus, you'll have the chance to participate in a live Q&A session to share your thoughts and feedback.

To register, visit [**https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\_GlKgJ6K3RDueOaxpMpjsQg#/registration**](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_GlKgJ6K3RDueOaxpMpjsQg#/registration).

# **Seeking Participants with Low Vision for a Research Study**

You can help us evaluate how different crosswalk markings affect street crossing by pedestrians with low vision. The crosswalks we are evaluating may be

marked with typical white crosswalk markings, or they may have different colors.

The UNC Highway Safety Research Center, in conjunction with Accessible Design for the Blind, is looking for volunteers who have low vision to participate in a study on the effect of crosswalk markings on the accessibility of crossing in the Washington, D.C. area in early November.

The study will take about two hours. The compensation is $75, and travel to the study area will be reimbursed. There will be day and evening appointments. We are looking for experienced travelers who don’t have full vision and who regularly travel independently outdoors, including crossing streets. This study is limited to travelers with reduced acuity, restricted fields, sensitivity to glare, or loss of contrast sensitivity but who can see crosswalks. Travelers who typically travel with a cane, use a telescope, or just use their remaining vision may qualify. Guide dog users with low vision and who own and use a cane will be asked to use their cane rather than their guide dog.

If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to find crosswalks, align to cross, and cross when it is safe. An orientation and mobility specialist will be with you while you travel all routes.

If you are interested in participating in this study, contact Mary Beth Cleveland at (301) 412-4224 or email her at **mbcleveland@fastmail.net**.

# **AER Seeks New Member on the Organizations and Schools Accreditation Commission**

The Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired is seeking a new member for its Organizations and Schools Accreditation Commission. Established by the AER Accreditation Council, the Organizations and Schools Accreditation Commission (OSAC) has chief responsibility for creating and revising program standards, establishing policies and procedures, and submitting them to the Council for approval. In addition, the OSAC approves each review panel that is selected to conduct a program review; and the Commission examines and ratifies the review report and accreditation recommendation submitted by the panel. The OSAC completes a written Accreditation Decision report and submits to the Chair of AER Accreditation Council (Council) for final consideration and vote.

Members hold three-year staggered terms. New members are nominated according to the AERAC approved policy in Section T.

For the application form, visit [**https://www.aerbvi.org/accreditation**](https://www.aerbvi.org/accreditation). Email the completed form by October 11 to **accreditationinfo@aerbvi.org**.

# **BANA to Hold 2024 Fall Meeting October 26–28 in Colorado Springs**

The Braille Authority of North America (BANA) will hold its 2024 fall meeting in Colorado Springs, CO, October 26 through 28. The National Braille Association, a BANA member organization, is hosting the meeting following its annual professional development conference, which will take place October 23 through 25. The BANA meeting will be held in the conference hotel, which is The Antlers by Wyndham, located at 4 S. Cascade Ave., Colorado Springs, CO 80903.

Items on the BANA Board’s fall agenda include a review of formal reports from BANA's technical committees, such as Nemeth, Chemistry, and Tactile Graphics, as well as its general committees and task forces, such as the BANA General Committee on UEB and the General Committee on Electronic Braille. BANA members will act on recommendations and will issue committee charges when appropriate.

# **SSI Changes Reducing Customer Burden Take Effect**

Social Security Administration policy updates that expand access to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) go into effect today. As of Sept. 30th, the agency no longer includes food in in-kind support and maintenance (ISM) calculations. The new policy removes a critical barrier to SSI eligibility that an applicant or recipient might encounter if they get informal food assistance from friends, family, and community networks. (For more information, visit <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2024/#3-2024-4>.)

The agency is also expanding a rental subsidy exception to all SSI applicants and recipients nationwide that previously applied in only seven states. This uniform nationwide policy will ensure that people paying at least a certain amount toward rent are not subject to ISM in the form of rental assistance. (Visit <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2024/#4-2024-1> for more information).

Additionally, the agency is expanding the definition of a public assistance household in two important ways. First, the agency will add Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to the types of public assistance listed in the policy. Second, the agency will no longer require that **all** household members receive public assistance to be considered a public assistance household. (Refer to <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2024/#5-2024-3> for more details.)

# **Survey to Assist in Developing Glasses for the Blind**

Alex Kolarov’s father is developing glasses for the blind, and he is trying to learn more about what would make life for the blind better. They would like you to take their survey.

The survey is anonymous. All questions except for the last 3 are required. There is also a field for email, phone and your name, if you would like to be contacted when they test their device.

Survey link: [**https://tinyurl.com/34vxjfwe**](https://tinyurl.com/34vxjfwe).