**March 2020**

So Many Things to Miss There are just so many things to miss during the corona virus pandemic: freedom, hugs & handshakes, movies, restaurants, haircuts, and of course,

unlimited access to toilet paper! More than any of these, perhaps we miss the social interaction that Americans have always taken for granted. Here at SCC, we certainly

miss getting together with you for our monthly club meetings and hope to be able to restart them soon. In the meanwhile, it seems we could all use a bit of good news, inspiration, and hope for the future. With that in mind, this newsletter is filled with stories about individuals who have done great things despite, or even because of, blindness or vision impairment. We hope you’ll be able to forget COVID-19 for a bit, sit back, relax, enjoy, and be inspired! Last month at SCC...Whoopie for IEPs the business portion of the February club meeting included a financial report, details on efforts to sell the building, and the cancellation of the proposed adaptive Easter egg hunt due to scheduling constraints. We hope to have this activity next spring. Next, club members shared practical ideas for IEP meetings while enjoying...what else? Whoopie pies! Tommy Edison, Blind Movie Critic By its nature, film is a visual medium. You would think an art form intended primarily for the eyes wouldn’t interest a blind person, but you would be wrong. Not only does Tommy Edison watch movies, he reviews them on YouTube. Even though he was [born without vision](http://www.theatlantic.com/video/archive/2012/05/how-tommy-edison-the-blind-film-critic--became-a-youtube-sensation/256821/), Edison has always loved film, and when he started posting reviews three years ago, his videos attracted thousands of viewers. Even Roger Ebert [gave Tommy two thumbs up](http://blindfilmcritic.com/about-tommy-edison). Edison has [given his take](http://www.youtube.com/user/BlindFilmCritic/videos) on everything from *The Hunger Games* to *Reservoir Dogs*, but he approaches movies differently from most film fans. “I’m not distracted by all the beautiful shots and attractive people,” he [once said](http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/i-interviewed-a-blind-film-critic). “I watch a movie for the writing and acting.” Since he only judges what he can hear, Edison doesn’t care for CGI-heavy action blockbusters. On the other hand, he’s a big fan of *Die Hard*. Even more fascinating than his reviews are the videos on [his second channel](http://www.youtube.com/user/TommyEdisonXP/videos), where he answers interesting questions from his viewers, such as how a blind person learns to smile, whether blind people can understand descriptions of color, and whether Edison would want to see if he was granted the ability. Simple yet profound, Edison’s personal vlogs give an amazing insight into the world of the blind. This section includes a comic picturing a blind man walking past a large print sign that says, “Important, please read braille sign” and an arrow pointing to a Braille strip. (Of course, the blind man has no idea the braille strip exists!) Following in the Steps of Erik Weihenmayer Weihenmeyer We’ve [already told you](https://listverse.com/2013/02/26/10-modern-explorers-who-pushed-the-limits/) about Erik Weihenmayer, the blind adventurer who scaled Mount Everest, but he isn’t the only visually challenged superhuman laughing in Mother Nature’s face. Meet [former Royal Navy sailor Alan Lock](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-somerset-16415942). Growing up, Lock dreamed of becoming a submarine officer, but during training, he lost his eyesight in six short weeks to macular degeneration. Lock views the world through “frosted glass with blind spots” dotting his vision, but he wasn’t going to let a little thing like blindness bring him down. Inspired by his disability, Lock set out to conquer the world. Between 2003 and 2012, he competed in 18 marathons, climbed Mount Elbrus, and became the first blind person to row across the Atlantic Ocean. Still not satisfied with his [list of awesome achievements](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/alan-lock/polar-vision-trekking-south-pole_b_2962935.html), Lock decided to try something even cooler—literally. With the help of two sighted friends and a guide, the 31-year-old set off from the Antarctic coast, determined to [ski to the South Pole](http://www.sightsavers.net/about_us/media_centre/press_releases/17645.html). Hauling a 60-kilogram (130 lb) sled around his waist and battling freezing winds, Lock and his companions traveled 960 kilometers (600mi) over 39 days, snacking on dehydrated foods and chunks of butter. Not only did he become the first blind person to reach the South Pole, he earned over $25,000 for charities that help the visually challenged.

**May 2020**

Spring Wrap Up Last Month At SCC Our first WebX virtual meeting was a success, thanks to the efforts of Bill and Elaine Edwards, who worked diligently to get things ready to go online. Last month’s minutes were shared, a treasurer’s report presented, and our efforts to sell the building updated. The highlight of the meeting was Abby Edward’s inspiring video presentation! Corona Virus Restrictions: Extra Burden on the Blind The highlight of the meeting was Abby Edward’s inspiring video presentation! Coronavirus Restrictions: Extra Burden on the Blind community

