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2016 Winter Edition
Volume 2 Issue 1

SIGHTED GUIDE OHIO



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Message from the Editor

First year milestone for Sighted Guide Ohio

Sighted Guide Ohio offers events, resources, services for your area, latest technology information, news and stories of people just like you and me....

Welcome back to Sighted Guide Ohio!!

Sighted Guide Ohio's mission is to provide a magazine dedicated to the visually impaired and blind friends and family. We reach out to the State of Ohio for the people that need a voice for visually impaired and blind communities.

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Photo of Adrianne Kolasinski

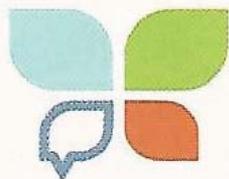


Photo of John Soovagian

*Optimism is the faith
that leads to
achievement.
Nothing can be done
without hope and
confidence.*

—Helen Keller





PROOF IT TO ME

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Center for Instructional Supports and Accessible Materials
Ohio State School for the Blind Outreach Program and Services

BEST GRANT

The BEST Grant is a statewide project of professional development and technical assistance dedicated to braille literacy, braille instruction, braille materials and braille technology in Ohio schools.

BEST Goals

The goals of this project are to:

Increase the braille competency of Ohio's educators through the provision of high quality professional and technical assistance that focus on results-driven outcomes.

Increase the knowledge and use/implementation of braille and state-of-the art technologies of Ohio educators through high quality professional development and technical assistance that focus on result-driven outcomes.

Increase the competency of personnel providing quality braille materials for Ohio students who require braille through the provision of high quality professional development training and technical assistance support.

Braille Excellence for Students and Teachers (BEST): A State-wide Project of Professional Development, Technical Assistance and Product Development Dedicated to Braille Literacy, Braille Instruction, Braille Materials, and Braille Technology in Ohio.

Contact CISAM for further information:

CISAM
5220 North High St.
Columbus, OH

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<http://cisam.ossb.oh.gov>



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“Believe you can and you’re half way there.”
 ~ Theodore Roosevelt

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Distribution

Sighted Guide Ohio was created to be a voice for the visually impaired and blind communities. SGO is a publication that covers the State of Ohio focusing on our four major cities including **Toledo, Cleveland, Columbus** and **Cincinnati, Ohio**

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Our Stories...

Charlotte Cushman

I have been in the field of blindness and visual impairment for more than 30 years, first as a teacher at Perkins School for the Blind and now as the manager of the on-line educational resources at Perkins. As both a teacher and a librarian, my passion is to share information and resources with people. Our web properties attract teachers, families, and related personnel, such as speech therapists, OTs, and psychologists working with children and youth who are blind or visually impaired.

On a day-to-day level, I am in frequent touch with people who ask questions or wish to share their ideas on one of our websites. Questions come from all different types of people and from all parts of the world. Parents who have just learned that their newborn child has a visual impairment may contact me asking for advice on how to get them the services they need. Teachers may ask about the transition to UEB (Unified English Braille) or the latest in assistive technology. A speech therapist may want to know how to make an AAC (Augmentative Alterna-

tive Communication) device accessible to a student who is blind. I enjoy trying to help people find the answers to a wide range of reference questions.

Perkins eLearning has 10 microsites for educators, so managing these always requires attention and creativity. Our sites focus on a wide variety of information, including literacy, science, Active Learning, transition, and more! I work with teachers, family members and others who have an activity or resource they would like to share with others. Sometimes they may need encouragement to share their idea, and sometimes they need the technical support to format it correctly online. When there is a big issue or a new development in the field, I often try to find content that is relevant to our readers.

Another big part of my job is using social media. I am committed to trying to reach people wherever they are, so this means that we need to have a strong presence on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/ptliteracy>, Twitter [https://](https://twitter.com/PathstoLiteracy)



[twitter.com/PathstoLiteracy](https://www.perkinselearning.org/) and Pinterest <https://www.pinterest.com/pathstoliteracy/>. Come and follow us there!

As the oldest school for the blind in the United States, Perkins has a long history of providing training for others in the field. All of our websites are free and we invite you to join us online! Visit <http://www.perkinselearning.org/> to learn more and to register for our websites.



www.perkinselearning.org



Learn More ▾

Paths to Transition



Welcome!

This site is a collection of ideas and resources related to the transition from school to adult life for youth who are blind or visually impaired, including those who are deafblind or who have multiple disabilities.

Share your ideas. Ask questions.
Join the community!

READ MORE ➤

Paths to Transition Website

By Charlotte Cushman

This website <http://www.perkinselearning.org/transition> from Perkins School for the Blind was recently launched to provide free information to families, youth, teachers, and related service providers. While transitions occur throughout life, the focus on the site is on leaving school and preparing for adult life, including career, as well as independent living.

One of the highlights of the site is the blog section <http://www.perkinselearning.org/transition/blog>. Anyone who registers for the site receives a weekly email notification of the most recent blog post. The authors of the posts represent a wide range of viewpoints, including the parent of a young man who is deafblind, a transition specialist, a college student with Usher Syndrome, a young adult who is totally blind and working in an office, and more.

Recent posts include:

- A Path to Transition for Parents
- 6 Tips to Succeed in College Through Self-Discipline
- The Skill of Self-Advocacy
- Tips for Your Students On Talking About a Disability with an Employer
- Transition, Beginning at Home



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CHANGING TECHNOLOGY IN THE WORKPLACE



A PATH TO TRANSITION ... FOR PARENTS



TIPS TO HELP STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS SUCCEED IN A JOB INTERVIEW

For more information or help registering, contact elearning@perkins.org



Our Stories...

Nikki Dobens

Despite challenges that society likely believes that I face, I think that I have lived an amazing life so far. I have never had sight, so I have never really had to adapt. Living life without vision has always been my “normal.”

