



## **PERISCOPE**

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

**Spring 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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## **Table of Contents**

**[From the Editor's Desk](#)**

**[President's Message](#)**

**[Mississippi Council of the Blind](#)**

**[State Board Meeting Highlights](#)**

**[Northeast Mississippi Chapter News](#)**

[Jackson Chapter Highlights](#)

[Second Annual Interstate Auction Happening in March!](#)

[Sixteen Concerns Regarding Mississippi School for the Blind](#)

[e-Braille on Cartridge](#)

[Friends of Handicapped Readers for Talking Book Services](#)

[Goodbye Winter, Hello Spring](#)

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## **From the Editor's Desk**

**By Alison Smitherman**

Welcome to the Spring 2026 issue of the Periscope. We hope you enjoy reading all the wonderful articles that were submitted. This issue includes information about all that has been going on in our organization and its chapters, news about our upcoming State Convention, an exciting interstate auction happening in March, as well as issues concerning MSB.

I want to thank those of you who contributed articles for this issue of the Periscope, as well as those who were responsible for its formatting and distribution. Without your hard work, this newsletter would not be possible.

As a reminder, articles for the Summer 2026 issue are due in to me by no later than May 21, 2026.

In the meantime, enjoy the beautiful spring weather. I look forward to seeing you at our State Convention in May.

Happy Reading!

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## **President's Message**

**By Jane Peets**

Hello, everyone. Here we are into 2026. February 24 is Disability Day at the Capitol. The Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities will have a table. Those who wish to attend are asked to arrive around 10:30 a.m. The event goes until 02:00 p.m.

At our MCB board meeting on January 17, a special legislative committee was formed to identify three main issues of concern regarding MSDB. Hopefully we can draw attention to the current educational issues of our visually impaired students.

MCB will be participating in the “Fabulous Interstate Auction” again this year. The date for the auction is March 21 to be held on Zoom. Closer to that time I will be sending registration information to our Google group. We will have 11 lots up for bidding, so get ready to join in the fun.

Our annual one-day convention will be at the Holiday Inn Trustmark Park on May 9th. I apologize that it falls on the weekend of Mother’s Day, but this was the only Saturday we could book in April or May. We have a block of ten rooms set aside for those who would like to stay at the hotel. The rate is \$130 per night plus tax. The reserved name is MCB. Reservations will be cut off on April 17. Registration will be \$40 which includes the cost of lunch. If anyone has a suggestion concerning our program for the day, please call me.

It is the time of year for scholarship applications to be submitted. Our scholarship is currently \$2,500 to be awarded on a yearly basis. Please encourage any legally blind/blind graduates who are planning to further their education to apply. The application is available on our website. Children of a legally blind/blind parent are also qualified to apply.

The next MCB Board meeting is scheduled for March 21 at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. We welcome visitors. If members have suggestions or ideas, I encourage you to contact me to talk about them. If you don't communicate, we can't facilitate.

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## **Mississippi Council of the Blind**

### **State Board Meeting Highlights**

**Saturday January 17, 2026**

**By Recording Secretary Ralph Smitherman**

The roll was called at 10:09 a.m. Central Time; a quorum was established. President Jane Peets opened the meeting with prayer, and she called the meeting to order. The minutes and Treasurer's report were approved. Chapter reports were given, along with committee reports. President Peets announced that once again we would participate in the March 2026 Interstate auction; last year eleven states took part in this auction held on the Zoom platform. We will host our 2026 one-day state convention on Saturday, May 9, 2026, at the Holiday Inn, in Pearl. Discussion followed concerning the Mississippi School for the Blind, after which President Peets appointed a Legislative Committee with the members being:

Pshon Barrett,  
Billy Mayfield,  
Alison Smitherman,  
Eddie Turner.

The committee is to work with the Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities concerning MSB issues.

The ACB mid-year conference is to be held from March 6 through March 10. Individuals can participate by Zoom. The cost per person is \$30. The next scheduled state Board meeting is scheduled for March 21, 2026, at 10 a.m. The meeting will be held on the Zoom platform, and all MCB members are welcome to attend. We adjourned at 11:18 a.m.

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## **Northeast Mississippi Chapter News**

**By Bill Shelton, Chapter President**

Greetings from the Mississippi Council of the Blind of North Mississippi. We survived the recent ice storm with some losing electricity for a few days.

Our Chapter would like to thank Bobby Stanford for the years he diligently served as President of MCBNM. Our present Vice President, Bill Shelton, will assume the duties of Chapter President. MCB State membership dues have been submitted for our fourteen members.

We will hold a February 21 membership drive luncheon encouraging fellowship and membership growth. We will discuss new objectives for the year. We will make the Betty Kelly Scholarship available for a blind person needing help entering college. At the end of the year, our Marie Parish Christmas Child fund will again help a needy child.

