

From The Dallas Lighthouse News Desk

by Dallas Light House for the Blind

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**Dallas Lighthouse
for the Blind**
focus on opportunity



Employment Services
Offers a variety of high-quality employment services to the business community. We train and place highly-qualified, pre-screened employees for Customer Service, Telemarketing and other Call Center positions. The Dallas Lighthouse provides direct hire, contract placement and temporary placement personnel to meet a variety of needs. Training is also provided for employers on a number of topics, including Job Accommodations and Tax Incentives.



Welcome to Our March Edition of Good News You Can Use from the Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind

I'm Blake Lindsay, Manager of Communications. As a longtime presenter with total blindness, it is my passion to bring you monthly motivation, education, and entertainment dedicated to assisting and inspiring people with all levels of visual impairment. For 23 months, we have updated you on development of life improving assistive technology.

A portion of DLB's excellent educational tactic is to advance your proficiency with access to useful tools. The Dallas Lighthouse team also believes that informing the public on current accomplishments from those with visual impairment is important.

DLB's distinctive newsletter will continue to share your success stories to help initiate additional employment and educational opportunities. Many of our readers have confirmed that these professional development stories frequently move them to achieve even more. That's what we consider to be "good news."

We'll keep you up to date on Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind's expansions, and special activities to encourage your involvement. We'll let you know about employment opportunities, and services for people with visual impairment within our enormous 11-county, 7,600 square mile North Texas territory.

Thank you for subscribing to Good News You Can Use. Please share this worthwhile information with your family and friends everywhere!

(Click on the links below in the table of contents, or use your screen reader commands to guide you to specific sections in this Newsletter.)

If you are having trouble navigating the links, please let me know and I will send you the word file as an attachment in an email.

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Inspirational Story Athletics are Buzzing for People who are blind

by Blake Lindsay

For nearly a decade, Shawn Daugherty has graciously invested time and finances into coaching Goalball in the Dallas Fort worth Texas area. . It's a unique sport for adults and children with visual impairment. Coach Shawn and his wife are parents to four children. Two are sighted, and two have visual impairment. When his sighted boys were in school, Shawn coached Soccer, Baseball, and Football. He remembers how he became interested in Goalball.

"Christy Householter with Region10 recognized my coaching experience, and asked me if I would like to be involved with an exclusive sport." Since transportation is more challenging for non-drivers, Coach Daugherty goes the extra miles by coaching in two well-spread places. They include a Garland recreation center and a Red Oak elementary school. Julie Johnson resides in

Garland. She has valued from Coach Shawn's dedication for almost 7 years.

Julie comments, "Coach Shawn has an hour commute 1 way to our practices, he is still there every week & he also travels with us to tournaments outside of Texas."

In 1948, Goalball became customary for WW2 soldiers who lost their vision in battle. This activity quickly evolved into a super sport not only for these warriors, but others without sight who desired to be active and competitive. Participants compete in teams of three, and try to throw a ball that has bells embedded in it into the opponents' goal.

The ball is thrown by hand and never kicked. Complete concentration is required in a quiet environment. "Goalball is a great way for visually impaired individuals to not only exercise but also participate in a group sport," Julie stated. Goalball made its Paralympic debut in Toronto, Canada, in 1976, with the women's event being added at the 1984 Paralympic Games in New York.

Coach Shawn's passion for serving the blind community is evident. "Since my wife and I are parents of two children with blindness, we want to help educate parents on what these kids are really capable of." Julie Johnson benefits from the increase in exercise and fulfillment. "Coach Shawn is great. He teaches the fundamentals of the game & always motivates us to better

ourselves in & outside the sport. He is tireless with volunteering his time & resources," Julie said.

Coach Shawn's Goalball purpose is well detailed. "Everyone has the desire to improve and compete. I like to create the opportunity for athletes who are blind to participate and compete.

If you are interested in participating in this vigorous sport, or you desire to donate needed funds for traveling and uniforms, please reach out to Coach Daugherty by emailing

texasgoalball@gmail.com

You may also call
(214) 420-9411.

To witness Goalball in action, check out the video below, at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bZ51jzmbAQ>

Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind launches Aira to Improve mobility, independence and job productivity

The Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind (DLB), a leading non-profit employing and providing resources for visually impaired individuals, announced it is now offering Aira technology – or

“live” visual assistance via smart glasses – to both the organization’s employees and the seeing impaired community-at-large who visit the facility. The Dallas Lighthouse will be the first of 61 lighthouses for the blind in the country to utilize the technology.

Aira, pronounced EYE-Rah, is an assistive technology that connects people who are blind with a network of certified, live agents via wearable smart glasses and a smartphone app. The technology includes an augmented reality dashboard, accompanied by real-time video, allowing agents to be the source of visual cues for a user (AKA Explorer) on-demand. Agents, serving as visual interpreters, help Explorers accomplish a wide range of daily tasks and activities –such as reading, shopping, social interactions, and job seeking.

As part of the Aira Employer Network, the new partnership with the Dallas Lighthouse enables Aira Explorers to have unlimited access to the Aira service at any of their three facilities.

“Together Aira and the Dallas Lighthouse will be able to improve mobility, independence and even job productivity for people who are blind,” says Hugh McElroy, CEO of the Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind. “Having Aira enabled at all three Dallas Lighthouse locations literally puts us on the map as a premier employer for people who are blind as well as a provider of cutting edge assistive technology.”