The [novel coronavirus](https://abcnews.go.com/health/coronavirus) outbreak has forced millions of people around the world to limit what and who they touch and stay in place for the time being. But for the blind community, in particular, these restrictions create additional obstacles. Working and studying from home, shopping and even a recreational walk outside isn’t always easy for blind persons because companies and leaders have not put immediate thought into accessibility for disabled people, said Chris Danielsen, a spokesman for the National Federation of the Blind, a non-profit advocacy group. "We are seeing a concern that blind people will be left behind in the general anxiety that everyone else faces," Danielsen, who is blind, told ABC News. "We have the same anxieties everyone else has about the coronavirus, but they can be amplified in times like this." Nearly 7.6 million Americans over 16 years old have a visual impairment, [according to the NFB](https://abcnews.go.com/Health/coronavirus-restrictions-put-extra-burden-blind-community-experts/nfb.org/resources/blindness-statistics), which used census data from 2016. The majority of them, about 4 million, are under 65, according to the data. Experts said the biggest challenge for the blind community is transportation. Many cities have cut back on their bus and train lines. Taxis and rideshare options, like Lyft and Uber, are limiting pickups, according to Danielsen. Stacy Cervenka, who is blind and the director of public policy for the American Foundation for the Blind, a non-profit that pushes for greater accessibility, said this is most problematic for blind persons who live by themselves. "Without Uber or Lyft, we’re in a bind, especially in suburban and rural communities where everything is far away," she told ABC News. Cervenka said the lack of transportation would hinder any blind person who seeks to get tested for the coronavirus, as many states have opted for drive-thru testing. Cervenka added that while it is easier for companies and schools to switch over to video learning and working, and there are apps like Zoom that have good accessibility options for visually impaired users, not every remote working option is feasible. Some schools may not have the ability to provide homework sheets and other reading materials for their blind students, she said. Classes tailored for the blind community, such as learning to walk with a cane and independent living training, have been suspended in schools across the nation. "This is not something that students can learn remotely," she said. Social distancing hasn’t had too much of an effect on the community so far, according to Cervenka. Canes, guide dogs and other vision aids are already effective with keeping space between people and avoiding any obstacles. When it comes to touching, Cervenka said latex surgical gloves protect surfaces that need touching, such as braille signs on doors and elevators, without sacrificing tactility. Shopping in a store is more complicated for blind customers. Normally, store workers would be available to assist finding and taking an item off a shelf, but those employees may be too overwhelmed with the extra crowds to help. "There may be a struggle to get any assistance there," he said. Clark Rachfal, director of advocacy and governmental affairs for the American Council for the Blind, said one of the biggest risks for the blind community during the outbreak is COVID-19 itself. The biggest causes of blindness are complications from ailments such as diabetes and cancer, and those people are at high risk for contracting the disease, according to Rachfal."Blindness also affects more elderly people, and they too are more susceptible," he told ABC News. Rachfal said he is concerned that some medical offices and health care systems aren’t equipped well to handle blind patients who may have flu-like symptoms. Some offices may not have patient portals with accessibility options, he said. Rachfal added that the outbreak would have detrimental mental health consequences for blind persons who are elderly and live alone. Some of them don’t have access to new technologies, like delivery apps, and have limited in-person contact with their friends and family, according to Rachfal. He said the best thing that people can do to help those vulnerable blind persons is to reach out and ask if they need any assistance. "People can help with a phone call or even help deliver goods to their homes," he said. "You can leave it at their doorstep. You don’t need to be in close contact with them."By: Ivan Pereira Did You Know? Do you think you know everything there is to know about blindness? Think again. Did you know, for example, that the divorce rate for people who are blind is only one-third the rate for Americans in general? Or that people who are blind are more apt to have nightmares than people with sight? Here are some surprising facts and figures about the complex world of blindness. 1.There are different degrees of blindness. In fact, only about 10-15% of people who are blind see soothing at all.  2. You might walk by someone who is visually impaired and not know it – [fewer than 2 percent of visually impaired people use a white cane to navigate](http://www.dsb.wa.gov/resources/dispellingmyths.shtml). The rest use guide dogs or nothing at all.3. Surprisingly, [80 percent of vision problems worldwide could be avoided or even cured](http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/blindness/blindness_facts/en/index3.html) with prompt medical care and regular eye examinations. In particular, a leading cause of blindness among adults over 50 is cataracts, which are treatable with surgery. Organizations like the [World Health Organization](http://www.who.int/en/) are working to eliminate causes of avoidable blindness in developing countries.  4. People who are blind are just as likely as anyone else to experience vivid dreams while sleeping. The difference is that their dreams are dominated by sounds, smells and tastes. A Danish study also suggests that people who are blind must [endure significantly more nightmares](http://sciencenordic.com/blind-people-have-four-times-more-nightmares-sighted-people) than their sighted counterparts.5. One of the greatest ballerinas of all time relied on strategically placed spotlights to find her way around the stage. [Alicia Alonso](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alicia_Alonso) lost sight in both of her eyes at the age of 19 but continued to perform in her native Cuba and all over the world into her late 70s.  6. [Guide dogs can’t tell whether a traffic light is green or red](http://www.dsb.wa.gov/resources/dispellingmyths.shtml) or if it changes color. A person who is blind or visually impaired uses audible cues like traffic noise to determine when they think it is safe to cross, and then signals their dog to move forward. If a car is coming, the dog will refuse to obey the command.7. As many as 70 percent of people who are blind in the United States experience [non-24-hour sleep-wake disorder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-24-hour_sleep%E2%80%93wake_disorder) – a condition where a person’s circadian rhythm is out of alignment with conventional sleep schedules, causing insomnia at night or the urge to sleep during the day.8. People who are blind are often better at identifying aromas than their sighted peers. [Studies have refuted the age-old myth](http://www.livescience.com/32549-do-blind-people-have-a-more-acute-sense-of-smell.html) that blindness sharpens other senses, but researchers believe that people who are blind pay more attention to how an object smells and devote more cognitive energy toward cataloguing that information.    9. People who are blind are often lucky in love – [65 percent of Americans who are blind are married or live with a partner](http://www.afb.org/info/blindness-statistics/adults/facts-and-figures/235) and only 16.5 percent have divorced.

