

August 23, 2024

Dear Listeners

Happy Friday. Before the summer ends, you may want to check out Natural Bridge State Park, which is now accessible to blind and low vision visitors. Full details are [**here**](#Park). There’s also a link and a text version of *The* *Washington Post* article about a blind rock climber [**here**](#Climb).

Cheers,

Sylvia

Here are the links to all the items below:

* [**First Virginia State Park Accessible to Blind and Low Vision**](#Park)
* [**An Elite Rock Climber Lost His Vision, Then Found a Way to Climb Blind**](#Climb)
* [**Metro Still Seeks Virginia Applicants for Accessibility Advisory Committee**](#Metro)
* [**Opportunity to Advocate for People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities in Fairfax County**](#Opp)
* [**Early Voting Approaches in Arlington**](#Vote)
* [**Enhancing Digital Accessibility Through AI**](#AI)
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	+ **[Beep Baseball Learn to Play Clinic](#Beep)**
	+ [**Mediterranean Blues! - In-person Greek Music with the duo Melos**](#Melos)
	+ [**ACBVA Meeting: Mystic Access**](#ACBVA)
	+ [**Understanding your Medicare Options**](#Med)
	+ [**Bluegrass Jam**](#Jam)
	+ [**Virtual America InSight Verbal Description Tour**](#Insight)
	+ **[Registration Open for the AFBLC](#AFBLC)**

###

**FIRST VIRGINIA STATE PARK ACCESSIBLE TO BLIND AND LOW VISION**

Info Shared by Stan Gowin and forwarded by Kathryn Hodgdon

Natural Bridge State Park is now the only state park in the U.S. equipped with RightHear technology, allowing blind and low-vision visitors to better access all the park has to offer.

[**This beloved state park**](https://www.wric.com/news/western-virginia/ceremony-held-at-natural-bridge-marking-250th-anniversary-of-purchase/) draws plenty of visitors from within Virginia’s borders and beyond. According to an Aug. 14 press release from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, deploying this technology is “a pioneering step toward inclusivity.”

The department said visitors who are blind or have low vision should be able to fully experience the park as independently as possible. The hope is that, with this new [**RightHear Accessibility system**](https://www.right-hear.com/) that will now be possible.

At Natural Bridge, we believe that everyone should have equal access to the park,” said Park Manager Jim Jones in the release. “With the installation of RightHear, we are taking a significant stride toward creating an inclusive environment where all guests, including those who are blind or low vision, can enjoy their visit.”

This RightHear technology works by giving users real-time audio assistance through their iOS or Android devices, according to the release. The app and its guidance are available in up to 26 languages.

The department described multiple key features of the app. Through audio assistance, users will be able to hear information on the park and what it has to offer, such as details on the visitor center the Natural Bridge itself, among other topics. They will also be able to hear about upcoming events and any announcements that may be relevant to their visit.

While exploring the park, visitors will be able to use the app to reorient themselves in real time on the trail. They can also have their surroundings described and the app will identify key points along their route so they don’t miss the most important parts of their park experience.

According to the release, RightHear at Natural Bridge State Park was made possible in partnership with the Friends of Natural Bridge State Park and the Rockbridge Community Health Foundation.

###

**AN ELITE ROCK CLIMBER LOST HIS VISION, THEN FOUND A WAY TO CLIMB BLIND**

From *The Washington Post* and forwarded by MWE volunteer Evelyn Jemionek
Jesse, 38, is a “trad climber,” which means he ascends bare rock faces without permanent bolts. Instead, he places removable metal anchors into cracks in the mountain and attaches his rope to them. If he places those anchors poorly and falls, he could die. It is a sport in which one’s vision — the ability to spot minor fractures or grooves in the rock — is considered vital.

Read the full article at [**https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2024/blind-rock-climber-jesse-dufton/**](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2024/blind-rock-climber-jesse-dufton/) or read the word document [**here**](An%20elite%20rock%20climber%20lost%20his%20vision.docx).

