# Focus On ACBI

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# A Publication of the American Council of the Blind of Indiana

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# October-December 2024

President: Rita Kersh

(812) 278-3038 [Hoosierrita60@gmail.com](mailto:Hoosierrita60@gmail.com)

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## Ways to contribute to the American Council of the Blind of Indiana:

Those much-needed contributions, which are tax-deductible, can be sent to ACBI, Attn: Cindy Brooking, 676 VFW Road, Mitchell, Indiana 47446 or through our website noted above.

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## From Your President

## By Rita Kersh

First of all, I want to thank everyone who was involved with our successful ACBI-ACBO State Convention. I personally only heard positive comments from attendees about all aspects of our convention. Every year there is something we learn so improvements can be made the next time.

Our auction brought in over $3,000 total, with most coming to Indiana. We had really nice items this year and I appreciate all who donated.

The staff at the Crown Plaza Airport Hotel were very accommodating, and it seemed that there was always someone nearby when we needed something.

I heard that those who attended the breakout sessions found them very informative. Unfortunately, the numbers attending these sessions were low.

I want to congratulate our award winners! James and Linda Durst received the Hofstetter Award. Dee Ann Hart received the Pat Price Award. Don and Gerry Koors received a special award I called the ACBI President’s Award for fifty-three years of service and membership.

I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving with family and friends. Now it’s time to celebrate Christmas!

I wish everyone a wonderful Christmas and a healthy and prosperous 2025!

## Hoosier All State Chapter (HASC) News

## By Mary Stores

HASC meets monthly via Zoom, and we have a lot going on!

We met on November 12 and continued our virtual tour series. Every month a member of HASC will give a virtual tour of the place where they live. We are discovering things about towns and cities we didn’t know about, and we are getting to know each other as well. Mary Stores gave a virtual tour of Bloomington during our November meeting.

In December we will be taking a short break from virtual tours to have a holiday trivia night. The winner of the trivia contest will receive a $10 gift certificate from Amazon.com Please look out for the Zoom link to join December 12 that will be sent to the Indiana ACB list.

We will continue our virtual tour series in January, when Pat Tussing will give us a tour of Indianapolis. We are looking forward to that.

All of us at HASC wish you a blessed Christmas, happy Hanukkah, prosperous New Year, and joy on whatever holiday you celebrate during this season.

## Isn’t Technology Great?

## By Mary Stores

In the last issue of The Focus there were a couple of articles about the Meta glasses. Several people contacted me afterward and told me that those articles were helpful. Because of your feedback, which I really appreciate, I have decided to create this spot in every issue of The Focus. The app I am going to write about in this issue is called Speakaboo. But first, a cry for help!

I don’t know what I don’t know. Therefore, I am asking for your help in making this technology session even greater. If you have the time and want to write about some gadget or app you love, please do so. Here is where my knowledge is lacking:

* All things Android
* The Blind Shell mobile phone
* The Victor reader and its products
* Helpful things for people with low vision (since I have no vision, I don’t use the products).
* ChatGPT, the Envision glasses, and other AI apps.
* Anything else I may have missed.

Please consider sharing your technology knowledge, even if you don’t think it’s very much, even if you have been using it for a while. There are many people who are losing their sight, and your old reliable routine could be someone’s else’s new reliable discovery. Thank you!

### Speakaboo

Speakaboo is an AI-powered iPhone app that helps you find out information about your current surroundings, helps you locate lost things if they are visible to the camera, identifies cans or objects, and maybe some other things I haven’t discovered yet. There is a free version and a premium version. The premium version has a variety of prices you can pay to access the premium features. When I upgraded to premium a couple days ago, I noticed that I could ask follow-up questions about the images I took using the app.

All buttons in the app are clearly labeled and announced by VoiceOver. The response time is usually just a few seconds. I am going to tell you a couple of ways I used the app and give you all the steps I took so you know how it works. First, though, is the information about installing the app and what happens when you open it.

#### Installing Speakaboo

You can [download Speakaboo from the App Store](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/speakaboo/id6480101099) , and installing it only takes a minute or two. When you open the app, you get notified that Speakaboo wants to use your camera. If you double-tap OK, you will receive a second notification asking you to allow Speakaboo to access your microphone. Go ahead and double tap on OK. I will explain why in the next few paragraphs.

