**Focus On ACBI**

A Publication of the American Council of the Blind of Indiana

# October-December 2022

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Consider including a gift to ACBI in your Last Will and Testament.

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## From Your President By Rita Kersh

Hello fellow ACBI members and friends!

We did it! We put on a fantastic joint convention and the following committee members deserve a standing ovation: Barbara Salisbury (devoted numerous hours the handle details), Kari Goodman, Dolly Sowder, Mary Stores, Deanna Austin, Cindy Brooking and Anita Kurucz. There may have been a few headaches along the way, but the outcome was wonderful.

Further into this newsletter you’ll read a summary of some details about the convention and if you weren’t there, you’ll probably want to make plans for the next convention, which will be in Ohio.

On Saturday morning we held our annual business meeting and conducted standard business. We also had elections for open positions, secretary and board members. So, welcome these dedicated ACBI members to our board. David Rosenkoetter, secretary; Earlene Hughes, Pat Tussing and Gerry Koors, three-year board members; and Cliff Goodman, one-year board member to fill David’s previous position. All board members for 2023 were given the Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest forms to sign to be prepared for the new year. Unfortunately, we didn’t have time to get chapter updates, but hopefully that will be covered next year.

I had a great time and hope others did as well. Cheers to another great convention in the books!

I hope you all have a blessed Christmas/holiday season and that 2023 will be the best year ever!

## Heartland Chapter News By Mary Stores

The Heartland chapter had a meeting over Zoom in October. It was good to hear from quite a few people who attended.

In November several of us attended the ACBI convention in person and virtually. It was nice to have a convention so close to home.

The Heartland chapter would like to wish all of you a happy holiday season!

## SCAVI Happenings By Rita Kersh

This fall has been a fun time of year for our SCAVI members.

At our October meeting we celebrated our 40th anniversary by bringing snacks and sharing stories about when we each joined SCAVI. Dolly Sowder was the veteran of the group who attended peer support meetings in Bedford before SCAVI was officially chartered. She told the group about all the locations SCAVI used to meet and who used to be members in the early days.

In November we held our elections. Since Rich and Regina Vonderhaar relocated to Indianapolis, we had to fill their positions. We practically have a new board with only one person still in her position. We went through the upcoming convention agenda to give everyone an idea of what will be taking place over the weekend. We had all but three of our chapter members at the convention.

On December 10 we will have our annual Christmas party. We’ll all bring side dishes and desserts to go with the pulled pork that’s on the menu. We’ll play the “Dirty Santa” game and have a prize for the most Christmassy outfit.

From SCAVI to all of you, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful 2023!

## Hoosier All State Chapter News By David Rosenkoetter

Advent and Christmas greetings to all of you!

As we enter the last month of the year, we reflect on the first few weeks of the Hoosier All-State Chapter’s beginning. Besides the efforts to become established, solidified by the signing of official documents at ACBI’s annual convention, we are now able to take donations and dues payments. Each month we’ve had guests join us via Zoom along with our initial core membership. Yes, we’re still small but eagerly growing.

It was a joy making all of our acquaintances at the convention in November. Being someone who prefers in-person contact, this helped me get to know people who otherwise will be joining us via Zoom since I can put a voice, a body, and a name together.

Plans for the upcoming month can involve the rest of you as well. For when we have someone presenting on a blindness-related topic, the info and fun is open to all. This month, at our December 6 meeting, we will hear from Pastor Dave Andrus who is blind like us. As his work has included a lot of contact with both blind and sighted Christians, he has been able to counsel many who experience seasonal and holiday-related stress during this time of year.

You can learn more about him at his website, [www.not-alone.net](http://www.not-alone.net) which features a lot of podcast episodes on various things related to blindness and the Christian faith. Together with Cecilia Lee, herself totally blind, he does a regular show called, Room 4216. Andrus is an associate pastor at Abiding Savior Lutheran Church in inner-city St. Louis.

 AS always, if you know someone who is not living in the area of our active in-person chapter, please, let them know they are welcome at the Hoosier All-State meetings and we’d love to have them and you as members.

