



**TUCSON SOCIETY OF THE BLIND (TSB)
P.O. Box 57655. Tucson, AZ 85732
DECEMBER 2019/JANUARY 2020 NEWSY NOTES**

**TSB meets every Tuesday – 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Christ Presbyterian Church, 6565 E. Broadway**

**Come when you can and leave when you must. Bring a sack
lunch. For more information call Barbara, 298-2427 or Tom, 721-1029
www.tucsonsoftheblind.org**

CALENDAR

DECEMBER

- 3 Star Spangled Senior Holiday Show**
- 10 “Tips and Tricks for the Visually Impaired “Everyone bring a tip. Prepare to learn new tips**
- 17 Holiday Lunch and Holiday Gift Exchange. Leave at 12:30p.m. See details below**
- 24 TSB closed due to holidays**
- 31 TSB closed due to holidays**

JANUARY

- 7 Roxanna Baker playing the accordion. She will play Western and polka tunes**
- 8 Tucson EXPO 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM 445 S. Alvernon Way, See details below**
- 10 TSB Board Meeting 10:00am-1:00pm Biscuit Country Cafe 7026 E. Broadway**
- 14 Janet Dylla, Desert Low Vision. Janet will bring the latest assistive technology and other talking products**
- 16 Tucson Wildlife Center Fieldtrip: Meet at Center at 11:00 AM, See details below**
- 21 Gina Murphy, Mrs. Green, “Getting rid of toxic substances in your household and replacing them with earth-friendly alternatives”**
- 28 Maria Trujillo Tucson AARP, Arizona Association of Retired Persons. Learn about all the legislation AARP and the local chapter is working on**

February 4th - John McCann, “Talking about the American Council of the Blind”

Save the dates: March 5 and March 6 TSB Spring Concerts, 8111 E. Broadway, Fellowship Square, Villa 2 Great Room, 6:00 PM - 8:30 PM, Silent Auction, Raffle drawing, Concert tickets are \$10 each.

Thursday, March 5 Performers are Rob Boone on Trombone and Christine Vivona on Harp, playing Jazz and Broadway Tunes. **Friday, March 6** performer is Bill Gantz, an outstanding Western singer playing Western tunes on his guitar

Announcements

- **December 17, Holiday Gift Exchange and Mama Hawaiian Lunch.** Stay until 12:30p.m. Bring a wrapped gift (\$10 limit) to participate in the gift exchange. Mark the gift with a lady, if intended for a lady only. Members will play a fun game. Lunch will be catered by Hawaiian BBQ. TSB members can donate \$5. TSB treasury will pay the \$5 additional cost. Lunch Menu: Teriyaki Chicken, Aloha Pork, Macaroni Salad, Side Green Salad, Pineapple Chunks, and white cream sheet cake from Costco.
- **January 8 Tucson Lovin' Life After 50 Expo: 9:00a.m. - 1:00 p.m.,** Reid Park Doubletree Hotel, 445 S. Alvernon Way. TSB will have an exhibit table where we will give out brochures and resource lists, raffle off our beautiful gift basket and three large print calendars. There will be about 60 exhibitors, entertainment, and free prize drawings. Come join us for a fun day.
- **January 16 Tucson Wildlife Center trip to start at 11:00 a.m.** Wear your TSB t-shirts, long pants, and closed toe shoes. We will tour the animal hospital, meet the bird handlers, and meet live owls and other animals. Angeline will have other items to touch and learn about. We will also tour the outside of the animal enclosures. After the tour, we will eat lunch at the Village Inn, 9560 E. 22nd St. You can get ½ sandwich, soup or salad, and a piece of pie for \$11.00 Let Barb know as soon as possible if you are going. The only cost is your lunch at Village Inn. The Wildlife Center is located on Speedway, 3 ½ miles east of Houghton. Let Barb know if you are coming by January 7.
- **Please pay your TSB 2020 Dues of \$15.** TSB Dues are due in Jan 2020. The dues pay for luncheons, entertainment, and printing of the newsletter. What a deal! Any extra financial donations are also appreciated
- **Call our federal legislators and Support HR 2620, The Faster Treatments and Cures for Eye Diseases Act.** This legislation could help fund research on many eye diseases that our members have, such as age-related macular degeneration and glaucoma. Please call Federal Legislators: The U.S. and State Capital telephone line is 844-872-0234. Put in your zip code, then 1 for Federal, 2 for State. Press the # sign to get to the next call. It only takes a minute to call your congressional representative and urge them to pass H.R. 2620, the Faster Treatments and Cures for Eye Diseases Act. The act is a bipartisan bill introduced by Representatives Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Washington) and Sanford Bishop (D-Georgia). This bill has the potential to provide \$1 billion in research funding for blinding eye conditions, including inherited retinal diseases like retinitis pigmentosa, the vision loss associated with Usher syndrome.