**September 2020**

SCC Fall “Reboot”

After the changes of the past six months, most people long for a reboot...a chance to begin again at a place near normal. That is just the goal of this month’s SCC club meeting! We hope that this meeting feels much more like what our longtime club members are accustomed to. We will, of course, have to make some allowances for Covid restrictions. First, we ask that you wear a mask into the build- ing, and whenever you are chatting with others. Once you are seated at a table with your family, you are welcome to remove your mask, just as you would in a restaurant. We have rearranged the meeting room setup to provide for social distancing between tables and refreshments will be individually wrapped and delivered to your table. If you have questions about these Corona virus safety measures, please email: [tcnjames@gmail.com](mailto:tcnjames@gmail.com) The evening will begin with our customary business: introduction of guests, updates from the board, the presentation of requests, and future project details. Then, we are look- ing forward to hearing from two special speakers from Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Charlotte Reed, who has degrees in social work and art therapy and currently serves in a CABVI Creative Arts Therapy program, will share her experiences. We know that she will be especially inspiring to your children, so we hope that you will bring them along to the meeting! Vicky Lorenz, director of Early Childhood and Youth Services, will also share information about the opportunities available at CABVI. Please don’t miss out on this opportunity to refresh and reboot! Marguarite Ruth Flohre, a founding member of the Sightless Children Club, passed away Monday, June 15, 2020. She is survived by her daughter, Marcia and son, Mitchell. Mitch continues to be a faithful, valued SCC supporter. Meg was also active in her church, retired from MTL Labs as a Graphic Designer, was a passionate gardener, and will be missed by everyone that knew her. Our sincere condolences go out to Mitch and the rest of his family. Margarite Flohre, or Meg, as most members knew her, was a pivotal founding member of the Sight- less Children Club. She served on the Board of Directors for many years, and we are indebted to her for her many years of faithful service. Meg was there when a group of concerned parents grew into the eleven-member Sight- less Children Club in 1952. Over the years, she helped with countless events and fundraising activities. The goal: the education and success of blind and visually impaired children. Founding members like Meg made class- room inclusion possible, socialization a reality, and success achievable. We are today, ever mindful and grateful, for the tireless devotion of Meg and the other ten founding members of the Sightless Children Club. Pictures of Early SCC events...Clowns and Kazoos and an annual Christmas talent contest. Be sure to spot Mitch in the band! Tell Me Something Good...Abby Edwards is an amazing young woman. Blindness and other health challenges seem to make her all the more determined to succeed. She graduated from high school with her beloved guide dog Kathy in 2016, then went on to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Wright State University. Next challenge: graduate school. Abby moved to Boston for two years to pursue a graduate degree in social work and finished in May. The Covid-19 pandemic may have prevented her from walking across the stage with Kathy again, but it didn’t stop her from pursuing independence. After many virtual interviews, Abby landed a job as a Donor Referral Coordinator for Community Tissue Services. Early this month, she and Kathy moved into their own Dayton apartment. Keep following your dreams, Abby….you amaze us all!

**October 2020**

October is white cane awareness month, so that will be the theme of this month’s SCC meeting. After a brief business meeting, we’ll play Jeopardy– The Mobility Edition, to learn more about orientation and mobility issues. There are sure to be a few laughs, wo we hope you’ll join us! (Hint: you’ll want to read this entire newsletter carefully ) We ask that you wear a mask into the building and whenever you are chatting with others. Once you are seated at a table with your family, you are welcome to remove your mask and enjoy the fun. We have arranged the meeting room to provide for social distancing and refreshments will be individually wrapped and delivered to your table. What is White Cane Day? The President of the United States annually recognizes White Cane Day by issuing the Blind Americans Equality Day Proclamation on October 15th to acknowledge the abilities of people who are blind and to promote equal opportunities for blind and visually impaired Americans. The mission of White Cane Day is to educate the world about blindness and how the blind and visually impaired can live and work independently while giving back to their communities, to celebrate the abilities and successes achieved by blind people in a sighted world, and to honor the many contributions being made by the blind community. Cane Tip Tips A wide variety of cane tips provide smoother operation and more durability. Each tip has its pros and cons.· Pencil tip. Pros: Good feedback and lightness make it a good choice for people who have problems moving the wrist for long periods of time. Cons: The long, thin tip has a tendency to get stuck in cracks in the sidewalk. · Roller tip. Pros: Rolls over cracks in the sidewalk, making for a smoother walk. Cons: Greater weight can add to wrist fatigue; doesn’t provide as much feedback to the traveler about small changes in the terrain.· Marshmallow tip. Pros: The thick tip won’t get stuck in cracks easily. Cons: The tip is heavy and can cause wrist fatigue over time. · Metal glide. Pros: Very light; glides easily over cracks. The Benefits of Orientation and Mobility: Movement is important to everyone. *Orientation* asks the questions: “Where am I?” “Where am I going?” and “How do I get there?”*Mobility* involves getting to your destination safely and efficiently. Orientation and mobility (O&M) begins with understanding where your body is in the environment It also includes knowing about relationships between different objects in the environment. O&M is a related service and may be provided by public schools for all students with visual impairments from birth through age 21 years, regardless of additional disabilities. Orientation and mobility is a lifelong learning Process that is important because: Movement teaches the brain. O&M teaches movement with a purpose. Purposeful movement may not occur naturally for children with a visual impairment, so an early O&M evaluation is critical to learning, socialization and independence. Safety creates confidence and a sense of well-being skills enable children to safely explore and interact with the world, including the home, school, and community. When children, including those with low vision or multiple disabilities, understand their environments, they feel safe. Experience brings context to life. O&M instruction provides real experiences that are essential to all children and adults. The skills learned reduce isolation by giving individuals a “common ground” for interacting with family, friends, and employers. CABVI Speakers Share Insights Last month’s “Fall Reboot” SCC meeting included two guest speakers from Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI). Our goal in providing guest speakers like these two wonderful ladies is twofold: information and inspiration. First, Charlotte Reed inspired listeners by sharing her many adventures earning degrees in Social Work and Art Therapy, while running a household and raising children. Her positive outlook and obvious determination to succeed was uplifting, while her humor kept everyone listening. She left her audience encouraged and ready to grab a paintbrush! Next, Vicky Lorenz, manager of the Early Childhood and Youth Services at CABVI, shared her passion for working with children who have visual impairments over the past15 years. She currently oversees CABVI’s Early Intervention, School Support and Advocacy, Pre-Employment Transition, and Music Therapy programs, so she was able to share the mission of CABVI and the many opportunities available. She also provided many practical insights about self-advocacy and helping children get the services and equipment they need to succeed. We look forward to coordinating our efforts with CABVI to serve blind and visually impaired children in the days ahead. Sarah Grace Born July 14, 2020, To Meghan and Brian Brophy and welcomed by big brother Johnathan  Congratulations from all of us at SCC!