###

**METRO STILL SEEKS VIRGINIA APPLICANTS FOR ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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| --- |
| From Access Fairfax E-NewsMetro is looking for riders with disabilities and older adults interested in joining the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). The AAC consists of 20 volunteers committed to helping Metro enhance the travel experience of people with disabilities and senior citizens on Metrobus, Metrorail, and MetroAccess. Six members of the AAC represent Maryland, six represent Virginia, six represent the District of Columbia, and two members serve at-large.The current three vacant positions are for the residents of Arlington County, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, City of Alexandria, City of Falls Church, or Fairfax City. The residents of the District of Columbia and Maryland (Montgomery County and Prince George’s County) are welcome to apply so that your application will be on file when openings arise. Metro will keep your application on file for one year after it is submitted.Learn more at[**Metro seeks applicants for Accessibility Advisory Committee | WMATAMetro seeks applicants for Accessibility Advisory Committee | WMATA**](https://www.wmata.com/about/accessibility-advisory-committee/AAC-Membership-Application.cfm?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)**.** |

###

**OPPORTUNITY TO ADVOCATE FOR PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL AND SENSORY DISABILITIES IN FAIRFAX COUNTY**

From Access Fairfax E-News

Community members wishing to serve should be knowledgeable about the constituency represented, have visibility into the needs and supports available in the communities for which they are appointed, and be able to work with to staff to help vision and reimagine how our service delivery system – directly and in partnership with other organizations – supports county residents.

People with lived experience bring invaluable insight and perspective to the development of social services programs. Their firsthand understanding of the challenges, barriers, and gaps within existing systems allows them to offer practical solutions and identify program elements that are truly responsive to the needs of the community. By centering the voices of those directly impacted, we can create social services that are more effective, equitable, and likely to achieve their intended goals.

Learn more at [**Family Services Boards, Authorities, Commissions | Family Services (fairfaxcounty.gov)**](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/familyservices/boards-authorities-commissions?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)**.**

###

**EARLY VOTING APPROACHES IN ARLINGTON**

Early Voting for [**the Nov. 5 Presidential Election**](https://links-2.govdelivery.com/CL0/https%3A//vote.arlingtonva.gov/Elections/1/010101917b4395c7-7845606b-9b51-4821-b0dd-07fd33bba67f-000000/Z0A2HhFANVh79xS6DR_RPW0GlYTx5kCmqcHL4RQUTY4%3D367)begins next month in Virginia. All Arlington voters are eligible to vote early at Courthouse Plaza or Long Bridge Aquatics & Fitness Center beginning on Sept. 20. You only need to bring an acceptable ID.

Early voting locations and hours are available at [**Early Voting – Arlington County VA Voting and Elections (arlingtonva.gov)**](https://vote.arlingtonva.gov/Early-Voting).

*Are you registered to vote?*[***There is still time to register***](https://links-2.govdelivery.com/CL0/https%3A//vote.arlingtonva.gov/Voter-Registration/1/010101917b4395c7-7845606b-9b51-4821-b0dd-07fd33bba67f-000000/2X-laOBzOVxuwF8LgIDh6TF0DkbJudTNG9Lok2ujrMM%3D367)*before election day.*

###

**ENHANCING DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY THROUGH AI**

From the American Foundation for the Blind website by Aaron Preece

The rapid progress in generative AI over the past two or three years shows serious promise for drastically increasing accessibility in many aspects of life for people who are blind or have low vision.

In this article, the focus is on GPT-4O, though other highly complex AI models such as Google's Gemini, Anthropic's Claude, and Meta's LLaMA may achieve similar results.

Read the full article at [**Enhancing digital Accessibility through AI | Accessworld | American Foundation for the Blind (afb.org)**](https://afb.org/aw/fall2024/digital-accessibility-ai).

###

**THEATER UPDATE**

The following performances will be described by a MWE volunteer. Note that recorded program notes will be available at the theater just prior to the actual performance and on Dial-In before and after the performance at Publication 8, Category 12, Branch 11.

**Sojourners**

Round House Theatre Bethesda - 240-644-1100

Described Saturday, September 21st matinee

**Jaja’s African Hair Braiding**

Arena Stage Kreeger at the Mead Center - 202-488-3300

Described Saturday, September 28th at 2:00 pm

**Comedy of Errors**

Shakespeare: Klein Theatre: 202-547-1122

Described Saturday, September 28th matinee

###

**CALENDAR**

**Replay POB Events**

**Listen and watch replays of recent webinars and other POB events at**[**www.youreyes.org/replays**](https://youreyes.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=939b8acf4b5eb247b7120bcd9&id=21719989f4&e=59825d4dc8)**.**

###

**Kensington Park No Pressure Audio Book Club – Virtual**

Monday, August 26th from 6:30 to 7:30 pm

[**Virtual Branch**](https://mcpl.libnet.info/event/10781896#branch)

Audiobook lovers, drop in for an informal and wide-ranging discussion without the pressure of reading an assigned title. All readers are welcome whether you read with your ears or eyes.  Tell us about a book title that you really enjoyed.

