
Contents

1. ***Culture Encounters*** Presented at Deafblind International & National Federation of the Blind National Convention
2. **Merck Staff Take Their Children to Work ... The Tactile Way!**
3. **The Ladies Luncheon**
4. **DB CAN NJ Hosts Board Meeting**
5. **2nd Annual Cornhole DOMination & Chili Cook Off**
6. **Barnes & Noble Gift Wrapping**
7. **Potluck Lunch & Drum Circle**
8. **Website Coming!**

Culture Encounters Presented at Deafblind International and National Federation of the Blind National Convention

DB CAN NJ Board Trustees Mark and Kathy presented one of DB CAN NJ's signature activities, *Culture Encounters of the DeafBlind Kind*, at the DeafBlind International Conference last April in Hyannis, MA and at the National Federation of the Blind's National Convention last July in Orlando. *Culture Encounters* offers participants exposure to the various communication modes used by DeafBlind people and encourages sharing of cultural information by all. The activity happens in small groups facilitated by DeafBlind leaders, and can be likened to "speed dating" because every few minutes, the groups rotate to a different DeafBlind leader. The Dbl presentation was a poster session. In Orlando, it was a workshop led by attendees at the NFB's National Convention. For more information on *Culture Encounters* or to purchase it, email dbcannj@gmail.com.

Merck Staff Take Their Children to Work ... The Tactile Way!

Last April, we welcomed Scott Stoffel's invitation to volunteer at his **Tactile Carnival** at pharmaceutical giant Merck's *Take Your Children to Work Day* in Rahway, NJ. The goal of our participation was to share DeafBlind culture and perspective, and to demonstrate tactile approaches through Scott's innovative games. We've been to Merck before, and they've



always been a gracious host. This time was no exception, and the children were enthusiastic to play Scott's games through their sense of touch only.

Our terrific team of volunteers represented: Tactile Carnival, DeafCAN!, DB CAN NJ, NFBNJ/DB Division, Helen Keller National Center, American Association of the DeafBlind, ASL Interpreter Referral Service and DeafBlind League of New Jersey. Volunteers recruited by DB CAN NJ were: Jon, Stacie, Kathy, Kathy, Mark, Sydney, Alice, Cece, Mirellie, Mark and Maria. We also answered questions about the technology DeafBlind people use, and some of us followed up with parents we met that day whose children have different abilities. Of course, the service dogs in attendance, Wanda and Chester, were a huge hit. It's so powerful for us to come together as joined forces in a really cool opportunity like this to spread awareness of DeafBlind culture. We look forward to the next time we can all partner together again.



The Ladies Luncheon

Last spring, a longtime friend, Mary-Ellen, suggested DB CAN NJ bring together ladies who have Usher Syndrome and are voice communicators so they could share their experiences and their resources. We worked with Nancy O'Donnell, of the Usher Syndrome Coalition, to make it happen, and DB CAN NJ provided the SSPs. Sadly, Mary-Ellen passed away in July, but her legacy will live on through the friendships that were formed and the connections that were made at that lovely little luncheon last June.

DB CAN NJ Hosts Board Meeting

DB CAN NJ is managed by a Board of Trustees. We are in touch all the time through email, phone calls and texting, and we are required by our Bylaws to meet in person once every two years. In July 2018, we had our first in-person meeting. Thanks to our Trustees who have renewed their commitment to DB CAN NJ for another two years:

Kathy Gabry, President	Marci Friedman, Secretary	Kathy Kady-Hopkins
Mark Gasaway, Vice President	Paul Werner, Treasurer	Jamie Pope

Mark also agreed to continue serving as our Parliamentarian. Special thanks to Kathy Kady-Hopkins and ASL IRS for providing the interpreters for our meeting.

We reaffirmed our focus on the DeafBlind community, which we will continue to serve through fundraising, development of our website, and providing activities, training and the services of Access Providers, community outreach and participation, and networking and resources for all who are interested in the DeafBlind community.