**November 2020**

Despite the challenges of 2020, we all have much to be thankful for, so the theme of this month’s SCC club meeting is “Thankful for SCC”. We hope you will join us in sharing our gratefulness for all that SCC has done for the blind and vision impaired over the past 60 years! One young Lady’s Perspective: “8 Reasons I’m Grateful for my Vision Impairment” Over the years I’ve realized that having a vision impairment has had such a positive impact on my life, more than I could have imagined. It may seem like an uphill battle at times, but it also comes with many gifts that are often overlooked. My vision impairment has helped shape me into the person I am, it isn’t the only thing that defines me, but it is a huge aspect of my life, one that plays an important part. Having a disability isn’t all plain sailing, disabled people regularly face challenges, have to jump through hurdles, break down barriers and we constantly have to prove our worth, but despite all of that, there are many positives of having a disability. My vision impairment is something that I live with every single day, so I’ve learned to [accept](https://lifeofablindgirl.com/2019/05/08/how-i-learned-to-accept-my-disability/) and love it. There are times where I get frustrated, but that is more by society, inaccessibility, and people’s attitudes rather than my lack of vision. I’ve been thinking a lot about my vision impairment, what life may have been like if I was fully sighted. With that in mind, I thought I’d share some reasons why I’m grateful for my vision impairment, in the hope that it might help other people view their sight loss in a positive light. Being part of the disabled community, the online disabled community is honestly the best, I couldn’t imagine my life without being a part of it. There are some incredible disabled people who are raising awareness, striving for change, breaking down barriers and tackling public attitudes. Disabled people are constantly defying the odds and expectations, it is a real motivation to be part of a community of people that don’t let anything stand in their way. The disabled community has helped me learn to love and accept my disability, it has also given me the encouragement to share my experiences of living with a vision impairment in order to help others and to strive for change. The fantastic opportunities it has given me My vision impairment has enriched my life in so many ways and I’m truly thankful for that. I’ve had some fantastic opportunities that I wouldn’t have had otherwise, such as starting my blog, getting involved in campaigns, working with charities and organizations, teaching braille and assistive technology, and being recognized for my work within the sight loss community. If I was fully sighted, then I wouldn’t have had these opportunities and my life would have been very different. The chance to help others I’m really passionate about helping others. I’ve volunteered within the charity sector since I was a teenager – I’ve volunteered with the [RNIB](https://www.rnib.org.uk/) for many years, as well as local sight loss charities. One of the reasons I started my blog was to help other disabled people. Blogging wasn’t a thing when I was growing up, so I didn’t really have anyone with sight loss to turn to for advice or reassurance, not until I met my blind and vision impaired friends anyway. People have told me that my posts have helped them in some way, whether it is gaining a better understanding of vision impairment or helping a person that’s on their own sight loss journey. It is such a rewarding feeling to know that I’ve helped someone in some way. I know first-hand what living with a vision impairment is like, from the good and the bad, to realizing that my disability isn’t an [obstacle for success.](https://lifeofablindgirl.com/2019/03/17/lets-talk-about-success-and-disability/) All of that drives me to help others. It allows me to show others that living with a vision impairment doesn’t have to be negative, as well as reassure people that they’re not alone, and that you can live the life you want to, despite having sight loss. The life lessons it has taught me There are many things that my vision impairment has [taught me,](https://lifeofablindgirl.com/2018/07/04/25-things-my-visual-impairment-has-taught-me/) some of which I may not have learned if I was sighted. My disability has given me a unique perspective and really made me realize what’s important in life, it has given me a sort of wisdom in a way and I’m very thankful for that. The skills it has given me I feel like this is something that I find myself repeating time and time again, but I’ve gained some rather specialist skills because of my vision impairment, and I think that’s wonderful. If I didn’t have a vision impairment then I wouldn’t know how to use a long cane, wouldn’t have had a reason to learn braille and wouldn’t use a range of assistive technology. I used to think that these skills made me stand out, but it definitely is nothing to be ashamed of as they set me apart from everyone else. Most importantly, they are something to embrace and be proud of. Being able to see the world from a different perspective We live in a society that is dominated by the visual aspects. I don’t judge things on what they look like, I use my other senses. I know what it is like to face challenges, to constantly have to break down barriers and know how frustrating it can be when things aren’t accessible, but all of these allow me to see the world from a different perspective and appreciate the little things. The chance to educate others I try to educate others on what it’s like to live with sight loss, and I’m really passionate about raising awareness of vision impairment and disability. Whether it is writing posts for my blog, writing for other websites and publications, getting involved in campaigns or speaking to people in person, there are many ways that I can educate people on disability and vision impairment. Educating others helps me to tackle misconceptions and change public attitudes and I think that’s key. It has made me a stronger person Living with a vision impairment or any other disability can be hard at times, but the fact that things may be tough doesn’t mean that I’m going to give up, in fact, I do the exact opposite and so does every other disabled person that I know. Overcoming the challenges and hurdles makes me stronger, it makes me more determined and makes me love my vision impairment even more, and I’m very grateful for that. I have many reasons to be grateful for my vision impairment and I think that is a good thing. I’m happy, I’m able to achieve the things I want to and I can live