



PERISCOPE

**A Quarterly Newsletter sponsored by the
Mississippi Council of the Blind, Inc.**

Fall, 2026

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Tax deductible contributions may be sent to:

MS Council of the Blind

P O Box 134

Clinton, MS 39060

Anyone wishing to remember the MS Council of the Blind in a last will and testament may do so by including a special paragraph for that purpose. If your wishes are complex, please contact MCB for clarification.

Contributions to the James Doyle Case Memorial Scholarship Fund or to the Carter Gable Memorial Technology Assistance Fund should be appropriately marked and sent to the above address.

Phone MCB at 769-257-4515.

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A Note from the Editor

by Alison Smitherman

Hello, everyone!

Welcome to the Fall, 2026 issue of the Periscope. As we say goodbye to the excessive heat of Summer and welcome Fall with hopefully its cooler temperatures and festive activities, I hope you will enjoy reading this issue of our newsletter, which is packed with interesting and informative articles.

If you would like to submit an article for our upcoming Winter, 2026-2027 issue of the Periscope, please do so by no later than November 21, 2026. Your articles are always welcomed and appreciated.

As a reminder, we offer the Periscope in large print, braille, CD, NLS cartridge, and on our website at www.ms counciloftheblind.org. If you wish to receive the Periscope in a format other than the one you are currently receiving, please let me know. My contact details are on page one of this newsletter.

Happy reading, and Happy Fall, Y'all!

President's Message

by Jane Peets

Hello, everyone. I hope you all are weathering the extreme heat we have been having lately.

The MCB board met on 06/20 at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom, and our next meeting is scheduled for 09/19 at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. On 06/26, I attended the Helen Keller birthday celebration at the MS Library Commission. This was held in collaboration with the MS Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities and the Deaf/Blind Community of MS. The event was held on Zoom nationwide to commemorate the 146th year of Helen Keller's birth. Plans are to make this an annual event. Thanks go to

Miranda Loper and her wonderful staff at the library for making their events room available.

Be sure to save the date of 10/10 to attend our fall picnic at LeFleur's Bluff State Park. We will have a cookout again this year as well as an auction. Please let me know if you plan to attend so we can get a good headcount.

We have reserved the date of 04/24/27 for our 2027 annual conference. The conference will be at the Trustmark Park Holiday Inn again.

On 07/28/26, a meeting took place with State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Lance Evans and some of his staff to express concerns of the blind and deaf communities about some of the practices at MSDB. Two of our members, Billy Mayfield and Jane Harty, were in attendance. The MS Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities was represented by Executive Director Pam Dollar and Octavia Carson who is a parents advocate for the Coalition. Many concerns were expressed to Dr. Evans, and the attendees are hopeful that some positive changes will be made. Since that meeting, we have heard that Louisiana Tech will be doing a study of MSDB and will be offering some training to the faculty and staff toward courses

in training of the visually impaired. I will try to keep you informed of the progress regarding this effort.

Also, an advisory group is being formed to give input concerning the school. Jan Hawthorne and Jane Harty, former teachers at MSB, have been asked to join this group.

If you are in need of assistive technology, please apply for a grant from our Carter Gable Memorial Technology Fund. The grant has a requirement of a 20 % copay by the applicant.

Until we meet again, best wishes for a beautiful autumn.

MCB State Board Meeting Highlights
by Recording Secretary, Ralph Smitherman

The MCB Board met on June 20, 2026. We met by Zoom. President Peets opened the meeting with a prayer. Secretary Smitherman called the roll at 10:01 AM. A quorum was established.

The minutes and the Treasurer's report were approved.

Our fiscal year begins on June 1, and at present we have 85 members.

Committee reports were given.

We will support the Helen Keller celebration that is to be held on Friday, June 26, 2026. Our picnic is scheduled for Saturday, October 10, 2026, at the pavilion 8--where we meet each year. Our one-day convention for 2027 is scheduled for April 24, at the Holiday Inn, Pearl.

Chapter reports were given.

The delegation for the ACB summer convention was in place.

A discussion concerning the Mississippi School for the Blind took place.

A new logo was discussed, and when one is created, we will need to get some business cards.

We will host a table at the CCD picnic in 2027.

We will give support to Paul Harty who repairs Braille writers.

Our next scheduled state board meeting is set for Saturday, September 19, 2026, at 10 AM. We will meet by Zoom.

We adjourned at 10:51 AM.

Northeast MS Chapter News

by Bill Shelton, President, MCBNM

With the outside temperature rising above one-hundred, we in north Mississippi feel you members in Jackson are pushing your weather up our way. We are both wearing shades and looking for a shade. Our Chapter is looking forward to a membership drive meeting in September to add growth to our present fifteen members.

Our North Mississippi Chapter regularly fields inquiries from visually impaired individuals referred to our chapter concerning help with specific individual needs. They are primarily seeking financial services and transportation from us. MCB members are well aware of the higher costs for equipment and technology we need. We diligently try to help the blind and the “legally” blind; however, with the majority of their requests for financial services being beyond our capabilities, our chapter refers them toward state agencies

with programs which can better assess and assist them with benefits they need.

We welcome contact information for the agencies and departments within Mississippi from MCB and our sister Jackson Chapter for us to better facilitate referrals for the blind in need.