NEW: You will need to be logged into Zoom to attend this program. You can create a free account on Zoom using the sign-up link on the Zoom website - [**https://zoom.us/signin**](https://zoom.us/signin). Once you are signed in on Zoom, return to this page and click on the link below to join the program. You do not need a passcode.  If you have trouble getting in, please call Kensington Park Library at 240-773-9515.

Join Zoom [**https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85480395484**](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85480395484).
Or Dial In: 301 715 8592; Meeting ID: 854 8039 5484

For security reasons, this program session may be locked 10 minutes after it begins. Please log in promptly.

###

**Hadley Tech It Out Discussion Group: Keeping Track: Tech for Notes, Appointments, and Reminders**

Tuesday, August 27th at 2:00 pm

With so many appointments, lists and tasks to keep track of, technology can help you keep on top of your routine. Join us the discussion on accessible options for notes, lists and reminders.

Sign up to join at [**Tech It Out | Hadley Discussion Group for the Visually Impaired (hadleyhelps.org)**](https://hadleyhelps.org/discussion-groups/tech-it-out)**.**

###

Bottom of Form

**Hadley Travel Talk Discussion Group: Managing Your Finances While Traveling**

Wednesday, September 4th at 5:00 pm

Whether traveling domestically or internationally, keeping track of your money can help you avoid overspending, plan your trip, and make the most of your time. Join the discussion as they share tips and ideas.

Sign up to join at [**https://hadleyhelps.org/discussion-groups/travel-talk**](https://hadleyhelps.org/discussion-groups/travel-talk).

###

**All Access Book Club: The One and Only Bob by Katherine Applegate**

Thursday, September 5th at 11:00 via conference call

The All Access Book Club meets on the first Thursday of each month at

To join the event:

Call **703-324-1800**or toll-free number **1-877-862-8112**

At the prompt, enter the code **389887**

For more information, contact Access Services Library at 703-324-8380 or **email**.

###

**The Montgomery County Aging and Disability Resource Unit**

Friday, September 6th from 2:00 to 3:00pm

[**Maggie Nightingale Library**](https://mcpl.libnet.info/event/11387459#branch)

19633 Fisher Avenue, Poolesville

The Aging and Disability Resource Unit provides personalized hands on assistance, referrals to services and specific information to older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers.  A representative will be at the Maggie Nightingale Library to answer questions related to housing, transportation, staying healthy, and much much more.  Learn about the rich variety of resources available to Montgomery County, MD residents.   No registration necessary.  A representative will be in the library to answer your questions.

###

**Rosslyn Jazz Fest**

September 7th from 1:00 to 7:00 pm

Gateway Park, 1300 Langston Blvd, Arlington

Join the Rosslyn BID and Arlington Arts at the 32nd Rosslyn Jazz Fest for an afternoon of music, community, food trucks, yard games, and more.

The annual festival is free, and registration is encouraged but not required.

Full details and registration are at[**Rosslyn Jazz Fest 2024 | Rosslyn, VA (rosslynva.org)**](https://www.rosslynva.org/do/rosslyn-jazz-fest-2024)**.**

###

**Beep Baseball Learn to Play Clinic**

From Velma Berkey and forwarded by Sandy Neuzil

Saturday, September 7th from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

George Mason University Recreational Field #4

4611 Rapidan River Road, Fairfax

Learn to Play event hosted by George Mason Recreation, in collaboration with the Metro Washington Association of Blind Athletes, Northern Virginia Community College, George Mason Disability Services, the Philadelphia Fire, and Bayou City Heat. The event is open to all participants over the age of 15, this event offers a unique opportunity to learn and play beep baseball, an adaptive version of America's favorite pastime. The day includes a morning clinic, a provided lunch, and an afternoon scrimmage. Come ready to engage in physical activity on the field, and don't forget your athletic gear and baseball glove if you have one. They have a limited number of slots to ensure everyone gets ample time to play.
Event Schedule:

10 AM - 12 PM: Clinic

12 PM - 1 PM: Lunch

1 PM - 3 PM: Fun Scrimmage

Registration Period:**June 10 - August 30**

Register at: [**https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=VXKFnlffR0ygwAVGRgOAyxqMNspqpMROtYQUb-OYWChUNUc1RE9GRDZYTjZVT1ZLTTgyNVdZVFgwUy4u**](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=VXKFnlffR0ygwAVGRgOAyxqMNspqpMROtYQUb-OYWChUNUc1RE9GRDZYTjZVT1ZLTTgyNVdZVFgwUy4u)**.**