I grew up being raised by a single father: I am the middle of 3 girls, the only one of which without sight. Growing up, I believe my father had higher expectations of me, because everyone assumed that I would need to be taken care of. He was always my biggest advocate, and in the process, that likely led to my career choice in the field of social work, where I could in turn help others.

I had the typical high school life, being involved in as many extracurricular activities: in my house, it was never a choice as to whether we would go to college: it was simply the question of where.

I graduated from high school in 2001, and began college at Wright State University that fall. I graduated cum laude, and also with general studies honors in 2005. I have my Bachelor of Arts in social work.

In 2007, I married my husband: we met while I was in school. We had our oldest

daughter in 2008, and our youngest in 2013.

Being a mom with a visual impairment has attracted the attention of some. It has forced me to face some ignorance, and intrusive questions. When my oldest was a baby, I felt like it was assumed I couldn't take care of them on my own. At times, I felt as though my life was on display, and even though I knew I should help to defeat the stereotype, I wanted to be treated like a “normal” mom.

As the girls have grown, I have learned not to care so much about what others think. They live the typical life, and their eyes are open to diversity, and my hope for them is that they will be accepting of everyone.

Aside from having the full-time job of being Mom, I also have worked at United Way of Greater Toledo for over 4 years. I started out working in 2-1-1 as an information and referral specialist. Now, I work in their coordinated access department, where we assist families and individuals who are at risk of homelessness, or facing it. I started working full-time last November, and I love that I am making such a difference in our community.



Being without sight may have challenges that someone else might not have. However, that isn't what identifies me, and it doesn't determine my happiness. I have been surrounded by both blessings and trials, and each moment has helped to make me who I am today.

**Nikki Fugett-Dobens BSW
CIRS |Coordinated Access
Specialist**

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Our Stories...

John Soovagian

My name is John and I just turned 20 years old back in October. I have 2 brothers and 2 sisters and I am the oldest. I was born with Septo Optic Dysplasia (SOD) which caused me to be born blind with no sight at all. This means the optic nerves in my eyes are not fully developed and the pituitary gland is the size of a ball point pen. Luckily none of my major hormones were affected. I have been mainstreamed in the regular school systems ever since I can remember and when I was 9 years old I started going to school at the Ohio State School for the Blind in Columbus, OH. My mom would drop me off every Sunday and be there to pick me up every Friday. I spent 6 years there until I turned 16 and my mom brought my back home. I am currently at Penta Career Center in the job placement program. This

program will help me get a job and live independently when I am able to live out on my own. I plan to graduate next year from the Project Search Program and be on my own in a group home or assisted living in the next few years. There are a lot of things I like to do for fun like reading and listening to music, but I love to cook and play with my dog (Ashley) as they are my favorite things to do. My ultimate favorite thing is weather. I always listen to my



Photo of John Soovagian

weather radio so I can tell my family what the weather is going to be like each day. When there is a thunderstorm, I love to go out in my garage and listen to it. The storms used to scare me when I was little bit now I really like the sounds they make.



What is septo-optic dysplasia?

Septo-optic dysplasia is a disorder of early brain development. Although its signs and symptoms vary, this condition is traditionally defined by three characteristic features: underdevelopment (hypoplasia) of the optic nerve, abnormal formation of structures along the midline of the brain, and pituitary hypoplasia.

The first major feature, optic nerve hypoplasia, is the underdevelopment of the optic nerves, which carry visual information from the eyes to the brain. In affected individuals, the optic nerves are abnormally small and make fewer connections than usual between the eyes and the brain. As a result, people with optic nerve hypoplasia have impaired vision in one or both eyes. Optic nerve hypoplasia can also be associated with unusual side-to-side eye movements (nystagmus) and other eye abnormalities.

The second characteristic feature of septo-optic dysplasia is the abnormal development of structures separating the right and left halves of the brain. These structures include the corpus callosum, which is a band of tissue that connects the two halves of the brain, and the septum pel-

lucidum, which separates the fluid-filled spaces called ventricles in the brain. In the early stages of brain development, these structures may form abnormally or fail to develop at all. Depending on which structures are affected, abnormal brain development can lead to intellectual disability and other neurological problems.

The third major feature of this disorder is pituitary hypoplasia. The pituitary is a gland at the base of the brain that produces several hormones. These hormones help control growth, reproduction, and other critical body functions. Underdevelopment of the pituitary can lead to a shortage (deficiency) of many essential hormones. Most commonly, pituitary hypoplasia causes growth hormone deficiency, which results in slow growth and unusually short stature. Severe cases cause panhypopituitarism, a condition in which the pituitary produces no hormones. Panhypopituitarism is associated with slow growth, low blood sugar (hypoglycemia), genital abnormalities, and problems with sexual development.

The signs and symp-

toms of septo-optic dysplasia can vary significantly. Some researchers suggest that septo-optic dysplasia should actually be considered a group of related conditions rather than a single disorder. About one-third of people diagnosed with septo-optic dysplasia have all three major features; most affected individuals have two of the major features. In rare cases, septo-optic dysplasia is associated with additional signs and symptoms, including recurrent seizures (epilepsy), delayed development, and abnormal movements.

How common is septo-optic dysplasia?

Septo-optic dysplasia has a reported incidence of 1 in 10,000 newborns.

What genes are related to septo-optic dysplasia?

In most cases of septo-optic dysplasia, the cause of the disorder is unknown. Researchers suspect that a combination of genetic and environmental factors may play a role in causing this disorder. Proposed environmental risk

(Continued on Page 12)



What is septo-optic dysplasia?

(Continued from Page 11)

factors include viral infections, specific medications, and a disruption in blood flow to certain areas of the brain during critical periods of development.

