



“THE BLIND SPOT”

Oklahoma Council of the Blind

Affiliate of the American Council of the Blind

P.O. Box 1476, Oklahoma City, OK 73101

1-877-578-6212

Website: www.okcb.org

2025 Spring Edition

MISSION STATEMENT

To promote equal opportunities for blind Oklahomans to participate fully in society and achieve a better quality of life.

Debbie Sanders, Editor

Contributors: Debbie Sanders, Pam Holloway, Vicki Golightly, Frances Poindexter, Darla Cook, Joseph Bundy, Dana Young, Kaitlyn Evans, Tera Webb, Jeri Cooper, Marilyn Sanders

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Letter from the Editor

Independence means something different to everyone, but at its core, it's about having the confidence and tools to seize possibilities and live life on our own terms. That's why we're so excited about this year's state convention theme: Seizing Possibilities with OCB—because true independence isn't just about what we can do but about recognizing opportunities and taking action. In this edition, we're focusing on what independence looks like for our community—from traveling with a white cane or guide dog to making informed financial choices and staying prepared for emergencies. You'll find articles that highlight different aspects of independence, along with helpful tips and resources to support you along the way.

With storm season approaching, it's important to be prepared. We're sharing essential safety tips to help you stay ready for severe weather. On top of that, financial independence is key to a secure future, so we've included practical advice to help you manage your finances-even while on a fixed income. Plus, we're excited to highlight prescription delivery services, including Walmart Pharmacy's new option, making it easier to get the medications you need without extra hassle. Taking control of these everyday

challenges is just another way to seize the possibilities available to us.

Independence isn't just about making choices—it's about being able to follow through on them. It's about having the skills, resources, and determination to live life the way we want, without waiting for permission or depending on others to make it happen. This year, as we gather for the convention and explore the theme of Seizing Possibilities, let's remind ourselves that independence isn't just a dream—it's something we can build, embrace, and live every single day.

TULSA COUNCIL OF THE BLIND AT LARGE UPDATE

By Marilyn Sanders, Tulsa Council of the Blind, President

Greetings to all on behalf of the TCB. If you do not have an OCB/ACB affiliate chapter in your area that you can attend, if you are looking for a chapter where you don't have to leave your home for meetings, mess with public transportation to get to and from the meeting, don't have to dress up for attendance, and sit in your favorite chair and relax by participating through a Zoom call, then we are the answer to your needs.

The TCB at Large Chapter meets the first Monday of each month at 7:00 PM via Zoom. Thanks to Debbie Sanders and Elaine Boykin, Program Co-chairs, programs are presented that are of interest to everyone. Debi Trout provided an update on the latest and greatest in the area of orientation and mobility in February, and Chris Peterson from Penny Forward presented an informative program on finance and crypto currency in March.

Thanks to David Bailey for his work in updating the TCB website, which is <http://www.tulsacounciloftheblind.org>. This is a continual work in progress.

If you are interested in attending our monthly meetings and need the Zoom information, please send an e-mail to mksanders1348@att.net. We are looking forward to having you attend the next meeting on April 7, 2025.

HEARTLAND COUNCIL OF THE BLIND UPDATE

By Pam Holloway

We have been very busy at Heartland the last few months. In January, we donated socks to "Socks of Love." We filled sandwich bags with one pair of socks and a note of

encouragement for the homeless. This is a non-profit ministry.

In February, Joe Marshall, one of our members, talked about Charles Bonnet syndrome. In March, Deputy Tara Hardin with the Oklahoma Sheriff's Department talked about AI and fraud.

In April, we will have the founder of Second Chances, a ministry that gives lunch, 10-dollar gift cards, and clothes to the homeless. We will also be filling plastic Easter eggs with candy for the upcoming Easter egg hunt. Then on April 19th, we will be having an Easter egg hunt for blind children and children with other disabilities.

We have not gotten a speaker for May yet but on May 17th, we will be having "Dining in the Dark" at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum.

In June will be our yearly picnic. We will not have a meeting in July as many of our members will be at ACB in Dallas.

OUR ORGANIZATION: A FAMILY OF SUPPORT AND STRENGTH

By Dana Young, Lawton Council of the Blind

In life, we all face challenges—some expected, some unforeseen. Within our organization, we understand that no one should have to face these hardships alone. We are more than just a group of individuals working toward a common goal; we are a second family. A family that stands by each other, offering strength, comfort, and unwavering support through every trial life brings.