McElroy adds that with more than 100 blind or visually impaired employees working in the Dallas Lighthouse textiles and manufacturing programs, Aira provides an extra pair of eyes that can make the difference when sewing a straight stitch or creating a perfect fold, for example.

As smart cities continue to evolve, Aira Networks will expand to more locations, including workplaces, such as the Dallas Lighthouse, as well as schools, and transportation hubs.

"More than 25% of Aira sessions are work-related tasks. In the workplace, it's all about employee efficiency, and having access to the tools and technologies that increase efficiency and reduce uncertainty is the secret sauce for successful employers," said Suman Kanuganti, CEO of Aira. "The Dallas Lighthouse has always stood for expanding work opportunities for people who are blind or low vision, and we are truly proud to call them part of the Aira Employer Network."

"Thanks to the generous support of a private donor," says McElroy, "we are able to include Aira in our service line for both employees and the community. With agents across the country, Aira is making us better and expanding our reach as an organization, bringing new people to our doorstep. And we exist to serve them."

Get the app for iOS and Android, and learn more at

aira.io.

Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind was fortunate to receive some news coverage of the event as well. CW33 stopped by and put together this great story:

<http://cw33.com/2018/03/08/smart-glasses-open-up-new-opportunities-for-the-vision-impaired/>

A Smart Way to Help people With Visual Impairment on Easier Navigation

A team at Ohio State University has been working on a “smart paint” application to explore the use of smart technologies to help blind and visually impaired people to better navigate the world around them.

MetroLab’s Executive Director Ben Levine sat down with John Lannutti, professor of materials science engineering at Ohio State University; Mary Ball-Swartwout, orientation and mobility specialist at the Ohio State School for the Blind; and Josh Collins, chief technology officer at [Intelligent Material](#) to learn more. Ben Levine: Could you please describe what “smart paint for networked smart cities” is? Who is involved in this project?

John Lannutti (OSU): The goal of “smart paint for networked smart cities” is to assist people who are blind and visually impaired by implementing a “smart paint” technology that

provides accurate location services. You might think, “Can’t GPS do that?” But, surprisingly, current GPS-based solutions actually cannot tell whether somebody is walking on the sidewalk or down the middle of the street. Meanwhile, modern urban intersections are becoming increasingly complex.

That means that finding a crosswalk, aligning to cross and maintaining a consistent crossing direction while in motion can be challenging for people who are visually impaired.

And of course, crosswalks aren’t the only challenge. For example, our current mapping technologies are unable to provide the exact location of a building’s entrance. We have a technology solution to those challenges. Smart paint is created by adding exotic light-converting oxides to standard road paints.

The paint is detected using a “smart cane,” a modified white cane that detects the smart paint and enables portal-to-portal guidance. The smart cane can also be used to notify vehicles — including autonomous vehicles — of a user’s presence in a crosswalk.

As part of this project, we have a whole team of educational, city and industrial partners, including:

Educational partners:

- Ohio State School for the Blind — testing and implementation of smart paint technology in Columbus involving both students and adults
- Western Michigan University — implementation of smart paint technology with travelers who are blind and visually impaired to maximize orientation and mobility
- Mississippi State University — the impacts of smart paint technology on mobility and employment for people who are blind and visually impaired

City partners:

- Columbus Smart Cities Initiative — rollout of smart paint within Columbus and the paint's interaction with the Integrated Data Exchange (IDE), a cloud-based platform that dynamically collects user data to show technological impact
- The city of Tampa, Fla. — rollout of smart paint at the Lighthouse for the Blind
- The Hillsborough Area Transit Regional Authority, Hillsborough County, Fla. — integration of smart paint with existing bus lines to enable precise location determination
- The American Council of the Blind — implementation of smart paint with the annual American Council of the Blind convention
- MetroLab Network — smart paint implementation in city-university partnerships

Industrial collaborators:

- Intelligent Material — manufactures and supplies the unique light-converting oxides that make the paint "smart"
- Crown Technology — paint manufacturing, product evaluation and technical support
- SRI International — design and manufacturing of the "smart" white cane hardware

Levine: Can you describe what this project focused on and what motivated you to address this particular challenge?

Lannutti: We have been working with Intelligent Material in integrating light-converting oxides into polymeric matrices for specific applications for several years. Intelligent Material supplies these oxides for highly specialized applications across a variety of industries, and has deep experience in filtering and processing the resulting optical outputs.

They were already looking at using this technology for automotive applications when the idea to develop applications for people who are blind was introduced. We were extremely fortunate to have the Ohio State School for the Blind (OSSB) right here in Columbus and even more fortunate to have interested collaborators there who have helped us at every step of the way.

They even have a room filled with previous white cane technologies; we used those to better understand what works and

what doesn't, helping refine our own product. At about this same time, the National Science Foundation released a call for Smart and Connected Communities proposals, which gave us both a goal and a "home" for this idea.

Levine: What need motivated this collaboration? Why did you decide to partner with Ohio State University to meet this need?

Mary Ball-Swartwout: At Ohio State School for the Blind, we work with students of all ages and abilities. OSSB's orientation and mobility team, which includes me, Phil Northrop and Rachel Smith, is very familiar with the challenges our students face in navigating cities. Orientation and mobility training is essential for students' navigation within the outside world, but we are always searching for additional technologies that could make our students' travel more efficient.

