



Metrolina Association for the Blind



Robert Scheffel
President & CEO
MAB

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The new postage rates that became effective in May, 2007, have had a dramatic impact on our statement rendering operations. MAB handles over 17,000 modified monthly statements for various US corporations. We package these statements (Braille, large print and audio CD's) in 9 inch by 12 inch booklet envelopes, affix the appropriate postage, and carry them to the main post office in Charlotte.

Under the new regulations, we are now being charged by not only the weight of the envelopes, but also by the size. Of the 17,000 monthly statements we process, over 11,000 are large print statements that are 7 pages or less. Thanks to the good folks at Pitney Bowes, we have determined that we can actually reduce the postage costs of these 11,000 statements by folding them in half and inserting them into 9 inch by 6.5 inch envelopes. We offer these savings to our customers as "value added services."

Some of you may wonder why we don't use the benefits of U.S. Postal regulation 135, the "free matter for the blind" mailing privileges, when mailing these statements. The answer is that commercial mailings do not qualify as "free matter" materials. This opinion

was received by the local mail classification officer in the late 1980's. Our agency appealed this ruling to the national mail classification office in Philadelphia, but lost the appeal. No further appeals are possible. Thus, since that time, these modified Braille and large print statements have been sent via first class mail rates.

Robert R. Scheffel



Tips & Tricks



Tips for food preparation/cooking:

For easy clean up when peeling veggies or fruits, just line the sink with a sheet of newspaper. Let the peelings drop into the sink on the newspaper. When you're done just gather up the paper and throw everything in the trash.

Before you put sticky substances (like peanut butter) into a measuring cup, fill it with hot water. Dump out the hot water, but don't dry the cup. Add your ingredient and watch how easily it comes right out.

Tips for Locating Food on your plate:

When eating, move the fork towards the center of the plate. It reduces the chance that food items will fall to the table and will make it easier to locate the remaining food.

Use a piece of bread, a roll, or knife to act as a "pusher" to help guide the food onto the fork. This works particularly well with foods more difficult to pick up, like peas and corn.

A person with sight can describe the location of food on a plate by using the clock method. (Vegetables at 2:00, Meat at 6:00, Bread at 10:00)

Recipe Alternatives:

For a low fat alternative when baking cakes or muffins try substituting the oil for an equal amount of applesauce.

To add flavor to an ordinary boxed cake mix, substitute the water for orange juice or your favorite fruit juice.

Talking Glucometers

The AccuChek VoiceMate is no longer being made as of January 2007 (the strips for it will continue to be produced for another 4-6 years). There are currently two talking glucometers being manufactured in the United States: the Prodigy and the Advocate. Each costs only about \$35, and is about the size of the palm of your hand. Both speak English and Spanish. The Prodigy is sold through Diagnostic Devices Inc. (1-800-366-5901 or www.prodigymeter.com) and the Advocate is sold by Diabetic Support Program (1-800-990-9826 or www.prescriptionsplus.com). MAB has both the Prodigy and the Advocate available for demonstration. If you are interested in seeing these talking meters, contact your case manager.

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) publication *Voice of the Diabetic* is a great source of information to help visually impaired diabetics stay updated about glucometers and other adaptive devices and methods for diabetes management. To subscribe to the *Voice*, contact NFB at (1-410-296-7760 or email subscribe@diabetes.nfb.org.) It is available in print, audio, or by email.



Medication Reminders

Do you have a hard time remembering to take your medications at specific times? There are services and products available that can give you reminders throughout the day to take your pills. RxNotify (www.rxnotify.com) charges 25 cents per call to call you during the day (or evening) to remind you, and they also sell watches and pillboxes that alert you to take your medicines. MedPrompt (www.medprompt.com) pages you on a special pager. PageMinder (www.pageminderinc.com) not only reminds



you to take your meds, but can remind you of medical appointments or other tasks. You can also purchase special reminder watches or pill boxes from adaptive products catalogs such as Maxi-Aids, Inde-

pendent Living Aids, or LS&S. To find more products and services, simply search on the internet for "pill reminders."

