

Metrolina Association for the Blind



Robert Scheffel
President & CEO
MAB

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Your Votes Counted The Transit Tax Stays

It was exactly one year ago that *MAB Matters* applauded the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) for continually striving to create a customer-friendly system for individuals with vision loss by implementing the "Talking Bus" and adding additional bus stop announcements.



Pictured left to right:
Zettie Phillips (CATS)
Laura Park-Leach (MAB)
Sarah Heinrich (MAB)

Once again, CATS has proven its positive impact on the local community. The transit tax is here to stay! Roughly 70% of Charlotte voters chose to keep the tax instead of repeal it. Mecklenburg county residents voted against the repeal, but what exactly does that mean for the Queen City's residents, particularly MAB clients?

MAB clients can now expect continued improvements in the public transportation system, including expansion and general maintenance, allowing them to maintain their ability to travel independently. As the number of Charlotte's elderly population grows, so does the number of those that are visually impaired; thus, resulting in an increased number of individuals who become transit dependent to commute to work and social events, and for other daily living needs.

What does this tell us about our fellow community members? Charlotte revealed its true colors: it is a city of visionaries, all of whom encourage not only the growth of the city, but its willingness and ability to comply with both ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and non-ADA accessibility needs.

Whether sighted or visually impaired, 'abled' or disabled, Charlotte agrees that the public transportation system contributes positively to the lifestyles of those that live, work, and play in Mecklenburg County and is essential in keeping pace with the city's growth.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert R. Scheffel". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Tom Sullivan Headlines Annual Dinner

The words “Thank You” seem so miniscule to the wonderful support given by MAB’s staff, volunteers, and most importantly, clients. To make our “Thank You” as meaningful as possible, MAB, with the help of Allergan, welcomed guest speaker Tom Sullivan to the 2007 Annual Dinner with open arms.

Hosted at the Westin Center City, the 2007 Annual Dinner provided an evening for MAB’s friends and family to gather in appreciation for the year’s hard work and dedication.



Tom Sullivan

The evening began with an enjoyable and elaborate dinner spread, during which guests were entertained by Kathryn Withers’ singing performance of “Be Thou My Vision” and “Look to the Rainbow.” Chairwoman, Erin Mandell, recognized the many successes of her fellow board members and MAB volunteers with encouraging words.

Headlining the evening was special guest speaker Tom Sullivan, who, blinded at

birth, shared his life experiences to his audience through speech, song, and video clips.

At the core of his speech, Tom Sullivan expressed his personal goal of “turning any negative into a positive,” and reflected on how he has taken his blindness as a challenge to raise himself to a higher standard, instead of allowing himself to be hindered by



Left to Right: Sheilita Douglas, Geraldine Donaldson, Earthlun Ferguson



Left to Right: Pat MacLean, Louis Atchison, Mabel Atchison

his impairment. Now an accomplished author, actor, director, composer, performer, skier, golfer and motivational speaker, Tom radiated wit, wisdom and high spirituality to help others see what he hears. Some of the most recognizable works of Sullivan’s career include regular appearances on television’s ***Designing Women***, ***Highway to Heaven***, and ***M.A.S.H.***, as well as several of his novels, such as *If You Could See What I Hear*, *Adventures in Darkness*, and numerous children’s books.

“It was the most wonderful event I have ever had the privilege to attend.... The speaker was the most outstanding one I have ever heard and he hit the nail right on the head concerning the Blind and visually impaired.”



Technology Opens Multiple Doors

Things often occur in our lives that one may not fully understand

Life can be so invigorating at one moment, yet terribly complicated the next. It's during these complicated times that we must look inside ourselves and realize that we only get one shot at life, and that we must make the very best of every minute.

Sharon Chambers, one of MAB's remarkable friends, lives every minute as though it's the best minute of her life. Unable to solve the then mystery of her deteriorating vision, doctors simply said that her eyes



Sharon Chambers

were changing and that she was in desperate need of new glasses. Little did her doctor know, the pair of glasses she was wearing at that particular time were only three weeks old.