When Ohio State University and Intelligent Material approached us, our team was very interested because their technology better integrated into the modern world than past products. None of the prior products have created a lasting benefit for many of our students, and we enthusiastically support any new tools that help our students to enhance travel skills.

Levine: How will the tools developed in this project impact planning and the built environment?

Ball-Swartwout: One of the great things about smart paint is that it can be added to the built environment easily at little extra cost. We expect that once smart paint is widely adopted, most sighted users will not notice much difference as smart paint is not visually different from regular road paint. Some intersections might need to have more paint features that enable smart white cane-guided entry from the sidewalk into the crosswalk. Paint that tells users that they have reached their destination may become visible as horizontal stripes along modern sidewalks.

These paints could be either gray or black or even invisible to sighted pedestrians, but would still be detectable by "smart" white canes to tell users that they have arrived at their destination.

Levine: What business need motivated this collaboration?

Josh Collins (Intelligent Materials): We specialize in the design and manufacturing of rare-earth doped nanocrystals capable of converting light energy up and down the visible spectrum. Our core Intelligent Material technology enables up to parts-per-billion sensitivity of detection. Nothing found in nature converts light in the same way and the prospects for widespread application of these patented oxides into road and sidewalk paint worldwide are very attractive to us from the business perspective.

Discovering a range of additional business and academic partners dedicated to helping people who are blind and visually impaired has been very encouraging.

Levine: Can you tell us about the new technologies that are associated with this project? Can you talk about the status quo versus your vision for the future?

Collins: Beyond converting ceramics in paint, placing a highly sensitive excitation source and detector package at the tip of a moving white cane is truly novel. Also challenging is powering this package using minimal battery weight to decrease the likelihood of wrist and upper neck fatigue.

The status quo is that the travel of citizens who are blind and visually impaired can be unpredictable. They need better technologies for routine travel and especially for travel to any new destinations. In addition, we anticipate that this technology could assist in the travel of people who have a variety of physical and cognitive impairments.

Our vision for the future of this technology is that it will be widespread and utilized constantly. Outside the U.S., Japan and Europe have integrated relatively expensive technologies into streets and sidewalks, and we see smart paint replacing that very quickly. Because the "pain" of installing smart paint is very small, we believe that grass-roots pressure will enable rapid introduction of this technology.

Levine: What are some of the other applications for this technology?

Collins: It turns out that the same technology that informs users who are blind which way they should go can be used to tell airport ground vehicles which way they should not go. Runway incursions of ground vehicles in an active airport could lead to terrible accidents if a rapidly moving jet were to collide with one of these vehicles.

These incursions can involve vehicles, general aviation traffic and other large air carriers. To address this, we are also looking at deploying smart paint at airports. We have worked with OSU to successfully add smart paint to "hold bars" at the Ohio State University Airport in Northwest Columbus. This enables unique optical signatures to provide warnings to both ground vehicle operators and pilots to eliminate incursions.

The corresponding visual, audible or tactile warning signals triggered by passage over the smart paint will prevent unauthorized ground vehicle or plane passage. This will satisfy the need for updated safety enhancements that benefit airport operational performance.

Levine: What was the most surprising thing you learned during this process?

Lannutti: In my mind, the most surprising thing was discovering that sound was not necessarily the best means of guiding users who are blind. This is a bias on the part of sighted individuals as

we are used to beeping and buzzing noises that guide or inform us throughout our day. Pedestrians who are blind, on the other hand, need to constantly listen to aspects of their environment to successfully navigate it. For example, listening to traffic noise is extremely important to them as a means of avoiding danger.

People who are blind or visually impaired cannot see but need to hear their environment. So we had to dial back our expectations regarding the utility of sound. Instead, we now focus on vibration along the white cane as a means of alerting the user.

Ball-Swartwout: The OSSB orientation and mobility team has been surprised to learn how rapidly technology is advancing to give people with visual impairments greater potential independence. Also, the high level of interest and excitement on the part of the staff and students at the OSSB regarding this project has been amazing.

Levine: Where will the project go from here?

Lannutti: We are preparing for a proposal submission to the National Science Foundation at the end of February. We are looking for considerable support from industry particularly in the area of software development. We believe that with the right partner this idea can easily create a "Google Maps for People who are Blind," thereby increasing the travel abilities of a wide range of individuals who have disabilities.

Ball-Swartwout: Thanks to the city of Columbus, we now have several acres of smart paint applied at crosswalks and sidewalks across our campus. We are looking forward to Institutional Review Board-approved testing of this technology, utilizing our students and adults who are blind and visually impaired in the community. Professors Dae Kim and Robert Wall Emerson from Western Michigan University will visit us to work with our students in quantifying crossing efficiency and other safety factors associated with smart white cane-assisted travel.

Article Link:

<http://www.govtech.com/data/Ohio-State-University-Partners-Develop-Smart-Paint-to-Help-the-Visually-Impaired-Navigate-Cities.html>

The Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind Helping to Keep Local Sidewalks Safer

Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind applauds the bicycle rental company called Mobike. Recently, the Last month, DLB took advantage of a wonderful opportunity to openly support their proactive signage.

These signs are increasing the public's awareness on avoiding potential danger to the blind community. According to Mobike, fears from people with visual impairment in Dallas, brought this

unintended obstacle to their attention. Good for them for taking action.