At least three genes have been associated with septo-optic dysplasia, although mutations in these genes appear to be rare causes of this disorder. The three genes, HESX1, OTX2, and SOX2, all play important roles in embryonic development. In particular, they are essential for the formation of the eyes, the pituitary gland, and structures at the front of the brain (the forebrain) such as the optic nerves. Mutations in any of these genes disrupt the early development of these structures, which leads to the major features of septo-optic dysplasia.

Researchers are looking for additional genetic changes that contribute to septo-optic dysplasia.

Read more about the HESX1 and OTX2 genes.

See a list of genes associated with septo-optic dysplasia.

How do people inherit septo-optic dysplasia?

Septo-optic dysplasia is usually sporadic, which means that the condition typically occurs in people with no history of the disorder in their family.

Less commonly, septo-optic dysplasia has been found to run in families. Most familial cases appear to have an autosomal recessive pattern of inheritance, which means that both copies of an associated gene in each cell have mutations. The parents of an individual with an autosomal recessive condition each carry one copy of the mutated gene, but they typically do not show signs and symptoms of the condition. In a few affected families, the disorder has had an autosomal dominant pattern of inheritance, which means one copy of an altered gene in each cell is sufficient to cause the condition.

Where can I find information about diagnosis or management of septo-optic dysplasia?

These resources address the diagnosis or management of septo-optic dysplasia

and may include treatment providers.

- Genetic Testing Registry: Septo-optic dysplasia sequence
- MedlinePlus Encyclopedia: Growth Hormone Deficiency
- MedlinePlus Encyclopedia: Hypopituitarism

You might also find information on the diagnosis or management of septo-optic dysplasia in Educational resources and Patient support.

General information about the diagnosis and management of genetic conditions is available in the Handbook. Read more about genetic testing, particularly the difference between clinical tests and research tests.

To locate a healthcare provider, see How can I find a genetics professional in my area? in the Handbook.

Where can I find additional information about septo-optic dysplasia?

You may find the following resources about septo-optic dysplasia helpful. These materials are written for the general public.



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Sonar Smart-bracelet From Sunu Provides Independence for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Sunu Sets Sights on Crowdfunding

(Boston, November 16, 2015) Sunu, a startup focused on assistive wearable technology, today announced the launch of a crowdfunding campaign designed to raise at least \$50,000 to help bring a new generation of its product to market. The award-winning technology powers a sonar smart-bracelet called the Sunu Band, providing enhanced mobility and independence for the blind and vision impaired. The campaign also offers Sunu Tags, helping owners track and retrieve personal items.

"From my own experience, independent mobility for people living with impaired vision can be especially frustrating and stressful," said Fernando Albertorio, Sunu's CEO and co-founder, and a visually impaired entrepreneur. "The current aids in the market are simply too expensive, not intuitive and tend to label or stigmatize the user, causing many people to opt-out. A user-centered design creates functional but discreet and intuitive devices."

An estimated 20.6 million adult Americans (or nearly 10 percent of all adult Americans) report they are blind or have trouble seeing, even when wearing glasses or contact lenses. There are more than 280 million visually impaired individuals worldwide. Visual impairment at any level can cause difficulties with everyday activities such as driving, reading, socializing and walking. With the Sunu Band's

proximity sensors and haptic feedback (vibrations), the visually impaired can better sense objects in their path and navigate successfully.

The Sunu team was a 2014 Gold MassChallenge winner and received the MassChallenge Perkins award for assistive technology. Over the past year the company has improved and tested the product and kicked off partnerships with various organizations in order to supply subsidized Bands and Tags to those in need. Sunu completed product testing and validation with both the Perkins School for the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind, and worked with numerous orientation and mobility experts, and individual users. The new Band includes:

- A haptic clock allowing users to tell time via discreet vibrations.
- Connections to the Sunu Tag locator beacon, helping people keep track of personal articles.
- A lower regular price (\$249) due to manufacturing advances. Special limited time prices are available through IndieGogo: a Super Early Bird for \$159 and an Early Bird for \$199.

The crowdfunding campaign



includes a referral program for those still can't afford a Sunu Band, allowing them to "win" one by sharing the campaign with friends and family. Sunu is now accepting pre-orders on IndieGogo through December 16, 2015. Supporters can receive Sunu Tags, Sunu Bands, cellphone cases, school, organization or distributor packs, and the ultimate Sunu Insider Experience which includes a visit to the Guadalajara, Mexico and tours of the Sunu Mexican HQ and lab.

About Sunu

Sunu's mission is to empower mobility and independence for the visually impaired by creating wearable technology that enables and augments the senses in a way that is discreet and intuitive. Started as a community service project at a Helen Keller School for blind children in Mexico, Sunu has since received global recognition for its sonar smart-bracelet. Learn more at <http://sunu.io>

Bobbie Carlton, Carlton PR & Marketing, 781-718-7619 bobbie@carltonprmarketing.com



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OUB is a charitable nonprofit organization under Section 501c3. We gladly accept your generous donations!

More than a summer camp

OUB Camps are fantastic opportunities for children with blindness or low vision to learn, grow and thrive! Our camps provide outdoor educational experiences and job training where kids and staff with visual impairments can participate in all of the usual camping activities like campfires, boating, swimming and hiking, while learning skills, like cooking, that will help them prepare for a lifetime of independence and success.



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staff members! Apply today!

Who can attend?

Any child age 7 - 19 who is blind or has low vision that interferes with their living, learning and social interaction is welcome to attend OUB Camps.



5 Effective Strategies for the Inclusive Classroom

By Kristin Vogel

Students with special and exceptional needs are placed in inclusive learning environments more frequently than in the past. For general educators with a limited special education background, this can often be anxiety provoking and stressful. Here are five strategies that have been successful for working with students in the inclusive classroom.

