

Hawaii Association of the Blind Newsletter

January 1, 2024

Announcements

The Hawaii Association of the Blind is saddened to report that long-time member, Kenny Johnson, passed away on December 29, 2023.

Although Kenny didn't often say very much, his contributions to HAB and others spoke louder than words. He truly cared about the blind community and firmly believed in working towards equality for everyone. When Kenny gave, he gave from his whole heart.

During 2023, a number of HAB members got to know Kenny better when talking and laughing with him during general meetings, Holoholo events, parties, and other blind events. He will be sorely missed.

So the next time you or someone you knows pops open an India Pale Ale, be sure to raise a toast to his memory.

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Bring in the New Year with us! Come Holoholo with us. Learn about apps, explore new location and have a time of fun and fellowship.

Date: Monday, January 15, 2024,

Time: 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Location: Whole Foods Market

Location address: 388 Kamakee Street, Honolulu 96814

Handi-Van or Drop off at Trolley stop on Kamakee Street in front of Whole Foods.

For more information or to RSVP contact Sherrie Martinez (808)561-5968 or Anthony at (808)372-2225.

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Honolulu Zoo PAY Event

When: January 27, 2024

Time: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

RSVP deadline: January 24, 2024

Please contact Anthony Akamine at (808)372-2225 Or email habpay808@gmail.com for more information or to sign up.

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Announcing January 28th Holoholo Shoppers event in Pearl City

Snap, crack, twinkle, and pop! Make your way to HAB's 2nd Holoholo event of the new year.

What: Holoholo event

Where: Pearl City Walmart 1131 Kuala Street Pearl City HI 96782

When: Sunday January 28 10:00am to 1:00p.m

Bring a friend or family member.

We would like to encourage everyone to come out and join us. It is an opportunity to get familiar with new places, practice mobility skills, learn about accessible apps that may help your shopping and mobility experience. For more information or to RSVP please contact Leah (619)770-8856 or Anthony Akamine at (808)372-2225.

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American Council of the Blind CB annual D.C. Leadership Conference will occur in Arlington, VA, March 1-5, 2024.

American Council of the Blind annual National Conference and Convention will be held in Jacksonville, FL, July 5-12, 2024. We will be partnering with the Blinded Veterans Association for a week to remember. To subscribe to the ACB Convention list, send a blank email to acbconvention+subscribe@acblists.org

American Council of the Blind Audio Description Awards Gala will happen in November of 2024.

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HAB HOLO HOLO SHOPPERS EVENT Recap

KA' MAKANA ALI'I FOODLAND FARMS

DECEMBER 15, 2023

HAB Holo Holo Shoppers experienced a new location at Ka' Makana Ali'i Foodland Farms! Some shoppers ventured out and explored the mall and purchased great smelling lotion (Crata)! New people joined the group! Jeannie Camacho made snazzy tactile maps of Foodland Farms and nearby stores! Some people got to use a Juno (fabulous magnifier) to read!

The following pictures have an image description caption above each picture and Alt+Text per picture.

Image Description #1: Rose using the Juno.

Image Description #2: Tactile map with Braille and tactile labels!

Image Description #3: Troy and Sherri smiling at the camera while lots of socializing is happening at the table.

Image Description #4: Anthony with his festive cane!

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Be My Eyes Groups

For years we've heard from our community that not every person is comfortable asking for help from an unknown volunteer, no matter how kind. That's why, starting today, Be My Eyes is offering a major new capability to give blind people more choices.

In addition to our existing 7.1 million volunteers, now blind people worldwide can also build their own custom network of people to help with everyday tasks. Build your own trusted group of friends or family to help with more personal and sensitive tasks you might not wish to share with an unknown volunteer – it's your choice.

Maybe you need a friend or family member to confirm a medication. Or maybe you would feel more comfortable with a friend reviewing your paper mail. Surely

among 20 friends and family members someone would be happy to help you out at the moment you need it. Now Be My eyes technology makes that easy. Once you've assembled your trusted group, just press the "My groups" button to connect with the first available person who is known to you.

To create a new group, click on "My groups" in the Be My Eyes App homepage and follow the instructions on the screen. After you have created and named

your first group, you will be able to send an invite link to your friends and family members. You will find the link at the end of the group creation process.

Once you've assembled your trusted circle, just press the Be My Eyes Groups button to connect with the first available person who is known to you. You

can enter up to 20 people in your circle and have up to 5 different groups on Be My Eyes.

When you've set it up, your group will always be there to help, in any language you and your friends speak. And just like the other Be My Eyes features

such as standard volunteers, Specialized Help and now Be My AI, our new Be My Eyes Groups feature is free of charge for non commercial use.

We'll roll out Be My Eyes Groups worldwide beginning December 20th as an open beta test to ensure it's working well for our worldwide user group. To access

this new feature, just open the current Be My Eyes app and click on the button marked "My groups" to start creating your individual trusted group.