a fantastic and independent life, that gives me even more reasons to be grateful for my disability. There is no cure for my vision impairment and I’m ok with that. I don’t wake up every day wishing I was sighted or wishing that things were different; I don’t hold on to the hope that something could be done. I focus on the positives rather than the negatives and what my disability brings to my life. I have a lot of reasons to be grateful for my vision impairment. In some way, whether it is gaining a better understanding of vision impairment or helping a person that’s on their own sight loss journey. It is such a rewarding feeling to know that I’ve helped someone in some way. I know first-hand what living with a vision impairment is like, from the good and the bad, to realizing that my disability isn’t an [obstacle for success.](https://lifeofablindgirl.com/2019/03/17/lets-talk-about-success-and-disability/) All of that drives me to help others. It allows me to show others that living with a vision impairment doesn’t have to be negative, as well as reassure people that they’re not alone, and that you can live the life you want to, despite having sight loss. The life lessons it has taught me There are many things that my vision impairment has [taught me,](https://lifeofablindgirl.com/2018/07/04/25-things-my-visual-impairment-has-taught-me/) some of which I may not have learned if I was sighted. My disability has given me a unique perspective and really made me realize what’s important in life, it has given me a sort of wisdom in a way and I’m very thankful for that. The skills it has given me I feel like this is something that I find myself repeating time and time again, but I’ve gained some rather specialist skills because of my vision impairment, and I think that’s wonderful. If I didn’t have a vision impairment then I wouldn’t know how to use a long cane, wouldn’t have had a reason to learn braille and wouldn’t use a range of assistive technology. I used to think that these skills made me stand out, but it definitely is nothing to be ashamed of as they set me apart from everyone else. 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Educating others helps me to tackle misconceptions and change public attitudes and I think that’s key. It has made me a stronger person Living with a vision impairment or any other disability can be hard at times, but the fact that things may be tough doesn’t mean that I’m going to give up, in fact, I do the exact opposite and so does every other disabled person that I know. Overcoming the challenges and hurdles makes me stronger, it makes me more determined and makes me love my vision impairment even more, and I’m very grateful for that. I have many reasons to be grateful for my vision impairment and I think that is a good thing. I’m happy, I’m able to achieve the things I want to and I can live a fantastic and independent life, that gives me even more reasons to be grateful for my disability. There is no cure for my vision impairment and I’m ok with that. I don’t wake up every day wishing I was sighted or wishing that things were different; I don’t hold on to the hope that something could be done. I focus on the positives rather than the negatives and what my disability brings to my life. I have a lot of reasons to be grateful for my vision impairment. Holly is a 25-year-old blogger, who lives in York, England. Her blindness is the result of Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP), with only light and dark perception, but it certainly does not stop her from having a full and productive life. She is an Assistive Technology teacher, writer, and a blogger, and inspirational speaker. Things to be Grateful For (a poem) There are so many things to be thankful for; the gift of being alive, blessings of a new day to hope and dream, the gift of families, the gift of children, the gift of friends, gift of people who make you laugh and smiles, the gift of strangers who show you kindness, the gift of nature, gift of educators, gift of preachers and many more. Lailah Gifty Akita 8-Year-old Sees Stars for the First Time After His Blindness is Treated With Gene Therapy Wishing on a star is one of the most magical rites of childhood: “Star light, star bright, The first star I see tonight—I wish I may, I wish I might, Have the wish I wish tonight. “But for one little Canadian boy named Sam, that simple activity was beyond his reach. That’s because 8-year-old Sam couldn’t see the stars. Sam suffers from the rare disorder retinitis pigmentosa, a form of progressive blindness caused by genetic retinal degeneration that results from mutations in the RPE65 gene. “You lose perception of light,” Dr. Elise Heon, of Sick Kids Hospital, explained to [CTV News](https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/i-never-saw-stars-before-gene-therapy-brings-back-8-year-old-canadian-boy-s-sight-1.5145830). “You end up in darkness and [it’s] slowly progressive, it’s relentless, your visual field shrinks and shrinks and shrinks and shrinks.” Sam’s sight was extremely limited, especially at night. Images most people take for granted—the stars, an airplane streaking across the sky, or even our own shoes—were beyond the scope of his vision. Until recently, there was no effective treatment for his condition. Now, however, thanks to a new form of gene therapy, many patients, including Sam, are seeing huge improvements in their eyesight. The science behind the protocol is impressive. After being modified with a healthy copy of the gene, an inactivated virus is injected directly into the retina. (Each eye is injected only once.) The healthy gene then goes to work, enabling cells to produce a protein that converts light into electrical signals, which in turn, facilitates improved vision and prevents further progression of the disease. The targeted gene therapy protocol, developed in the U.S., was recently green lit for use in Canada, but with Sam’s sight failing, he and his mom, Sarah Banon, traveled to America last year to get him treatment. Within a week’s time, Banon began to notice progress and says Sam’s condition has continued to improve over the course of the year since he underwent the procedure. She reports her son has gained incredible confidence. He dresses without help. He’s able to see, even when it’s dark, and he no longer requires lights on when it’s cloudy outside. “Now he is able to function as a normal child,” she told CTV. “This is a story of hope… A child told ‘it is what it is,’ and now, when he looks up at night, he can see stars.” And when Sam wishes on those stars, he’ll know in his heart that sometimes, wishes really can come true. By Judy Cole October, 2020