1. Get to know your students' IEPs/504s

Upon receiving notice that a student with a specific plan is entering your class, it's important to connect with that student's case manager. For a student with a 504 plan, that is usually the school counselor; for a student with an IEP it's either the Special Education Teacher or Resource Specialist. You should receive a brief synopsis of the IEP, often referred to as the "IEP at a Glance" form. This will detail the specific services and minutes each student receives, as well as any accommodations and modifications that are available for them.

One of the most common accommodations for students with special needs is preferential seating. This doesn't always mean in the front row of the classroom right next to the teacher's desk. There are many instances where seating a student in the front row can be catastrophic! Most of the rooms I see are grouped in clusters; I like to make sure that a student I am

working with is next to peers they feel comfortable with, and can help explain a concept during collaborative time. Seats away from distractions such as windows or doors is quite helpful for students with attention issues.

Take Action: *Check and make sure you have current documents for students in your class. Make a chart with what services each student receives and how frequently. Make note of their next IEP meeting date. If you haven't started one yet, start a folder for student work samples-this will make the Special Educator's job that much easier!*

2. Implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Universal Design is so much more than one of the hottest buzzwords circulating around education circles. It's an approach to curriculum planning and mapping that makes learning engaging and accessible to a wider range of learners with different strengths and needs. UDL builds on Howard Gardner's theories of multiple intelligences, in that it calls for teaching to utilize multiple modalities, and for students to respond to learning with a variety of assessment tools. Educators that recognize the importance of UDL realize that we all learn and express ourselves in different ways, and that in order to assess skills we need to be allowed to use our strengths, while practicing our areas of need at

the same time.

3. Support Important Life Skills

As a seasoned educator, when I hear the term "life skills", I often think of tasks that are performed by our more severely disabled students, many of whom are not in a general education environment. When I do this, I am shortchanging my students, many who lack very necessary skills they need in order to be a productive and contributing member of society. Many general education mainstream students cannot perform the following simple tasks:

- telling time from an analog clock
- writing a simple letter
- signing their name in cursive
- note taking and study skills

Many of the teachers that I work with have a "Study Skills Thursday", where students clean out their backpacks, organize their binders and notebooks, and focus on developing and self-reflecting on both short and long-term goals. I also do locker checks with some of my students. The battle is half won if a student comes to school organized and prepared.

Take Action: *Find or create a survey for your students to gauge what essential skills they have, and what they need (I use this Learning Skills and Work Habits Student Self-Assessment*



Checklist from Teachers Pay teachers). How can you incorporate instruction in these skills into your everyday schedule?

4. Engage in Collaborative Planning and Teaching

No classroom is an island, especially an inclusive classroom. Opening up your room to service providers, paraprofessionals, special education teachers, and parents gives you valuable opportunities to participate in collaborative teaching. Collaborative teaching looks differently depending on what school, level, and setting you are working. I am fortunate enough to work in a school where collaborative teaching is encouraged and celebrated. Teachers have common planning times, and professional development time is often set aside for teachers to plan together. This often spans grade levels and subject areas.

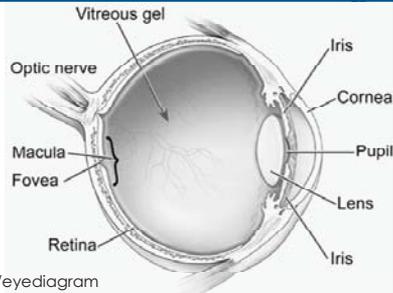
Take Action: *Try to find a common time to sit and meet with your grade-level Special Education teacher. How can you work together to improve student learning? Draft a plan to hand to your administrator; perhaps you can receive a stipend for your planning time!*

5. Develop a strong Behavior Management Plan

Having a successful inclusive

Can you name the parts of the eye?
Do you know how each part helps you see?

<https://nei.nih.gov/health/eyediagram>



classroom depends upon having control of your classroom. It is essential to have clearly communicated expectations and goals, that are accessible to all students. Your classroom environment should be tailored to better suit diverse students' needs. With students' and specialists' input, create a checklist or action plan for students.

Some specific behavior management strategies that support effective instruction are:

- Posting daily schedules
- Displaying classroom rules and expectations
- Encouraging peer to peer instruction and leadership
- Using signals to quiet down, start working, and putting away materials.
- Giving students folders, labels and containers to organize supplies.
- Checking in with students

while they work

- Utilizing proactive rather than reactive interventions as needed
- Speaking to students privately about any concerns
- Employing specific, targeted positive reinforcement when a student meets a behavioral or academic goal.

Take Action: *Look through student IEPs to see if any student has a formal Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). Consult with your Special Education teacher for resources on how to establish and strengthen behavior management in your classroom. If possible, have the SpEd teacher observe and give feedback.*

There are many pieces to the puzzle for creating an effective inclusive classroom. Communication is key, and collaboration with other educators and professionals has a great benefit to all.

Are you interested in earning credits or just want to learn more about a range of topics related to the education of students with visual impairments? Perkins School for the Blind offers lots of online classes, including many that are self-paced.

Watch the latest videos or sign up for an upcoming webinar!