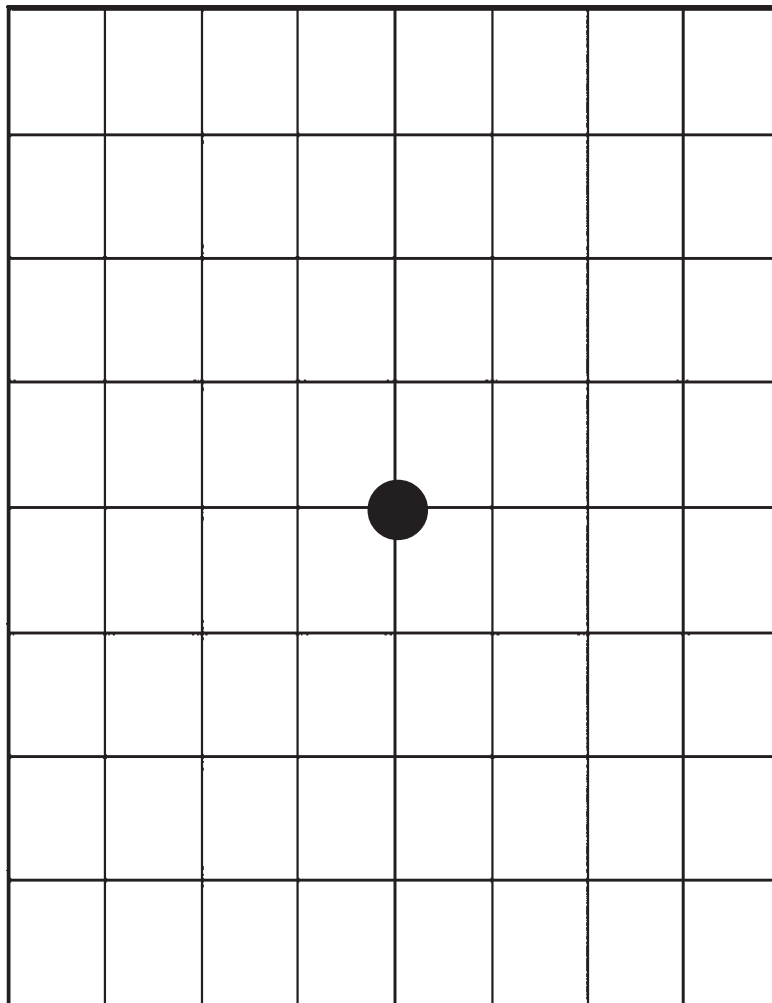
Amsler Grid Testing

The first line of defense for macular degeneration is awareness. A simple test of your vision will alert you to any changes that may indicate a problem with macular degeneration or a worsening of your condition. This common test is known as the Amsler Grid.

The Amsler Grid looks like graph paper, with dark lines forming a square grid. Some versions have white lines on a dark background.

One of the first signs of macular degeneration can be wavy, broken or distorted lines OR a blurred or missing area of vision. The Amsler Grid can help you spot these early. Early detection of wet AMD is critical because laser treatment, when indicated, is most successful when performed before damage occurs. Since dry AMD can lead to development of wet AMD, most patients should use the Amsler Grid. Check with your eye doctor to find out how often you should use this test.

Here's how to use the graph below. Wear your reading glasses, if you normally use them and sit about 14 inches away from the screen. Focus on the dark dot in the center of the grid. While looking at this dot, you still should be aware of the lines of the grid. If you notice any



blurred, wavy or missing lines, contact your ophthalmologist as soon as possible

Amsler Grid

If you are in “the macular generation”, you should check yourself on the Amsler Grid. But remember that it is a “gross” test and may not catch early vision loss. You should see your eye doctor every year or two for a dilated eye examination.

The “Face” Test

Another way to easily test your vision is just waiting for you in your bathroom mirror. The key to catching vision problems is to look with one eye at a time, because when both eyes work together, they can hide a vision problem.

Every morning, simply look at your face in the mirror. Cover your left eye with your hand and focus on your face. Then switch, covering your right eye with your hand so you're looking at your face with the left eye. If you notice any

central blurring or missing parts, contact your doctor for an eye examination.

To learn more, visit www.AMD.org or call : 1-888-430-9898 to sign up to receive a free Amsler Grid and other information about Macular Degeneration.