H.R. 2620 creates new financial instruments, Eye Bonds, which will create \$1 billion of new funding designed to expedite the development of new treatments for all causes of blindness and severe vision loss. This will encourage critical funding for Usher syndrome research at universities, small labs, and other centers. You can make a difference. Leave a message for Sen Kirsten Sinema and Sen Martha McSally as well, as this legislation will appear in the Senate also. Thanks for your help

- **Grandparent 855-464-6872. GoGo Grandparent is a service well suited for the visually impaired in obtaining rides either on Uber or on Lyft. You call a live operator who schedules rides for you but you have to register first to use GoGo this service. I tried the service recently and found it easy to use. See registration details at the end of this article.**

When I used the service, I pressed 0 for operator. The operator typed in instructions for the driver: “Barbara is visually impaired, has a cane, and you need to approach her.” Then the operator matched me up with a five-star driver, Ms. Lisa from Lyft who arrived in four minutes. The operator also tells you the color and make of the car. Driver Lisa called to tell me she was two minutes out. Then in two minutes she came up to me where I was standing at the curb. Ms. Lisa was wonderful and friendly as she took me home. I found out later that you are supposed to tip with cash. After my great ride an email came from GoGo Grandparent with the fee details. I will not hesitate to use this service again.

GoGo Grandparent can be used from any landline phone or cell phone. It does not require a smart phone or an app. The advantage is a 24 live operator. The disadvantage is that GoGo charged me \$5 for using the service. To sign up call the above number with your credit card, cell phone number, and email address. If you are interested in using GoGo, give them this referral code 'GOGO2EQZC'. Both you and I will receive a free \$10 ride.

President’s Message by Barbara Macpherson

Well believe it or not, the holiday season is here. This newsletter has many accessible gift ideas such as the Smart Alexa Oven, basic cellphones for the blind, to gift cards for those who use Uber and Lyft services.

TSB members had an outstanding annual meeting and elected Shirley Jackson and John McCann to the board. Mark from Tony’s Deli 747-0070 catered a delicious lunch with all the trimmings and provided two kinds of pie.

Thanks to all who bought Jim Click tickets and supported TSB. We earned \$2,025 which will help us meet expenses. A special Thanks to Tom Young for taking charge of the Jim Click tickets.

Have a wonderful, happy, and healthy, holiday season! Warmly, Barb

Eye Talk by Annie Schlesinger

Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS) was identified over 250 years ago when Charles Bonnet's grandfather, who was blind, told about seeing things that were not there. Individuals with diminished eyesight may experience visual hallucinations (I like to refer to them as illusions) of faces, patterns, cartoons to complex pictures of disturbing scenes, whose illusions can come and disappear in a flash. There is no interaction with them. They are not psychotic but happen to some people with impaired vision.

Lots of us have never been told about the possibility of illusions happening and to suddenly see an image can be frightening. An explanation for them is that when the brain doesn't get much visual input or stimulation, those visual centers in the brain can become hyperactive and produce images. Sensory deprivation may be a factor. The brain needs input, give it stimulation such as socialization and activities. Attend groups such as Tucson Society of the Blind!!!

I didn't find any effective treatment for CBS. Drugs are iffy and can have side effects. Transcranial magnetic stimulation has been tried. Knowing about them may reduce the stress of seeing illusions. Challenge your habits: if they happen when you are seated -- stand up; if they happen indoors -- go outdoors more; if in dim light -- try bright light. Change something and see if it helps.

Smart Alexa Oven - Please click this link for all of the details about the Smart Oven. The cost is approximately \$250. <https://amzn.to/2n0X9wg>

- Meet Amazon Smart Oven - A 4-in-1 convection oven, microwave, air fryer, and food warmer.**
- Certified for Humans - Struggle-free, tinker-free, stress-free. No patience needed—it's actually simple.**
- Preset it and forget it - Includes 30+ built-in presets, voice control with Alexa through a compatible Echo device like the included Echo Dot.**
- Dinner is ready - With Announcements, Alexa will notify you when the oven is preheated or when your food is done.**
- Check the temperature - The temperature probe helps you know when your food is cooked just the way you like it.**
- Scan-to-cook - Scan select packaged foods with the Alexa app and Amazon Smart Oven will cook them automatically.**
- Spacious interior - Large enough to cook a 5-pound chicken.**

New Accessible Basic Cell Phone Lucia Available - Lucia allows blind and visually impaired individuals to use a basic mobile phone just like their sighted peers. The phone has a tactile keypad with big buttons in different colors and shapes, as well as a voice guide that reads what is on the screen and speaks the names of the buttons and menus. You can text using voice commands and there is a long-lasting battery. Those with low vision can increase the print on the screen. Any major carrier will pair with the phone, but the company has a plan for unlimited minutes and texting for \$20 month plus taxes. Lucia cost \$299 plus \$14 shipping..

