

Hawaii Association of the Blind Newsletter

November 3, 2023

Announcements

Sharing the sad news of the passing of HAB's secretary Maureen Sheedy's mother, Mary Frances Kabel-Gwyn at the age of 103. As a certified brailist, Mary Frances was Maureen's first audio describer and an integral part of her life. Please keep Maureen in your thoughts and prayers.

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The Hawaii Association of the Blind cordially invites you to attend its annual Thanksmas Party!

HAB Thanksmas Party

Saturday Nov. 25th, 2023

5:00pm - 8:00pm

801 South Street – Meeting Room B

Cost: \$25 for HAB members, Ho'opono students and children 12 years and older.

Cost: \$35 for non-members

Please RSVP no later than Sat. Nov. 18th, 2023 to the calling committee or Sajja at

classicalsajja@gmail.com

You may pay for this event in person at the event or in advance at the HAB November monthly meeting or by sending your check to:

Brian Huffman

1420 Victoria St. #602

Honolulu, HI 96822

Registration starts at 5:00pm

Dinner served at 5:45pm: Catering by Da Spot, the menu includes green salad with papaya dressing, chicken piccata, beef pancit, parmesan encrusted fish with garlic aioli, sesame green beans, vegetarian Thai red curry with tofu and vegetables, white rice and assorted drinks and desserts.

Entertainment: Live Music performed by Gensen Rabacal and Mike Englar

After dinner games and assorted desserts

Raffle: Tickets will be available for purchase in advance and during the event for \$5 each or 5 tickets for \$20. all proceeds from the raffle will be donated to the Maui Strong Fund.

We will not be doing a gift exchange this year. The committee requests that instead of buying a gift as in years past, please instead add additional funds as a donation or purchase extra raffle tickets to strengthen our donation to the Maui Strong Fund.

We encourage guests to carpool, ride share or use The Handi-VAN to this event where possible. Parking details will be sent out closer to the event.

Thank you and hope to see you there!

HAB Thanksmas 2023 Raffle

All items were donated and 100% of the proceeds will be given to the Maui Strong Fund.

\$5 per ticket or \$20 for 5 tickets

Each item will have its own ticket box so you can choose which item you are interested inGood Luck!

You can buy tickets at the event or pre-pay for you, your family and friends.

Send raffle ticket money to:

Sharon Ige

1513 Kuloko Street

Pearl City, Hawaii 96782

Please specify which prize or prizes you want to put your tickets in for a chance to win.

Multiple tickets can be put in same box.

If you have any questions about the HAB raffle, please contact Sharon Ige at (808) 892-9477 or via email at

sharonige003@hawaii.rr.com

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HoloHolo

Date: Friday November 10th 2023

Where: Foodland Farms Pearl City

1150 Kuala St

Time: 4p.m until 7p.m

This is an opportunity to gather together, fellowship, sharpen mobility skills and learn about shopping apps and of course shopping. For more information please contact Sherry at (808)561-5968 or Anthony Akamine (808)372-2225 for questions.

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From: Dr. Brett Oppegaard

The UniDescription Project

SAVE THE DATE: Descriptathon 10, Feb. 6-8, 2024

This next Descriptathon is a big one - Descriptathon 10 — representing a decade of our community-building efforts related to Audio Description via The UniDescription Project, www.unidescription.org.

... Please mark these D10 dates on your calendar now: Feb. 6-8 ... because you are invited!

If you thought previous Descriptathons were fun, I'm really eager for you to join us for D10, with many (pleasant) surprises in store as well as our usual offerings of high-quality AD training, team-building exercises, AD practice and publishing, all designed to make the world a more-accessible place, especially for our national parks and other public gathering places.

Since most of you have participated in a Descriptathon before, I'm hopeful that you might want to do it again. As you probably recall, a Descriptathon is full-on engagement for three days, plus some significant prep time, which will begin in early January. There is never a cost to participate or to the public audiences you serve for hearing your work (all costs for production and distribution are covered by grants). Even if you have been involved in many Descriptathons, as you know, we always have several new twists and turns in the process to make it interesting, plus you get a new team and new teammates.

If you are committed to participating and want to have some input about your team, teammates, type of park, region, whatever, or if just want to let me know that you are in, ready to do some describing, and awaiting team placement, please send a quick email to me now at brett.oppegaard@hawaii.edu, so we can get those preferences baked into the initial organization of the event as we go. Yes, we already are forming these D10 teams and starting to put the team members into place.