Once you have allowed access, a help screen comes up, and it tells you what Speakaboo is, how it works with VoiceOver, that it is powered by AI and AI isn’t always accurate. Then after double-tapping Next a couple of times or navigating to page 3, you can double-tap the Get Started button.

#### Settings in Speakaboo

There is also a Settings button on the main screen. If you double-tap that button, the only settings are to change the voice rate of the voice that describes your images. It sounds like Samantha, and you can only change the rate, not the voice. Those are the only settings Speakaboo currently has. Since this is also version 1 of the app, I expect there will be more great things to come.

#### Finding Out the Indoor Temperature

One way I used Speakaboo was to have it tell me what the indoor temperature is. I just opened the app, pointed my camera to where I knew the thermostat was. Then I double-tapped and held my finger down on the iPhone screen for a second, until I heard a tone. Once the tone sounded, I released my finger, and Speakaboo informed me that there was a thermostat mounted on the wall displaying the indoor temperature of 70 degrees.

#### Finding A Cat

I wanted to find one of my cats, but I knew they were sleeping. I didn’t want to wake them up, so I used Speakaboo.

I approached one place a cat usually sleeps, pointed my camera, and double-tapped on and held my finger on the home screen until I heard the tone. Then I asked, “Do you see a cat?”

Within a second, Speakaboo told me that no, there was no cat visible. There was beige carpet and empty luggage (it’s actually a soft-sided cat carrier, but AI isn’t always 100% accurate).

I moved to the second spot and repeated the process. I was told that a person’s brown slippers and leopard-print pajamas were visible, but no cat.

When I approached the third spot and repeated the process, Whiskers meowed right before the app informed me that a black cat with a white chest was visible in the left-hand corner of the image.

Speakaboo doesn’t allow you to save your images once it takes them. However, if you know how you were holding the camera when you took that last picture with a good description, you can open another app and repeat the process. You could also take a video in another app if the image from Speakaboo sounds like something you want to capture.

One thing I really liked about Speakaboo was the picture-taking process. With other apps you had to find the camera button and double tap that button specifically. With Speakaboo, as long as you can double-tap or tap and hold your finger down for a second once you’ve tapped, then Speakaboo takes the picture, making the process a little more flexible.

Those are just a couple of ways I’ve used Speakaboo so far. I hope all of you who try it will find it useful as well.

## Independent Living

## by Dee Ann Hart

Independent Living means being as self-sufficient as possible. It means taking risks and being allowed to succeed and fail on your own terms. Independent Living means being able to exercise the greatest degree of choice about where you live, with whom you live, and how you use your time.

Principles of independent Living philosophy says that people with disabilities, who are blind or live with low vision know best how to take care of themselves. They are able to make important decisions that affect their lives, have relationships with whom they choose and have access to all the benefits of society that non-disabled people do.

Some characteristics of independent living include taking part in activities and opportunities beyond one's home as one chooses. Including basic activities like shopping, going to the doctor and working; recreational activities such as exercising and museum-going; and civic activities such as volunteering, voting and serving on boards.

With these mindful strategies, you can gradually build independence and lead a self-directed life.

### Identify Your Goals and Priorities

What matters to you. What are your aspirations, values and passions? Set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals to guide you on your path toward independence. Knowing what you want can help you make decisions aligned with your true self.

### Develop Communication Skills

Effective communication is important in finding independence. It may enable you to express your thoughts, feelings, and needs clearly, avoiding misunderstandings and building stronger relationships. Practice active listening, assertiveness, and empathy to enhance your interactions with others.

### Establish a Supportive Network

While independence is about self-reliance, having a supportive network is an essential part. Surround yourself with people who encourage and respect your choices for yourself. These could be friends, family members, mentors, or peers who offer emotional support and guidance without imposing their own agenda.

### Build Your Confidence

Confidence is the foundation of independence. Develop it by acknowledging your strengths, accepting your weaknesses, and taking on challenges. Celebrate your achievements, no matter how small and learn from failures without harsh self-criticism to encourage your personal growth.

### Spend Time Alone

Solitude can give you the opportunity to reflect, pursue hobbies, and understand your own thoughts and feelings. Alone time can help in making decisions that align with your inner self.

### Set Boundaries

Learning to say no and setting clear boundaries can be vital steps toward independence. They can help you maintain your sense of self and prevent others from encroaching on your time, energy and personal space.

### Try New Experiences

Stepping out of your comfort zone can bring growth and independence, expose you to new experiences, challenge your beliefs, and build resilience. Whether it is learning a new skill, traveling, or changing a routine, each new experience can contribute to your self-reliance.