Find out more here:

www.perkinslearning.org/professional-development

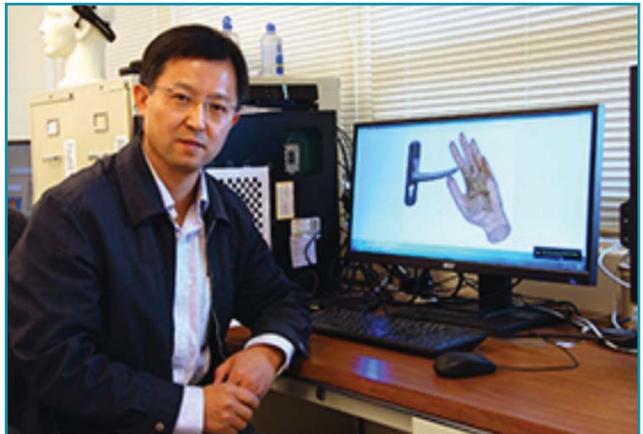
To see the calendar of upcoming events, visit: www.perkinslearning.org/events-monthly





Robotics to help blind and visually impaired to recognize objects

A hand-worn robotic device is being developed that will help millions of blind and visually impaired people navigate past movable obstacles or assist in their ability to pre-locate, pre-sense and grasp an object. In collaboration between the University of Nevada, Reno and the University of Arkansas, Little Rock, researchers will develop new technology, with co-robotic functions currently unavailable in assistive devices, for the wearable robotic device. The team received an \$820,000, three-year National



Robotics Initiative grant from the National Institutes of Health's National Eye Institute division. The grant is also the first NRI grant for the University.

Read more at: <http://www.wearabletechnologyinsights.com/articles/8865/robotics-to-help-blind-and-visually-impaired-to-recognize-objects>

DID YOU KNOW

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- One Touch speed dialing
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- Menu Readout
- Digit Dial
- Readout mode

Devices that provide for some or all of the features mentioned:

- LG Cosmos™ 3 • LG Revere® 3
- LG Extraverit™ • Samsung Convoy™ 3
- Samsung Gusto® 3 • LG Lucid™



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TO ORGANIZE, charter and supervise service clubs to be known as Lions clubs.

TO COORDINATE the activities and standardize the administration of Lions clubs.

TO CREATE and foster a spirit of understanding among the peoples of the world.

TO PROMOTE the principles of good government and good citizenship.

TO TAKE an active interest in the civic, cultural, social and moral welfare of the community.

TO UNITE the clubs in the bonds of friendship, good fellowship and mutual understanding.

TO PROVIDE a forum for the open discussion of all matters of public interest; provided, however, that partisan politics and sectarian religion shall not be debated by club members.

TO ENCOURAGE service-minded people to serve their community without personal financial reward, and to encourage efficiency and promote high ethical standards in commerce, industry, professions, public works and private endeavors.

www.ohiolions.org



10 things you probably don't know about braille

By Bill Winter

Surprising facts about the raised-dot reading system, including an asteroid named Braille and why there's braille on drive-through ATMs

Why is braille on the keypad buttons of drive-through ATMs? So back-seat passengers who are blind can reach the ATM and independently make a transaction without help from the driver.

January is National Braille Literacy Month, so it's the perfect time to explore the world's most popular tactile reading and writing system.

Braille is named after its creator, Louis Braille, and uses combinations of raised dots to spell out letters and punctuation. Around the world, people who are blind read braille with their fingertips and can write it using devices like the Perkins Brailier. But that's not the whole story about braille. For example...

1. Braille started out as a military code called "night writing." It was developed in 1819 by the French army so soldiers could communicate at night without speaking or using candles. Fifteen year-old French schoolboy Louis Braille learned about the code, and eventually developed the more usable, streamlined version of the braille alphabet we know today.

2. There's an asteroid named Braille. In 1999, NASA's Deep Space 1 probe flew past an asteroid while on its way to photograph the Borrelly comet. NASA named the asteroid "9969 Braille" in honor of Louis Braille.

3. Braille takes up more space than the traditional alphabet, so braille books are much larger than their print counterparts. "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire" is 10 volumes in braille, the "New American Bible" is 45 volumes and "Webster's Unabridged Dictionary" is a shelf-hogging 72 volumes.

4. Braille is not a language. It's a tactile alphabet that can be used to write almost any language. There are braille versions of Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, Hebrew and many other languages.

5. Most people who are blind don't know braille. According to a 2009 study by the National Federation of the Blind, only 10 percent of Americans with blindness can read braille. That number has been falling as more people with visual impairments use audio books, voice-recognition software and other technology to read and write. However, the same study found that braille-literate people are more likely to attain higher levels of education and be employed.

6. There's a braille "Olympics." It's the annual Braille Challenge for students who are blind, sponsored by the Los Angeles-based Braille Institute. More than 1,400 students from the U.S. and Canada test their braille skills in categories like reading comprehension, proof-reading and spelling. Winners in each age group walk away with monetary prizes – and braille bragging rights for a year.

7. Just because you're blind

doesn't mean you don't have to learn math. There's a special version of braille just for mathematics called the Nemeth Code. It was invented by Dr. Abraham Nemeth and can be used to transcribe math, algebra and calculus.

8. Braille is the surprise plot twist in the 2010 movie "The Book of Eli." In the movie, Denzel Washington plays a loner who wanders through a violent post-apocalyptic wasteland with the last known copy of the Bible. At the end, you find out that the Bible is in braille and Washington's character is blind.

9. There are two versions of braille – contracted and uncontracted. In uncontracted braille, every word is spelled out. Contracted braille is a "shorthand" version where common words are abbreviated, much like "don't" is a shorter version of "do" and "not." Most kids start with uncontracted braille and then learn the contracted version.

10. There's a good reason why braille is on the keypad buttons of drive-through ATMs. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates that all ATMs must be accessible to people with visual impairments, and drive-through ATMs aren't exempt. That's so passengers who are blind, travelling in the back seat of cars or taxis, can reach the ATM and independently make a transaction without assistance from the driver.

Read more about: Braille & Literacy, Living With Blindness
www.perkins.org



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Social Security Questions and Answers

By Erin Thompson, Public Affairs Specialist

DISABILITY

Question:

How long does it take to get a decision after I apply for disability benefits?

Answer:

The time it takes to get a decision on your disability application can vary depending on:

- The nature of your disability;
- How quickly we can get your medical evidence from your doctor or other medical source;
- Whether it is necessary to send you for a medical examination; and
- Whether we review your application for quality purposes.

If you would like to apply for disability benefits, you can use our online application.