Whether it's navigating health struggles, coping with the loss of a loved one, or dealing with personal and professional hardships, we are here for one another. Our organization isn't just about our shared mission; it's about the people behind it. We lift each other up, ensuring that no one feels alone in their journey. When one of us is struggling, we rally together, offering not just words of encouragement, but real, tangible help—because that's what family does.

Beyond the difficulties we face as individuals, many of us also deal with the daily challenges that come with our disabilities. Life doesn't pause to accommodate our struggles, and yet, through it all, we continue to push forward. What makes this organization so special is that we don't just acknowledge each other's hardships—we actively support one another through them. We listen, we care, and we show up in ways that truly make a difference.

Being a part of this organization means being surrounded by people who genuinely care. It means having a safe space where vulnerability is met with compassion and where strength is found in unity. We are more than colleagues, more than peers—we are a family. And that is why I love being a part of this incredible community.

No matter what life throws our way, one thing is certain: we will always have each other.

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE UPDATES

By Joseph Bundy

The Oklahoma Council of the Blind (OCB) fundraising committee has been hard at work planning and organizing several fundraisers. The ongoing Rada and Terri Lynn Chocolate fundraisers continue to support OCB, with 40% of each order placed through okcb.org going directly to the organization. In addition, new and exciting fundraisers are on the horizon, including a potential dining out event with Boomerang Diner, where a portion of sales from a special dining night or a Round-Up Donation program will benefit OCB. Those interested should sign up for the OK List Serv to stay updated on details. The committee is also discussing

the creation of OCB-branded apparel and promotional items, which will be available year-round for supporters.

One of the most exciting upcoming fundraisers is the release of a new OCB cookbook, featuring a variety of recipes, including air fryer and Instant Pot favorites. While OCB has done a cookbook in the past, this edition will bring fresh recipes and personal stories from contributors. Members are encouraged to submit their favorite recipes—whether desserts, appetizers, main dishes, salads, soups, or drinks—along with a short story about their significance. To make it even more engaging, those attending the OCB convention are invited to prepare and bring their recipe creations for the auction, offering a fun way to share and support OCB. Additionally, Next Gen’s Friday night fun at the convention will feature sample tastings to spark interest and encourage friendly bidding wars. For food safety, items should be non-refrigerated, such as bread, cookies, brownies, or cupcakes. Recipe submissions should be sent to ocbcookbook@gmail.com by August 1st, with the goal of having cookbooks ready by Christmas—perfect for gifts. For any questions or fundraiser ideas, please contact Joseph Bundy, Chair of the Fundraising Committee, at josephbundy92@gmail.com or 405-693-4771.

AROUND THE STATE

OAER CONFERENCE

The OAER 2025 Oklahoma Chapter Annual Conference will take place from July 31 to August 1, 2025, with the theme “Empowering Transitions and Advancing Careers with Assistive Technology.” This event will feature an outstanding lineup of keynote speakers, including Eric Yarberry, Mike Buckley, Lacy Goings, and Lee Sonnenberg. The conference will be held at the OKC West Side Lions Club, located at 4135 NW 10th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73107. For more information, to register, or to become a member, please visit the official conference website, <https://sites.google.com/view/okaerbvi/home> or contact the event organizers at okaerbvi@gmail.com.

OSB UPDATES

SCASB

By Tera Webb

January 23-25th, OSB hosted Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas for our South Central Schools for the Blind (SCASB)

cheer, wrestling, and performing arts event. OSB represented Oklahoma well with our hospitality and sportsmanship.

Friday, the Jazz Band dazzled the crowd with some awesome music that everyone loved. Other states represented well with various performing arts that kept the crowd entertained. We had guitars, we had drums, and we even had a play created by one of the schools.

Saturday, the OSB choir kicked off the day with the National Anthem. The cheer teams, mascots, and wrestlers all did their best to showcase what they had been working towards all year.

The OSB wrestling team took 2nd place, the cheer team took 3rd place, and our mascot placed 2nd!

A huge thank you to all who volunteered to help with all the SCASB activities.

23rd Annual Oklahoma Regional Braille Challenge

This year, as OSB celebrates 23 years of offering Braille Challenge, we want especially to celebrate our volunteers and sponsors. Many of these individuals have supported this event each of the past 23 years! Without their donation of

time, expertise, patience, and funding, we could not offer this annual event. So, thank you!

I also want to celebrate the 45 contestants who participated this year! Your braille skills were certainly celebrated this year by keeping the score room busy! Our score room, with red pencils and answer sheets in hand, worked hard through the day to come up with the final results.

Congratulations to all our contestants, and thank you to all the donors and volunteers.

