

# Signs of DeafBlind Solidarity

DBCAN - NJ  
DeafBlind Community Access Network of New Jersey, Inc.

SUMMER 2020

## Contents

1. From the Editors
2. Culture Encounters at Easter Seals
3. Cornhole Tournament & Chili Cookoff
4. Holiday Shopping Program
5. Barnes & Noble Gift Wrapping Fundraiser
6. DeafBlind Awareness Week Activities
7. Success Must Be Self-Driven
8. News from the Board of Trustees
9. Inspiration Corner: Into the Wild Blue Yonder!

## OUR NEXT EVENT

Friday, August 28, 2020



REGISTER HERE:

<https://forms.gle/X1fPxvqyCHSPg5gM9>

## From the Editors

This is our first newsletter since Summer 2019. It's not that we haven't been doing anything. We have, and we wanted to share all that great stuff with you in our Winter newsletter ... until COVID-19 struck. At that time, as a sign of unity, we created the **Signs of Solidarity** posters. Thanks to all who contributed because you made someone else's day brighter with your smile, your kind and thoughtful words and videos, and your songs.



SHEREL



MARK



KATHY

As New Jersey heads into a new way of life, so does DB CAN NJ. We're exploring how we can continue to grow and share our beautiful community. The new name on our newsletter is **Signs of Solidarity** ... because that's what we do: Work together. Stand together. Grow together. These are our common goals.

This issue is jam packed with stories and photos of our good times over the past year. We hope you'll smile as you remember them. And stay tuned - there will be more to come!

## Culture Encounters at Easter Seals

Last September, Easter Seals invited DB CAN NJ to lead a workshop for their staff who work with deafblind job seekers. The goals were to expose the job coaches to the deafblind world from a deafblind perspective, to share tips and explore solutions to working more effectively with deafblind people, and to increase the staff's confidence in working with those who are deafblind. Discussions focused on communication, interpreting, guiding, and philosophical issues. Six deafblind people led hands-on communication and guiding activities and teamed with the job coaches in a scavenger hunt. At the end of the day, everyone was smiling, communication was effortless, and all agreed that the goals of the workshop were achieved. Thanks to Easter Seals for hosting this opportunity that will, in the long run, benefit many deafblind people.



## Cornhole DOMination Tournament & Chili Cookoff

Congratulations to Peter Paladino for being crowned the 2019 Chili King and to Cornhole team winners Alice and Gabriel, and Jeff and Scotty! Since our first tournament in 2017, we've grown from 48 attendees to more than 130. Attendees came from Maine, New York, Georgia, Pennsylvania and of course the Garden State to share in the camaraderie, team spirit and competition under a crisp, blue sky. Some of our deafblind friends traveled more than 3 hours each way by train, bus, car and plane to share a comfortable, relaxing and fun-filled day with old and new friends. Thanks to our families and friends who generously donated money, food, gifts and time. Special thanks also to the Leto family and our business sponsors ASL IRS, Chase Machine Company, Foodtown of North Arlington, Kearny ShopRite and Mariner Wealth Advisors, as well as the many students from the deaf interpreting programs who shared their time and skills so that our deafblind friends could have complete access to all aspects of the day. We know our good friend Dom is proudly looking down on us as we continue to honor his memory through our spirited Cornhole games and the wonderful variety of tasty chilis.



## Holiday Shopping Program



DB CAN NJ once again offered three free hours of Access Provider/SSP services during the 2019 holiday season. Deafblind people had their choice of joining a group shopping trip or using an AP/SSP for a holiday-related activity in their home or community. This year, SSPNJ joined us in the effort which meant that even more deafblind people had access to holiday activities. The group shopping trip was held at Menlo Park Mall. Seventeen people attended. APs/SSPs for the shopping were provided by DB CAN NJ and SSPNJ. In the picture at left, Santa is seated in a big green chair in the middle of our group, a large Christmas tree behind him and 10 of the shopping participants all smiling.

## Barnes & Noble Gift Wrapping Fundraiser

Thanks to Barnes & Noble for once again inviting us to wrap gifts at their Clifton Commons store during the 2019 holiday season. Our 16 volunteers wrapped, and wrapped, and wrapped (and ate way too many "Buy 1 Get 1 Free" cookies) while we smiled, chatted and raised holiday cheer among hundreds of shoppers - and over \$1,100 for DB CAN NJ! In the photo at right, two volunteers show off their humorous holiday eyewear. The young man's is the shape of Christmas wreaths while the young lady's has mistletoe trim, and she's got a Rudolph "red nose." Our team worked like clockwork and everyone made each moment an opportunity to share the joy of the season. THANK YOU to all for sharing of yourselves during the busy holiday season!



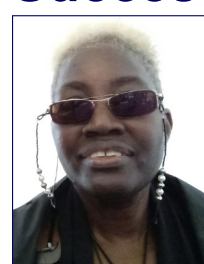
## DeafBlind Awareness Week Activities



HELEN KELLER DEAFBLIND AWARENESS WEEK  
June 21 - 27, 2020

It was our honor to lead the effort of 12 organizations in asking NJ Governor Phil Murphy to proclaim the last week of June 2020 as Helen Keller DeafBlind Awareness Week. To further celebrate, we collaborated with Eyes Like Mine, Inc., in hosting what we believe was the first-ever DeafBlind Virtual Happy Hour. On satisfaction surveys, the event was described as awesome, enjoyable, enlightening, innovative, joyous, unforgettable, WOW and refreshing. The efforts of many were needed and greatly appreciated: creative and technical teams (Marina, Marci, Mark, Brian, Sherel, Leslie, Edwin, Laura, Krystle and Kathy), the DB CAN NJ Access Team (Tara, Jon, Mark, Alice and Joe), and our special presenters Chris Woodfill, Associate Executive Director of Helen Keller National Center, and Bernice Davis, Executive Director of the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Thanks to all!

