



Council of the Blind
A Gateway to Advocacy, Perseverance,
And Education of and For the Blind

Issue 6
September
2023

AGAPE

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A Message

From President Patrick Patton

Greetings, AGAPE Family!

It's September and fall is approaching. As we look back on the things we've accomplished this year, we realize how busy we have been! I want to start by saying Happy Labor Day to all. We are wishing everyone a happy fall, and a safe back to school for children and grandchildren out there. We are most excited about our upcoming events. This month we will return to hosting our Gospel Fest after a two-year hiatus. This year's gospel fest will be held for the first time at Central Baptist church here in St. Louis. We will be presenting two very special awards this year also for the first time. It will be such a great afternoon of singing and inspiration. We hope you can join us there.

Also, coming up in October, we will be hosting the MCB Convention again. If you thought last year was a good time, this year will be even better. Please join us on Route 66 for a fun filled convention with a sock hop and prom. Plenty of door prizes and fun. Can't wait to see you on Route 66.

Immediately following the convention, MCB will be hosting White Cane Safety Day on October 14th. White Cane Safety Day will be held in Jefferson City this year and we're looking forward to a great day of activities. See more information about the White Cane Safety Day in the MCB update, and the calendar section of the newsletter.

We are extremely pleased with our efforts, and here is a little bit of what AGAPE has been doing.

In July, AGAPE was very proud to sponsor the Disability Pride luncheon in observance of the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, signed in 1990. The luncheon was held at the Missouri History Museum. The Missouri Historical Society invited guest speakers from several organizations in the St. Louis area. The purpose was to celebrate the value and importance of the ADA in our lives and test our knowledge of ADA trivia.

In August, we hosted our inaugural ice cream social fundraiser to raise funds and foster community unity, marking the end of summer with music, games, and delicious food, including



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vanilla ice cream with various toppings and soda for ice cream floats. The event was a great success, and we hope to make it an annual family tradition.

Our monthly meeting will take place on Saturday, September 9th, starting at 11:00 AM. We'll gather at the MCB Building and, following the meeting, there will be an opportunity to enjoy some food and good company.

Accessibility & Awareness

Did You Know...?

The 2023 United States elections are held on Tuesday, November 7th. This is an off-year election that includes local and state elections and initiatives as well as some United States Congressional elections. Get an early start to find accessible ways to participate in the upcoming elections. Here are some options:

- **Curbside Voting:** Voters with limited mobility can vote “curbside”; or outside the polling place. Just go to your polling place and ask someone to go in and ask poll workers to bring a ballot out to you. They should bring you a ballot within a reasonable period of time.
- **Accessible Polling Places:** If you have physical disabilities, and your polling place is not accessible, you may request a different polling place assignment so that you may vote in a more accessible polling place. You may also vote at a central location. Simply contact your local election authority to make this request. You can find your local election authority here or by calling (800)NOW-VOTE.
- **Accessible Voting Systems:** Every polling place must have an accessible voting system for individuals with disabilities including audiovisual accessibility. Accessible systems include an audio ballot to make your selections or the ability to enlarge text so that you can read the on-screen ballot with ease.
- **Permanent Absentee Voting:** If you have a permanent physical disability, you may request to be placed on a designated list so that your local election authority can automatically mail an absentee ballot application directly to you prior to each election. You will need to make this request directly to your local election authority who will send



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you further information. For more information click here:
<https://www.sos.mo.gov/elections/goVoteMissouri/howtovote#Accessible>

WayAround

The WayAround app is a versatile and user-friendly tool designed to assist individuals with visual impairments in navigating their surroundings more independently. Using the app, users can create and access customizable audio labels for various items and objects in their environment. These labels can be attached to physical objects using adhesive tags or stored digitally.

In addition to audio labels, the WayAround app also supports text-to-speech capabilities, which means that users can input text information that the app can read aloud. This feature can be useful for creating detailed notes or descriptions.

Overall, the WayAround app empowers individuals with visual impairments to easily label and access information about their environment, promoting greater independence and confidence in daily activities.

The app is available on the Apple App store and the Google Play store. As well, here is a link to a Youtube video on how to use the Way Around app: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V36b3D2OtCE>.

MCB & ACB News

State & National Happenings

The 67th Annual Missouri Council of the Blind Convention will be from October 6-8, 2023 in Springfield, Missouri. This year's convention will be held at the DoubleTree by Hilton 2431 N. Glenstone Avenue, Springfield, MO 65803. The phone number for the hotel is (417)831-3131. The Room rate for a King Room is \$100.00. The registration after September 1st will be \$30. You can register for the event using the following link: <https://www.moblind.org/67th-state-convention>.