And of course, please feel free to introduce me to your friends who also might want to participate; the more the merrier!

Thanks for your consideration! I hope you can join us for this historic tenth Descriptathon! Any questions or concerns, please let me know.

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Meet Our Members

Brian Huffman

I serve as the interim Treasurer for HAB. I have been a member of HAB since 2017. I had been a member of the American Council of the Blind

of Minnesota (ACBM) prior to joining HAB. I have attended at least three annual ACB conventions (Las Vegas, Louisville, and Minneapolis). As my day job,

I am a law librarian and tenured faculty of the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I have lived alongside blind

family members, and am lucky to have numerous friends who are blind. I am a proud member of HAB and support the mission and values of HAB and ACB.

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HoloHolo Shoppers Event PEARL CITY FOODLAND FARMS Recap

By Anthony Akamine

HAB Holo Holo Shoppers had a great turnout of 23 awesome attendees on Saturday, October 21st. Somehow, over the past few months, Pearl City Foodland Farms

has become a treasured home to our Holo Holo group. As I looked up the true definition of the word "home" on the internet, this is what I found: "Home

is a safe haven and a comfort zone. A place to live with our families and enjoy friends. A place to build memories, where we can truly just be ourselves."

How true that is!

Even though our group was large, we had plenty of room to spread out at the large area of tables to the left of the front entrance. New canes were delivered to several attendees participating in HAB's Safe Travel program. A demonstration of how to change Ambutech Hook-Style tips was provided and at least two attendees received new tips for their well-used canes. So many familiar voices and faces, plus a few new ones surrounded our area. It is always great to keep growing.

Near the front entrance was a free sample area featuring Adobo Pork Rinds with Smoked Clam Dip, Spicy Soybeans and Fried Chicken Skin, so ono! Then walking and shopping allowed for greater descriptions of the store layout. Sensory discussions revealed the smell of crab and seafood on the way to the restroom in the back, cold blasts near the refrigerated drinks, and sweet smells of fresh fruits in the produce section. We weaved through the Poke Bar smelling Ahi Limu and Garlic Scallops, enticing our taste buds on the way to fill up our large fountain drinks behind the Poke Bar.

Since it was a Saturday, special events included a Beer Garden and samples of HI Steak Pupus in our seated area. A talented singer started playing just as our party was leaving. Our group stood outside, sharing fantastic details before filling up the arriving Handi-Vans home. The OM Instructors and Interns arrived early and stayed late to provide supportive shopping and OM concepts throughout our monthly event. We all keep learning, learning, learning as we catch up with each other and shop till we drop in a fun supportive space. See you next month for another great gathering in our favorite treasured shopping.

For more information on upcoming HoloHolo events call Anthony at (808)372-2225

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Congratulations are in order as one of our members James Gonsalves has gotten a new kidney transplant. He says "our bodies are a temple of God and God has given me a second chance to experience a new life again. A camaraderie of those of you in HAB have prayed for me and expressed positive thoughts

for a new kidney through the years. I am so happy to express that this day has arrived and I thank God and all of you. Finally, the healing will take

a long while, so I still need prayers and need to be cautious about going anywhere in large crowds. During this time I won't get to see you as much, but

I will keep you guys in my heart and thoughts as you are a part of my ohana." If you available, please call me at (808)312-0990. I would love to hear

from you.

James Gonsalves

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Aria Mia Loberti on starring in "All the Light We Cannot See"

Aloha Everyone:

I had the pleasure of meeting Aria and her guide dog, Ingrid last year while attending a fundraiser for Guide Dogs for the Blind last October. What a delightful person, and of course, her guide, Ingrid is absolutely precious. Ingrid was trained at Guide Dogs for the Blind, so we all had something in common.

Please read the book All the Light We cannot see by Anthony Doerr so you can enjoy the series even more.

So very proud that an actress who is truly blind got the leading role.

Hope you can read the book and enjoy the series.

Much aloha,

Vickie and Buddy

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American Council of the Blind (ACB) Wins Nationwide Disability Rights Class Action Against Quest Diagnostics for Use of Inaccessible Touch Screen Kiosks

ALEXANDRIA, Va., October 24, 2023 — Following a week-long bench trial in Los Angeles, a federal court in California found Quest Diagnostics in violation

of the Americans with Disabilities Act and permanently enjoined Quest from continuing to violate the ADA.