### Practice Self-Care

Taking care of your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being is essential for personal independence. Develop routines that promote health and happiness, such as regular exercise, balanced nutrition, adequate sleep, and mindfulness practices.

Maintain an active lifestyle. Physical activity can benefit your health and also boost your mood and self-esteem. Find activities you enjoy, like walking, cycling, yoga, Zumba, Pilates, aerobics, swimming or team sports to integrate movement into your daily life.

### Express Your Needs and Ask for Help

Being independent doesn't mean going it alone all the time. However, knowing when to handle things yourself and when to seek assistance. Ask for help when you need it, and clearly express your needs to others. It is a sign of strength and self-awareness to communicate your needs, not weakness.

Independence is about having the freedom and the ability to make your own decisions, take action based on your personal values, and live your life in a way that reflects who you are. It involves taking responsibility for your actions, managing your life affairs, and making decisions without undue influence from others.

With emotional self-reliance, you can find the freedom to pursue your aspirations.

Becoming independent can bring benefits to many aspects of your life, from your mental health to your relationships.

### Benefits of Independence

* Boosts self-confidence and self-esteem: when you're able to make your own decisions and rely on yourself, you naturally feel more competent and capable. Each successful decision or solved problem reinforces your belief in your abilities, enhancing your self-confidence and self-esteem.
* Reduces stress and promotes happiness. Independence allows you to live life on your terms, reducing the stress that comes from living up to others’ expectations or relying on them for your needs. This can lead to greater happiness and satisfaction in life.
* Improves decision-making: as you become more independent, you'll likely make more decisions on your own, which can improve your decision-making skills over time. Learning to evaluate options and considering consequences can help you make choices that align with your goals and values.
* Allows you to help others: when you're self-reliant, you're in a better position to assist others. You can offer support and guidance based on your experiences and strengths, helping those around you grow and succeed.
* Ensures you make yourself a priority: independence can encourage you to put your own needs, goals, and well-being first.
* Recognizes that taking care of yourself doesn't have to mean being selfish -- it can enable you to be your best for others as well.
* Empowers you to achieve your dreams: being independent can give you the freedom to pursue your desires and ambitions, such as career goals, personal projects, or lifestyle changes.

### Centers for Independent Living

Centers for Independent Living promote the Independent Living philosophy to empower all people with disabilities. Each Center for Independent Living is unique but operates under the same five core services: peer counseling; information and referral; individual and systems advocacy; independent living skills training; and services that facilitate transition from nursing home and other institutions to the community, provide assistance to those at risk of entering institutions and facilitate transition of youth to postsecondary life.

## Am I Actually an Entrepreneur? What About You?

## By Ron Brooks – Phoenix, Arizona

I’m on the Board of the ACB special interest affiliate known as IVIE. IVIE stands for “Independent Visually Impaired Entrepreneurs,” and while I’ve got the visually impaired part down, I’m not too sure if the label of “entrepreneur” actually fits. In fact, when I hear someone refer to me as an entrepreneur, I sort of feel like an impostor. After all, I haven’t invented anything—at least not yet. I haven’t gone out and raised a bunch of money from angel investors or venture capitalists. I haven’t ridden the high of meteoric growth, and I haven’t plummeted into the depths of poverty alongside some brilliant idea that just never caught on. All I did was sit down at my kitchen table, go online, and complete the paperwork for incorporating my small consulting business, [Accessible Avenue](https://www.accessibleavenue.net), and I only did that because it was 2020; we were in lock-down; and I knew I was going to lose the job I already had working for someone else. And let’s be clear. Accessible Avenue is really little. In fact, I’m still working a full-time job—just to make the ends meet while I continue trying to bootstrap Accessible Avenue to breakeven. Me, and entrepreneur? Really?

Well, the answer is an emphatic “yes!” And I’m betting there are lots of other people out there, who have no idea that they are just as entrepreneurial as I am—maybe even more so.