We welcome user feedback about the feature. Write to us at
info@bemyeyes.com

<mailto:info@bemyeyes.com>

so we can continue to improve this service.

Learn more about our new Be My Eyes Groups feature in our new blog

post:

www.bemyeyes.com/blog/be-my-eyes-integrates-friends-and-family-groups

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Blind veteran 'blessed' to spend Christmas at charity centre

21st December 2023, 08:05 HST

Image: Blind Veterans UK Norman Roper with staff at the Rustington Centre

92-year-old Norman Roper said he was "so fortunate" to be spending Christmas at the centre

A blind veteran has said he feels "blessed" to be spending Christmas with other vision-impaired ex-service personnel at a charity wellbeing centre.

Norman Roper, 92, will be spending Christmas at Blind Veterans UK's Centre of Wellbeing.

He said he was "so fortunate" to be at the centre for the festive season, and not alone.

Mr Roper, from Witney, has lived on his own since his wife died five years ago.

He will be enjoying the holidays alongside staff and other blind veterans at the charity's new centre in Rustington.

Activities planned include Christmas wreath making, a pantomime evening, and reindeer racing.

Mr Roper said he was particularly looking forward to Christmas dinner

Christmas Day will then involve the traditional gift giving, and a Christmas lunch with all the trimmings.

Mr Roper, who served in the Royal Navy for nine years from 1954, said: "I'm particularly looking forward to Christmas dinner; I do all my own cooking at home and I'm a terrible chef."

He added: "Previously when I've stayed at the centre, I've treated my fellow veterans to my stand-up comedy, so maybe they will be in for a treat this Christmas. I love to make people laugh; laughter makes the world go round."

Jo Parker-Smith, Community Engagement Lead at the Rustington Centre, said: "We are really looking forward to welcoming a small group of blind veterans to Rustington for Christmas."

"The majority of those joining us would otherwise be alone for the festive period but now they will be surrounded by other blind veterans and staff."

She added that it will be a "very special year" for the charity as marks their first Christmas in the new centre.

Mr Roper, who went on to work for Oxfordshire Constabulary after leaving the Navy, said Blind Veterans UK had helped him "enormously" since he first began receiving support from the charity in 2014.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-67794297>

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Student developing way for the blind to play ping pong using sound

7 December 2023

Algorithm helps translate images into sound

A University of Sydney Engineering Honours student is developing technology to allow people with low vision and blindness to play ping pong using sound.

Object tracking cameras combined with speakers provide real-time audio feedback in three dimensions, creating an acoustic "image". Image: Phoebe Peng figure

Object tracking cameras combined with speakers provide real-time audio feedback in three dimensions, creating an acoustic "image".

Working with ARIA Research, a startup co-led by the University of Sydney and the University of Technology Sydney which is developing vision for the blind,

Phoebe Peng is using technologically advanced human echolocation that enables blind users to perceive their surroundings in precise detail.

The process uses event cameras which, unlike normal cameras that capture complete images of a scene, track changes in an image over time, making them ideal

for the observation of small objects like table tennis balls. The images are then processed into sound using a specialised algorithm. This is then communicated

back to the player via an array of loudspeakers, ultimately with the aim of allowing players to track the ball and movements acoustically.

"Table tennis or ping pong has been played for decades as a more accessible version of tennis. The sport is particularly beginner-friendly while maintaining

a rich level of competitive play. However, like many sports, it remains inaccessible for people who are blind or have low vision," said Ms Peng, who will

soon complete a Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Software Engineering.

A researcher testing out the system. Credit: Phoebe Peng figure end

According to Peng, table tennis makes a perfect test case for the kind of technology being developed by ARIA Research.

“The small size of the ball and table, along with the movement of the ball in 3D space, are things that make table tennis difficult to play for those with

low vision and complete blindness,” said Peng, who is completing the work as part of her Honours’ thesis. “Making this sport more accessible while also

exploring the potential of event cameras were my two biggest motivators,” she said.

In one study, using two perfectly positioned cameras, Ms Peng was able to identify and track a ball in three dimensions in real time. She then fed that

data into an algorithm controlling an array of loudspeakers along the sides of the table, which created a sound field matching the position of the ball.

While the results are promising, more experimentation will be needed before the system will be ready for actual play.

Researchers in the lab, testing out the system. Image: Phoebe Peng figure end

“An ongoing technical challenge is the matter of human perception of sound,” said Ms Peng. “There are limitations on how accurately people can perceive

sound localisation. What type of sound should be used? Should the sound be continuous? This is what we’ll be tackling in the next stage of development.”

Over the past three years, the ARIA Research project has been developed in collaboration with the University of Sydney and University of Technology Sydney’s

faculties of engineering, Blind Citizens Australia and World Access for the Blind Australia, with the support of the Australian Federal Government.

Ms Peng presented her work as part of Acoustics 2023 Sydney conference at the International Convention Centre Sydney.

<https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2023/12/07/student-developing-way-for-the-blind-to-play-ping-pong-using-so.html>

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