Wishing all of you better days,
Bill Shelton, MCBNM President

Jackson Chapter News
by Gary Cooper, President

Hello, everyone.

We welcome two new members to our Jackson Chapter, Jane Harty and her husband, Paul. Ms. Jane is a retired schoolteacher from MSB and already involved in several aspects of our community. We are very pleased to have her and her husband join our local Jackson Chapter.

We Jackson Chapter folks continue to enjoy our socials, this past one being a brunch at The Toasted Yolk; thanks to Wanda

Allen for the usual great choice. We also held a 50/50 drawing, continuing to raise monies for the chapter and for one lucky attendee.

Our board continues to meet every other month. The chapter has approximately \$4000 in the bank and a CD approximately worth \$11k. We have around 60+ members currently.

Hope to see all of you at our MCB state picnic in October.

MCB Officers and Board Members

June 1, 2026 - May 31, 2027

Submitted by Ralph Smitherman

OFFICERS:

President: Jane Peets, 2025 - 2027, second term full

Cell: 769-257-4515

Email: janepeets@yahoo.com

Vice-President: Pshon Barrett, 2025 - 2027, first term full

Cell: 601-613-6755

Email: pshonb@comcast.net

Recording Secretary: Ralph Smitherman, 2025 - 2027,
second term full

Cell: 601-672-0973

Email: redbird26@bellsouth.net

Corresponding Secretary: Wanda Allen, 2025 - 2027, third
term full

Cell: 601-720-4237

Email: wandacallen64@gmail.com

Treasurer: Rene Virden, 2025 - 2027, fifth term full

Cell: 601-937-5461

Email: rvirden40@gmail.com

BOARD MEMBERS:

1-year: Billy Mayfield, 2024 - 2027, first term full

Cell: 601-454-2004

Email: billymayfield@comcast.net

1-year: Gary Cooper, 2024 - 2027, first term full

Cell: 601-214-9683

Email: gary.cooper1209@gmail.com

2-year: Alison Smitherman, 2025 - 2028, second term full

Cell: 601-331-8084

Email: amduo@bellsouth.net

2-year: Mike Duke, 2025 - 2028, first term full

Cell: 601-506-6802

Email: gmduke@comcast.net

3-year: Ken Maddox, 2026 - 2029, second term full

Cell: 601-937-0025

Email: madpak3@comcast.net

3-year: Juanita Bishop, 2026 - 2029, first term full

Cell: 601-874-9695

Email: jmbishop15@gmail.com

CHAPTER REPRESENTATIVES:

MCBNM:

JACKSON:

Volunteers Wanted: Talking Book Services

by Miranda Loper, Director, Talking Book Services

Do you wish for a meaningful way to volunteer your time? Do you want your volunteer work to have an impact on Mississippians across the state? Talking Book Services is searching for volunteers to assist with a variety of projects as we increase our services and number of patrons. From assisting with circulation tasks and narrating magazines to helping with special events or program preparation like Summer Reading, we have volunteer opportunities suitable for all abilities from teens to adults. The process of becoming a volunteer is simple and requires only a one-page interest form. If you are interested in volunteering with Talking Book Services staff, please contact TBS Director Miranda Loper at 601-432-4116 or email talkingbooks@mlc.lib.ms.us.

Technology Update

VISIONAUTA ADDS REAL-TIME CONVERSATION WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ARRIVES IN ELEVEN LANGUAGES, INCLUDING ARABIC, RUSSIAN, CHINESE, JAPANESE, GERMAN AND ITALIAN

The app, built by a blind software engineer who worked at Google and Samsung, gains an assistant that sees: it talks by voice without interruptions, describes surroundings, tells the

user where they are, searches the internet, reads and plays sheet music, and helps blind people take well-framed photos. Available for iPhone and Android.

Independent Visually Impaired Entrepreneurs Online Business Expo - November 14, 2026

IVIE is offering a great opportunity to blind or visually impaired business owners/entrepreneurs. When you join in our Online Business Expo shopping experience, you can tell the audience about your business, describe your products and services, pass on contact information, and allow participants to ask questions. For IVIE members, the fee for presenting for fifteen minutes is \$10, for a half hour is \$20, or for an hour is \$30. Not an IVIE member? Then, the fee for presenting is an additional \$15 -- \$25 for fifteen minutes, \$35 for a half hour session, or \$45 for an hour session. Nonmembers have the option of having \$15 of the payment used to pay IVIE dues for 2027.

All those participating in the call, whether presenting or not, will use the same Zoom information to connect. The date and time is November 14, 2026, from 11:30 am to 6 pm Eastern.

The deadline for purchasing a time slot to give a presentation is October 31, 2026. To purchase a time slot or ask questions, send an email to info@ivie-acb.org with your request to exhibit. You will be sent an online business expo registration form which will include a link for payment and additional information. If you wish to attend the IVIE Online Business Expo and listen to this unique shopping experience, there is no cost. However, if you are not on the IVIE email list or the ACB-conversation email list or leadership list, please send an email to register so we can send you the Zoom call details. Send the request to info@ivie-acb.org.

A Quote to Ponder

“A life of significance is about serving those who need your gifts, your leadership, your purpose.” – Kevin Hall