Applying online for disability benefits offers several advantages:

- You can start your disability claim immediately. There is no need to wait for an appointment;
- You can apply from the convenience of your home, or on any computer; and
- You can avoid trips to a Social Security office, saving you time and money.

For more information, go to www.socialsecurity.gov/disability.

Question:

Why is there a five-month waiting period for Social Security disability benefits?

Answer:

The law states that Social Security disability benefits begin with the sixth full month after the date your disability began. You're not entitled to benefits for any month prior to that. Learn more at our website: www.socialsecurity.gov/disability.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME

Question:

My grandfather, who is receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI), will be coming to live with me. Does he have to report the move to Social Security?

Answer:

Yes. An SSI beneficiary must report any change in living arrangements within 10 days after the month the change occurs. If the change is not reported, your grandfather could receive an incorrect payment and have to pay it back, or he may not receive all the money due. Just as importantly, your grandfather needs to report the new address to Social Security to receive mail from us. You can report the change by mail or in person at any Social Security office or call Social Security's toll-free number at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY: 1-800-325-0778). You can get more information by reading the booklet Understanding SSI, at

www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi.

Question:

How do Social Security benefits and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments differ?

Answer:

The two programs are funded differently and have different eligibility requirements.

Workers and employers fund Social Security retirement, survivors, and disability insurance through taxes on workers' earnings. Generally, we pay Social Security benefits to eligible workers and their families based on the worker's earnings. Meanwhile, general taxes fund the SSI program, which serves the needy. SSI eligibility depends largely on limited income and resources. Please visit www.socialsecurity.gov for more information.

THE FORCE IS STRONG WITH SOCIAL SECURITY'S ONLINE SERVICES

"There's been an awakening. Have you felt it?" This winter, Americans of all generations are awakening to the newest film in the Star Wars franchise, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Many readers probably remember seeing the first *Star Wars* film in theaters in 1977. Audiences watched with fascination at the advanced technology used by the Jedi and Sith in a galaxy far, far away.

We still don't have interstellar travel, personal robots, or holo-



Social Security

graphic communication, but we now use technology in our daily lives that would have seemed like science fiction in 1977. At that time, it would still be years until the modern Internet and smart phones would be part of our lives. Now, many of us can't imagine life without such technology.

Many people who need to do business with Social Security are finding an awakening of sorts in how easy it is to use our online services. We continually expand our online services to reflect changing customer needs, and to provide you with world-class service that would even have interplanetary traveler Han Solo saying, "Chewie, we're home." Our online services are convenient and secure, and allow you to conduct much of your business with us from the comfort of your home, office, or space freighter. (Not all services are available in all galaxies).

For instance, you can use our website at www.socialsecurity.gov to apply for retirement, spouse's, or disability benefits online. You can also apply for Medicare and Extra Help with your Medicare prescription drug costs on our website. We also have online benefit planners to help you estimate your future retirement, disability, and survivors benefits.

You can open a free personal online my Social Security account, where you can keep track of your annual earnings and verify them. Why is that important? Because your future benefits are based on your annual earnings. With your account, you can also get an estimate of your future benefits if you are still working; or, if you currently

receive benefits, you can use your account to manage your benefits, and get an instant letter with proof of your benefits. You can also request a Medicare card replacement. "The force is calling to you. Just let it in." This winter, check out our online services and join the millions of other Americans who have already awakened their own personal my Social Security accounts. A my Social Security account is a force to be reckoned with. And you don't need to be a Jedi to have one. Learn more at www.socialsecurity.gov. Once you go online, this force will be with you ... always.

USE YOUR EXTRA DAY TO LEAP INTO RETIREMENT

It's leap year and that means one thing — you can add one extra calendar day to your February schedule. Many people are preparing for the upcoming elections. Others might be getting a jump on spring-cleaning. What will you do with your extra day?

You could use a few of your extra minutes to check out what Social Security offers at www.socialsecurity.gov/onlineservices. There, you can:

- Apply for retirement, disability, and other benefits;
- Get your Social Security Statement;
- Appeal a recent medical decision about your disability claim;
- Find out if you qualify for benefits;

If you're planning or preparing for retirement, you can spend a fraction of your extra 24 hours at my Social Security. In as little as 15 minutes, you can create a safe and secure my Social Security ac-

count. More than 21 million Americans already have accounts. In fact, someone opens one about every 6 seconds. Join the crowd and sign up today at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount. With a personalized my Social Security account, you can:

- Obtain an instant, personalized estimate of your future Social Security benefits;
- Verify the accuracy of your earnings record — your future benefit amounts are based on your earnings record;
- Change your address and phone number, if you receive monthly Social Security benefits;
- Sign up for or change direct deposit of your Social Security benefits;
- Get a replacement SSA-1099 or SSA-1042S for tax season; and
- Obtain a record of the Social Security and Medicare taxes you've paid.

And if you have a little time to spare, you can always check out our blog, Social Security Matters, at blog.socialsecurity.gov. There, you will find guest posts by Social Security experts, in-depth articles, and answers to many of your questions about retirement, benefits, and healthcare. Each post is tagged by topic so you can easily search for what matters most to you.

Leaping from webpage to webpage, you can easily see that Social Security has you covered all year long, not just on that extra day in February. Remember, you can access our homepage that links to our wide array of online services any day of the — at www.socialsecurity.gov.



The Ohio State School for the Blind Project SEARCH

We are excited to announce Project SEARCH for the upcoming 2016-17 school year. Project SEARCH is a one-year, high school transition program, which provides training and education leading to employment for individuals with low vision and blindness. This program will occur on-site within the host business, COSI, The Center for Science and Industry. The students have the opportunity to learn valuable work and life skills while rotating through multiple internships. Each student applies to the program and is accepted through a selection committee process. All students must be eligible for services with the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities to participate and have earned all their academic credits necessary to graduate. The application deadline is January 29, 2016. For further information please contact Cathern King at cking@ossb.oh.gov or (614)468-8877.



Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities



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Take a Break with a Digital Talking Book



The Ohio Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled (OLBPD) is part of the Cleveland Public Library. In partnership with the State Library of Ohio Talking Book Program, OLBPD serves as the Regional Library for the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) of the Library of Congress, and administers a free library program of braille and audio materials circulated to eligible borrowers in the State of Ohio by postage-free mail. OLBPD and the State Library of Ohio Talking Book Program received the 2010 National Library Service Network Library of the Year Award.



Ohio Library for the
Blind & Physically Disabled
at Cleveland Public Library

17121 Lake Shore Blvd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44110-4006
Phone: 216.623.2911
Ohio Toll-Free: 800.362.1262
Fax: 216.623.7036
Email: olbpd@cpl.org



Facebook for Visually Impaired and Blind

Odds are you've checked your Facebook account in the last few hours. Odds are even pretty good that you have Facebook open on your desktop or smartphone at this very moment. In its 11+ years, Facebook has gone from cyber novelty to internet tentpole—a (if not “the”) hub around which a tremendous number of people orient their everyday online activity.

For seeing-impaired users, however, Facebook's inherent visual offerings can make using the social network a difficult proposition. And while Facebook has long worked on tools to make the site—particularly its “photos” functionality—more accessible to those with visual impairments, reports of a new feature indicate the company is preparing to up their usability in a significant way.

According to reports, Facebook is looking into the use of artificial intelligence software that allows users with visual impairments the ability to query the site about what is in front of them. For example, not only will the site describe a photograph based on who is tagged in it, but upon prompting, will be able to narrate the action taking place as well.

In addition to this developing form of dynamic photo-

interaction, in November Facebook released a HIKE! tutorial to the public, which outlines best practices for web developers to follow when coding with accessibility in mind. “We really don't want accessibility to be the luxury of a handful of companies,” Facebook's head of accessibility engineering, Jeff Wieland, told Phys.org. “We want everything around the world to be built with accessibility in mind.”

In fact, in some instances, improving accessibility for visually impaired web users is as simple as adding a browser extension, like the newly developed Depict add-on, which not only works to supply auditory narratives of on-screen imagery, but also solicits crowd-sourced depictions of pictures it doesn't already have in its databanks.

As Depict creator Niamh



Parsley told GOOD in July 2015, internet accessibility for the visually impaired still has a way to go. “Depict ended up being a little bit of a Band-Aid fix,” she explained. “But it gives image descriptions to blind users right now and, most importantly, it gets the conversation started and raises awareness about accessibility on the web for blind users.”

Facebook's efforts to make its content available to all users shows just how that conversation is getting results.





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VIFAS is a non-profit organization working with local school districts in the Northwest Ohio area to provide necessary resources for the visually impaired and blind.

VIFAS is proud to be creating awareness and support for visual impaired / blind friends and family through workshops and events that target community outreach and education.



www.vifas.org

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Cleveland Sight Center

University Circle
1909 East 101st Street
Cleveland, OH 44106
216-791-8118
clevelandsightcenter.org

Cleveland Sight Center's mission is to empower people with vision loss to realize their full potential and to shape the community's vision of that potential.

Cleveland Sight Center is a CARF accredited non-profit agency founded in 1906 that provides preventative, educational, rehabilitative and other services for individuals who are blind or have low vision, directly serving approximately 13,000 clients annually and many more indirectly through radio reading and community outreach programs. In addition to providing educational and rehabilitative services, CSC also offers social and recreational activities for clients and hosts camping sessions at its summer camp Highbrook Lodge in Chardon, OH. Cleveland Sight Center has an on-site Vision Clinic specializing in low vision and routine eye exams, as well as a retail store featuring products for living well with vision loss.



Community Partner





Move & Groove for Children with Visual Impairments

Tuesdays, 10 – 11 a.m.
January 12, 19 & 26
February 2, 9 & 16

A NEW program at The Chicago Lighthouse North

Through a unique blend of activities, engaged and curious kids will move through a weekly theme-based adventure combining movement, music, art and literacy to promote the development of new skills and curiosity. The sessions will be taught by an experienced special education teacher of the visually impaired.

Ages: 6 months – 3 years (siblings welcome)

Fee: \$8/session (siblings \$4/session)

For more information, please contact:

Melissa Wittenberg
Senior Director, The Chicago Lighthouse North
(847) 510-2060

Boot Camp

Date: Tuesday January 27, 5:30pm - 6:30pm

Where: Cleveland Sight Center, 1909 East 101st St. Clyde E. Williams, Jr. Aud. B Cleveland , OH 44106 MAP

“Blindness Basics”

Date: Tuesday February 2, 8:30am - 9:30am

Where: New Avenues to Independence, Inc., 17608

Euclid Ave. Cleveland , OH 44112 MAP

RESCHEDULED: You Can Get Involved in Unified English Braille (UEB): An Online Focus Group for Parents (Second Chance!)

- Thursday, January 28th at 9:00 PM EST (6:00 PM Pacific).
- Tuesday, February 2nd at 8:00 PM EST (5:00 PM Pacific).

Early research about how people felt about the idea of change was important and helped later adopters (Canada and the United Kingdom, and the United States) evaluate the impact of their own possible transition to UEB.

There have numerous been focus group and interview studies in which consumers and vision professionals have been asked about their concerns, expectations and experiences with UEB. A big gap in our research involves the voices of the parents and families of children who are blind and transitioning to the UEB. We want to learn more about what families expect from UEB and what is happening to support them.