Gil Laster - The Will to Overcome

July 13, 1987 was a life changing day for me at age thirty-five. I was diagnosed with having Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) during a regular annual eye checkup. The doctor did not give much information, however, his use of the word “degenerative” did not sound good. I went to the public library and found two medical books that explained much more about the disease. Learning that it is inherited, my first concern was for my two young children that they may have the disease too (fortunately, they did not). As I read more about the symptoms the voids in my vision that I had never noticed before suddenly appeared. This was both frightening and amazing that my mind had been filling in what I was not actually seeing.

Over the next sixteen-years my optimism for the future was vanishing along with the ability to see. The hardest thing to live with was the ever-present reminder that I was becoming handicapped. To add to my frustration I resisted adapting. I quit doing some of the things that I had enjoyed because I could no longer see well enough to do them as I wanted to. There was also great stress to perform well in a competitive work environment. My outlook dimmed as I viewed myself becoming less capable in an unfamiliar world.

In 1992 I voluntarily stopped driving for fear of having an accident. In 1996 I could no longer read normally and in 2003 there was no longer any useful vision, only light sensitivity. At that point I accepted disability retirement after 29-years as an engineer with Duke Energy. That was the lowest point in my self-esteem, as I believed that I had finally failed in the struggle with RP. Unknown to me at the time it was also the turning point to becoming a much happier per-

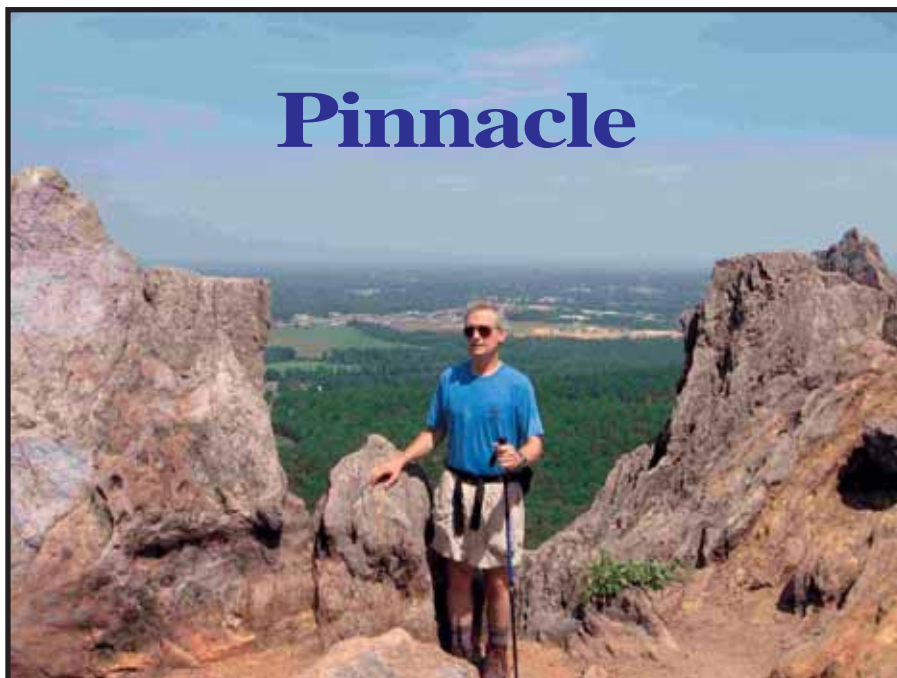
son again.

My wife, Jan, gently, and sometimes not so gently, persisted in keeping me involved with family and friends. A very helpful thing was to join Boy Scouts in 1997 with my son when he was eleven-year old. Going along with him on outings I started doing some of the things that I had avoided and was afraid to try. We canoed fifty-miles on the New River, explored a cave, snow skied, did backpacking, and had many

camp outs. Our experience culminated in the summer of 2003 when we backpacked fifty-miles at the Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. I was led by a guide for the entire trip. My son is now twenty-years old and I still serve in Scouting. It has been very rewarding to participate with a group of people that have always been supportive of me as a valuable person.