The link to the FOX-4 TV coverage.

www.fox4news.com/.../dallas-bike-share-company-will-pick-up-knocked-over-bikes

Healthy Living Tips: Whole Food

From Dr. Jamie N. Lindsay, D.O.

March is National Nutrition Month. So, what better time to remind ourselves about the benefits of eating a diet made up of primarily whole food? The term “whole food” is used to denote minimally processed food – food that is how it’s found in nature.

Examples of Whole Food

Vegetables

Fruits

Nuts

Seeds

Beans

Whole grains

Fish

Whole food contains many beneficial nutrients such as vitamins and minerals, which are lost or removed from processed food. The consumption of whole food is associated with reduced risks of many chronic diseases. Eating at least 2 ½ cups a day of vegetables and fruit may reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, heart attack, and stroke (Wang et al.). And diets that are primarily whole and unprocessed are associated with lower systolic and diastolic blood pressure (Takahashi et al.). Eating a diet made primarily of plant-based food also may aid in weight management. Some evidence suggests that more calories are burned after eating a whole food meal compared to eating a processed food meal (Berkow). Many health experts agree that eating more whole food is a strategy for improving health and preventing disease.

Focus on Vegetables:

Pay attention to vegetable consumption. Vegetables are nutrient dense – they provide a lot of nutrients for not a lot of calories. Because vegetables are low in calories, you don't have to worry about overeating them. Instead, the dilemma for many people is figuring out how to eat enough of them. Eat them first to make sure you get them in before you feel too full. Strive to fill at least half your plate with colorful vegetables. Enjoy them raw, roasted, in smoothies, and steamed.

Some people find that eating meals that contain a combination of protein, fiber, healthy fats, and crunch help them feel full and satisfied. Raw, crunchy vegetables are a good source of fiber. Pair them with protein and healthy fat for a satisfying snack or meal.

The Bottom Line:

Eating a dietary pattern that emphasizes a variety of nutritious whole food and limits consumption of highly processed food should be a component of your overall strategy for healthy living.

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Useful Tools in the DLB Store, Make Great Gifts for Anyone

Our store staff frequently increases beneficial items for people who are legally or totally blind for purchase. Some examples are a hand-held CCTV video magnifier, ladies and gentlemen's talking watches, unisex braille watches, talking clocks, signature guides, large print paper, large button phones, and TV remotes.

We also have oven mitts, 20/20 pens, and big sticky text dots to help you mark your appliances for convenience and accuracy.

There are Uno playing cards, Dominoes, fit-over anti-glare shades (available in amber, gray, and yellow), and magnifiers with powers of 3, 3.5, and 4.

We're always adding more, so come visit Melva at the DLB store located at:

4306 Capitol Avenue

Dallas, TX 75204

If you have questions, call

(214) 420-6585

Or email,

store@dallaslighthouse.org

Stimulating Story on how hockey players who are blind can pass, shoot and score

The skate-safe rubber-matted hallway at Kettler Capitals Iceplex in Arlington fills quickly on a Sunday morning in January. People hurry in carrying hockey sticks; bulging bags of gear line the walls. At first glance, it looks like any other weekend at an ice rink. But there are harnessed guide dogs calmly navigating through the crowd, some skaters are wearing sunglasses or making their way with white canes, and people are including their names in greetings: "Hi, it's Matt." "Hi, it's Karen." They're all here to try, or help others try, a sport new to the Washington region, and to the country: blind hockey.

The [Washington Wheelers Blind Hockey Club](#) is hosting today's event, which includes a group skate and a demonstration game, to increase awareness and recruit players. Once everyone has the right gear, Wheelers players and several volunteers join about 20 newcomers of all ages on the ice. Some tentative skaters take the right-angled arms or gloved hands proffered to them; others carry canes into the rink and tap the wall as they go. Club co-founder Craig Fitzpatrick, 41, wearing a Wheelers jacket and a

USA Hockey baseball cap, stops next to a boy in orange snow pants standing uncertainly near the door.

“Come on the ice with me,” Fitzpatrick says, swiveling backward and reaching out, so the boy can hold his hands. He pushes off, gently gaining speed until the boy’s strides grow longer and more confident. Player Emily Molchan, 24, skates with Remington, her 4-year-old Labrador retriever, who slides around the ice wearing protective booties.

Tina Butera, a pediatric ophthalmologist and club co-founder, watches in a white Wheelers sweatshirt. “There’s a blind person skating with their seeing-eye dog,” she muses aloud to no one in particular. “What’s your excuse today?”

Canadians have played organized blind hockey for over 40 years; in French, it’s called “hockey sonore,” meaning hockey played by sound. But blind hockey — players range from legally blind (or 20/200 corrected vision) to entirely blind — has been officially organized in the United States only since 2014. Kevin Shanley, of New Paltz, N.Y., a 39-year-old engineering professor who has been legally blind since age 6, co-founded the first organization, the New York Nightshade, four years ago; Fitzpatrick calls him “our George Washington.”

Matt Morrow, sport director for the International Blind Ice Hockey Federation as well as the executive director of the Canadian Blind Hockey Association, estimates there are about 100 players in the States, about 50 of whom are still learning, but the game is

growing quickly here. According to Morrow, there are now nine American groups: the Wheelers, established in February 2016; a newer D.C.-area group, the Washington Elite, which is run by the [Blinded Veterans Association](#); two teams in New York; and teams in Pittsburgh, Chicago, St. Louis, Hartford, Conn., and, as of last month, Denver.