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MCB Sports and Recreation **White Cane Safety Day by Wilma Chestnut**

Mark your calendars for the upcoming White Cane Safety Day event at Ellis Porter Park in Jefferson City on October 14, 2023. You can find us at 300 Ellis Porter Dr. The festivities will kick off at 9:00 am.

This event is open to everyone – whether you're a skater, biker, walker, runner, or wheelchair user. Of course, we're especially excited to have white cane walkers and guide dog users join us! Feel free to invite your family and friends to make it a wonderful family outing.

After the walk, there will be prizes to win and refreshments to enjoy. It's bound to be a day of fun and community, so don't miss out!

To register for this event as a participant, please use this link: <https://www.moblind.org/wcs-day>

To register for this event as a sponsor, please use this link: <https://www.moblind.org/wcs-sponsor>

Membership Updates **Stay Up-to-Date on Community News**

We would like to wish a happy birthday to our September birthday Danny Lawrence.

We would also like to welcome new members Yvette Good, Terry Nord, Rhonda and Marvin Taylor. And, we warmly welcome back Larry Parker.

We want to send our condolences to our member, Etefia Umana, on the recent loss of two family members.

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the loss of one of our members Lisa Harper, who passed away in August. Our thoughts and prayers go out to her family and friends. Lisa was such a joy to know. She will be missed.



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We would also like to extend well wishes and speedy recovery to our members this month who have been under the weather, and/or recovering from surgeries.

We would like to send our appreciation out to those who helped to make the ice cream social event a success. Thank you Rhona, Marvin, Yvette, Etefia, Danny, Treva, Patrick, Elizabeth, and Tracy!

Featured AGAPE Member of the Month

Our featured AGAPE member of the month is Debra Reece. Here are a few words from Debra:

I have been a member of AGAPE for about 10 years and have held the office of vice president. One of the things I'm most proud of is my position at Amazon. I am proud to have accomplished this in my life, as it allows me to inform people about available resources for the blind community. I enjoy inspiring individuals, particularly those struggling with low self-esteem and depression, by sharing coping strategies and ways to deal with these challenges.

Wellness Corner by Etefia Umana

I'm writing this article to share my experience with a gym in the St. Louis area. After a traumatic event, I committed to improving my health and strength. Planet Fitness in the Central West End became my choice. In January, I got a membership, but it was in July, post-surgeries, that I started taking full advantage of it.

I'm thrilled with the exceptional support and accessibility I receive at the gym. I'm not endorsing a specific facility, but I want to express my positive experiences. This might guide visually impaired individuals towards better health options.

The staff, including Liam, Tory, AJ, Alex, Sign, and Gucci, are truly helpful. When I arrive, they take my number and exercise preferences. If I want to use the treadmill, they set the speed and time. For instance, if I aim for 45 minutes with speeds varying from 1.5 to 1.8, they adjust the settings and check on me periodically.



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They're equally attentive if I try the rowing machine or weights. They guide me through setup, assist during the exercise, and move me between machines every 15-20 minutes. After the workout, they offer hydrotherapy massages and ensure transportation arrangements are smooth.

Their support extends to my arrival and departure, coordinating with the Call a Ride service. The staff's sensitivity and dedication show how businesses can make adaptive methods work for everyone. I encourage others, regardless of visual impairment, to consider Planet Fitness or its affiliates in the area. Their commitment to inclusivity is evident, possibly influenced by the American with Disabilities Act.

Improve Mind, Body, Soul and Quality of Life

When we set goals for our lives and seek to make meaningful improvements in how we live, what we're really striving for is a higher quality of life. Improving your quality of life leads to better outcomes in happiness, health, relationships and overall life satisfaction.

But what is quality of life, and how can we improve our lives? The American Psychological Association defines quality of life (QoL) as "the extent to which a person obtains satisfaction from life."

According to psychologists, improving quality of life means achieving satisfaction across several aspects, including:

- Emotional and physical well-being
- Social relationships and engagement with others
- Personal and professional development, including learning new skills
- Determining and living by our own lifestyle choices and values
- Participating in and contributing to society in meaningful ways

Though we may each approach improving our quality of life in different ways, there are a few actions everyone can take to increase their daily enjoyment. Below are five steps to optimize your well-being and increase life satisfaction.