EXCITING UPDATES FROM JERI'S HOUSE!

We're thrilled to announce that Jeri's House has officially moved into our new location! This has been a journey filled with decisions and changes, but through it all, we've seen God's love guiding us.

Mark your calendars for our Open House on Saturday, April 5th, from 11 AM to 2 PM at 613 S. Redwood Avenue, Broken Arrow, OK. Stop by, tour our new space, and enjoy some popcorn while supporting Jeri's House!

Our mission continues to grow as more people learn about Jeri's House and the vital services we provide to the

DeafBlind community. We're currently contracted with Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Florida and are working with other states to expand.

With the move comes new challenges, including building accessibility upgrades like installing ramps, widening doors, and adding a bathroom. We're also seeking donations to assist a resident in need of urgent training. If you'd like to help, visit www.jerishouse.org to donate via PayPal, Venmo, or mail. As always, we appreciate your prayers and support as we continue this journey. Thank you for being a part of Jeri's House!

UPDATES FROM THE OKLAHOMA LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND AND PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED

The OLBPH building remains closed due to issues with heating, ventilation and air conditioning. Onsite staff are limited, but talking books continue to be mailed daily without interruption in services. Incoming phone calls are being routed to a work-from-home employee who takes messages. Calls are then returned by the appropriate librarian or other staff. This process is a little slower and we appreciate your patience as we do our best to continue to provide

exceptional library services. The building is currently projected to reopen in May dependent on HVAC repairs.

The new DA2 talking book machine, which was beta tested last year, is expected be available to all OLBPH patrons sometime this fall. The OLBPH will release more information about how to request a DA2, and the transition to DA2s closer to such time. The DA2 player includes several exciting advancements, including Wi-Fi connectivity and the ability to download directly from BARD to the device.

The OLBPH was honored to win the Department of Rehabilitation Services, Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired 2024 Unit of the Year award. The award was in recognition for the outstanding service of the OLBPH team to SBVI clients and the OLBPH's numerous advancements in services during 2024.

The OLBPH plans to host a children's Summer Reading Program from June to July, 2025. More information will be forthcoming in the April edition of the OLBPH's newsletter, Bright Future, and on social media. Follow the OLBPH on Facebook and Twitter for information about the Summer Reading Program and other events and news.

2025 OKLAHOMA COUNCIL OF THE BLIND CONFERENCE AND CONVENTION

By Vicky Golightly and Frances Poindexter, Convention Co-Chairs

Yes, it's time to plan to attend the 2025 OCB Conference and Convention on September 26-28, held at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in Oklahoma City.

The Convention Committee has already met twice to begin planning your convention. Our keynote speaker is Koni Sims, a board member of the American Council of the Blind (ACB). Koni has a wealth of information to share about recreation, sports, ACB updates, and issues such as employment and what is going on in the rehabilitation arena.

This year's theme is "Seizing Possibilities with OCB," which means possibilities in your personal, professional, and recreational lives. We want to stress that OCB believes in you and your ability to achieve outstanding successful outcomes in all your endeavors. It is said often, but the sky is the limit, or maybe we should say the universe has no limits to what you and OCB can accomplish together.

Joseph Bundy, Chair of the Vendors Committee, already has ten vendors committed to attend. Joe is a man of action,

having already secured half of our vendors early in March. He excels in seizing those possibilities.

There will be a professional and consumer seminar on Friday. Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI), a division of the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), has already committed to support this special day, as well as convention activities throughout the weekend.

The next Convention Committee meeting is March 31, and everyone is invited to help us “seize possibilities with OCB” by joining the planning of this event. If this newsletter is published after this meeting, don’t worry, as there will be many other Convention Committee meetings.

Sleeping rooms at the Wyndham Garden Hotel are only \$89 per night plus applicable taxes for one to four occupancies. Hotel and convention registration information will be available soon on the OCB List Server and on our website, www.okcb.org.

The Committee is in the beginning stages of planning great speakers, wonderful exhibits, great entertainment on Friday night, and much more. OCB’s Next Generation Committee is planning a super-special game extravaganza

on Friday night immediately after a BBQ meal sponsored by the Heartland Council of the Blind, the host chapter. Yum.

As usual, we will have a silent auction, a live auction, and hopefully some new never-tried-before activities. Remember those super possibilities!

For more information, feel free to contact Vicky Golightly at (405) 740-6227 or email her at vgolight1@gmail.com. You may also contact Frances Poindexter at (405) 642-1068 or email her at lisspo@aol.com.

Remember, we're only a little way through the planning process. We need your help to raise the bar for those infinite possibilities.