With time, Sharon's vision continued to worsen, and by the age of 25, she had surrendered her driving abilities. Initially, as her ability to see diminished, she felt as though she was "in a dark room, with no doors, no windows, and no way out." Quickly, Sharon came to the realization that she had to work through the frustration and the tears, and that she still had a long life ahead of her. Despite her vision impairment, Sharon continued to teach at a local school, participated in numerous volunteer projects from which she earned an award from the Mental Health Associa-

tion in Virginia signed by Elizabeth Taylor, and pursued her passion of traveling. Of all of these accomplishments, her greatest blessing is her son, Tim.

Sharon embraced her role as a mother, despite her blindness. "A child deserves to have a mother. We were a normal mother and son. I had to function as a mother, regardless of my sight. He is the greatest blessing in my life."

Through her relationship with her son, Sharon grew to acknowledge the fact that, "visually impaired people are just ordinary people with sight problems." She is also particularly grateful to her son, for it was he who introduced her to MAB.

Metrolina Association for the Blind was able to provide Sharon with *Window Eyes*, a computer screen reader, which Sharon has named "Simon," that allows blind and visually impaired people complete access to Windows applications. With the help of MAB and her Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist, Sharon has been introduced to the technological world via her computer.

Because of MAB and Simon, Sharon is now able to converse with friends, both old and new, and family via email. *Window Eyes* has allowed Sharon to complete everyday tasks, such as maintain her finances and prepare her grocery lists. It has also provided her with a way to write poetry. "MAB gave me a whole new way of living."

"Metrolina Association for the Blind is now part of my family," Sharon says enthusiastically. "I've never before encountered such wonderful people, such people who put more than 150% into their job, and want the very best for visually impaired people. Simon helped me read again, and hear my own words. With Simon, I am seeing again."

"I can't express how MAB has changed my life. It's like breathing again."

Sharon Chambers

Eggs and Spinach Offer Protection Against Cause of Blindness

In a recent study, it was discovered that two of the main nutrients found in eggs, and spinach and other leafy green vegetables offer some protection against the most common cause of blindness among senior citizens.

Age-related macular degeneration affects 1.2 million Americans, generally after they reach the age of 65. Macular degeneration is a progressive vision impairment, resulting in the deterioration of one's central vision.

Found in eggs, spinach, and other leafy green vegetables, the common two ingredients, lutein and zeaxanthin, are both categorized as carotenoids – compounds that result in vegetables and fruits to appear yellow in color.



It was discovered that those in the top fifth of dietary consumption of foods containing lutein and zeaxanthin had a 35% less chance of developing macular degeneration compared to those in the lowest fifth of consumption of the two nutrients.

“Lutein and zeaxanthin may be considered as useful agents in food or supplement-based interventions designed to reduce the risk of adult macular degeneration,” researchers reported in the journal Archives of Ophthalmology.

Foods which are considered good sources of lutein and zeaxanthin include eggs, spinach, kale, turnip greens, collard greens, romaine lettuce, broccoli, zucchini, corn, garden peas, and Brussels sprouts.

Tips & Tricks



Choosing the Safest Password

Unfortunately, there's not a list of “the world's safest passwords,” for if there were, they would no longer be the safest. There are, however, some criteria to consider when creating a new password. Certain passwords tend to be more common than others, and result in more frequent hacking. *PC Magazine* suggests that the more common and more risky passwords include “password,” “123456,” “qwerty,” “abc123,” “letmein,” “monkey,” “password1,” and your first name.

When choosing your next password, consider using a minimum of eight characters and combine two parts of unusual words (such as “glaucomacular”), all while interchanging capital and lowercase letters with numbers and symbols. If you speak a language other than English, try combining English words with foreign words. Happy internet travels!

Cooking Tips

Everyone Will Enjoy

Do you crave the nutty flavor of store-bought coffee in the mornings, but your wallet despises it? For a fresh nutty flavor every morning, try adding vanilla extract to the coffee grounds when brewing your pot of coffee in the mornings.



Tired of soggy canned corn? For a crunchy, right-off-the-cobb flavor, place canned corn in a casserole dish, and dot with butter, salt, and pepper. Then bake uncovered in the oven at 325-350 degrees until the corn is crunchy and lightly browned.

