Greetings,

Hello TAPVI families! It’s been a busy year for us, and we know it has been for you as well. I want to take this opportunity to let you know about some of the things we have been working on this year, as well as opportunities for the future.

**Items we have accomplished this year:**

- Partnered with Belk Department Store (San Marcos and McKinney location) for a back-to-school fundraiser benefiting our non-profit and raised approximately $160.00.
- Created and distributed our bi-annual newsletter.
- Created and distributed the parent survey to solicit feedback on preferred methods of communication and topics of interest.
- Added a new Website Committee Chair, Dr. Bob Smither; He is in the process of rehosting our website: [www.tapvi.org](http://www.tapvi.org)
- Pushed out videos and resources via our Facebook page.
- Held Facebook fundraisers for our organization which grossed approximately $850.00.
- A TAPVI representative attended both meetings of the Education Action Committee to work on the statewide plan for education of students with visual impairment.
- A TAPVI representative attended Sports Extravaganza and presented at the Texas Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (TAER) conference.
President’s Greeting (cont.)

- A TAPVI representative presented and distributed QR Codes for the parent survey at Braille Challenge at Region 10 ESC
- A TAPVI representative attended the Family Organization Leadership Meetings hosted by TSBVI to allow several different organizations in the state to hear what each other are doing and seek opportunities to collaborate.

Future opportunities:
- In response to your request on our survey, we plan to offer online webinars to be pushed out via FB and our website. Stay tuned for more details very soon!
- Several of you indicated on the survey that you would like to help with local family support groups (FSGs); You will be contacted soon so we can get you plugged in! Thank you!
- Please consider serving on a TAPVI standing committee (information below)
- Please consider serving on the TAPVI Board; elections will be held in May for open positions. Our terms are for three years for all positions. The only unique position is for the person who is elected as President-elect, who automatically moves to President their second year, and past-president their third year. We will be needing a new Secretary, new President-elect, and new board members at large, as well as more involvement in committees. Terms run July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020. If you are interested in getting involved, please email the President-Elect, Alison Smith, at smith_alison@hotmail.com.

Thank you for allowing us to serve you and represent Texas families impacted by vision loss. We urge you to get involved with your local family support groups (FSGs) or start one in your area. Please let us know how we can support you in doing this!

Educationally yours,
Beth A. Jones, Ph.D.
TAPVI President

Please help us welcome Dr. Bob Smither as our new Website Committee Chair! He will be serving in this non-voting committee position in order to help us revitalize and maintain our website. Dr. Smither holds a PhD in engineering, and he co-founded the Laura Smither Recovery Center.
Committee Service

The TAPVI Board has the following committees on which membership may serve:

- Fundraising
- Marketing/Website
- Conferences/Scholarships
- Newsletter
- Membership

*Please email Alison Smith, smith_alison@hotmail.com, if you are interested in committee service. A service letter can be provided upon request.
ElBraille

This May, Vispero plans to release the New ElBraille 40 Windows 10 Notetaker running the latest version of JAWS. More than just another notetaker, or a re-spin of the ElBraille 40 already on the market, the new ElBraille is the most approachable notetaker for parents and teachers and raises the bar by providing unparalleled access to the tools students need. Featuring an Intel I5 processor and increased RAM and Flash disk capacity, teachers and parents will find ElBraille easy to learn and understand as they assist their student or child. The use of Windows provides an operating system familiar to both parents and VI teachers. It is easy to use a monitor, mouse and keyboard as with any other Windows computer, to come alongside and help a student complete tasks.

The ElBraille includes the following key features:

- Runs 64-bit Windows 10 and JAWS
- Focus 40 Blue 5th Generation Braille display
- 7th generation Intel® Core™ i5-7Y57 Processor with vPro technology Dual-core (4M Cache, up to 3.30 GHz)
- 8 GB RAM
- 128 GB SSD internal storage
- 2 stereo speakers, built-in microphone, and 1/8" (3.5 mm) headphone/microphone jack
- An additional system speaker with sound and vibration feedback
- SD card slot supporting SD, SDHC, SDXC up to 2 TB
- 2 USB 3.0 ports and 1 USB C port
- Full sized HDMI port
- Wireless WLAN802.11 A/B/G/N/AC networks support (2.4 and 5 GHz)
- Bluetooth V4.2
- A built-in 4G LTE modem for cellular connectivity supporting AT&T compatible systems
- Rechargeable 21,000 mAh battery (Approximately 17 to 20 hours on battery, even with wireless networking turned on)
- Specially designed apps for performing popular actions such as the creation of voice or text notes, listening to audio content, and more
- Supports Microsoft Office 2016 and higher (Office 365), Office 2013, and Office 2010