## Success Must Be Self-Driven



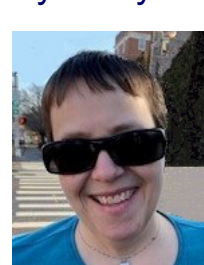
Alice Eaddy, in the photo at left, shares this quote given to her by Coach Amo Musharraf, Blind Athletes, Inc., "Every human being who reaches the age of understanding wishes for success. Wishing will not bring success. But desiring it with a state of mind that becomes an obsession, then planning definite ways and means to acquire it, and backing those plans with persistence which does not recognize failure, will bring it. Success is the compounding effect of repeated starts - the fruit of strong desire cultivated with patience and nurtured with perseverance." Coach Amo passed away unexpectedly in 2018, but his undeniable wisdom lives on.

## News from the Board of Trustees

- ◆ **HAPPY BIRTHDAY DB CAN NJ!** July 22, 2020 was our 4th birthday!
- ◆ In July, the Board elected the following trustees for the next two years: Kathy Gabry, President; Mark Gasaway, Vice President; Marci Friedman, Secretary; Sherel Belanovitz, Treasurer; and Betsy White, Trustee. Lisa Mauriello will continue as our bookkeeper.
- ◆ **WE NEED YOU!** DB CAN NJ has unique opportunities for anyone interested in supporting our work. Our current needs are in public relations and Zoom events. If you're interested in a volunteer opportunity, large or small, we'd love to hear from you! Email us at [dbcannj@gmail.com](mailto:dbcannj@gmail.com) or contact us through our Facebook page or our website (<https://www.dbcannj.org/contact>).
- ◆ **AP/DB WORKING AGREEMENT:** DB CAN NJ established a formal Agreement that defines the roles of Access Providers/SSPs and deafblind individuals in the working relationship. The agreement focuses on the overall provision of these 1:1 services including responsibilities of each person, trust and respect, boundaries and safety. The agreement was developed at the recommendation of our insurance provider, and, as a result, is a requirement for all who provide or use our services.

## Inspiration Corner: Into the Wild Blue Yonder!

By Betsy White



Last November my sister suggested I come for a short visit. Instead of taking the train (which takes forever), she asked, "Why don't you fly?" I had never flown by myself, and I had some serious doubts. "She must be crazy," I thought to myself. "How could I, her deafblind sister, get on a plane by myself and pull this off?" Even just two days before the trip, I reached out to a woman who has traveled often with other deafblind people. She offered to meet me at the airport, go through security together and hang out with me at the gate til my flight took off. But, in the end, I turned her down. I knew I could do this.

I was to leave on a Saturday morning. I didn't sleep much the night before, and my stomach was in knots. I took a cab to the airport, and the cab driver escorted me into the United Express terminal. Once I was in the airport, my nerves began to settle down as I realized I was going to have to focus on the task at hand and rely on the assistance of complete strangers. Amazingly, it could not have gone any better.

Almost immediately, a very kind gentleman, who I later learned was a pilot for another airline, led me to the ticket counter. Within minutes of my being at the ticket counter, another kind person asked if she could assist and offered me a wheelchair. She stayed by my side through security and got me to my gate. While waiting to board, my new pilot friend showed up at the same waiting area, and we continued to chat about the upcoming flight and his work. I was delighted to learn that his seat was just across the aisle from mine on the same plane! I realized that I wasn't really alone, and the coincidence of this positive karma was giving me a ton of confidence.

I was relieved once I was able to board the plane and settle into my seat, with my new friend right across the aisle. The flight lasted only 45 minutes and soon enough my sister was greeting me. My trip was great. It is incredibly empowering knowing that we can do anything we put our minds to!

## Like What You See Here?

You can help us continue our work by:

- ◆ Making a donation: Send your check payable to DB CAN NJ to: 187 Stewart Avenue, Kearny, NJ 07032 OR give online at: <https://www.dbcannj.org/donate>
- ◆ Sending us your comments related to the DeafBlind community: [dbcannj@gmail.com](mailto:dbcannj@gmail.com), message our FaceBook page at DeafBlind Community Access Network of NJ or use the "contact" form on our website
- ◆ Shopping our auctions on ebay.com -100% of the sale prices are donated to DB CAN NJ! Up for sale now: a 2001 Collector's Edition Longaberger basket.
- ◆ Making us your favorite nonprofit on Amazon:



We're a grassroots effort that aims to be truly responsive to the needs of the deafblind community. Everyone who cares about and believes in our **AWESOME** community is welcome to join our training, networking, social and recreational events.

[dbcannj.org](http://dbcannj.org)  
[dbcannj@gmail.com](mailto:dbcannj@gmail.com)

"Friend" us on Facebook at:  
Deaf Blind Community Access Network of NJ

© 2020