For more information and or to join the Hoosier All-State Chapter, please, reach me at (260) 206-9277 or at davidrosenkoetter260@gmail.com

## Everyone An Advocate By David Rosenkoetter

One of the many joys I have in being a member of ACBI is participating in our legislative and advocacy committee which is chaired by Dee Ann Hart. It’s a privilege to keep abreast of what’s coming down the pike at the State House and from Congress regarding blindness and other disabilities. Getting our voice heard and respected in the political world, however, is only one part of advocating on behalf of the blindness community. Every one of us is an advocate in various ways.

### Legislative Advocacy

When hearing the word, advocacy, we may think of calling Congressman, meeting with city council members, and attaching our names to petitions. Recent bills have come to our attention discussing enforcing the ADA to better address web access. (HB 9021 sponsored by Rep. Duckworth (D-IL). Earlier this year, the American Council of the Blind advocated before Congress concerning four legislative imperatives. (See my summary of these in a previous edition of Focus).

As we approach the upcoming 2023 Indiana State House Session, we will keep December 9 and in mind as the deadline for submitting bill/legislation requests and Jan. 13 as a deadline for our Representatives to submit bill drafts and proposals to be put on the calendar. You can go here to track such legislation having to do with us who are blind or having low-vision or regarding other disabilities. Check our list serve as well for updates that Rita brings to our attention from ACB’s national office.

### Community Engagement

Do you enjoy playing a game like chess or Scrabble? Singing in a choir? Writing poetry or prose? Or helping out with transportation concerns? Whether we live in a big city like Indianapolis or a small town like Bedford, opportunities abound for us to join our friends who are sighted in choirs, tournaments, meetings, and more casual discussions. I know it’s sometimes intimidating even if we’re good at a hobby to join others we do or don’t know in public, yet doing so will build our self-confidence while raising awareness of our capabilities and rights. After all, how will people grow to embrace us and our concerns unless we are seen and not just heard.

Then what happens when we go with friends or family to the movie theater? Wearing those nifty headsets with the secondary audio programming, we get to laugh right along with everyone else watching the action. People can see that we don’t always have to rely on someone sitting next to us announcing what’s up on the screen.

Consider the times you and your family go out for dinner. If you have a guide dog, your host or hostess as well as patrons around you get to see the way that dog is, in fact, a four-legged disability advocate. The sign he wears tells people not to pet him while in harness and that he’s working. How he responds to your commands to walk from the table to the restaurant’s door or to sit nicely at your feet speaks to the helper he’s been trained to be. Here in Indiana, Rep. Cindy Ledbetter will be returning last year’s HB1102 for consideration so that more refined distinctions between service and emotional support animals can be codified as law.

### Employment Advocacy

Nearly every one of us has heard the statistics for decades: 70 percent of the blindness community is unemployed. Add an additional disability and that rate rises to 80 percent. Include a third factor such as mental or cognitive illness and the percent jumps to ninety. As such, those who do work for a living serve not only their need for gainful employment and bring home the bread for their families. They represent our community’s dignity and ability to participate in the workforce.

Some jobs are traditional fits for us like being a rehabilitation counselor or therapist as certified by ACVREP, becoming an employee of the IRS or Social Security Administration, or an instructor of adaptive technology. But, presentations from our recent convention showed us that we who are blind can be teachers, lawyers, and extreme athletes. So, whether we work the nine-to-five J.O.B. or from home freelance, employment gets us in touch with those who can learn of our needs, rights, and capabilities. We educate people about making their companies’ websites more accessible. We help coworkers relax with us during a working lunch when the subject turns to matters far distant from our special accommodations and toward the topics of business, production, and publicity.

In short, we are all advocates throughout the length and breadth of our lives. Everyone is an advocate as we navigate life’s contours boldly blind.