### How Can I Tell if I’m an Entrepreneur?

According to Merriam-Webster, an entrepreneur is “one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise” Definitely sounds like someone who starts or runs a business, and that’s definitely true. But wait! There’s more. People who manage or assume risk for a business—or an enterprise also fit into Merriam-Webster’s definition. So, if you ever served as a manager with decision-making authority with a business, or at any other organization, then you’re also in the Entrepreneur’s club. In fact, I’ve read books and heard speeches from entrepreneurs, where they told their stories, and many of those stories began with newspaper routes, lemonade stands, and all manner of creative ways these people found to scrounge money or create something new. I can tell you that in my own case, I have been an entrepreneur for decades—not because I was always a business owner, but because I treated my job and my duties like any other owner might treat his or her own small business. So, for me, being an entrepreneur is more of an attitude than a special category of people who own things.

### From Being in Charge” to True Entrepreneurship

Based on Webster’s definition, anyone who owns or manages a business, or who tells subordinates what to do can technically be called an “entrepreneur.” But if you want to succeed as an entrepreneur, there’s a sixteen-letter word that defines the attitudes and habits you will want to cultivate. That six-syllable word is “entrepreneurship,” and in my opinion, it’s what really differentiates the true entrepreneurs from those who just happen to be in charge. Now if you ask fifty entrepreneurs what that means, you’ll get fifty answers. In fact, there are entire libraries of books, written to define that single powerful word, “entrepreneurship.” But we don’t have the time nor the space to cover all that ground, so here are just a handful of the biggies. Some of these ideas are mine. Others come directly from some of the most successful and famous entrepreneurs of all time. All of them are attributes that can help anyone develop a more entrepreneurial mindset.

* Be curious. – It is easy to make assumptions based on prior experience. By approaching every new opportunity, every new challenge, every new task, every new relationship with curiosity instead of preconceived notions based on what happened last time, you may find that things have changed, and the circumstances that generated difficulties in the past, offer potential for success today. Here’s a simple example. In the past, PDF documents could not be read by screen reading software. If I let past experience govern my feelings about PDF documents, I would never try to open them, meaning that I would never know that Adobe Systems has done a lot of work to make PDF documents more accessible, and today, most of them can be read using screen readers and braille displays. The same is true for the entrepreneur. Past experiences do not determine present and future outcomes. Use them as learning experiences, and do not assume that they will determine your success or failure going forward.
* Say “yes” when you can. – Whether it’s volunteering for a new project, or trying something different, or taking on a new role, saying “yes” is the only way to move forward. Saying “no” ends conversation. Saying “yes” opens doors and makes new possibilities available. It creates the space for risk, and also the space for reward. To be clear, there are times to say, “no.” If an opportunity is not in keeping with your personal mission, goals, or interests, it could become a huge distraction. But when a new opportunity presents itself, try to assess it from a place of possibility. As a friend puts it, “Start with ‘yes,’ or at least ‘maybe.’ You can always say ‘no’ later.”
* Take ownership. – There are two pieces to ownership: taking on the work and taking responsibilities for the results. First, doing the work: When I began my career back in 1993, I knew very little, but somewhere along the line, I had learned the value of taking ownership. Every time my boss asked for a volunteer—and this is for anything at all, I raised my hand. As a result, my boss gave me more opportunities to try new things. As a result, I tried more, failed more, learned more, succeeded more. Eventually, I got a promotion, and then a better job with a new employer. Then, another job, followed by additional promotions and more money. It was this self-induced progression that gave me the chance to learn what I needed to know in order to launch my own business. And the second component of taking ownership: taking responsibility for the results—good or bad. I learned this one at a personal development workshop back in 1998, and taking responsibility for the results is one of the most powerful lessons I have ever learned. Here’s why. First, if I accept responsibility for what happens, I have at least some ability to affect the outcome—even if it’s just in how I react to what is happening around me. Second, and more to the point of entrepreneurship, trying and falling short is the best way to create the motivation for learning to do better, but only if you take responsibility for having fallen short in the first place. After all, who is going to keep trying if their efforts cannot affect the outcome? Short answer: no one. Therefore, in a very real sense, failure breeds success, because it’s the trying, falling short, taking responsibility, learning, and trying again, that results in success.
* Be persistent – In the words of Albert Einstein, “I tried and failed 99 times, and on the 100th time, came success.” It doesn’t always take dozens or hundreds of attempts to succeed, but practice and repetition create the opportunities to learn and refine—whether you’re playing the piano, honing your skills as a writer, or designing a product or process. Being persistent also pays in terms of finding ultimate success. AS Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, put it: “I’m convinced that about half of what separates the successful entrepreneurs from the non-successful ones is pure perseverance.”
* Dedicate time to self-reflection – Most mornings, one can find me at my keyboard, journaling, and one of the questions I ask myself each day is this: “What did I learn yesterday, and how can I use that information going forward?” Some days, it’s easy, and I can write paragraphs about what I did, what I learned, and how I can do better tomorrow. On other days, it’s harder, and I find myself reflecting on the fact that I learned, yet again, that I like fried green tomatoes. Nevertheless, I force myself to dig deep for some kind of self-reflection each morning, and my reason for doing it is simple. If I don’t learn something from what happened yesterday, I’m doomed to repeat the lesson today, tomorrow, and into the future. Put another way, I can’t move forward until I learn from what just happened. But don’t take my word. Elon Musk puts it this way: “I think it’s very important to have a feedback loop, where you’re constantly thinking about what you’ve done and how you could be doing it better.” If it’s good enough for Elon, it’s good enough for me.
* Be optimistic. - I inherited optimism from my dad, and it has served me well. No matter how hard my life or my job seems, I always feel like there’s a brighter day out there in the future, and the only question is how to find it. And for the entrepreneur, optimism isn’t just a feel-good thing. Optimism is the attitude that makes the effort, the occasional failures, and the perseverance to keep going possible. Hey, this is hard stuff. If I weren’t so optimistic, I would have given up a long time ago.