(The Wheelers partnered with the BVA during the 2016-17 season, but they are now separate organizations. The Elite, which receives some funding from a Department of Veterans Affairs grant, practices in Alexandria at the Mount Vernon RECenter and, like the Wheelers, hosts introductory programs and regional events.) Canada, by comparison, has about 125 players and seven programs, according to Morrow; names include the Calgary Seeing Ice Dogs and the Vancouver Eclipse.

In both countries, the local organizations offer training and scrimmages but don't usually compete against one another. Players, however, can attend regional and national tournaments in either country. National events in the United States include the USA Hockey Disabled Hockey Festival, scheduled for April in West Dundee, Ill., and the Blind Hockey Summit, which took place last fall near Pittsburgh. And Canadian and American organizers are working toward a four-nation tournament by 2020.

Blind hockey looks a lot like standard hockey: Players swoosh down the ice, passing a puck with the goal of slinging it into a net. But it sounds very different. The adapted puck — a hollow metal canister filled with ball bearings, which is nearly twice the size of a regular rubber puck — rattles across the surface,

clanging like a bunch of cowbells when a hard shot sends it into the boards. Skaters find the puck by listening for it. "It's loud!" Butera says. "It's so simple, it's genius."

Before play begins, teammates guide goalies — who typically have the least vision on the team — to their nets, which are about a foot lower than regulation to minimize high shots goalies can't hear coming (the puck doesn't make much noise in the air). Players have to complete one pass before taking shots on net, which helps alert the goalie and other defenders to an approaching puck.

A referee also uses a special electronic whistle to signal when the pass has been completed and the team is eligible to score. Jerseys are in bright, high-contrast colors so those with contrast sensitivities can differentiate teams (white jerseys are not permitted because they blend in too easily with the ice). No checking is allowed.

"People don't understand how blind people can play hockey," says Wheelers Coach Nick Albicocco, 35, who is sighted. It's the sound, he says, that helps players adapt: "The game of hockey by its nature is a confined space. Because you have boards and you have glass, it already confines the sound. You're not in the wide open, you're not losing sound."

"It's when the puck stops that I don't know where it is," says goalie Doug Goist, 49, of Alexandria, who lost his vision completely to retinitis pigmentosa. "All I hear are the skates

sloshing around — *shh, shh, shh* — so I know roughly where [the skaters are], on the left side or right side or in front of me. And I can hear people whacking their sticks on the ice, which means pass it to me.”

Kevin Brown describes how sound helps him as a defensive player. “When the goalie talks, he’s focused on that one place, in the crease, all the time. He’s always my 6 o’clock. So, if I think I am going northeast but I’m going east-west, and the goalie chirps, then I’m thinking, ‘Oh! That wall’s coming up faster than I thought.’ ”

When those unfamiliar with ice hockey hear about blind players, they’re often surprised. “People think it’s a dangerous sport to begin with, so it’s not something they think blind people can do,” says Eileen Brown, Kevin’s wife. But players like to prove doubters wrong. “When I told my eye doctor I was thinking about playing hockey, he said, ‘Absolutely not,’ ” Fitzpatrick says. “And I said, ‘I am absolutely going to do it after you said that.’ ”

The Wheelers’ logo nods slyly at the perception of danger. It features a man on a motorcycle, wearing a helmet with a solid visor. His hockey stick is behind him while his seeing-eye dog perches in the sidecar. Fitzpatrick — an Air Force veteran and CEO of a technology company whose vision loss stems from Stargardt disease, a form of macular degeneration — calls it an inside joke. “Low-vision people tend to have a wicked sense of humor about our lot in life,” he says. “Devil-may-care, we’re going to go play.”

Diana McCown's preteen sons, Nate and Aiden, both have albinism, often associated with vision loss. They have been playing with the Wheelers for a little over a year, and they fly around the ice during the group skate until their mother calls them off. How do they feel out there? "Happy," says Nate. "Happy," agrees Aiden. "I like ice."

McCown, 44, of Takoma Park saw information about a blind hockey event on a D.C.-based albinism-focused online group. "I really thought it was going to be a one-time thing," she says. But after the first practice, she says, Nate told her, "'Mom, I'm going to go to school tomorrow and I'm going to tell all my friends I'm a hockey player.' And it takes your breath away, right? And one of the pieces I try to build in my kids is try to own who they are, and if they want to go play ice hockey and they can't see a darn thing, then let them go play hockey."

Other young Wheelers include another player with albinism, Tyrese Springer, 17, a high school wrestler who travels to practices from Catonsville, Md., near Baltimore, and Caleigh Griffiths, 19, of Chesapeake, Va., who attends Old Dominion University. An experienced skater who grew up playing with sighted teammates, Griffiths has familial exudative vitreoretinopathy, which causes progressive vision loss. She says blind hockey is easier "because everyone else is pretty much at the same sighted level that I am, so it's not like I'm fighting to be where everyone else is." Predicts Shanley, who is also the blind hockey representative for USA Hockey: "Give it five years, and we are going to have a bunch of kids' teams."

But even players who didn't come early to the sport love it. Goist, who is a program manager for IT services projects at National Industries for the Blind, met Fitzpatrick in a bar one evening. "He started mentioning blind hockey and I just started laughing for like two minutes. Because it was beyond my understanding of how that would work," Goist says. Though he agreed to come to an introductory event, he had no intention of participating. "I just wanted to see what it was about and support it," he says. Nevertheless, he found himself in goal, wearing pads and skates. He's still there.