**April 2021**

If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant: if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome.” These words, spoken by Anne Bradstreet long ago seem so appropriate this year. After the “long winter of COVID”, spring...and the new beginnings it offers, seems especially sweet. Spring is the time to start new projects, make new plans, learn new things, make new friends, and have new adventures! Spring is also the time for IEP meetings, so we will have special speakers at this month’s meeting to help parents prepare for these crucial conferences. Please take a moment to consider friends who have vision impaired children who would like to learn more about the IEP process and invite them to this month’s meeting. Here at SCC, the pending sale of the building on Helke Rd. provides SCC the chance to begin afresh in its mission to support blind and visually impaired children and their families in the Miami Valley. Don’t miss this month’s meeting and the opportunity to help SCC step into a bright new springtime of service and support. Last month at SCC: The theme of last month’s SCC meeting was, “We love technology”. We enjoyed a video presentation about OrCam MyEye, a voice activated device that attaches to eyeglasses and can read text from a book, smartphone screen or any other surface, recognize faces, help the visually impaired shop on their own, work more efficiently, and live a more independent life. Then, our own Abby Edwards demonstrated Aira, a “visual interpreter for the blind,” that connects its users to a network of live certified agents who assist the user remotely in real-time. The result is an augmented reality experience in which users can access helpful information in a friendly, efficient manner to improve their mobility and independence. Thanks, Abby! Blind Teens adapt to Zoom Meetings: When nearly everything went virtual and the term "lockdown" was newly abuzz last spring, Stephanie Hurd and Ryan Menter began asking how they would modify their teen programming for Future in Sight, a nonprofit that provides education, rehabilitation and social services to those who are blind or visually impaired. Hurd, whose vision loss progresses over time due to a rare degenerative eye condition, began working at [Future in Sight](https://futureinsight.org/) as a coordinator of volunteer services. She went on to provide one-on-one trainings to teach people how to navigate technology while blind or visually impaired. She started informally organizing activities for adults, then teens, which eventually turned into consistent programming. She's now an assistive technology and activities specialist for the group. Before the pandemic, Hurd would host one or two in-person activities per month in various locations across New Hampshire for teens. A wide array of activities were available, including pottery, fencing, baseball, horseback riding, hiking, rock climbing and ice skating. For blind and visually impaired youths, these programs hosted by Hurd were "something to look forward to," a chance to meet and befriend other teens who share similar experiences, said Menter, a 16-year-old from Lebanon, Maine, who serves as a volunteer co-coordinator for Future in Sight. "We used to look forward to these events, and we would all be texting back and forth a couple days before, 'Don't forget, I'm so excited!'" Covid restrictions meant that the group would have to “go virtual”. The virtual activities, although not ideal, brought new opportunity for expansion to the organization, which plans to continue a hybrid of virtual and in-person programming after the pandemic, Hurd said. The programming is now more reachable for people involved coming from communities throughout New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts and even New York, Hurd said. “It takes down those barriers of logistics, trying to get everybody together," she added. "Not everybody gets the opportunity to get to a location." Up next, Hurd is looking forward to a "Cupcake Wars"-style bakeoff — when they can reunite in-person again, hopefully soon. The Blind Explorer Who Trekked to the South Pole Meet [former Royal Navy sailor Alan Lock](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-somerset-16415942). Growing up, Lock dreamed of becoming a submarine officer, but during training, he lost his eyesight in six short weeks to macular degeneration. Lock views the world through “frosted glass with blind spots” dotting his vision, but he wasn’t going to let a little thing like blindness bring him down. Inspired by his disability, Lock set out to conquer the world. Between 2003 and 2012, he competed in 18 marathons, climbed Mount Elbrus, and became the first blind person to row across the Atlantic Ocean. Still not satisfied with his [list of awesome achievements](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/alan-lock/polar-vision-trekking-south-pole_b_2962935.html), Lock decided to try something even cooler—literally. With the help of two sighted friends and a guide, the 31-year-old set off from the Antarctic coast, determined to [ski to the South Pole](http://www.sightsavers.net/about_us/media_centre/press_releases/17645.html). Hauling a 60-kilogram (130 lb) sled around his waist and battling freezing winds, Lock and his companions traveled 960 kilometers (600 mi) over 39 days, snacking on dehydrated foods and chunks of butter. Not only did he become the first blind person to reach the South Pole, he earned over $25,000 for charities that help the visually challenged.

**May 2021**

It’s time to “wrap up” the SCC year, so we hope you will join us at this month’s meeting to celebrate the things we’ve accomplished and to begin looking forward to a fresh start in September.