Beginning in 2016, Quest Diagnostics began to install self-service kiosks at its Patient Service Centers, which allow patients to, among other things,

check in for phlebotomy appointments in a private and independent manner. Following complaints from ACB's members that these kiosks as designed prevent

people who are blind from accessing their services, ACB joined a civil rights complaint in federal court alleging that Quest's kiosks deprived members

of the blind community full and equal enjoyment of Quest's services and failed to provide effective communication.

The Court ruled in favor of ACB and a nationwide class of blind and low vision Quest patients. The court found that Quest violated Title III of the ADA

in that Quest failed to provide people who are blind with full and equal enjoyment of Quest's services and facilities because of their disability.

"Self-service kiosks are being used more and more in many aspects of daily public life," said Dan Spoone, Executive Director for the American Council of

the Blind. "The Court's decision that Quest violated the ADA and that the check-in services of these kiosks must be accessible to people who are blind

is a significant step towards ensuring that the rights to full and equal enjoyment and effective communication are protected.”

Deb Cook Lewis, ACB’s president, added, “Although the ADA is more than 30 years old, people who are blind are still forced to fight for full and equal

access to healthcare. This judgment sends a clear message that full and equal enjoyment is required by law, and health care providers must ensure access

for people with disabilities.”

This litigation has been led by ACB’s counsel at Nye Sterling Hale Miller and Sweet and at Handley Farah & Anderson.

Matthew Handley, one of ACB’s attorneys in the litigation, added, “Touchscreen kiosks are an ever-increasing aspect of our daily lives – this decision

ensures that accessibility of those kiosks will need to be front and center in the minds of every company wishing to make use of self-service technology.”

<https://www.acb.org/>

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Watching TV While Blind

Making television accessible to people with vision impairments requires technical and regulatory advances and collaboration to ensure the visual media

remains open to all

By Brian Vines

October 19, 2023

figure

An illustration of a male gay couple on a couch in a cozy darkened living room. They are in front of a TV which has a word bubble coming out of it: "Monica rolled her eyes as Jack shoved her playfully."

Illustration: Lacey Browne/Consumer Reports

figure end

In 1985, there was not a 7-year-old on the planet with a better working knowledge of the goings on in Genoa City, the fictional setting of "The Young and the Restless," than me.

The daytime drama was my grandmother's favorite. It was my job to watch with her and provide visual commentary, because my grandmother was blind. When the words weren't enough, I helped her set the scene in her mind by answering her questions. "Were his eyes opened when they kissed?" she'd want to know. "Can anyone in the courtroom tell she's lying?" We played this game of TV Show and Tell whenever the set was on.

Back then, no one thought much about how to make TV accessible to visually impaired people, or really even considered that it might be an important thing to do. Today the landscape is vastly different. Newer TVs have settings and features designed to help people with limited vision enjoy the boob tube like the rest of us. Still, disability advocates say these assistive technologies leave room for improvement and that laws surrounding their implementation are not keeping pace. At the same time, they say, the need to make devices even better and easier to use by the visually disabled is more pressing than ever.

More on TVs and Assisted Tech

For starters, public health officials say the number of Americans with uncorrectable vision

impairment is expected to double by 2050, due to chronic diseases like diabetes and the rapidly aging population. Today, 4 million Americans over 40 have a vision impairment. Of those, 1 million are blind and 3 million have uncorrectable central or peripheral vision loss.

Also a major issue: how screen-centered our world has become. “We live in a visual society,” says Clark Rachfal, director of advocacy and governmental affairs at the American Council of the Blind, an organization made up of blind and visually impaired people. “If you want to be part of your community, if you want to be part of the conversation, you have to have access to the visual media everyone else is using.”

“We’ve got to get over the idea that blind people don’t watch television,” says Chris Danielsen, who in addition to being blind is the director of public relations for the National Federation of the Blind, the nation’s oldest and largest organization of blind Americans. “We do and always have.”

Matthew and Paul Castle, an inter-abled couple living in Seattle, can attest to that. Matthew is sighted while Paul has retinitis pigmentosa, a progressive eye disease that over the years has reduced his vision by more than 90 percent. On their “matthewandpaul” TikTok account, the couple chronicles their life as “Two Guys and a Guide Dog,” sharing everything from pranks to “blind life-hacks” for their 1.5 million followers. In a TikTok video, they share how accessibility tools help them navigate watching TV.