The five methods for improving your quality of life include: feeling the benefits of bodywork, learning stress management skills, getting better sleep, achieving a healthy work-life balance, and becoming more active.

For more details, click here: <https://relaxtheback.com/blogs/news/how-to-improve-quality-life>



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Entertainment Spotlight

Editors, Tracy Anderson and Etefia Umana, interviewed Elizabeth Brown. Here are a few words from Elizabeth Brown:

When we first began organizing the Gospel Fest almost 30 years ago, our aim was to create something uplifting for our blind community and personally meaningful to us. Many of our members attended Greater Faith Church, and we also held meetings there. When it came to finding a venue for the Gospel Fest, we approached Bishop Kelley, Pastor Gina Kelly's father. He graciously allowed us to host it there, and we continued to do so for several years until this year. Our Gospel Fest featured numerous choirs and performers, including soloists, saxophonists, and Gospel choirs. We consistently had a great turnout and an enjoyable time, filled with spiritual joy.

My mother, Betsy Reece, played a significant role in spearheading the Gospel Fest event when it first started. I worked closely with her on the event, with the majority of the planning handled by her.

One of the aspects I appreciated most about the Gospel Fest was our 'high praise' moments and the inclusion of speakers, some of whom were blind themselves. These speakers shared their experiences of living with blindness and how they successfully navigated the challenges it presented. Our goal was to reach out to those who were newly blind or struggling with blindness, informing them about available resources and our willingness to assist. In addition, we took the opportunity to educate the broader public about issues concerning the blind community. This commitment to awareness and support was one of my favorite aspects of organizing the Gospel Fest.

AGAPE is partnering with Central Baptist Church (CBC) and is cordially inviting you to our Gospel Fest. This year's Gospel Fest will be held on Sunday, September 24, 2023, at 3:00pm at Central Baptist Church located at 2842 Washington Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63103. Please join us for an afternoon of praise and inspiration.

If you are unable to attend and would like to donate, please do so via Cash App [\\$AgapeCouncil](#), or you can make your check or money order payable to AGAPE Council of the Blind and contact Pattrick Patton for the mailing address at agapecouncil@gmail.com.



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Calendar of Events Activities for the Month

Monday, September 4 Labor Day holiday

Saturday, September 9: AGAPE monthly meeting, 11 AM at the MCB building And via the AGAPE conference phone line.

Monday, September 18: Flower Arranging Class with Carl Cook at the Botanical Gardens (4651 Shaw Ave St Louis, MO). The flower arrangement class for this month will be six dollars. Please contact Society for the Blind for more information.

Sunday, September 24th: AGAPE Annual Gospel Fest at Central Baptist Church (2842 Washington Ave, St. Louis, MO 63103). This event is free to the public and donations are welcomed.

Wednesday, September 27: Starkloff Disability Summit at Worldwide Technology Headquarters (1 World Wide Way, Maryland Heights, MO 63146). This event will be held from 8AM until 4:30PM.

On-Going Activities We Keep It Moving

Every Tuesday & Thursday: Prayer Line from 8:30am-9 AM on AGAPE Conference Line

Every Tuesday: \$2 Tuesday Bowling at Olivette Lanes from Noon to 3 PM

Every Thursday: Chair Exercises with Wilma, Conference Line 2



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Upcoming Events A Look to the Future

Friday, October 6th - Sunday, October 8th: 67th Annual MCB State Convention; Springfield, MO

Saturday, October 14th: White Cane Safety Day; Jefferson City, MO

TBD: AGAPE Monthly Meeting

Resources Need to Know Info

For an up-to-date list of all resources, contact a member of The Communications Team.

AGAPE Conference Line

605-313-4818

Access Code: 367629

Conference Line 2

(517)-525-1531

Access Code: #5620518

Missouri Council of the Blind (MCB)

To give every blind Missourian an opportunity to contribute socially and economically to society with the same expectations for success as all other Missourians.

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

5453 Chippewa St, St. Louis, MO 63109

314-832-7172

Saint Louis Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired

SLSBVI provides a variety of services and programs, and holds space for others to offer services and programs, to help people with sight impairment to have full lives.

<https://slsbvi.org>

8770 Manchester Rd, St. Louis, MO 63144

314-968-9000



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American Council of the Blind

The American Council of the Blind is a nationwide organization in the United States. It is an organization mainly made up of blind and visually impaired people who want to achieve independence and equality.

<https://www.acb.org>

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