DISASTERS AND THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

By Pam Holloway

It is essential for individuals who are blind or visually impaired to stay informed about emergency preparedness to ensure their safety in unexpected situations. Emergencies can fall into several categories, including human-caused incidents, natural disasters such as floods, tornadoes, wildfires, and severe storms, as well as technological emergencies like power outages. Being aware of these

potential threats and having a preparedness plan in place can make a significant difference in navigating emergencies safely and effectively.

CREATE A DISASTER PLAN

Meet with family, friends, neighbors, or coworkers (support group) to discuss and plan for disasters that occur in your area. After discussing what to do in case of the disaster pick two places to meet.

Outside of your home in the case of a sudden emergency like a fire or outside of your neighborhood in case you can't return home at a designated address for emergency backup.

Have an out-of-state friend or relative to be your "back-up" contact. After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Other contacts should call this person and tell them where they are and where you are for exchange of essential information. Everyone must know your contact's telephone number.

Discuss what to do in an evacuation. Plan how to take care of your service animal or pet.

ASSEMBLE A GO-BAG

This would include basic necessities for 3 days (72 hours); many of the items are things that you probably have already around your home. Consider marking emergency supplies with large print, tactile, fluorescent tape, or Braille. This bag is used for ALL hazard preparedness. If you have a fire, leave as quickly as possible, with or without your go-bag.

GO-BAG LIST

**Three days' supply of water (three gallons per person),
Three days' supply of non-perishable food, Battery-operated
or crank-operated radio (don't forget extra batteries),
Flashlight and Plastic Emergency Whistle and Other
Emergency Alert Items, First Aid Kit, Toiletries and a Change
of Clothes, Prescription and Assistive Devices, White Cane,
Work Gloves and Sturdy Shoes, Safety Glasses,
Identification and Important Papers, Currency and Cash,
Service Animal (as well as food and water)**

HAVE A SHELTER IN PLACE LOCATION

The appropriate response depends on the type of emergency. If you hear a warning signal, listen to local radio or television stations for further information. You will be told what to do, including where to find the nearest shelter if you

are away from your "shelter in place" location. If you are told to "shelter in place," act quickly. Follow the instructions of local authorities. Basic steps include:

Enter your home immediately. Bring children or pets indoors. If your children are at school, the school will shelter them unless told differently.

Close and lock outside doors and windows. Locking may provide a tighter seal.

Get your disaster supply go-bag and make sure radio is working.

Call your emergency contact and keep the telephone handy in case you need to report a life-threatening condition. Otherwise, stay off the telephone so that lines will be available for use by emergency responders.

Keep listening to your radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Do not evacuate unless instructed to do so by local authorities.

If you are at work or in another facility, follow the directions and plans of the facility. Do not attempt to go home.

PRESCRIPTION DELIVERY SERVICES

By Debbie Sanders

Accessing medications independently is now easier than ever with prescription delivery services from major pharmacies like Walmart, Walgreens, and CVS. These services allow prescriptions to be delivered directly to your door, eliminating the need to travel to a pharmacy. Walmart offers both standard and express delivery, with standard orders arriving in 5–7 days and express deliveries available as soon as the same day in many areas. For those who are blind or visually impaired, Walmart has also integrated ScripTalk labels, which allow prescription information to be read aloud using a specialized device or smartphone app. This ensures greater accessibility and independence when managing medications.

Walgreens and CVS also provide prescription delivery options, making it even more convenient to receive essential medications without leaving home. Orders can be placed through each pharmacy's app, website, or by phone, and many insurance plans cover the service. In some cases, over-the-counter medications and other health essentials can be included in deliveries, reducing the need for multiple trips to the store. These expanded pharmacy services empower

individuals who are blind or visually impaired by making prescription management more accessible, convenient, and independent.

MY GUIDE DOGS AND MY INDEPENDENCE

By Darla Cook

Having a guide dog has given me a sense of freedom and independence that I wouldn't trade for anything. With a guide dog by my side, I can confidently navigate restaurants, stores, and city streets. I find myself engaging with more people and feeling more connected to the world around me. Of course, there are challenges—like educating others on why a guide dog shouldn't be petted while working—but the benefits far outweigh the difficulties. My guide dogs have given me confidence, companionship, and the ability to move through life with greater ease.

