



## **PERISCOPE**

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

**Winter, 2025-2026**

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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, and welcome to the Winter, 2025-26 issue of the Periscope. It's hard to believe the holidays are upon us, but here we are once again, getting ready to celebrate the most wonderful time of year. While celebrating, let's not forget our dear members who are going through hard times, including illness or loss of loved ones, and extend an extra dose of love to them during what can be a very difficult time of the year.

I'd like to thank all of you who submitted articles for this issue of the Periscope. Because of your contributions, we have a newsletter packed with many interesting topics, a few sad notes, as well as news that reflects what's going on in MCB. Thank you all for taking the time to write and submit articles. Also, thanks to those of you who assist with formatting and mailing our newsletter. Your hard work is so needed and does not go unnoticed. You ALL are appreciated more than you know!

The deadline for submitting articles for the Spring, 2026 issue of the Periscope is **February 21, 2026**. If you need assistance with writing your article, please contact me via telephone or email. My contact information is on page 1 of this newsletter.

Happy reading, and Happy Holidays, one and all!

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## **President's Message**

**By Jane Peets**

Hello, all. I hope you have been enjoying the autumn weather.

On 10/04 we had our MCB picnic at Leflore's Bluff State Park. Fifty people attended, and it was a beautiful day for spending time with friends. Thanks so much to everyone who helped pull this event together. It really does take a village. Our grill masters, Wayne Allen and Mike Brown, did a fabulous job, and all of the sides and desserts were very much appreciated. A special thanks to our auctioneer, Juanita Bishop, who helped us raise \$824 from the auction. We had a special guest, Andre Jarreau, director of the MS Deaf/Blind Community. Andre spoke to us about a survey, the purpose of which is to determine how many deaf/blind, deaf or blind persons in MS could benefit from help with transportation and attendant services. I

forwarded a link for this survey to our Google group, but if anyone needs a repeat, just let me know.

Some of you are aware of the recent controversy concerning MSDB. Charlie Drape of the *Clarion Ledger* interviewed a group including a former TVI, two parents of students, a former principal and an alumnus. His article was published in the Sunday paper on the front page on 11/02. I forwarded this to the Google group to keep everyone informed. If you missed it, I can send it again. I know that all of us who went to school at MSB have concern for the students trying to attain the skills and education they will need to succeed after school. Billy Mayfield, one of our board members, and I were included in the interview along with Jane Harty, TVI, Elise Corban and Dani Baisden, parents of visually impaired students. I hope you will take the time to read the article. There are some problems at the school, and it might be necessary for our membership to get involved with contacting our legislators to focus attention on the deficiencies in the program at the school. Superintendent Wilson made the statement that MSDB does not function as a special school but as a general education school. If this is the case, why is it named MS School for the Deaf and Blind?

Our next board meeting is scheduled for 01/17/26 at 10:00 a.m. via the zoom platform. A link will be sent to the Google group. Our meetings are open to all members.

As the holiday season begins, I wish a joyful Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

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## **MCB State Board Meeting Highlights**

**By Recording Secretary Ralph Smitherman**

**Saturday, September 20, 2025**

**Zoom Platform**

The meeting began at 10:02 AM, with a roll call. A quorum was established.

President Jane Peets called the meeting to order.

Mike Duke opened the meeting with prayer!

The minutes from the June 2025 meeting were approved as well as the Treasurer's report.

Committee and chapter reports were presented.

Our current membership is 78.

There was a discussion concerning the Mississippi School for the Blind.

Eddie Turner and Ralph Smitherman have been working on updating our email list and will continue to do so.

President Peets said that the MCB website has been updated, and she reminded us that this is a work in progress.

We will donate a \$150 VISA gift card to the ACB Holiday Auction for 2025.

President Peets said she would invite Andre to our picnic, which is to be held on Saturday, October 4, 2025.

Our President will work on finding a location for our state convention in 2026.

We are to meet again as follows: Saturday, January 17, 2026, at 10 AM by zoom.

We stood adjourned at 10:47 AM.

All MCB members are welcome to attend our Board meetings!

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**Jackson Chapter Update**

Hello, everyone, and greetings from the Jackson Chapter.

Our October social was held at the State picnic and was enjoyed by many chapter members.

We had our chapter board meeting in November to discuss the business of the chapter. We have around \$16,000.00 in the bank, and we completed one service project which was helping finance the memorial service for Roy Granger at the Mississippi Industries for the Blind.

In December, we will have our Christmas party and annual business meeting on December 6th at 11:00 AM at Martin's Downtown. Come join us for the fun and fellowship. We will be having a Sock Drive for the Homeless, so please bring some socks to help the needy.