Brown, who is 46 and from Falls Church, had played and coached many sports — including soccer, basketball and football — but had no ice hockey experience before he started skating with the Wheelers. The director of marketing for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, Brown has cone-rod dystrophy, a degenerative condition, and now only has light perception. His vision had worsened in 2016, around the same time he found out about the Wheelers.

"My philosophy in life is, I'm not afraid to fail, I'm afraid not to try," he says. "So, coming out was exciting, and I did a little skating, and the next morning they said, 'You want to come out and play in a hockey practice?' And I said, 'Hey, there must be a higher power telling me to come out here.' And I've loved it ever since."

Kettler and Arlington County donate ice time to the Wheelers, and a nonprofit called Leveling the Playing Field offers gear — so players don't have to pay to participate unless they travel to competitions. Fitzpatrick's goal for the Wheelers, which is also a nonprofit, is to raise money to hold more events, buy supplemental gear and support travel. "The only real way to experience the whole blind hockey deal is to be part of these competitions also," he says. "Otherwise, you're just practicing every week." Brown traveled to the Blind Hockey Summit in 2017, playing in six games in a weekend. "It was a blast," he says. "So personally motivating and humbling at the same time."

At the Wheelers' weekly practices, there are usually seven to 10 blind players of varying ages and skill levels. This means that during scrimmages, sighted players often fill in for still-developing blind skaters; Fitzpatrick would like the program to grow enough for scrimmages to consistently be five-on-five, and blind on blind. "That's kind of the benchmark for when you realize that your program has grown and become sustainable," he says.

Mainly, though, Fitzpatrick wants more visually impaired people to experience what hockey has to offer. "It's turned me around, big time," he says, a sentiment echoed by other players.

"I can't get enough of it," says Brown. "You get a lot of people that have similar challenges, and for an hour and a half on the ice you forget all those challenges."

Playing hockey upends assumptions about blindness, says Molchan, who has Stargardt disease. "People think that blind people can't do things, but they really can," she says. "There's nothing a blind person can't do. Except maybe see."

It's time for the demonstration game, and the new skaters and their families line the bleachers, listening attentively as an announcer reads the rules over the loudspeaker. Emily Molchan's dog waits with her at the door, tail wagging, apparently ready to head back onto the ice. She hands his harness to Diana McCown, and skates out, wearing a red Wheelers jersey.

There are 24 players, including 10 sighted players who will fill in but won't take shots. Teams wear yellow and red. Goist is in one net. In the other is Ian Cohen, 28, a sighted volunteer and client services director of Leveling the Playing Field; he pulls a knit stocking cap over his helmet to act as a blindfold.

Albicocco, serving as referee, hoists the puck and rattles it. The McCown brothers, starting at center for opposing teams, face each other as the puck drops, clattering onto the ice. Immediately, the air is filled with sound. Sticks clack, skates shoosh, and the puck clanks into the boards, creating a racket that echoes. When players make long passes, the puck doesn't jangle as much, but then — wham! — Springer knocks it, and it rattles across the ice. Players shout at each other — "Here!" or "Center!" — and Albicocco's electronic whistle trills, signaling that a pass has been completed. Cohen, in net, gets ready for a shot.

Aiden McCown, wearing No. 4 for the yellow team, scores. His teammates crowd around, embracing him and cheering. The crowd cheers, too. But the celebration lasts only a moment. Then, the rattle of the puck cracks the air. It's time to play on.

After the game, the players, cheeks ruddy, file out past a clapping audience. Brown, who scored to help propel the yellow team to a 2-0 victory, reflects on the day. "The fact that I scored a goal is so infrequent, and it doesn't happen a lot with a blind defenseman," he says. "But the highlight of the day was when we were taking the picture. Craig and I were standing in the front and there was a young man behind us, probably early teens. And he said, 'Mom, Dad, this is so much fun. I want to do it again.' "

Article Link:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/devil-may-care-were-going-to-go-play-the-fellowship-and-thrill-of-blind-hockey/2018/02/05/578a7d48-fcb3-11e7-a46b-a3614530bd87_story.html?utm_term=.58055d5a6083

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Websites meeting accessibility standards

Last June, a federal judge in Florida ruled in favor of a visually impaired man who claimed the website for Winn-Dixie??? a supermarket chain ??? denied him the "full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages or accommodations" it offers to its sighted customers.

In the ruling, the judge said the supermarket chain website was closely integrated with its physical store locations, making it subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act. The decision, which didn't award the plaintiff damages, required Winn-Dixie to update its site, representing what is believed to be the first regarding a website's accessibility under the ADA.

The case reflects an increased push among organizations to meet accessibility standards when pushing out their digital content. According to area experts interviewed by Crain's, the idea is to provide consumers with a better brand experience while also

mitigating any reason for people with disabilities to call their attorney.

Since the start of 2018, Cleveland digital marketing agency [thunder::tech](#) has fielded a dozen calls from clients asking how to make their websites easier to navigate, said senior director of development Bruce Williams.

"In this bucket of digital transformation, there's an aging population, those with disabilities, and transactions that people normally do in person they are now doing online," Williams said. "As a company, you want your customers to meet you where you're at."