## The Job I Never Applied For By Tyson Ernst

If you pay any attention to the news, you will inevitably hear unemployment is at a 50-year low. I have, as a result of feeling left out of the traditional employment market, decided to become an entrepreneur as a professional job applicant. Over the last year, I have created 20 candidate profiles, filled out nearly 100 online job applications, participated in 4 Zoom interviews, received a dozen rejection letters, and worst of all, had 3 postings I’m highly qualified for taken off the job board entirely after submitting my application. Talk about a blow to your self-esteem. From a 10,000-foot level, it appears the only job I’m qualified for is applying for jobs!

It feels as though I have created a full-time position where my job duties include researching the latest postings across traditional and non-traditional industries, draft both custom cover letters and resumes, and master the attachment function of Microsoft Outlook. Maybe I could make a web series on YouTube out of this, or possibly a blog, if only I could find the time to create a decent website. What do you think? “My life as a serial job applicant?” I’ll keep you posted.

Sometimes, you just have to reinvent yourself!

\*This is a blog first posted on ACB Voices on October 18, 2022. To receive blog posts directly, subscribe [HERE](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Facbvoices.wordpress.com%2F&data=05%7C01%7Cmstores%40iu.edu%7C8fde516a4c78467c187c08dab22ff6a1%7C1113be34aed14d00ab4bcdd02510be91%7C0%7C0%7C638018216574070604%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=ZlfGCMBq47tmzzC0fCgIORiUsEbl5w%2B3PSHI6gakDi0%3D&reserved=0). To submit a blog post, send your 300-to-500-word submission to Voices@acb.org.

## Christmas at Aunt Ida’s House By Dick Feagler

(This article was first published in The Plain Dealer in 1993. It was retrieved on December 1, 2022 from <https://www.cleveland.com/pdopinion/2007/12/christmas_at_aunt_idas_house_d.html#column> .

On Christmas, when I was a kid, we all went over to my Aunt Ida’s house – an old house in the old neighborhood.

Just what did you think I was going to talk about today? The little town of Bethlehem with its sniper towers? The unholy mother Britney? The lack of one wise man, let alone three?

It’s Christmastime, my friends. Let’s rest our weary brains. Let’s turn our backs on earthbound stars and People magazine celebrities and media personalities. Let us visit some people whose names get into the newspaper only when they die. And even then, just in the tiny type of the death notices.

Let’s go to my Aunt Ida’s house. Come on. It won’t take long. You’ll be home in time for the 11 o’clock news, I promise you.

The house wasn’t far from the steel mills, and the fallout from the mills made the dirt in Aunt Ida’s back yard black and rich. When the wind was wrong, the air in the neighborhood smelled like a chem lab. Breathing it might have been bad, but nobody knew that then. By the way, my Aunt Ida had great luck with flowers.

On Christmas, we’d all be there. The old folks, the young folks and the kids. The young folks were the young men and their wives still recovering from the great upheaval of World War II. The old folks could remember World War I.

The kids, like me, weren’t old enough to remember much. We were busy collecting memories, and this is one of them.

There was no TV. The only one among us who had a TV was my cousin Stanley, who sold them. He hasn’t yet sold one to any of the rest of the family, but he keeps trying. He knows it’s only a matter of time. For, what isn’t?

“I have a 10-inch screen,” he tells us, a cigar stuck in the corner of his mouth, a tall brown beer bottle at his elbow. He’s sitting at the dining room table with the rest of the young men, playing pinochle. You’ll notice that they have all, just for a little while, assumed the present tense. A Christmas present tense.

“They are never going to be able to make a screen bigger than 10 inches that will give you a decent picture,” Cousin Stanley lectures. “According to the laws of electronics, 10 inches is as big as you can go.”

The Army Air Corps gave Cousin Stanley a job fixing radios. That’s where he got his electronic knowledge. So, my Uncle Ziggy, who flushed out snipers on Okinawa, and my cousin Melvin, who knocked out tanks in Italy, listen to Stanley with respect. Stanley – the trumpeter of the dawn of the age of television.

By now, the tiny type has recorded Stanley’s name. And Ziggy’s. Melvin’s, too. And my Aunt Ida’s. Time killed them. The tanks couldn’t do it and the snipers couldn’t do it. But Time? It does it every time.