In so many ways, it is time to leave the past behind us, while learning from the challenges it has brought. We all long to leave the COVID era behind, knowing that in some ways it has changed us forever. Those of you who have been part of SCC for a long while are also probably looking forward to leaving some difficult days behind, so that we can focus on our mission of serving blind and visually impaired children in the Miami Valley. Please, join us next Monday to celebrate and focus on a bright new future for SCC! As we look back on the past year, one of the most exciting SCC developments is the finalization of sale of the building we no longer need on Helke Rd. Returning the proceeds to the SCC investment account means that we can serve more children and young adults, while building for future generations. A huge debt of gratitude goes out to our president, Elaine Edwards, who has handled dozens of calls and mountains of paperwork over the past two years, as well as to the other board members and trustees who invested many hours of sweat equity into this project. Well done, team! Camps for kids with special needs: Ah, summer camp. The mosquitoes, the swim races, the friendships, the bug juice, the postcards home. What child wouldn't benefit from the fun and structured freedom camps provide? Kids with special needs are no exception. But the idea can seem challenging to parents and kids alike -how can you be sure that your child will get the attention he or she needs? Will your child be able to participate fully? The good news is that there are many camp choices for kids with special needs. From highly specialized camps to regular camps that accommodate kids with special needs, options abound. Different Types of Camps When it comes to camps, kids with special needs have as many choices as other kids. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires all camps to make reasonable accommodations so that kids with special needs can attend. So, camps that previously couldn't host kids with special needs might now be on your list of possibilities. Inclusionary (or mainstream) camps do just what their name implies: they include kids with special needs in their groups of children with regular needs. These camps may have started out serving only a general population of kids, but they've gradually changed as the needs of the families they serve have changed. Some camps are designed just for kids with special needs. There are nonprofit and for-profit camps, religious camps, camps run by national organizations, private camps, day camps, camps that run weekend sessions, and sleepover camps that accept kids for the entire summer. Benefits of Camp The benefits of camp for kids with special needs are often the same as for any child: increased confidence & independence, activity and exercise, the opportunity to interact with other kids, develop friendships, and build relationships, positive role modeling by adults, and a chance for parents to have a much- needed break Independence is an important camp benefit. For example, an overnight mainstream camp can give special-needs kids the chance to be without parents, doctors, or physical therapists for a week. They'll do more things for themselves and learn how to ask friends to help, which can boost problem-solving and communication skills. Also, camp provides the physical benefits of increased activity. Many kids with disabilities or chronic illnesses are sedentary and don't get to participate in the sports or recreational activities that their peers do. They therefore miss out on the social and health benefits that exercise brings. Starting Your Camp Search To find a camp, make lists of the basics you're looking for: a list of goals, a list of caretaking priorities, and a list of other considerations (such as cost) then consider which type of camp might best suit your child:·inclusionary (or mainstream) camps for kids with a specific special need camps for kids with many different kinds of special needs Consider whether your child has ever been away from home, for the weekend or even longer, and what experiences might help prepare him or her for camp. This will help you to decide not only the type of camp, but whether your child is ready for a day camp or a sleepover (residential) camp. Involving kids in the camp search will help to ensure that they get the most out of the camp selected. So, ask your child: ·What do you want to get out of summer camp? Would you be more comfortable going to a camp with kids who do or don't have special needs? If it turns out that the idea of camp is a bit overwhelming for both you and your child, you might want to try starting small, like weekend sessions at a special-needs camp. Doing Your Research Whatever type of camp you're leaning toward, it's important to do your research. Many places offer information —the American Camping Association (ACA), for example, has an online listing of special-needs camps broken down by the types of camps, cost, length of stay, state/region, and campers' ages. The site is also loaded with general and age-appropriate advice for parents You also can call local chapters of major disability organizations about camps in your area. Many organizations publish lists of camps and can connect you with camp directors and former campers. Of course, part of your research will involve figuring out what you can afford. The cost of camps varies widely, but you can help fund your child's camp experience by applying for scholarships. You can contact charitable organizations and fraternal organizations (such as the Lions, Kiwanis, and Rotary Clubs, all of which sponsor special-needs camps). And depending on your child's specific special need, he or she may be eligible for financial aid from your state Probably the only way to get a true feel for the camp is for you and your child to visit it together. This is especially important if your child is going to a regular (inclusionary or mainstream) camp where they haven't hosted many children with special needs before. This gives you a chance to point out changes they might need to make and see how the camp's staff responds to your requests. If you can't visit a camp, interview the director and some staff members to get a feel for the place. Ask them to describe the physical layout and the kinds of activities your child will do. Also ask to speak with other families whose kids have attended to see what their experiences were like. In fact, word of mouth is one of the best ways to find out what you need to know about each camp. As you're trying to figure out which camp is best, just remember that whatever the special need, there's likely a camp out there to suit your child. With some research and understanding between you, your child, and the camp director, your camper-to-be can have an unforgettable summer. For more info: <https://www.sst10.org/docs/district/parents%20&%20families/cmpdir21.pdf?id=2562>Calling All High School Students! This summer, we want to give you some tools to grow your spatial thinking skills while expanding your knowledge of STEM—and connect you with a group of other blind youth your age. Did you know that high spatial thinking skills are correlated with success in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) in school and careers? Spatial thinking skills are also critical to being a successful traveler. The stronger your spatial thinking skills are, the easier it is to build a mental map and perform all sorts of other tasks that are important to get you where you want to go in the environment or in life! From July 5 through July 30, the NFB EQ Program is going virtual. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 3:00-6:00 p.m. eastern time, we’ll be facilitating classes that focus on building spatial thinking skills. Activities will include origami, creative and technical drawing, and building structures out of a variety of materials! We will send you everything you need to engage in the classes and, by the end of NFB EQ, you’ll have more physical tools in your toolbox (and more thinking tools in your brain) that you can apply now and in the future. Learn more and apply today at [nfb.org/eq](https://nfb.org/civicrm/mailing/url?u=20819&qid=5205865). Congratulations class of 2021 Aleea Chaffin is graduating from high school in June! Her family invites you to join them as they celebrate her success on: Saturday, May 16, 2021 from 2-5 pm at Crossview Christian Church 4237 East Social Row Rd., Waynesville, Ohio Nathan James will receive a Bachelor’s degree in Healthcare Informatics on Saturday, May 14th In Lynchburg, Virginia