We are holding two online focus group meetings to gathering stories from families about your expectations and thoughts about the changes to the braille code. We will use these experiences to help explore how families are mak-

Upcoming Events

ing the transitions. We also plan to ask questions about your suggestions for designing an online braille eLearning platform.

Please help us learn more about what is happening for parents and families by joining us for an online focus group webinar on either:

- Thursday, January 28th at 9:00 PM EST (6:00 PM Pacific).
- Tuesday, February 2nd at 8:00 PM EST (5:00 PM Pacific).

Your input will help us understand how we can support other families during this historic transition period. For your time and effort, we will be offering a \$50.00 gift card to those who participate after completion of the focus group session.

Joining is easy. Just follow this link to get started: UEB Prep Parent Focus Group Survey and Consent to Participate https://portland-state.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5vb4rU9CBrfosy9

By joining the world-wide UEB community, braille readers in the US are adding an exciting new chapter to the long history of Braille’s devel-



Upcoming Events

opment. We are hoping the information and resources offered here will help you in your journey to learning more about UEB and Braille.

For more information on the UEB, UEB Prep, or the UEB Prep Parent Focus Group please contact:

Drs. Kathryn Botsford (phone; 206-849-3021 206-849-3021); or Holly Lawson (phone: 503-725-4595 503-725-4595) at Portland State University, Portland, Oregon

Make-Ahead Dishes Make Sense

Date: Thursday, February 4, 10:00 AM CST 10:00 GMT

If your weekdays are too exhausting to make dinner every night, your weekends are overbooked or you don't want to spend your entire party in the kitchen cooking, make-ahead recipes can be the solution.

Set that pricey take-out menu down and join Seminars@Hadley as we explore make-ahead options that you can take from the fridge, freezer or slow cooker to the table. Bring your tips to add as presenters Linn Sorge and Sue Melrose, both Hadley instructors, share their ideas

and make-ahead tips. Dawn Turco, Hadley senior vice president, will co-present and moderate this 60 minute seminar. Bring your ideas along to share and join in the fun!

This seminar is an audio presentation. Space in this seminar is limited. Please only register if you know you are available to attend so that others are not closed out. To register for the seminar, select the "Registration" link below.

Please read the technology requirements carefully prior to the seminar.

If you are already registered, we encourage you to verify that you are able to access the room at least 24 hours prior to the start of the event to allow time for troubleshooting. If you require technical assistance, please contact The Hadley School for the Blind helpdesk at helpdesk@hadley.edu or by calling 847-446-8111 847-446-8111 ext. 6690.

Line Dancing

Date: Sunday February 8, 10:00am - 12:00pm

Where: Cleveland Sight Center, 1909 East 101st St. Cleveland, OH 44106 MAP

Client-lead line dancing, teaching clients the basics of line dancing.

www.theblindcafe.com/

Events are subject to change.
Call ahead to confirm.

Ohio Accessible Playgrounds

Beachwood: Preston's H.O.P.E. — Located on the property of The Mandel JCC, 26001 South Woodland Rd. The largest fully accessible playground park in Northeast Ohio.

Cambridge: Cambridge City Park — McKinley Ave & Lakeside Dr. This GameTime playground includes swings, slides, coil-spring rides, climbing platforms and activity panels, and is treated with an added safety feature of a rubberized coating.

Circleville: Mary Virginia Crites Hannan Community Park — A Boundless™ Playground is located off Rt. 188 on Pontius Road.

The City of Ravenna: Ravenna Community Playground — Located in Chestnut Hills Park, on North Chestnut Street in Ravenna.

Colerain Township: Clippard Park Boundless™ Playground — 10243 Dewhill Road.

Columbus: Carriage Place Park — 4900 Sawmill Road.

Dayton: W.S. McIntosh Memorial Park—W Riverview Ave. Located a half-mile from a historic Wright Brothers site.

Euclid: Playground of Possibilities — located at Bexley Park.

Mason: Thomas P Quinn Park — 880 Tradewinds Drive. This neighborhood park features a handicap accessible playground along with tennis, basketball.

Newark: Newark Rotary Accessible Playground—located on Sharon Valley Road just north of the OSUN/COTC campus.

Powell: Liberty Township Boundless™ Playground — 2507 Home Rd.

Stow: Stow Outdoor Accessible Recreation Playground — located at Silver Springs Park, 5027 Stow Road.

Warren: The Valley's Inclusive Playground — located within Perkins Park, 391 Mahoning Ave.

West Chester: Hopewell Elementary School Boundless™ Playground — 8300 Cox Road.

Westerville: Millstone Creek Park — 745 N. Spring Rd.

More information available online at www.sightedguideohio.org



The 2nd Annual Beeping Easter Egg Hunt for Blind/Visually Impaired



When: Saturday, March 12th, 2016 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Where: St. Stephen Lutheran Church, 7800 Erie Street, Sylvania, OH 43560

NWO Parents of Blind/Visually Impaired are pleased to announce the 2nd Annual Beeping Easter Hunt. Blind and visually-impaired children of any age, from anywhere, along with their sighted siblings, may participate in this fun event.

- Beeping Egg Hunt will start at **10:30am**
- Egg Hunt for sighted siblings will immediately follow beeping egg hunt.
- Each blind/visually-impaired child will have a sighted guide if wanted/needed and will have the opportunity to hunt for Easter eggs that make a beeping sound. Feel free to bring your own basket, container/bag to place the eggs. We will also have some on hand if you forget, no biggie!
- There will be light refreshments and food/snacks.
- Each child will take home a bag full of candy and/or snacks.

To register your child for this event, **please RSVP by March 6th** for event planning purposes. (A parent or guardian must be present at all times.) You can also find us on Facebook under: Toledo & NWO Parents of Blind/Visually Impaired.

Contact Michelle Ballard to register for this event. Call/Text: (419) 787-5752.

E-Mail: mballard@bex.net

Event Sponsors:

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