Contact Information:
Bobby R. Lakey
VP of Sales & Marketing
M: (469) 360-1143
bobby@christal-vision.com

* TAPVI does not endorse any of the products or services detailed here, but is simply including information to inform our constituents about available options.
Safe Toddlers

Grace Ambrose-Zaken, Ph.D. completed her master’s program at UT Austin in 1992 and then went on for her Ph.D. at Vanderbilt University. She coordinates the orientation and mobility (O&M) programs at Hunter College of The City University of New York (CUNY). She has spent her career in research and development of O&M field. Her co-founder, Professor Marom Bikson, is a highly distinguished medical device engineer at City College of CUNY. Together they developed the Safe Toddlers wearable white cane, also known as the Toddler Cane. Using a 3D printer for some parts of the cane, these canes are custom made for each child. As children grow taller, they need new canes, until such time they can properly use hand-held mobility tools.

The programs for infants (birth - 3) may be able to pay for wearable canes through IDEA funds for assistive technologies, as school programs already pay for long canes for older children. Safe Toddlers is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and is also relying on donations. Each cane costs $400. The children under five who are blind in Texas will likely benefit from Safe Toddlers canes and if they receive them, they will have a better chance of meeting their developmental potential.

Safe Toddlers website https://www.safetoddles.org

How to Partner With the Blind Children’s Program

By: Kathalene Gale, Field Supervisor

Coordinating your child’s support team can be challenging. The Blind Children’s Vocational Discovery and Development Program is here to help by being an active partner in your child’s support team. After sharing your top priorities with staff, the program can support you in accessing services to enhance your child’s future development and independence.

1. Be open and ask for help from your Blind Children’s Specialist and Rehabilitation Assistant team.
   - Your child’s needs are always changing. When you need support, let your specialist know so that together you can assess new needs and plan new services.

2. Communicate outside of your scheduled visits.
   - Reach out to your Blind Children’s Specialist every time information about your child changes.

3. Invite others into your support team.
   - You don’t have to do it alone. Reach out for support from your team.
   - The program can connect you to other families and community resources.

4. Share your Blind Children’s Specialist’s contact information.
   - Your specialist can work with other members of your child’s support team to ensure needed services are received.

The Blind Children’s Program offers a variety of services that can include:

- Support at Admission, Review and Dismissal meetings
- Community resources
TAPVI TIPS (cont.)

- Statewide services and information
- In-home training
- Conferences and workshops
- Deaf-blind services
- Personal futures planning
- Networking

If you are not currently in the Blind Children’s Program and would like to connect with a Blind Children’s Specialist, please email us at BlindChildrensProgram@hhsc.state.tx.us.

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Conference Scheduler/ Important Dates

**June 8, 2019 (10:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m.)**  
TAPVI Board Meeting  
Join virtually at: [https://zoom.us/j/134749540](https://zoom.us/j/134749540)

**June 21–22, 2019**  
Texas Parent to Parent Conference  

**June 23, 2019**  
TAPVI Annual Board Meeting, Open to Entire Membership, June 23rd, TSBVI, 9–11; 3–5;  
TAPVI Informational Booth, TSBVI during Summer Programs Check-In  
11–3

**July 7–12, 2019**  
National Organization of Parents of Blind Children Conference in Las Vegas  
[https://nopbc.org/2019NOPBC](https://nopbc.org/2019NOPBC)

**August 2–5, 2019**  
International CHARGE Syndrome Conference in Dallas  
[https://www.chargesyndrome.org/forfamilies/conferences/](https://www.chargesyndrome.org/forfamilies/conferences/)

**September 27–29, 2019**  
Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas in Wimberley (DBMAT) Conference  

**February 2–29, 2020**  
Texas Focus Conference in Houston  
Info to Come!

**July 9–12, 2020**  
NOAH Conference in California  
Current Topics/Legislative Updates

PLAAFP: Does Your Student’s IEP have a Strong Foundation?

The IEP must include, “a statement of the child’s present levels of academic achievement and functional performance [PLAAFP]...including how the child’s disability affects the child’s involvement and progress in the general education curriculum” 20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(A). If the IEP fails to establish a baseline for setting annual goals and monitoring progress, the IEP may be found to deny FAPE.