Note:**This event will be free!**

For more information, visit [**recreation.gmu.edu**](http://recreation.gmu.edu/) or contact Paul Bazzano at**pbazzano@gmu.edu****.**

###

**Mediterranean Blues! - In-person Greek Music with the duo Melos**

Sunday, September 8th from 2:00 to 3:00 pm

[**Wheaton Library**](https://mcpl.libnet.info/event/10858088#branch)

in the Social Hall, 2nd Floor, 11701 Georgia Avenue, Wheaton

Spyros Koliavasilis and Niko Mitreone will perform Rebetiko music, sometimes referred to as "Greek Blues," capturing feelings of oppression, despair, hope, and love of marginalized communities.

*Rebetiko*is now a Greek national treasure - recognized and protected by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage to Humanity. It is a passionate music that unifies strangers, people of different religions and countries, all together looking for a better life at the crossroads of the world.

Questions about this program? Contact the Library at 240-777-0678. This program is sponsored by the Friends of the Library Montgomery County, [**https://www.folmc.org/**](https://www.folmc.org/)

###

**ACBVA Meeting: Mystic Access**

Monday, September 9th from 7:00 to 8:30 pm

The slogan for Mystic Access is “Gain confidence using technology.”

Their goal is to empower blind and low vision users to gain more confidence using assistive technology through tutorials, podcasts, and events.

Their tutorials are extremely thorough and designed to walk someone who is afraid of using technology through all of the ways to use it.

If you have time before the meeting, you might want to listen to part of one of their free tutorials or purchase one that would benefit you. Their website is:

[**https://mysticaccess.com/**](https://mysticaccess.com/)

For more information about ACBVA, please email:
**Info.acbva@gmail.com****.**
and visit the ACBVA website at:
[**www.acbva.org**](http://www.acbva.org/)**.**

Contact Paul D'Addario at 703-532-9138 or RoseAnn Ashby at 703-403-0226 with questions.

**Join Zoom Meeting**[**https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86481244260?pwd=ekgxYldXMnlqYk16MFlua0lIQnozZz09**](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86481244260?pwd=ekgxYldXMnlqYk16MFlua0lIQnozZz09)
Meeting ID: 864 8124 4260
Passcode: 111222

**One tap mobile**
+13017158592,,86481244260#,,,,\*111222# US (Washington DC)

**Dial by your location**
+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)
Meeting ID: 864 8124 4260
Passcode: 111222

###

**Understanding your Medicare Options**

Tuesday, September 10th from 6:00 to 8:00pm

[**Quince Orchard Library**](https://mcpl.libnet.info/event/11189704#branch)

15831 Quince Orchard Road, Gaithersburg

Provided by the Montgomery County State Health Insurance Assistance Program.

The Montgomery County State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) will provide an overview of Medicare benefits, eligibility, enrollment, costs, & coverage, as well as info on Medicare savings programs, Medicare fraud, protection & local services.

**Questions about this program?** Contact the Quince Orchard Library at 240-777-0200.

###

**Bluegrass Jam**

Tuesday, September 10th from 6:00 to 8:00pm

[**Damascus Library**](https://mcpl.libnet.info/event/11220328#branch)

9701 Main Street, Damascus

Bring your acoustic instrument and share your love of playing bluegrass music.

Questions about this program? Contact the branch 240-773-9444.

Looking for more fun things to do at MCPL?

###

**Virtual America InSight Verbal Description Tour**

Thursday, September 12th at 5:30 pm

Join the Smithsonian American Art Museum for a docent-led virtual tour designed for participants who are blind or have low vision. Discover highlights from the collection through rich verbal descriptions that invoke a multisensory experience.

Register at [**Overview ⋮ Virtual America InSight: Verbal Description Tours ⋮ Blackthorn Events**](https://events.blackthorn.io/en/5f4ZMUx7/virtual-america-insight-verbal-description-tours-4a2bVRuomv/cart-v2)**.**

###

**Registration Open for the 2024 AFBLC**

The 2024 American Foundation for the Blind Leadership Conference (AFBLC) will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Minneapolis, Minnesota, from September 23rd - 25th!

Learn more at [**2024 AFB Leadership Conference | American Foundation for the Blind**](https://afb.org/about-afb/events/2024afblc)

[**Register Here**](https://cvent.me/ezGLeL?RefId=Default+Registration)**!**

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