



Sightless Children Club News

MAY 2020

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

THIS MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS:

- **VIRTUAL CLUB MEETING VIA WEB X MONDAY, MAY 18 AT 7:00. WATCH YOUR EMAIL FOR THE LINK TO JOIN IN!**



- **REMEMBER TO SHARE AMAZON SMILE**

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SCC Spring Wrap Up:

Spring usually brings with it thoughts of new beginnings. This year, however, many seem to find themselves longing for things to “wrap up”. Those who have been homeschooling their children for the first time are likely ready for school to “wrap up.” (Who knew it was so exhausting, right?) Most of us are weary of the unpredictable

on-again-off-again Ohio weather and eager to “wrap up” spring and move on to summer. Certainly, we all yearn for the end of the Corona pandemic, so that Americans can work together to heal from the wounds of lost lives and fractured livelihoods. As we “wrap up” another year of SCC, our meeting this month will take a look back

at the events of the last nine months and begin to look Forward to the new SCC year. We hope you will join us!



Last month at SCC... ‘Going Virtual’

Our first WebX virtual meeting was a success, thanks to the efforts of Bill and Elaine Edwards, who worked diligently to

get things ready to go online. Last month’s minutes were shared, a treasurer’s report presented, the and

our efforts to sell the building updated. The highlight of the meeting was Abby Edward’s inspiring video presentation!

Coronavirus Restrictions: Extra Burden on the Blind



“Limited transportation access and accessibility options are major hurdles.”

The novel coronavirus outbreak has forced millions of people around the world to limit what and who they touch and stay in place for the time being. But for the blind community, in particular, these restrictions create additional obstacles.

Working and studying from home, shopping and even a recreational walk outside isn't always easy for blind persons because companies and leaders have not put immediate thought into accessibility for disabled people, said Chris Danielsen, a spokesman for the National Federation of the Blind, a non-profit advocacy group. "We are seeing a concern that blind people will be left behind in the general anxiety that

everyone else faces," Danielsen, who is blind, told ABC News. "We have the same anxieties everyone else has about the coronavirus, but they can be amplified in times like this." Nearly 7.6 million Americans over 16 years old have a visual impairment, according to the NFB, which used census data from 2016. The majority of them, about 4 million, are under 65, according to the data.

Experts said the biggest challenge for the blind community is transportation. Many cities have cut back on their bus and train lines. Taxis and rideshare options, like Lyft and Uber, are limiting pickups, according to Danielsen.

Stacy Cervenka, who is blind and the director of public policy for the American Foundation for the Blind, a non-profit that pushes for greater accessibility, said this is most problematic for blind persons who live by themselves. "Without Uber or Lyft, we're in a bind, especially in suburban and rural communities where everything is far away," she told ABC News. Cervenka said the lack of transportation would hinder any blind person who seeks to get tested for the coronavirus, as many states have opted for drive-thru testing. Cervenka added that while it is easier for companies and schools to switch over to video learning and working, and there are apps like Zoom that have good

accessibility options for visually impaired users, not every remote working option is feasible. Some schools may not have the ability to provide homework sheets and other reading materials for their blind students, she said. Classes tailored for the blind community, such as learning to walk with a cane and independent living training, have been suspended in schools across the nation. "This is not something that students can learn remotely," she said. Social distancing hasn't had too much of an effect on the community so far, according to Cervenka. Canes, guide dogs and other vision aids are already effective with keeping space between people and avoiding any obstacles. When it comes to touching, Cervenka said latex surgical gloves protect surfaces that need touching, such as braille signs on doors and elevators, without sacrificing

tactility. Shopping in a store is more complicated for blind customers. Normally, store workers would be available to assist finding and taking an item off a shelf, but those employees may be too overwhelmed with the extra crowds to help. "There may be a struggle to get any assistance there," he said. Clark Rachfal, director of advocacy



and governmental affairs for the American Council for the Blind, said one of the biggest risks for the blind community during the outbreak is COVID-19 itself. The biggest causes of blindness are complications from ailments such as diabetes and cancer, and those people are at high risk for contracting the disease, according to Rachfal. "Blindness also affects more elderly people, and they too are more susceptible," he told ABC News. Rachfal said he is concerned that some

medical offices and health care systems aren't equipped well to handle blind patients who may have flu-like symptoms. Some offices may not have patient portals with accessibility options, he said. Rachfal added that the outbreak would have detrimental mental health consequences for blind persons who are elderly and live alone. Some of them don't have access to new technologies, like delivery apps, and have limited in-person contact with their friends and family, according to Rachfal. He said the best thing that people can do to help those vulnerable blind persons is to reach out and ask if they need any assistance. "People can help with a phone call or even help deliver goods to their homes," he said. "You can leave it at their doorstep. You don't need to be in close contact with them."

By: Ivan Pereira

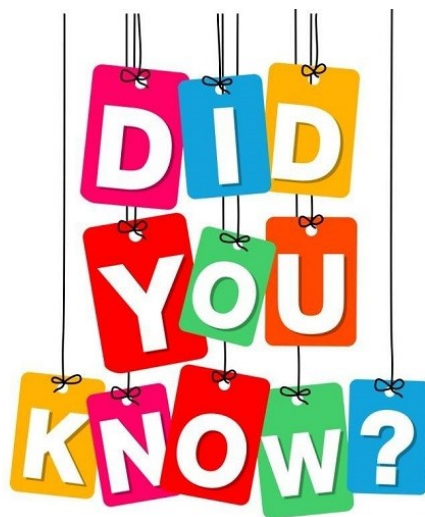


Do you think you know everything there is to know about blindness? Think again. Did you know, for example, that the divorce rate for people who are blind is only one-third the rate for Americans in general? Or that people who are blind are more apt to have nightmares than people with sight? Here are some surprising facts and figures about the complex world of blindness.

1. There are different degrees of blindness. In fact, only about 10-15% of people who are blind see soothing at all.

2. You might walk by someone who is visually impaired and not know it – fewer than 2 percent of visually impaired people use a white cane to navigate. The rest use guide dogs or nothing at all.

3. Surprisingly, 80 percent of vision problems worldwide could be avoided or even cured with prompt medical care and regular eye examinations. In particular, a leading cause of blindness among adults over 50 is cataracts, which are treatable with surgery. Organizations like the World Health Organization are working to eliminate causes of



avoidable blindness in developing countries.

4. People who are blind are just as likely as anyone else to experience vivid dreams while sleeping. The difference is that their dreams are dominated by sounds, smells and tastes. A Danish study also suggests that people who are blind must endure significantly more nightmares than their sighted counterparts.

5. One of the greatest ballerinas of all time relied on strategically placed spotlights to find her way around the stage. Alicia Alonso lost sight in both of her eyes at the age of 19 but continued to perform in her native Cuba and all over the world into her late 70s.

6. Guide dogs can't tell whether a traffic light is green or red or if it changes color. A person who is blind or

visually impaired uses audible cues like traffic noise to determine when they think it is safe to cross, and then signals their dog to move forward. If a car is coming, the dog will refuse to obey the command.

7. As many as 70 percent of people who are blind in the United States experience non-24-hour sleep-wake disorder – a condition where a person's circadian rhythm is out of alignment with conventional sleep schedules, causing insomnia at night or the urge to sleep during the day.

8. People who are blind are often better at identifying aromas than their sighted peers. Studies have refuted the age-old myth that blindness sharpens other senses, but researchers believe that people who are blind pay more attention to how an object smells and devote more cognitive energy toward cataloguing that information.

9. People who are blind are often lucky in love – 65 percent of Americans who are blind are married or live with a partner and only 16.5 percent have divorced.