In the fall of 2003 it

was my wife that persuaded me to seek help with near total blindness. I called MAB. I got signed up for the Mini Sessions, support group, mobility training, and Braille Training. The Mini Sessions with Sarah Schwartz and Laura Schmidt introduced me to other blind people and how to adapt at home. Charla Rose Houston was my Braille instructor. Braille was very hard for the first four months. Finally I got the feel of it and reading the dot patterns became easier. I became a graduate of Grade II Braille after ten months. I was also introduced to Camp Dogwood and have been attending a week there each summer since. There I meet others that have been very successful in their lives as blind individuals. My mobility instructor was Ian Smith. I had been using a cane prior to working with him, but as I discovered, I was not using it well. Ian challenged me to go places that I had been reluctant to go. He pointed out how to recognize landmarks and keep my orientation. Eventually I became very



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comfortable with the cane and no longer afraid to venture out on my own.

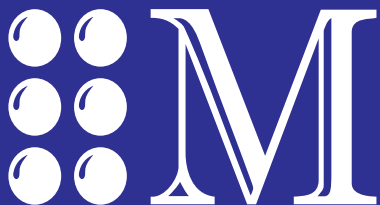
I knew about dog guides, but did not seriously think about getting one until Ian began suggesting that I was well suited for one with my activities. In the summer of 2006 I applied at The Seeing Eye school in Morristown, NJ. I was quickly accepted and spent the month of October there with my new companion, Javier. He is a 65-pound Chocolate Lab, full of energy, and loves people. He gives me the freedom to walk independently. He takes me around obstacles, stops for steps, and gets me places twice as fast than a cane. I even hike and camp with him and the Boy Scouts. Javier has made me an enthusiastic believer in dog guides.

The journey to becoming comfortable and confident with blindness took me a long time. It does not have to be that way, though. The people at MAB understand the skills needed to adapt successfully, making the transition to blindness easier and much less stressful. I am thankful that MAB serves the blind community of the Charlotte area and me so well.

Gil Laster
Charlotte, NC

Our Mission:

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



Client Letters



I am sending you this e-mail to inform you about the excellent job that Joy Boyer is doing with my Orientation & Mobility training. Joy has gone out of her way to customize my rehabilitation training in order to accommodate my learning style and objectives.

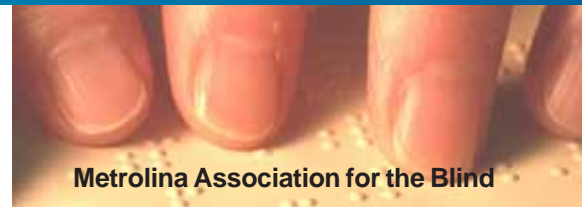
I compliment you and M.A.B. for allowing your rehabilitation coaches to determine the most productive learning style for each customer. I am grateful to the M.A.B. rehabilitation coaches for their dedication to my journey as I become an independent blind person.

Thank you -
Adam J. Slotkowski

I... want to thank you all for everything that you do for me. I have really grown in my personal growth as a visually impaired and blind person. Your agency has brought so very much to my life it is hard to put it down to a few words. Your agency has opened a whole world of things up for me and improved my life one hundred percent and more... I am just astonished to think I was able to cope before my involvement in your agency.

With all my affection and thanks,
Sharon Chambers

MAB Matters



Metrolina Association for the Blind

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.

The Cloud
That Turned My World into
Darkness

Oh yes, I'm as bitter as I can be
I just lost the most precious gift in life
I no longer can see
I really didn't know what to do
I found myself on the streets
Every night and day
Hitting all the barrooms along the way
This lasted for a while
Then I thought I'm going to have to
deal with this somehow
I wanted to lash out to the gods above
No, I'm going to turn my anger into love
I want to thank thee up there wherever you may be
I still have my fondest memories
Sitting with my family and friends while saying grace
Don't tell me, what's more beautiful than innocence in a
child's face
So many don't appreciate the beauty around them
No, don't pity me
They're the ones who do not see

I saw a young guy the other day
He wore a look of despair
I seated myself beside him and he seemed pleased
that I was there
Suddenly he began to cry and looked to me
and said I really don't want to die
We continued talking for hours on end
I found a friend in him that day
and I know I helped him
When he stood, he shook my hand
Smiled, and slowly walked away
Oh yes, I can see
My garden is ablaze with many brilliant kinds of color
I can tell every flower by its fragrance
and know all of them, one from another
I want to say to all the very young, whatever they might do
During your life's journey, I hope that you will find
Someone who truly loves you, there will be
times you will feel blue
I'm sure he or she will say,
I'm so happy to have taken this journey with you.