Thunder::tech works with middle market businesses in the B2B, B2C, government and nonprofit sectors. As early as last year, the goal for most marketers was to create mobile-first online content ??? a mission that shifted steadily into creation of accessible websites, Williams said. The challenge for many organizations now is understanding what exactly should be provided in terms of digital accessibility features.

There are some guidelines for companies to follow. In the late-1990s, for example, Congress amended the Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to require federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities.

In January, tweaks to Section 508 of the law ensured all government websites would be accessible to people with hearing and sight disabilities using screen readers and other assistive technology. Organizations also can review worldwide standards like the [World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG). Some of those standards include the visual presentation of text and how audio and video is portrayed on a website.

When considering accessibility, companies must understand how wide these challenges spread. Experts say digital content should be reachable for not only the visually impaired, but those with cognitive, language and learning disabilities as well.

"You won't know every customer to the nth degree, but you can talk to experts in the field and look at your audience," Williams said. "Make decisions without cherry picking one user over the other." Auditing online touch points is a positive first step toward organizational accessibility.

While computer-generated scanning services can uncover digital gaps, companies should also have users test their website with a screen reader or magnifier. Nor should websites be the only priority when it comes to building a successful digital business.

"Most clients are thinking of the web, but there's also shared PDFs and downloadables, or an app or adjacent transactional platform they put out for the brand," Williams said.

Accommodating impairments is something more companies are taking to heart as the baby boomer population ages, said Randy Knapp, senior assistive technology trainer with the Cleveland Sight Center.

"Vendors are realizing that all users have the ability to interact and do business whether they have a disability or not," Knapp said. "Meeting people who have a wide variety of needs is just good business."

Website compliance often requires more than just edits to image tags or hyperlinks via a content management system. Graphics, text, templates and web pages may need recalibrations to address issues in Section 508 or WCAG.

Cleveland Sight Center's web page gives users options to change the color or font size. The WCAG-compliant site, launched in 2015, also offers special instructions for image and video descriptions, and utilizes updated site navigation, content and search capabilities designed for users browsing the site with assistive technology. Knapp, who has been blind since birth, said websites are "living documents" that speak to audiences based on their needs.

"There's a misnomer that accessible sites can't have graphic content," Knapp said. "You can write code so your site looks modern and speaks to accessibility, too. When designed properly

from the get-go, you'll have a site that's efficient and cost productive."

Working from a proactive position instead of a reactive one integrates accessibility into the company culture. Williams of thunder::tech suggests assigning a team to review digital touch points on a regular basis, which will help accessibility become a day-to-day element of an organization.

Through the auditing process, content publishers will understand how to modify site images and tags alongside easy-to-read PDFs and video captions.

"B2C brands need to think about accessibility a bit quicker, or at least consider how critical their services are to customers," Williams said. "If someone has trouble accessing something that can impact their life, you should be paying attention to it." Ultimately, online inclusivity represents a business opportunity that's all too often ignored, said Knapp. "My money is just as green as anyone else's," he said. "If a company makes it so I can shop there, their bottom line is going to increase."

Article Link:

<http://www.crainscleveland.com/article/20180217/news/152151/sites-should-meet-accessibility-standards>

Attention blind and low-vision students!

Are you or do you know a blind or low-vision teen who wants to spend their summer learning, meeting new people, and having a great adventure? Join the National Federation of the Blind at our NFB EQ program. NFB EQ is a jam-packed week of fun and learning. Participants spend each day engaged in activities designed to strengthen their knowledge of engineering as well as their problem-solving abilities. In the evenings, participants hang out with the 29 other teen participants while exploring the local community and participating in various recreational activities. Throughout the week, participants will forge new friendships while increasing their engineering knowledge, problem-solving abilities, self-confidence, and independence.

To learn more and to apply, visit

<http://www.blindscience.org/nfbeq>.

The Specs:

Who: 30 blind and low-vision teens currently enrolled in grades 9-12 in the United States.

What: A weeklong summer engineering program for blind and low-vision teens.

When: Participants will travel to Baltimore on July 29 and they will travel back home on August 4.

Where: The National Federation of the Blind Jernigan Institute in Baltimore, Maryland.

Why: To meet new people, learn new things, and have an exciting adventure!

How: [Apply Now!](#) Applications are due May 1, 2018.

How Much: There is no registration fee for this program. Visit our frequently asked questions web page for more details: <http://www.blindscience.org/nfb-eq-faq>.

Additional Information

- To be eligible to apply students must: be enrolled in grades 9-12 during the 2017-2018 school year in a school (public, private, charter, residential, or home school) in the United States, be blind or have low-vision, and be available to attend the entire program.
- Participant's transportation to and from the program will be arranged by the National Federation of the Blind. Students will travel to Baltimore on Sunday and will travel home on the following Saturday.
- This is a residential program; students will stay in dormitories at the National Federation of the Blind Jernigan Institute and all meals will be provided.

- In the evenings, after the conclusion of the instructional day, students will be engaged in various social and recreational activities.

What are people saying about EQ?