2nd Annual Cornhole DOMination & Chili Cook Off

Saturday, November 10 was a brisk, sunny day, and more than 90 people came out to the American Legion in Kearny to celebrate DB CAN NJ by playing Cornhole, taste testing hot and spicy chili, taking part in our mini drum circle, and enjoying themselves through the camaraderie that is the hallmark of DB CAN NJ. The comments overheard all day were like these: “Everyone is so welcoming here,” “I feel so accepted here” and “This is soooo great! Thank you. When is your next event?”

Cornhole DOMination & Chili Cook Off is DB CAN NJ’s annual fundraiser in memory and in honor of Dominick Leto, a young man who lost a courageous battle with cancer in February 2017. Upon his passing, Dom’s family asked that donations be made to DB CAN NJ. We were honored by their faith in us and their respect for the work that we do. This year, with the Leto family’s help, we raised more than \$2,800.

In preparation for this year’s Cornhole event, we wrote *Playing Cornhole – The Tactile Way*, a guide about the game, its history and rules, and how to play. It also offers tips for the tactile player and how Access Providers can assist these players.

An event like this is successful only because of the commitment of our Board and a team of truly fabulous volunteers: Tara and Jeffrey, who assisted with the event organization; musicians Sydney and Chad; interpreting students Wildre, Elnora, Melissa, Andre and Sylvia; Access Providers Barbara, Danielle and Cece; interpreters Chelsea and Christine; our eight chili contestants; the many bakers; coffee donators Stephanie and Gene; those who donated gift baskets; and all the folks who stepped up to help with set up, Kitchen Patrol and break down. In addition, Kearny ShopRite and North Arlington Super Foodtown supported us with food donations.

We hope you’ll join us for our next Cornhole DOMination on November 2, 2019!



Barnes & Noble Gift Wrapping



We are extremely grateful to all who stopped by our gift wrapping table at Barnes & Noble in Clifton Commons during the holiday shopping rush and donated to DB CAN NJ. We raised more than \$800 for Access Provider training and services. We couldn't have done it without the invitation from Barnes & Noble and our incredibly awesome volunteers who gave of their time during this busy season: Craig, Elnora, Jay, Jeremy, Jesse, Jon, Jon Sr, Kathy, Marci, Maria, Mirellie, Simone, Sydney, Tatiana, Tia, Veronica and Wildre. Thank you, all!

Potluck Lunch & Drum Circle

DB CAN NJ's first Potluck Lunch & Drum Circle was held at the Rutgers Catholic Center in New Brunswick, NJ, January 12, 2019. DB CAN NJ provided sandwiches for the event, and we're grateful to all who brought food to share or donated to our cause. Paul brought an update of DB CAN NJ's original survey, which asks for input on where we should focus our activities. Special thanks to Jay, Mirellie, Jon and Joe who arrived early to help Sydney, Chad and the two Kathys with the set up; Justin, who joined Sydney and Chad in leading the percussion; and Wildre and Elnora for their excellent food service set up, maintenance throughout the event and clean up. DB CAN NJ is truly fortunate to have the participation and support of so many wonderful people. Not only do people come to enjoy themselves, they also come to share themselves, reconnect with old friends, meet new people and offer connections to services that will even further enrich everyone's lives. Through this event, not only did we have a great time drumming, but we also connected people looking for support groups, braille instruction and DeafBlind sports. A good day, indeed.



Website Coming!

Yes, folks, we know it's been a long time in coming, but we just didn't have the funds til now to launch our website. As this newsletter goes to press, we are *so close* to the unveiling of our new website at dbcannj.org. We'll let you know when the big day arrives!

SAVE THE DATE FOR CORNHOLE:

Saturday, Nov. 2, 2019

Details to be announced soon!



Like What You See Here?

Help us continue the great work we're doing by making a donation:

- ◆ Make your check payable to DeafBlind Community Access Network of New Jersey, Inc. and mail it to 187 Stewart Avenue, Kearny, NJ 07032
- ◆ Go to the PayPal Giving Fund, <https://www.paypal.com/fundraiser/hub>, and type in DeafBlind Community Access Network of New Jersey, Inc.
- ◆ Send us your comments on this newsletter or anything that's important to you and related to the DeafBlind community. Email your comments to: dbcannj@gmail.com

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