By: Willie McRorie
MAB Client

MAB Board of Directors

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Calendar of Events

Charlotte Hornets Beepball Team

For teens and adults with visual impairments
Every Monday evening
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Contact: Karen Howard at 704-336-2344

Karen.Howard@mecklenburgcountync.gov

Games begin at 10:00 a.m. and are double-headers:

Saturday, August 25

Foundation Fighting Blindness (FFB)

Quarterly Meeting, 10 AM – 12 PM

Registration 9:30 AM

Sharon Towers – Hunter Hall

5100 Sharon Rd., Charlotte

Topic: To be announced

Contact: Chris Stetkiewicz 919-781-8014

Saturday, September 22

Foundation Fighting Blindness (FFB)

15th Annual Western Classic & Barbecue

Camp Yonahnoka, Linville, NC

www.westernclassic.org

Recurring Events:

VIP Travel Club, Mecklenburg Park & Rec.

\$15 Registration for each event

Pick-up and drop off at:

Marion Diehl, 2219 Tyvola Rd, Charlotte, 9 AM, 4 PM

MAB, 704 Louise Ave., Charlotte, 9:30 AM, 3:30 PM

Contact: Karen Howard 704-336-2344

Karen.howard@mecklenburgcountync.gov

August 31 – McGill Rose Garden,
brunch at Johnson & Wales University

September 19 – Mountain “Mystery Trip”

National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Meeting

Third Saturday of each month

Eastern Hills Baptist Church, 1 PM

4855 Albemarle Rd., Charlotte

Bring \$5 for lunch

Contact: Muriel Brown 704-679-4140

Sunshine Club Weekly Meeting

Every Wednesday

Bethlehem Center, 2705 Baltimore Ave., Charlotte

Contact: Rogers Bennett 704-334-2500



Accessible Gold Rush Signage

Charlotte has become one of the first cities in the United States to install Braille and large print bus stop signage. The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) is conducting a test site using the Gold Rush shuttle uptown. The Gold Rush is a free shuttle with two lines, the red and orange, that circulates on a 7 or 12 minute schedule depending on the time of day. Once the test is complete, CATS will consider accessible bus stop signage for the entire system. If you have feedback on this project, please call Laura Park-Leach at MAB (704-887-5111) or Zettie Phillips at CATS (704-336-2233).



Photo courtesy of Visit Charlotte

Stress Management

We all experience stress at some points in our lives. Both positive and negative events, as well as day to day life changes can increase our stress levels. Stress is an inevitable part of life, but if it's not dealt with properly and quickly it can contribute to health damaging physical and emotional problems. Some of the physical symptoms of stress include headaches, insomnia, muscle tension and increased heart rate, just to name a few. While there are many external sources that contribute to our stress levels, we often cause or exacerbate the situation by engaging in our own stress building behaviors. These behaviors include self-criticism, worry, having unrealistic expectations and focusing on negative thoughts. Our stress responses are based on how we perceived a situation, as opposed to viewing the facts with a rational perspective.

So what can we do to limit the potentially harmful effects of stress? We all have our own ways of dealing with stress, but here are a few skills to keep in mind. Talking with someone you trust about a stressful situation can be a tremendous help.

Negative thoughts and feelings become unwanted baggage if not dealt with properly and will gradually wear us down physically, mentally and emotionally. It helps to discuss your feelings to gain additional insight, perspective as well as support. It is best to explore solutions to problems with a clear mind. For every negative and self-critical message, send yourself a positive one. Try to focus on the strengths or positive aspects of your circumstances.

Use physical exercise as a means to combat stress. Studies have shown that physical exercise can contribute to overall health and wellness, not to mention be a great stress buster. Relaxation techniques are another positive way to manage stress. Use mental imagery by visualizing a safe and happy place in your mind. Try to focus on the sounds and calming feelings associated with your safe place and allow yourself to become physically settled. Use breathing techniques to also help you relax physically. Take a slow and deep breath until you feel your stomach rise and then gradually exhale in a controlled manner. Many people get themselves lost in a good book helpful, or listening to relaxing music to refocus their energy. Find a healthy stress buster that works for you and keep in mind that positive behaviors can become habits just as negative ones can.



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.