We will continue to work toward the Doug Laprade Penny Roll. Many of you remember Doug. He initiated this fund raiser in our chapter many years ago. Sadly, we lost his dear wife Sarah, mother of Brian, last fall. They were valued and much appreciated loyal, faithful members within our chapter. Miss Sarah enjoyed speaking with former students she had taught braille and their present situation. She truly believed braille is a vital life skill in a person's work and home life. Both are gravely missed but warmly remembered.

We look forward to gathering at the annual MCB Convention and renewing longtime acquaintances.

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## **Jackson Chapter Highlights**

**By Gary Cooper, Chapter President**

Greetings, everyone!

Hope all are staying warm and dry; this past cold and icy Mississippi weather was and continues to be challenging.

I am happy to say that the Jackson chapter is still going strong with over 50 current members.

All board members were present at our January chapter meeting, reporting that we continue to serve our community and have over \$16,000 in assets.

**REMINDER: Our chapter and State dues are due.**

We will be having a social gathering on February the 28, 2026 at 11 a.m. at Piccadilly in north Jackson. I would like to give a shout out to our Social Chair, Wanda Allen, who does an excellent job at coordinating these events.

I hope everyone is doing well, and I look forward to seeing all of you at our MCB state convention soon.

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## **Second Annual Interstate Auction Happening in March!**

**By Pat Tussing, Auction Coordinator & Chair of Steering Committee for the Interstate Auction**

Do you have plans for March 21 at 7 p.m. Eastern? The Interstate Auction is coming soon. State affiliates benefitting from the Auction are: Delaware, Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio, South Carolina, and South Dakota.

We are offering electronics, including long-range Bluetooth stereo headphones, exquisite fine jewelry, hand-made knitted clothing, delicious gourmet food delights, abundance of restaurant items, and the most delicious fudge.

Please join us on March 21, at 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time. In 10 days, the sign-up link will invite you to share an evening with us. Signup is quite easy.

The day before the Auction, you will receive a Zoom link and the call-in information to attend the Auction. Some items will support all the wonderful programming and events on ACB Media.

Enjoy the camaraderie, the fun and the challenge of bidding.

We truly welcome everyone!

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Editor's Note: As you may recall, in the last issue of the Periscope, we featured an article submitted by Jane Harty entitled *MSB Complaints Synopsis*. This article listed highlights of concerns about the School. The information below is a continuation of that article, which lists in detail sixteen concerns found by the group who investigated the School. This group consisted of the following individuals:

Dani Baisden, Former MSB parent and former MDRS deafblind specialist

Elise Corbin, Parent of an MSB senior

Jane D. Harty, TVI retired, 2017 MSB Teacher of the Year

Billy Mayfield, Retired MSB High School Principal and MSB alumnus

Jane Peets, President, Mississippi Council of the Blind and  
MSB alumna

## **Sixteen Concerns Regarding Mississippi School for the Blind**

**Submitted by Jane Harty**

1) MSB is breaking the law by not following the Blind  
Persons' Literacy Rights and Education Act of April 2012

[https://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/documents/2012/html/HB/  
0900-0999/HB0960SG.htm](https://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/documents/2012/html/HB/0900-0999/HB0960SG.htm)

2) MSB is breaking the law by having noncertified individuals  
- teacher aides - alone in a classroom with students for  
more than 3 periods a day.

[https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Offices/MDE/O  
FP/Guidance-Letters/LEA-Title%20I-Title%20III-  
Use%20of%20Funds/workkeys-asst-teacher-  
requirements.pdf](https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Offices/MDE/Office%20of%20Special%20Education/FP/Guidance-Letters/LEA-Title%20I-Title%20III-Use%20of%20Funds/workkeys-asst-teacher-requirements.pdf)

3) *“If someone is not valuing the people in the organization,  
then they’re gonna leave. It doesn’t matter how successful  
we are.”* Spoken by Superintendent LaMarlon Wilson and  
posted via video on MSB Principal Lakesha Doyle’s  
Facebook page on July 27, 2025. Nine certified employees

have departed - three of which are TVIs - since he has been MSB and MSD superintendent.

4) Too much turnover. Since 2018, six different persons have served as MSB principal. The superintendent role has changed hands nine times since 2019.

5) MSB won an in-house t-shirt award for braille shirts that say, "*M S Shhl fwh the Blind earng witht limits*". No school for the blind anywhere in the world would endorse or joyfully wear a shirt with braille so incorrect that it undermines the very literacy medium the school exists to promote.

6) MSB has no substitute teachers. As a result, when staff members are absent, students are routinely denied meaningful instruction and learning opportunities.

7) Goals and objectives on student Individualized Education Plans are not honored for all students. Teachers are not sufficiently trained on the importance and legal ramifications of the student IEPs.

8) Students with significant cognitive disabilities (SCD) need to be taught according to their individual needs. This could be tactual schedules or task boxes, for instance. What's

happening at the MSB lower elementary is these SCD students are lacking individual accommodations.