Bon Appétit!

MAB Welcomes New Team Members

Metrolina Association for the Blind is proud to announce six new staff members. These employees bring a breadth of expertise, and will help MAB service Charlotte's growing need for vision impairment services. Please help MAB welcome these new staff members.

Linda Strobino, Vice President, Business Development

Abby Dorfmeier, Marketing and Public Relations Coordinator

Chris Wilkins, Vice President, Information Technology

Erica Wood, Program Receptionist

Lyndsie Smith, Braille Editor



Left to Right: Abby Dorfmeier, Bob Scheffel, Linda Strobino, Chris Wilkins, Lyndsie Smith, Erica Wood

Our Mission:

To reduce or eliminate the daily living problems imposed upon people by blindness or severe vision impairment.



Wanted: Volunteers

Because One Person Can Make a Difference

Looking for an extracurricular activity? Volunteers at Metrolina Association for the Blind are truly priceless, and MAB cherishes those who are willing and able to help. Volunteers have devoted count-

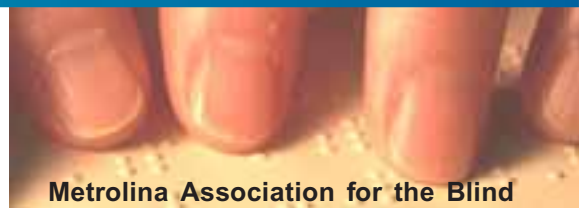


less hours of help to completing office tasks, serving as friendly visitors, and many other activities.

Currently, there are numerous volunteer opportunities within the agency. Through the continued support of all of our volunteers, MAB is able to make a difference in the lives of those we serve.

For more information on volunteer opportunities and if you are interested in lending MAB a helping hand, please contact Kelly Austin (704) 887-5129 or Abby Dorfmeier (704) 644-4295.

MAB Matters



Did You Know

You can subscribe to *MAB Matters* Quarterly Newsletter? It is available in four accessible formats: Print, Braille, Audio CD, and E-mail notification with a link to the newsletter on MAB's web site (PDF format). Contact Kelly Austin at (704) 887-5129 or kaustin@mabnc.org to sign up.

Southpark Mall To Host MAB Fundraiser

Simon Evening of Giving

The holidays are just around the corner. Have you started your holiday shopping? Why not bargain shop for your loved ones while simultaneously supporting MAB?

On Sunday, November 18, 2007, SouthPark Mall will host its fourth annual *Simon Evening of Giving* charity event. The event delivers a unique holiday shopping experience that offers special discounts and values to shoppers while helping raise money for local non-profit organizations, including Metrolina Association for the Blind.

The *Simon Evening of Giving* is a private evening of shopping for customers who have purchased a \$10 ticket. \$7 of each ticket sold will benefit MAB and the remaining \$3 will go towards the Simon Youth Foundation (www.syf.org). Shoppers who have purchased the ticket will be admitted into the mall from 6:30-9:00pm, and will shop for discounts at stores throughout the mall, enjoy entertainment and refreshments, and enter to win various door prizes. In addition, shoppers will have access to the silent auction, in which they have the opportunity to win items such

as jewelry, hotel stays, gift certificates, and many more.

Participating stores range from men's, women's and children's clothing stores to jewelry and luggage boutiques, all offering discounted shopping. For a complete list of participating stores, please visit www.simon.com/mall/aym.aspx?ID=788.

An eclectic spread of food will be provided by local restaurants, including Maggiano's and The Oceanaire, while entertainment will be provided by Ballantyne Brass and the Holiday Singers.



For additional information or to purchase tickets, please contact Abby Dorfmeier (704) 644-4295, or Kelly Austin (704) 887-5129.

<u>MAB Board of Directors</u>		
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Let's See the City!

Fall 2007 Calendar of Events



October 2007

Did you know that **October is World Blindness Awareness Month**? More than two-thirds of visually impaired adults in the United States are over the age of 65, and there are nearly 20.5 million Americans age 6 and older who are afflicted with vision impairments. The prevalence of blindness increases rapidly with age progression, particularly after age 75. Thus, the number of Americans with age-related visual impairments is expected to double within the next three decades.