In a 2009 decision against the City of Chicago School District, a hearing officer ordered the district to reimburse the parents for private school tuition and to pay for an addition year of private school in preparation of high school. In this case, the hearing officer found that due to the lack of this information in the IEP, the IEP was not capable of offering the student a FAPE. City of Chicago Sch. Dist. 299, 52 IDELR 177 (SEA IL, 2009).

How Do I Know if My Student’s IEP Has an Appropriate PLAAFP?

The present levels of academic achievement and functional performance in the IEP:

- describe what your child knows and can do
- describe your child’s unique needs that result from his disability
- include your child’s strengths and the areas that are challenging

Before writing IEP goals for your child, the IEP team need to know the measurable starting point for his/her knowledge or skill level—this is the present level of academic achievement.

Functional performance describes your child’s skills in daily living activities—social skills, mobility skills, employment skills, and skills that increase his independence.

Present levels (what your child can do) include baseline data from objective tests such as educational achievement tests. If the present levels are accurate, current, comprehensive, and based on objective test data, all IEP team members will be able to see your child’s needs clearly. Only when strengths and weaknesses are identified, we the IEP team be able to write measurable goals that will address his/her needs.

This information was adapted from: https://www.wrightslaw.com/blog/is-your-plop-a-flop/. Please consult this site for further information on this topic.

The American Council for the Blind Scholarship Committee is currently seeking applications for deserving students in Texas who are blind or visually impaired. If you know of a student who is currently attending or will attend a college, university, or technical school who might be a candidate for the scholarship, please contact:

Stephen Kerr
512-925-9080
Kerrsteve52@gmail.com
Application Deadline: July 5, 2019
Spotlight on a Student: Caylen

Caylen is 8 years old (she turns 9 on April 20) and a straight A third grade student at Broadway Elementary in Spring, Texas. She has competed in the Regional Braille Challenge for the last 3 years and has won first place all 3 times (twice as an Apprentice and this year as a Freshman). In 2018, she competed in the National Braille Challenge in California and placed 3rd. Caylen is also a member of the Destination Imagination program at her school. Her team won 6th place this year. She is a very intelligent and happy young lady. We are all looking forward to what her future holds. Keep up the great work, Caylen!

Spotlight on a Professional: Walter Ashby

Walter Ashby
Author of Impaired, But Empowered

It is crucial for our students to have successful role models with visual impairments! Walter Ashby, the author of an inspiring memoir, Impaired, But Empowered: A Memoir of Faith, Fortitude and Fortune, is just such a role model. Growing up in Mineral Wells, Texas during the 1950s and 1960s was anything but idyllic for Walter, who became legally blind at age six due to a rare genetic condition. His impairment created numerous problems that Walter had to overcome and often isolated him from his peers. Also, doctors told Walter’s parents that their son wouldn’t graduate from high school much less attend college, and that he probably would never amount to much.

Walter refused to let others define him and limit his opportunities and so he proved the naysayers wrong through a combination of hard work, perseverance and the support of a handful of adults, including his Dad and a high school English teacher. Walter’s deep religious faith also played a role. Not only did Walter graduate from high school, but he also went on to earn two graduate degrees, married the girl of his dreams, and has enjoyed a highly successful professional career. Walter was selected as a recipient of the 1990 Presidential Award for Outstanding Federal Employee with a Disability and awarded the honor by Mrs. Marilyn Quayle.

Walter is a gifted and inspirational public speaker. He is available to share his story and talk about overcoming adversity with clubs and community organizations, chambers of commerce, businesses and churches.

For more information about Walter, go to www.WalterAshby.com. The book is available on Amazon in print and Kindle versions.
Spotlight on Donors

TSBVI

Belk Department Store

Donors to TAPVI’s 15th Birthday Fundraiser on Facebook:

Gwendolyn Davis    Beth Jones    Barbara Nichols
James Froeschner   Meglyn Masters  Rachel Simpson
Linda Hulett        Brenda Maust   Alison Smith

Friends of Alison Smith Who Donated in Celebration of Her Birthday via her Facebook Fundraiser:

Lori Alvarez        Mary Cerimele  Melissa Loy     Lauren O’Rourke
Anonymous           Lindsay Dugat   Jazzy Martinez Dan Owen
Donna Beiter Fugitt Julie Estilette Craig Myers Trina Phillips
Terri Bonner        James Froeschner Hiep Nguyen Amy Potts
Chris Cerimele      Terri Johnston Baily Julye Nwyn Bob Smither

We raised a combined total of just over $1,000.00!

Thank You!

The TAPVI Board would like to express their appreciation to all parents who completed our survey. We are already using your feedback to shape our activities in order to better meet your needs!