Time erased my cousin Billy’s name. He crossed the Rhine River in the bloody, final act of his war. He lived through obscene and notorious battlefields. He died at 85 cutting wood in his front yard in Parma.

Time is the inevitable eraser, but it does not erase cleanly. If you look hard enough, you can still see traces of them all, faintly. And if you look even harder – why they are right here!

The women are gathered in the living room, talking about babies and recipes and operations. Nylon stockings that have come back again, so you can throw the leg makeup away. Electric stoves that practically cook your meal for you. Jobs they can quit now – are expected to quit now – because the men have come back from the war.

Their woman talk would make a feminist despair. They talk of “female trouble” and permanent waves. And the Christmas crowds at Halle’s and Taylor’s and Bailey’s. And the big Sterling-Lindner tree that looked even a little bigger this year. And Hough bake shop cookies. And trolley cars that turn on Public Square, showering the safety zones with a blizzard of sparks.

Jay Leno is not here. I told you, there is no television set, except the one Stanley is describing – sketching it in the air with the smoke from his cigar. Nobody has bothered to turn the radio on. There is just talk – endless, trivial, sometimes mysterious. Sometimes, if a kid comes into the room, the talk suddenly stops. “Ix-nay,” one of the aunts will say. “Little pitchers have big ears.” There are things, in this long-ago time, that a kid is not supposed to know about. If, for some unfathomable reason, anybody said the word “condom,” it would take the room an hour to recover its equilibrium.

Where are the kids? Would you mind, my friend, if I went in search of myself? It won’t take long. I know just where to look.

I am with my cousins in the unheated bedroom at the back of the old house. We are burrowing under the piles of coats that have been dumped on the bed. Moutons, mostly, with a few Persian lambs, for animals do not yet have rights. Just a glimpse of myself is all I want. I don’t want to look too hard. Because for me, this trip is a wistful mirror.

The bedroom door opens and Aunt Ida is standing in a rectangle of light.

“You kids go into the living room now,” she says. “Santa Claus is coming soon.”

We go. And as soon as we leave, Aunt Ida opens a bureau drawer, reaches under some flannel sheets and pulls out a moth-eaten Santa Claus suit and a scraggly beard. The pants of this suit have long since disintegrated. So my Aunt Ida hikes up her dress and yanks on a pair of my uncle’s blue serge pants. Over these she tugs galoshes.

She takes a pillow from the bed and plucks off the pillowcase. She stuffs the pillow under the Santa jacket to give herself a tummy. She fills the pillowcase with toys from Woolworth’s, Kresge’s and Grant’s. She puts on the beard, the cap. She tiptoes out into the hall. Then out the back door and into the night – air so cold it makes her nose sting, sky lit with a faint glow from the mills.

Around the house she goes and up on the side porch. She pauses and peeks in the window.

She sees what we see now. Me at 7. My young, handsome father and pretty mother.

(Death took my mother gently, during a nap. My father followed her the next year. But memory brings them back now, and makes them young again.)

On the frosty porch, my Aunt Ida sees us all – the old folks, the young folks and the kids. Moving, though we can’t feel the current, down a river of time.

We don’t see her. She is on the other side of the dark windowpane. The adults know she’s out there. We kids aren’t sure. It’s a moment of great suspense for us. We are not yet old enough to understand that life is fairly predictable. That you can usually tell what will happen next. That there are only a handful of plots, endlessly repeated.

I promised I’d get you back. But let me take a last look into that room. Almost all of the people we see there are gone now. But they haven’t gone far, and on Christmas they are very close. They are just the other side of the windowpane.

We can’t see them. But we feel them there, those simple people who loved us and took care of us. They left us blessings we too rarely count. And, if we let them, they come back at Christmas with gifts of everlasting life.

## Contact Information for the 2022 Board of Directors

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## Renewal Application

Persons interested in becoming a member or renewing their membership need only to send their check for $7, payable to ACBI, to Cindy Brooking, 676 VFW Road, Mitchell, Indiana 47446, along with the following information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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