Happy Holidays!

Ken Maddox – President

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**Email List for MCB**

**By Ralph Smitherman**



As you may know, MCB has an email list. We are trying to add everyone who chooses to be on our list. The list address is:

[Mississippi-council-of-the-blind@googlegroups.com](mailto:Mississippi-council-of-the-blind@googlegroups.com)

Eddie Turner is in charge of adding people to this list. His telephone number is: 601-624-4443

Remember, if you have a Gmail account, Eddie can add your email address automatically. If you use other accounts, you must agree to have your email address added.

With this list we are able to share information quickly.

Thanks much!

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### **MSB Complaints Synopsis**

**Submitted by Jane Harty**

**A June 16, 2025 Letter to the Clarion Ledger Editor was not printed for being “too accusatory”**

**November 5, 2025 Clarion Ledger Article available online**

**November 9, 2025 Clarion Ledger Article available in print on front page titled ‘*Alarming*’ decline cited at MS School for the Blind**

The Mississippi School for the Blind (MSB) is a school for the blind in name only. Students are not being taught according to their visual impairment needs. Teachers are neither required to know braille nor to learn it. MSB also requires testing every 4.5 weeks using assessments that blind students cannot access — yet those scores still guide instruction.

MSB currently has only five certified Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) working as teachers: three serving preschoolers statewide and just two serving all K–12 students. This directly violates House Bill 960 of 2012, the Blind Persons’ Literacy Rights and Education Act, which requires certified TVIs and instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). These mandates are not being met.

### **What must change?**

1. Administrators must stop modeling MSB after local public schools and instead look to true peer institutions—such as the Tennessee, Texas, and Perkins schools for the blind. We urge MSB’s leadership to learn from successful schools and bring proven practices back to Mississippi.
2. Use correct simbraille. MSB recently celebrated a t-shirt printed with ludicrous braille (“M S Shhl fwh the Blind earnng witht limits”). No blind institution 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.
3. Reinstate the requirement that all teachers earn a TVI endorsement within three years. The current superintendent took this away.
  4. End the practice of leaving classrooms staffed only by an unlicensed assistant, which violates MS Code §37-3-2(6)(e). Students deserve qualified educators, not untrained personnel.
  5. Stop teaching deaf and blind students in the same classroom. The superintendent calls this the “inclusion model”. Combining both groups under one teacher is ineffective and unproductive for meeting the unique needs of either disability

Mississippi’s blind and visually impaired students deserve more than symbolic support — they deserve accessible instruction, qualified teachers, and compliance with state law. Without these, the “School for the Blind” is just a name on a sign.

**Signed:**

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

**(Editor's Note: Please stay tuned as more concerns about MSB will be addressed in a future issue of the Periscope.)**

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### **Announcement about MCB Awards & Scholarships**

Each year, MCB seeks out recipients for five awards and one \$2,500-scholarship, to be presented at our annual state convention, which is usually held in late April/early May. If you know of someone whom you believe to be a worthy recipient of either a scholarship or one of our five awards, please contact the following committee chairs:

MCB Awards Committee Chair

Margaret Smitherman

[maramel@bellsouth.net](mailto:maramel@bellsouth.net)

James Doyle Case Memorial Scholarship Committee Chair

Billy Mayfield

[billymayfield@comcast.net](mailto:billymayfield@comcast.net)

You can also go to our website at [mscounciloftheblind.org](http://mscounciloftheblind.org) to obtain more information about our awards criteria or how to apply for a scholarship.

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### **Sympathy Notes**

With heavy hearts, we wish to extend our deepest, heartfelt sympathy to the families of the following two MCB members who have passed away since the printing of our last Periscope:

**Roy Granger:** Roy passed away on October 5, 2025, at age 66. Roy was a dear friend to many of us in the blind community and had recently moved back to Mississippi from Alabama. Our Jackson Chapter members were blessed to get to see Roy at our last Chapter lunch in September. Roy was fun-loving, had a heart for blind people and will be missed very much. Our sympathies go out to Joyce, his son Chuck, and the rest of the Granger family during this time of great loss.

**Sara LaPrade:** Ms. Sarah passed away on October 31, 2025, at the age of 94. She was a beloved teacher for many years at MSB and a faithful member of MCB. Many of us enjoyed getting to see and visit with her at our annual state picnics over the years. Our sympathies go out to Brian, Christina, and all family and friends who loved her. Ms. Sarah will be greatly missed.