Saturday, October 20th, NFB Vision Walk

Join NFB's (National Federation of the Blind) efforts to increase public awareness of the blind in our community and our goals of equality in education and job opportunities for blind people in our state.

Saturday, October 27th, FFB Vision Walk

Join FFB in the fight to find a cure for blindness. Foundation Fighting Blindness will host its first annual Charlotte VisionWalk at McAlpine Creek Park, located at 8711 Monroe Rd, Charlotte, NC, 28212. Registration is at 10:00AM, the walk begins at 11:00AM. To register, please visit www.visionwalk.org or call (919) 781-8014.

November 2007

Did you know that **November is American Diabetes Month**? Nearly 21million children and adults in the United States are living with Diabetes, and another 54 million are at risk. Diabetes can cause eye problems that may lead to vision loss.

Sunday, November 18th, Simon Evening of Giving
Come join MAB at South Park Mall for the 4th annual Simon Evening of Giving. Tickets are \$10 and proceeds benefit MAB and the Simon Youth Foundation. Come enjoy, private discounted shopping, a silent auction, entertainment, and hors d'oeuvre.

Location: South Park Mall
4400 Sharon Rd.
Charlotte, NC 28211

Time: 6:30-9:00PM

Ticket Price: \$10

December 2007

Saturday, December 1st, FFB Holiday Wine Tasting Benefit

Location: Carolina Inn
Chapel Hill, NC

Ticket Price: \$100

Contact: Jennifer Asaff, (919) 781-8014

Monday, December 3rd, International Day of Disabled Persons

International Day of Disabled Persons aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights, and well-being of individuals with disabilities. The theme of the day is based on the goal of full and equal enjoyment of human rights and participation in society by those living with a disability.

Wednesday, December 19th, VIP Travel Club

Hanes Mall in Winston-Salem for shopping and dinner, and then to

Tanglewood Park's "Festival of Lights."

****PLEASE NOTE PICK-UP & DROP-OFF TIMES****

Pick-up: 12:00PM

Drop-off: 9:00PM

Recurring Events

VIP Travel Club, Mecklenburg Park & Recreation

\$15 Registration fee for each event

Pick-up and drop-off location:

Marion Diehl -or- MAB
2219 Tyvola Rd 704 Louise Ave
Charlotte, NC Charlotte, NC

Pick-up time: 9:00AM 9:30AM

Drop-off time: 4:00PM 3:30PM

Contact: Karen Howard (704) 336-2344

Karen.howard@mecklenburgcountync.gov

Calendar continued from previous page

National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Meeting

Third Saturday of each month

Location: Eastern Hills Baptist Church

4855 Albermarle Rd

Charlotte, NC

Time: 1:00PM

Please bring \$5 for lunch

Contact: Muriel Brown (704) 679-4140

Sunshine Club Weekly Meeting

Every Wednesday

Location: Bethlehem Center

AER Scholarship and Stipend

Now accepting applications

The AER (Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired) Scholarship Committee has announced that is now accepting applications for the William & Dorothy Ferrell Scholarship which will assist two legally blind individuals who are enrolled in a college or university program.

In addition, AER is also accepting applications for the Douglas C. MacFarland Stipend, which will benefit up to five selected members, and will assist in defraying the cost of attending the AER International Conference.

AER is an international membership organization dedicated to providing all possible support and assistance to professionals who work in all segments of the education and rehabilitation of blind and visually impaired children and adults.

The submission deadline is February 15th, 2008. For additional information or an application, visit their website at www.aerbvi.org.

The Metrolina Association for the Blind

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Web: www.mabnc.org

704 Louise Ave.

Charlotte, NC 28204-2128

Low Vision Satellite Clinic

1318-AO Central Ave.

Phone: (704) 285-7490

A United Way agency since 1938, MAB provides critical rehabilitation programs benefiting 722 Charlotte area residents in 2005/2006 and more than 11,000 individuals monthly in all fifty states through its Braille, large print, and audio compact disc transcription services.