### If You’re an Entrepreneur, IVIE is for You.

I joined IVIE back in 2020 because I had started a business, and I figured I might be able to learn something useful, maybe meet a few other blind and visually impaired business owners along the way. Those were good reasons to join, but now that I’ve been an entrepreneur as well as an IVIE member for a few years, I want everyone to know that there’s more to entrepreneurship, and there’s more to IVIE than owning a business.

If you are a present or aspiring entrepreneur, IVIE is for you. If you want to develop the attitudes and habits of an entrepreneur, IVIE is for you. If you want to meet other people who are entrepreneurs or are learning about entrepreneurship, IVIE is for you. So, check us out: our monthly calls, our quarterly newsletter, or our annual business meeting, and then join us. You’ll be glad you did. And if you want to learn more about IVIE, you can do that too. Head over to

[https://ivie-acb.org.](https://ivie-acb.org/)

## Contact Information for the ACBI Board

### Officers

President: Rita Kersh, Bedford

812-278-3038, [Hoosierrita60@gmail.com](mailto:Hoosierrita60@gmail.com)

Vice-president: Deanne Hart, Muncie

765-215-1211, [d64hart@outlook.com](mailto:d64hart@outlook.com)

Secretary: Mary Stores, Bloomington

812-272-1876, [mstores@iu.edu](mailto:mstores@iu.edu)

Treasurer: Cindy Brooking, Mitchell

812-797-2185, [cindyfleener@yahoo.com](mailto:cindyfleener@yahoo.com)

Past President: Barbara Salisbury, Bloomington  
[barbara.salisbury@att.net](mailto:barbara.salisbury@att.net)

Directors

Cliff Goodman, Shoals

[clffgoodman@yahoo.com](mailto:clffgoodman@yahoo.com)

Kari Goodman, Shoals

klgoodman1976@gmail.com

Earlene Hughes, West Lafayette,

[earlene.hughes7@gmail.com](mailto:earlene.hughes7@gmail.com)

Don Koors, Indianapolis

donkoors@aol.com

Gerry Koors, Indianapolis

[gerrykoors@aol.com](mailto:gerrykoors@aol.com)

David Rosenkoetter, Fort Wayne

[Davidrosenkoetter260@gmail.com](mailto:Davidrosenkoetter260@gmail.com)

Pat Tussing, Indianapolis

[ptusing@outlook.com](mailto:ptusing@outlook.com)

Regina Vonderhaar, Indianapolis

[rvonderhaar@att.net](mailto:rvonderhaar@att.net)

Melissa Wobschall, West Lafayette

[mkwobsch@gmail.com](mailto:mkwobsch@gmail.com)

### Chapter Representatives

Circle City: Bill Sparks

bill@billsparks.org

SCAVI: Dolly Sowder, Bedford

[mdsowder90@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mdsowder90@sbcglobal.net)

Hoosier All State: Kevin Wobschall, W. Lafayette

Kwobsch@msn.com

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## Renewal Application

Persons interested in becoming a member or renewing their membership need only to send their check for $7, payable to ACBI, to Cindy Brooking, 676 VFW Road, Mitchell, Indiana 47446, along with the following information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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