My journey with guide dogs began in 1981 when I applied for my first one. I was matched with Maia, a beautiful golden retriever from Leader Dogs for the Blind. She was full of energy and playfulness, always keeping me on my toes. In 1982, I had my first child, Christopher, and a funny memory from his early years still makes me smile. When he was

about three years old, we were at my sister's house, and all the kids wanted to play "Ring Around the Rosy." Maia, however, wasn't having it—every time we tried to go around in a circle, she would grab the back of our britches to stop us!

Maia was a wonderful guide, but at 7 ½ years old, she developed heart problems, and I had to make the difficult decision to let her go. It was heartbreaking, but I knew I wanted to continue my journey with guide dogs. I waited until 1991 to apply for another dog, this time choosing Guide Dogs for the Blind. Over the years, I was matched with several amazing dogs, each one helping me maintain my independence in different ways.

Palomar, a black Lab, worked well until he had to retire at 7 ½ years old due to hip dysplasia. Raina, a yellow Lab, had to stop working at just four years old because of severe allergies to the Oklahoma environment. Peach, another yellow Lab, was a wonderful guide until she developed sound sensitivity to thunderstorms and loud noises. Nectarine, also a yellow Lab, was a great match, but just four days after we returned home, I was on a Tulsa Transit bus that was hit by a semi-truck. She was traumatized by the accident and had to return to the school.

After that, I received Laddy, a yellow Lab who worked well for a few years before developing a stomach issue that forced him to retire. My next guide, Kasha, a black Lab, had to stop working due to stomach and kidney issues. When I applied for another dog, Guide Dogs for the Blind determined I was no longer a good candidate. I took a break from the program before deciding to apply elsewhere.

I was later matched with Biscotti, a yellow Lab from Guiding Eyes for the Blind, but our time together was short. She began slowing down and became reluctant to get into cars, which made it clear that she wasn't suited for the work. Finally, in June of last year, I traveled to Yorktown Heights, New York, where I was blessed to be matched with my current guide dog, Blaze, a three-year-old yellow Lab.

Having a guide dog has truly changed my life, giving me the confidence and independence to go wherever I need to without hesitation. It allows me to move through the world with ease and connect with others in ways I never could before. While there are always challenges—like reminding people not to distract a working dog—the benefits of having a guide dog far outweigh them. My guide dogs have been my partners, my protectors, and my freedom. I wouldn't have it any other way.

PERSONAL FINANCES

By Debbie Sanders

Chris Peterson, President of Penny Forward, recently spoke at the TCB monthly meeting, sharing valuable insights on personal finance and budgeting. Penny Forward, an organization dedicated to financial independence for the blind community, offers a variety of screen reader-friendly tools, including accessible financial calculators. We were first introduced to Chris at last year's MOKA Conference for the Blind, where he emphasized that while many in the blind community (about 70%) rely on fixed incomes, saving is still possible with proper budgeting and planning. His message was clear: whether it's attending a convention, taking a vacation, or preparing for unexpected expenses, financial independence starts with setting achievable goals.

There are several ways to budget and save, even on a fixed income. One strategy is creating a dedicated savings fund by setting aside a small amount each month—no matter how small, consistency builds over time. Another approach is to cut unnecessary expenses by reviewing subscriptions, dining out less (ordering water instead of tea or soda), or finding more affordable alternatives for everyday purchases. A third strategy is seeking additional income sources, such

as freelance work, selling handmade crafts, or participating in online surveys. By applying these techniques, individuals can take control of their finances and work toward greater financial security and independence. Be sure to check out www.pennyforward.com for more resources and tools to support your financial journey.

CINNAMON SUGAR BISCUIT WAFFLES

By Pam Holloway

Ingredients

1 (16.3-ounce) can Grands! Flaky Layers Biscuits (8-count)

1/2 cup sugar

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Instructions

- 1. Preheat the waffle iron and lightly spray it with nonstick cooking spray.**
- 2. In a medium bowl, mix the sugar and cinnamon together; set aside.**
- 3. Open the biscuits and separate them. Gently stretch each of the biscuits until they are about 4 to 5 inches across.**

- 4. Place one biscuit in the center of the preheated waffle iron and press to close.**
- 5. Cook 4 to 5 minutes or until golden brown.**
- 6. Remove the waffle and immediately place it into the bowl with the cinnamon sugar. Toss to coat, pressing slightly to get the sugar to stick to the warm waffle. Serve immediately or keep the waffles in a warm oven while you cook the others.**

They're great served all by themselves, which makes them a great on-the-go breakfast—or are delicious drizzled with a little syrup or topped with your favorite fruit!

**Free Matter for
the Blind or
Handicapped**

Oklahoma Council of the Blind

PO Box 1476

OKC, OK 73101