9) Deaf and blind students are being taught together in the same classroom, which Mr. Wilson refers to as an “inclusion model.” However, deaf students communicate in an entirely different language than students who are blind, and combining both groups under one teacher is ineffective and unproductive for meeting the unique needs of either disability.

10) There are merely two certified Teachers of Students with Visual Impairment (TVI) in the kindergarten through 12th grade. MSDB employs seven TVIs altogether: 3 are with babies in the SkiHi program, one is Mr. Wilson himself and the seventh is Dr. Antonio Magee with the Mississippi Instructional Resource Center (MIRC).

11) There’s no longer any incentive for new teachers to pursue a TVI endorsement. Mr. Wilson **ended** the previous policy requiring teachers to obtain the #218 Visually Impaired (K-12) endorsement within three years of teaching at MSB.

12) When a new general education teacher shows genuine interest and a desire to learn how to teach their students successfully, the administration lacks the knowledge to provide accurate guidance or direct them to the Expanded Core Curriculum.

13) Students are tested every 4.5 weeks using a standardized assessment called iReady, **which is not accessible to blind students**. According to MSDB's October 22, 2024, data meeting, iReady results are used to guide instruction.

14) Dani Baisden's daughter who's totally blind experienced ableism while at MSB. (a) The librarian told her to close her eyes for her school photo. Because her parents would prefer that. (b) Her daughter could not dance in the Christmas play because it was too dangerous. That music teacher is still at MSB. Even with incessant requests of superintendent and principal, no ableism training was given to staff.

15) Administrators must stop modeling MSB after local public schools and instead look to **true peer institutions** in TX, KY, TN, and Massachusetts. We urge MSB's leadership

to learn from successful schools for the blind and bring proven practices back to Mississippi.

16) There is no teacher of students with visual impairment (TVI) college program in the state of Mississippi. Both JSU and MSU are striving toward offering this program. Currently, individuals are trained out of state.

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### **e-Braille on Cartridge**

**by Miranda Loper, Talking Book Services Director**

As many of you may know, Talking Book Services (TBS) of the Mississippi Library Commission provides specialized refreshable Braille devices, known as e-Readers, for patrons who wish to use e-Braille at no cost through the National Library Service. E-Braille is available for download from BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download), and now, e-Braille is available on cartridge just like talking books on cartridge. This method of receiving e-Braille does not require Wi-Fi access like BARD and can be used easily, regardless of a patron's technical abilities. TBS Reader Advisors can curate a reading list specifically based on your preferences such as genres, authors, or topics, and these e-Braille cartridges can be delivered to your residence via USPS mail.

Once connected to the Braille e-Reader, the cartridge will automatically begin to transfer the books to the internal storage on the device. Then, the cartridge can be returned while you enjoy your books at your leisure.

Fun fact: the e-Reader's internal memory has the ability to hold the entirety of the NLS e-Braille collection on one device! For more information about e-Braille on cartridge or if you have other questions, contact a TBS Reader Advisor at 601-432-4151 or email [talkingbooks@mlc.lib.ms.us](mailto:talkingbooks@mlc.lib.ms.us).

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## **Friends of Handicapped Readers for Talking Book Services**

**By Miranda Loper, Talking Book Services Director**

Are you seeking a volunteer opportunity or a way to support your talking book and Braille library? The Friends of Handicapped Readers (FOHR) is a non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to supporting the work and mission of Talking Book Services at the Mississippi Library Commission. The FOHR aids TBS in providing public awareness and feedback to services as well as funding patron engagement initiatives for programs and outreach. The organization meets quarterly to discuss updates and

initiatives for TBS, and beginning in March 2026, those meetings will be held in hybrid format, both in-person and virtually. The dates of the hybrid FOHR meetings for the 2026 calendar year are as follows: March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 2:00 p.m., June 1<sup>st</sup> at 2:00 p.m., and September 14<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. The annual FOHR Christmas Luncheon and Meeting will remain in-person only on December 7<sup>th</sup> at noon.

If you are interested in volunteering with TBS, the Friends of Handicapped Readers is open for membership to all TBS patrons across the state, and we are looking to grow our membership. For more information about upcoming meetings or becoming a member, please contact TBS Director Miranda Loper at 601-432-4116 or email [talkingbooks@mlc.lib.ms.us](mailto:talkingbooks@mlc.lib.ms.us).

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## **Goodbye Winter, Hello Spring**

**Poet: Catherine Pulsifer**

No more boots or heavy coats,  
We trade the frost for sunlit notes.  
A gentle breeze replaces chill,  
With blooming fields on every hill.

The birds return, their songs so sweet,  
Grass beneath our carefree feet.  
The sun shines bright, the air is clear,  
Spring's arrival brings us cheer.

So let's enjoy this warming grace,  
With nature's beauty taking place.  
A season fresh, a time to grow,  
Where happiness and sunshine flow.

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