**Summer 2021**

Summer Highlights:The next SCC club meeting will be Sept. 20, 2021. Please save the date! · Remember to share amazon smile with your friends and  family Inside this Issue:\* Blindness and Fear   Didn’t Stop Her Pg. 2Fire Safety for the Vision Impaired   Pg. 3 Congratulations Zech!   Pg. 4 Ahhh Summer... Time for flip flops, ice cream, and long– awaited vacations! While club members are enjoying a break from monthly meetings, the SCC Board has already begun work on next year’s SCC projects. The board’s first priority was to locate a site for future club meetings.  After looking into several possibilities, we are pleased to announce that meetings will now be held at the HER Realtors Training Facility located at 7625 Paragon Rd., Centerville, OH. HER Realtors have generously offered this lovely facility for our monthly meetings at no charge. The facility includes a large meeting room complete with a Smart TV, Wi-Fi access, a spacious kitchen, and other amenities.  We certainly appreciate HER’s *generous* support! Blindness and fear didn’t stop this woman from becoming a star swimmer. Vivian Stancil has taken the pools and people of the National Senior Games by storm. Vivian Stancil was 50 years old, blind, 320 pounds and afraid of the water. That’s when she did something that might sound shocking to those who don’t know her but makes perfect sense to those who do: She decided to take up swimming. Stancil is a person with the type of infectious laugh that makes you smile for hours after talking with her, even if you’re not exactly sure why. Like her laughter, her optimism is contagious. It was that optimism that caused Stancil to view a doctor’s warning about her health not as a threat, but as a challenge to commit to a brand-new lifestyle. If you don’t make a change, he warned 50-year-old Stencil, you won’t make it to 60. That was exactly the “game on” moment she needed to begin turning around her health. She talked with her friends about possibilities to get more physically active. Running was not a viable option; she was too heavy. Any type of team sport Swimming, however, seemed like it had potential. She just needed to get over her fear. "I would stand on the deck with tears in my eyes when [my instructor] said, ‘jump, Vivian!’ And I said, ‘I can't,’” Stancil recalled. “He said, ‘Don't make me have to come up there and get you. She made it through the first session, then another, and then another. Soon, Stancil was a regular at the pool and eventually lost more than 100 pounds. Her coach suggested that it was time for her to take her swimming to the next level, and she did: She signed up for the [National Senior Games](https://sr.studiostack.com/c/link?l=475371&s=475369&ref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.usatoday.com%2Fstory%2Fsponsor-story%2Fhumana%2F2021%2F06%2F03%2Fblindness-and-fear-didnt-stop-woman-becoming-star-swimmer%2F7505208002%2F&w=172267&p=476489&tz=0), presented by Humana. “I won my first medal, and then I started going to competitions in Irvine, San Diego and Pasadena, and all over the place,” she said. Collecting medals felt amazing, but what really kept Stancil coming back was the camaraderie and support that she encountered at each of the Games. “[Competing in the Games is] like a prescription for me. It’s medicine,” she said. “I don't come in first place, but people will be hurrah-Ing me on: ‘Come on Vivian! Come on!’ And they even will come up and hug me and kiss me and everything. “In 2016, Stancil was recognized as a “Humana Game Changer” because of her fierceness, dedication; and ability to serve as an inspiration for all seniors. As a Humana ambassador, Stancil is a well-known figure at the Games, whether it’s among Humana staff or fellow competitors that have become her close friends. While Stancil makes what she does look easy, swimming while blind takes an enormous amount of preparation. She swims at least three times a week, often four. She arrives at competition venues four days ahead of time so that she can get a feel for the pool and the lane lines. Even when she’s well prepared, it can be hard. She occasionally runs into hiccups, including one memorable moment in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, when she was trying to get through a door but ended up falling through a window. But for every precarious window, there are even more doors of opportunity when you walk (or swim) through life with a positive mindset. Despite the challenges, Stancil insists that she doesn’t entertain the idea of giving up and never will. Swimming, she said, is her destiny. So is helping people. Stancil runs a prayer ministry at her church, where she says she is blessed with the opportunity to touch people’s lives. She also runs a charity called the [Vivian Stancil Olympian Foundation](https://sr.studiostack.com/c/link?l=476387&s=475369&ref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.usatoday.com%2Fstory%2Fsponsor-story%2Fhumana%2F2021%2F06%2F03%2Fblindness-and-fear-didnt-stop-woman-becoming-star-swimmer%2F7505208002%2F&w=172267&p=476489&tz=0), which offers swimming lessons free of charge to low-income children who wouldn’t otherwise have an opportunity to learn. Helping others is Stancil’s way of giving back to the world. She didn’t get to where she is today by herself and is eager to share the credit with the people in her life who encouraged her Fire Safety for the Vision Impaired Summertime often means an increased risk of accidental fires, so it is a good time to reevaluate your fire safety measures. Prevention The first essential aspect of fire safety is prevention. FEMA and the U.S. Fire Administration offer tips for fire prevention for the visually impaired:  · Don’t wear loose-fitting clothing around an open flame.· Don’t leave hot pans unattended.· Always set a timer when cooking food in the oven.· Don’t overload electrical outlets.· Never use the oven to heat your home.· Properly maintain chimneys and space heaters.· Make sure pot handles are facing in (away from the front of the stove) so that they can’t be knocked off or pulled down.· Keep cooking surfaces clean and free of grease buildup. Preparedness Many of the techniques people use to prepare for a fire emergency work for the visually impaired as well. For example, the visually impaired should have an escape plan in place and should practice the route, being sure to stay low to the ground. However, because of their unique challenges, there are some additional steps that should be taken. For example, if a visually impaired person has a service animal, they should be sure to practice their escape plan with the animal. Also, when possible, the visually impaired should live on a ground floor and near an exit. · Plan and carry out regular fire drills.  Practice at least two exit routes from your home in order to leave as quickly as possible if you smell Smoke. · Have essential items ready to go. Consider keeping a jacket, slip on shoes and a robe next to the door, with your mobility cane and keys or keycard.· Know how to navigate stairs safely; practice walking up and down unfamiliar stairways with and without your cane, to make the navigation easier.· Enlist an escape buddy to help you get out of the building.· Report to building staff, once you are safely out of the building, so they can let you know when it is safe to return.· Plan for a safe location you can go to while the incident is dealt with.· Remember that smoke, fire, and carbon monoxide detectors are a must. It’s also important for the visually impaired to know that special smoke alarms exist for their needs. Normal high decibel alarms can overload a visually impaired person’s senses, causing them to become disoriented during a fire. There are smoke alarms available that pause between alarm cycles so the visually impaired can hear instructions or listen for orders from a firefighter. · During a fire, the visually impaired should follow their escape plan, crawling to stay low and checking doors with the back of their hand for heat before opening them (If a door is hot, use your second exit). Once the visually impaired person is out, they should stay out and call 911 if no one has done so.· Smoke alarms with a strobe light outside the home to catch the attention of neighbors, and emergency call systems for summoning help, are also available. Children for visually impaired children, preparation and practice are essential. The most important lesson parents can teach children is to “get low and go.” Practicing “get low and go” will teach them the importance of getting low to the ground as quickly as possible and to stay low as they make their way to an exit. SafeKidsUSA offers a four-step plan to help parents of visually impaired children prepare for a fire:· Step One: Create an escape plan with at least 2 ways out of each room.· Step Two: Establish a meeting place outside the house.· Step Three: Call 911 once you’re out of the house.· Step Four: Practice the plan. Parents should also be sure to do their part by regularly checking smoke alarms. It’s a good idea to familiarize children with the sounds smoke alarms make. Be sure to test them at night to make sure the child will wake up to the sound of the smoke alarm. Tell Me Something GOOD! Ohio Technical College PowerSports Graduating Class of 2021 Congratulations *Valedictorian* Zechariah Van Buren