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## **Ed Hill's Legacy Continues Through Braille Repairs**

**By Jane Harty**

Ed Hill dedicated countless hours to making braille accessible for Mississippians. Ed didn't just believe in the importance of braille—he took real steps to support it. Years ago, he traveled to the Perkins School for the Blind in Boston to learn how to repair braille.

Amazingly, Ed never charged a single dime for his repair work.

In March 2025, Ed entrusted this work to Paul Harty, passing along his full set of tools, repair materials, and 89 broken braille. And Ed had two simple, unwavering conditions:

- 1. The repairs must be done free of charge.**
- 2. The repaired braille are for Mississippians only.**

Paul can repair about 85% of braille problems. Most issues simply require thorough cleaning, adjustment, and proper lubrication. You may send your braille to him using Free Matter for the Blind. He will evaluate and repair it at no cost. If it requires a major repair, he will return the braille to you so it can be sent to MCB's repair specialist in Florida.

Paul W. Harty  
145 Munich Drive  
Gluckstadt, MS 39110  
601-715-9272  
pwharty@gmail.com

Thanks to Ed's dedication—and Paul's commitment to honoring that mission—these brailers are being brought back to life, one by one, and placed into the hands of Mississippians who depend on them.

Ed Hill's legacy continues—not in words, but in action, access, and opportunity.

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## **The New Talking Book Player from NLS**

**By Ralph Smitherman**

This is a brief overview about the new player from the National Library Service. I have a few observations.

The player is sturdy, its handle is built-in, which of course makes it easy to carry. The direction buttons on the player are easy to read. There is a user guide built into the player. There also is a key describer mode. Tone, volume and speed buttons are easy to find and use. Personally, I like to increase the

speaking rate on books I read. The wi-fi feature is easy to operate; just put in your wi-fi code and the player will let you know that the connection is successful. When you are connected to your wi-fi, you will be able to enter your BARD email and your BARD password; once again the player will tell you if you are connected. Therefore, when you enter on BARD you will use the arrow keys which are prominently displayed. When you find a book you want to download, just press the information key, which is located in the midst of the arrow keys, and follow the prompts. The machine is Bluetooth capable, so if you want to connect it to a speaker you can do that. If you receive books on cartridge, just slide the cartridge into the player and the player will tell you the number of books you have on the player. For example, if you have five books on the cartridge and two books you directly downloaded to the player, the player will say you have seven books. As you scroll through the books on the player, it will list them in alphabetical order. The rubber feet on the player are salient and will keep the player from sliding on a smooth surface. The adapter cord is separate from the player, and the cord connection is USB; I like that feature because when you carry the player the cord does not get in the way. There are several voices from which to choose. The battery life is sufficient, and you can find the battery status by pressing down and holding the mode key. You can plug in a thumb drive that has books on it and the player will acknowledge. The speaker is a good quality speaker. When the player is on, you can press the



power button quickly and you will be in the key describer mode; when you want to get out of the describer mode, just press the power key quickly and you will be out of that mode. There is a date and time setting.

Once again, the user guide is very helpful. There are many other features within this player, so I encourage you to use the player and enjoy reading!

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## **Free Braille Embossers!**

**By Jan Hawthorne**

I have two braille embossers to give away.

The first is a 1995 Versapoint duo, which I would still use if I could resolve selecting the USB port. Included is the Duxbury recommended USB to parallel cable preferred by Duxbury Systems. I have never had a service or quality issue with this embosser. As it weighs approximately 80 pounds, I will not ship it.

Second is a Columbia embosser from ViewPlus Technologies. The dot quality is not strong, and I would recommend light weight tractor feed printer paper.

Both embossers are capable of interpoint and braille graphics.

If you are interested in either of these embossers, please understand that you will need to pick them up as I am unable to ship them. Please email me if you could use either one. My email address is: [jhawthorne2@comcast.net](mailto:jhawthorne2@comcast.net).

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### **Once Again We Pause**

**by Lucile Teske**

Whatever else we lose throughout the years,  
Let us keep Christmas, shining and apart,  
And cast aside grim worries and dark fears  
To fill a stir of joy within the heart.

If dreams have failed and disappointments throng  
While problems seem too difficult to face,  
The muted cadence of the angel's song,  
Renews again this blessed time of grace.

Unrest and folly, glimmerings of war  
Enmesh us in a net of puzzling strife,  
But far above the star still goes before  
To point the way to happiness and life.

May hearts be listening when the joy bells ring  
New courage, faith, and hope on Christmas morn,  
As once again we pause, remembering  
That unto us the Prince of Peace is born.