More info at <http://www.razmobility.com/solutions/lucia/>. For general inquiries you can send questions to info@razmobility.com or call 800-729-0083.

Accessible Gift Ideas from Access World Nov 19 -There are a variety of tools to help someone in the kitchen. Let's start with a classic from Blind Mice Mart, the Pourfect Measuring Cups and Spoons for \$27.11. This set gives you 9 measuring cups and 12 measuring spoons that cover just about any imaginable amount. Need a 1/64 of a teaspoon drop? Or a large 2-cup portion? This set has you covered. Oh, and by the way, these durable plastic containers also include braille on the handles, so you can easily identify the size of each cooking thermometer. One of those items that you used to pay a pretty penny for, but is now a very affordable item, available on Amazon, is the Kizen Instapen Pro Instant Read Meat Thermometer for \$15.95. It will speak the temperature of your meat or other dishes within about two seconds. It is also waterproof and comes with a spare battery and a hook to attach it to a refrigerator.

I'd like to put in a plug for Amazon's Fire TV Stick with Alexa Voice Remote for \$39.95. While none of the major streaming devices will speak every screen for every app, Amazon has included a number of features on their Fire TV devices to help make more channels accessible, and they have continued to improve the interface over time. Apps that include a good or reasonable accessibility experience include Netflix, YouTube, Hulu, and Prime Video. The voice remote will let you say the name of a TV show or movie to find available services that include that show. You can also ask many of the same voice commands that you would ask an Amazon Echo. Many services also now include audio-described content, making television and movies more enjoyable.

In October, Uno Braille Cards were available at Target for \$9.99. While it has been possible to purchase braille Uno cards from specialized stores in the past, this is one of the first times that a mass merchant is offering a braille game in their store aisles, which is pretty special. The game itself includes 108 braille Uno cards that use print as well. There is braille writing on the box, including a message from the National Federation of the Blind. The game is available both in stores and online.

Many kids and kids at heart love to build masterpieces using Lego sets, but until recently, the instructions for these sets were not available in an alternative format. Now, Lego for the Blind, the brainchild of Lego fanatic Matthew Shifrin, includes directions for over 30 Lego sets ranging from a Pet Shop to a Volkswagen T1 Camper Van. Some assistance may be required to sort the pieces by color, but once this is done, the instructions can guide them the rest of the way.

Here is a little something for someone who may have just received their first iPhone or for someone who is a frequent traveler: How about a gift card from Lyft or Uber which can be used to summon a vehicle just about anywhere in the country?

Short Holiday Stories

Last year, when our three-year-old great-granddaughter Kylie was taken to see Santa Claus, she made sure to give him her wish list of toys. A week later, she ran into a different Santa in a mall. He stopped to ask what she wanted for Christmas. Kylie was appalled and let him know: "If you can't remember what I told you last week, how are you going to remember on Christmas Eve?!" Mary Paul

Years ago, drowning in too many responsibilities, I found myself devoid of any Christmas spirit. One day, I stopped at a red light. As I sorted through my long list of onerous tasks, a beat-up sedan pulled up next to me. Behind the wheel was Santa Claus belting out Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline." The man did not have a care in the world. Realizing he had an audience, he turned, looked me straight in the eye, and shouted, "Merry Christmas!" As he drove off, his enthusiasm lifted my spirits and officially kicked off my holiday season.

To surprise her son. I went over to their house, changed into a Santa suit in the bathroom, and, to the delight of the little boy, came out with a loud "Ho, ho, ho! After a half hour, I returned to the bathroom, changed back into my regular clothes, and exited the bathroom. The boy went in after me. He looked around for Santa. Then, reaching the only possible conclusion, he lifted the toilet seat and shouted, "Bye, Santa!" Kevin Cuddihy, Fairfax, Virginia

It had been a rough year: A single father with two young daughters, I was out of work and out of money. With little choice, I told the girls, "It looks like our gift from Santa will be the gift of our love for each other. Then a miracle occurred. I won \$1,000 in a contest. I kept it a secret as I went on a shopping spree and spent Christmas Eve wrapping presents for my girls, all the time thinking, boy, will they be surprised! The next morning, I went to the living room to lay out the gifts and froze. There were already dozens of presents under the Christmas tree and all with my name on them. My girls had felt bad that Dad wouldn't be getting any gifts, so they'd carefully wrapped their favorite stuffed animals and other toys so that I would have a merry Christmas. As I stared at the gifts through tear-filled eyes, I promised myself to never again doubt Santa Claus.

Andrew Shecktor, Berwick, Pennsylvania

Keep learning. Learn more about the computer, crafts, gardening, whatever.
Never let the brain idle. An idle mind is the recipe for depression.

Birthdays

December

20 Shirley Jackson
28 Ruth Hallett

January

13 Joe Mora
16 Arlene Thompson
25 Lucy Laue