“NFB EQ gave me more confidence to keep doing what I want—no one can stop me! The program opened my eyes to even more options in the field [of engineering] and it gave me some confidence that I can do some mechanical stuff that I didn’t think I could do before.” – Michael, Texas

“At the program, I learned that there is accessible equipment—I can use equipment that is close to what sighted people use, like Braille rulers and click rules. At school the tools for measuring in science aren’t always accessible to me.” – Lilly, Alaska

“I increased my drawing skills at NFB EQ. The tactile drawing board helped me, because I could feel what I drew. Visualizations also have gotten easier [going from drawing to model to prototype]. In engineering, you have to picture an idea in your mind and then draw it before you can build it. When you draw it, you can really see how it's going to come together.” – Trey, Kentucky

“I am amazed at how the people involved in organizing this program made everything so easy for us. From organizing logistics to making sure the schedule was running smoothly for

the students—the whole event was very successful. The staff's warmth and attention to detail really eased my mind and made me feel good about leaving my son at the program for the week."
– Mark (father), North Carolina

"I was looking for a rigorous, highly academic science program that promoted and modeled independence and the National Federation of the Blind was offering everything I was looking for. Still, I was hesitant. What if it wasn't a good use of my students' resources, or what if they weren't safe? My fears were unwarranted, from start to finish.

NFB made the health, safety, academic rigor, social experiences, and general well-being of our students paramount. Every detail was professionally planned and handled, ensuring that every moment, for every student, was as meaningful as it could possibly be." – Laura (teacher of the visually impaired), Kentucky

Questions?

Send them to:

STEM@nfb.org

(410) 659-9314, extension 2418

Valued Free Offers from the DLB

Bring your friends and meet new ones as you join our host Al Rodriguez for Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind's Bingo Night. Our get together is on the third Friday evening of each month, and this month, it's Friday, March 16th from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM. You can count on free prizes, free food, and the best part, friendly fellowship.

We look forward to having you in the DLB Auditorium at 4306 Capitol Avenue!

Our weekly yoga get-together takes place Fridays from 1:15 to 2:15 PM. Please join our thoughtful volunteer Bruce Boyd and others in the auditorium for some exercise and camaraderie. He has participated in Blindfold Yoga, increasing his knowledge of coaching people with visual impairment. Bruce wants for us to be in good health and good shape.

Please RSVP with Blake if you are interested in joining us.

Call

(214) 420-9411

Or email

blake.lindsay@dallaslighthouse.org

High School Senior gives up role in marching band to Guide a Friend who is Blind

LAINGSBURG, MI

At first glance, it's hard to pick out Autumn Michel's and Rachael Steffens amid the crowd of musicians on Laingsburg High School's football field.

If you were sitting in the stands last fall, you wouldn't have noticed them. The girls blended in seamlessly, a tiny piece of the moving formation of marchers on the grass.

The 114-member band — it represents a third of the rural high school's student body and is the largest in school history — had just minutes to perform their Homecoming half-time show, moving right, then left to the beat of Paul Simon's 1980s hit "Call me Al."

At 4-foot, 4 inches tall, her long brown hair pinned up away from her face and clarinet in hand, Autumn had no trouble keeping up. Rachael Steffens was right behind her. Autumn is blind. She lost her sight completely at age 4. The 14-year-old freshman has memorized her surroundings at home. At school, Autumn navigates the hallways and classrooms, parking lot and band room with a cane. But the football field's uneven ground is a challenge.

So Rachael, a 17-year-old senior, is her guide. Standing just behind her, she makes sure Autumn never misses a step while she marches along with the rest of her section.

Rachael is a percussionist, but she's not on the field this season. When the band plays from the stands, she has her instrument in hand. When the band takes the field, she marches in step with Autumn, her hands gently resting on either side of Autumn's shoulders. She steers her firmly, moving in front of her and to the side in step with the choreography. Autumn wouldn't be there without Rachael. Rachael wouldn't think of being there without Autumn.

This is just what you do for a friend, Rachael said. But their story is about more than friendship. It's a lesson in strength.

Jason and Angie Michels let doctors remove their daughter's optic nerves when she was four. An inoperable brain tumor near her optic nerves, called an optic nerve glioma, was discovered when Autumn was 7 months old. It grew steadily as she did. We can slow the progression by taking out some of the tumor, doctors told Autumn's parents. Her optic nerves were an unavoidable casualty of the three surgeries that followed.

Jason, 39, still remembers sitting with Autumn as she woke up in the recovery room after her first surgery. "Autumn, I'm sorry we have to do this," he told her. "You won't be able to see." "It's OK Daddy," she said. "God will see for me." This is the story Jason tells people about his daughter, an effort to explain her endless optimism. "This is simply who Autumn is," he tells them. "She's

*always had this amazing view of her world,” Angie, 36, said.
“Everything is positive. It brings people to her, drags them in.”*

Article Link:

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/humankind/2017/10/03/teen-gives-up-role-marching-band-autumns-eyes/726375001/>

Do you have an upcoming event you want our readers to know about?

Email or call me with the details so we can support your good news. Would you like to share your personal story? Please email or call me to coordinate a 15-minute interview.

Feel free to contribute a significant article about access technology or inspiring news and stories related to the blind community.

Thank you for considering the Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind for your financial contributions. Your generosity will help us continue to improve our services in the 11 counties we support through access technology training and much more. Also, please let us know if there's anyone you know with visual impairment who is wanting assistance.

As always, Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind encourages you to live your lives to the fullest. Stay tuned for more Good News You Can Use, serving people who are blind, visually impaired, and beyond.

Send us your comments, suggestions, and ideas by emailing:

blake.lindsay@dallaslighthouse.org

Or by calling:

(214) 420-9411.

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