One thing they have yet to share online is their odyssey trying to buy a TV set. The pair bought and returned four until they found an OLED model by LG that had contrast and brightness settings and adjustable onscreen fonts good enough to compensate for Paul’s diminished vision. Their new device is a godsend. “I always breathe a sigh of relief when we get to the end of the day,” says Paul. “We get to just escape and watch something on TV together.”

Regulating Accessibility

That a person like Paul Castle with low or no vision can enjoy television today has been a project decades in the making.

In 1990, the pioneering Americans with Disabilities Act prohibited discrimination on the basis of disability, with a suite of laws covering everything from employment to public accommodations.

But it wasn't until 2010 that the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act mandated that telecommunications companies and video programmers ensure that new digital, broadband, and mobile innovations adhered to accessibility laws. Among other things, the CVAA required that emergency information be conveyed in a manner accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired and that TVs and other video devices have a button for activating audio descriptions. And yet, more than a decade after that law's passage, only the largest 90 of the 210 broadcast market areas presently provide audio-described content and emergency notices.

And it wasn't until 2012 that the Federal Communications Commission required all local broadcasting services in the U.S. to offer a minimum of 4 hours of secondary audio programming (SAP) for visually impaired viewers every week. SAP is an auxiliary audio channel that, in addition to having different languages, provides descriptive audio narration of visual information that can be broadcast or transmitted both over-the-air and by cable television.

Furthermore, the requirements do not apply to video streaming applications, meaning platforms like Hulu or Netflix, both of which do provide accessibility tools by choice, are not bound by regulation to adhere to accessibility requirements. In July, Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), the author of the original CVAA, along with Rep. Anna G. Eshoo (D-Calif.), introduced the Communications, Video, and Technology Accessibility (CVTA) Act, as an effort to update existing

accessibility regulations and make them inclusive of technology not conceived of more than a decade ago.

Jeff Wissel, chief accessibility officer at Disability:IN, a nonprofit resource for disability inclusion, is happy to see accessibility requirements continue

to advance. “When all these aspects come together, it enhances the experience for those of us with disabilities to fully participate,” he says.

Roadblocks Remain

One barrier to participation expressed by many in the visual disability community is the lack of default accessibility settings for new devices. Rather,

most have accessibility settings that must be opted in to, posing a significant challenge to individuals who can’t read a manual or navigate through settings

onscreen. A more frictionless option for the visually impaired would be accessibility settings as the default users could choose to disable.

Nearly a decade ago when Danielsen, at the National Federation of the Blind, found himself unable to independently set up his new television, he had to

call for backup. “My friend had to come over and help me install it and set it up because I couldn’t walk through the screens,” he says.

Disability:IN’s Wissel says that even today TV manufacturers, as well as content creators, need to do better. “There are many companies that have yet to

fully embrace the requirements to ensure their products and services meet the accessibility requirements,” he says.

Still, no one doubts that members of the visually impaired community are reaping huge benefits from the advancements in television technology and content

creation we’ve seen. Today, most smart TVs—essentially traditional sets that connect to the internet—allow access to multiple streaming video services,

such as Amazon Prime, Netflix, and Hulu, which all have accessibility features like closed captioning and audio description. And many new smart TVs have

the added benefit of being voice-enabled, allowing for operation and navigation independent of onscreen menus.

It is important to note that people with visual impairments are not a monolith, and there is no universal solution for how a television may best work for

everyone. Whether their disability stems from genetics, age, or incident, an individual's unique circumstance will define what option is best for them.

But there are certain products that do provide an accessibility edge, and there are things to know about how to use the settings in the TV you presently

own—or a new one you plan to buy—to make it work optimally for you. “Fortunately, we’re seeing more TVs that have accessibility settings, and some companies

seem genuinely interested in moving beyond what is simply required by law,” says Jim Willcox, CR’s senior electronics editor.

Brian Vines has been a member of the special projects team at Consumer Reports since 2020, focusing on marketplace inequities. Prior to joining CR, he

spent a decade covering public affairs in community media. A Chicago native, he has a passion for social justice and deal hunting. Follow him on Twitter

@bvines78.

<https://www.consumerreports.org/electronics-computers/tvs/watching-tv-while-blind-a3393572533/>