**Dots and Dashes**

**January 29, 2024**

# **Calling All Aspiring Students!**

The American Council of the Blind (ACB) offers educational scholarships ranging from $2,000 to $7,500 to eligible applicants: legally blind, maintaining a 3.0 GPA (required for most scholarships), be a full-time student or a part-time student who works at least 32 hours per week, and be involved in their school and local community. This program is intended to help students with educational financial needs such as tuition, fees, room and board and assistive technology, and is geared toward entering freshmen, undergraduate and graduate students, and students attending technical college.

The application deadline is February 14, 2024. For more information about ACB's scholarship program, visit

[**acb.org/scholarships**](https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001AgMc9ZJMysL_kr7JSH-0XO7xuGXzt6Wstlm_9mPpJ45fOqfJ677I8x_oLS5NOetW89seLkiti7QQxzLcJfVQgdawCCZzOIVLbIkueJieIct_3oK-Zbj1SjQpJFJW_8wrq275WD3CgGbiRMuM4XzFHg==&c=A1mdOnWK3SuTiUFnn8dJ8MsWomyBnl9QyU-wq3-3qDwQla2W-Q_8tw==&ch=9jIrK90bTjgads6EyYT1U3-QeF5Rz6tIQ63qBug-esbvCsTON1RVsQ==).

# **Register Now for the 2024 D.C. Leadership Conference**

The 2024 ACB Leadership Conference will be held Friday, March 1, through Tuesday, March 5. All meetings except for Capitol Hill visits will take place at the Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel in Arlington, VA.

Room rates at the Sheraton are $149 per night, plus tax. To make a reservation, go to [**https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1698415960940&key=GRP&app=resvlink**](https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1698415960940&key=GRP&app=resvlink).

Or you may call 1-800-325-3535; be sure to tell the

representative that you will be attending the "ACB Leadership Seminar" to receive the group rate. The room block cutoff date is Monday, February 12, 2024.

To register for the conference, visit members.acb.org. Log into your account, or create an account by clicking the "Create an Account" button. If you can't remember your username and/or password, contact the Minnesota office at (612) 332-3242 or the Virginia office at (202) 467-5081.

Once you're logged in, visit the "DC Leadership Registration" link at the top of the page, read through the instructions and hit the "Begin with Preferences" button. To register by phone, call either our Minnesota office or our Virginia office (phone numbers above).

This year's imperatives are:

* Websites and Software Applications Accessibility Act — S. 2984 and H.R. 5813
* Communications, Video, and Technology Accessibility Act — S. 2494 and H.R. 4858
* Medical Device Nonvisual Accessibility Act — H.R. 1328
* Medicare and Medicaid Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefits Act — S. 842 and the Medicare Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefit Act — H.R. 33.

For more information, visit [**https://www.acb.org/2024-Leadership-Conference**](https://www.acb.org/2024-Leadership-Conference).

# **Lights, Camera, Description!**

The American Council of the Blind's Audio Description Project (ADP) and the Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) are now accepting entries for BADIE, or the Benefits of Audio Description in Education, an essay contest for young people (ages 7 to 21) who are blind or have low vision. It's a great chance for students to engage with accessible learning materials, unleash their inner film critic, and compete for fun prizes.

## **How Students Can Enter:**

1. Browse the free DCMP library at [**https://dcmp.org/**](https://dcmp.org/)[.](http://www.dcmp.org/)

2. Watch any audio-described film (there are more than 6,000 educational titles to choose from!).

3. Write an evaluation of the film's audio description, commenting on the ways the audio description enhanced or detracted from your experience.

4. Visit [**http://badiecontest.org**](http://badiecontest.org/) to submit your entry. There you'll also find guidelines and prize details, tips on writing a good review, and information about how audio description is created.

## **Categories:**

Alternate Assessment – students with non-traditional matriculation records

Sophomore – ages 7–10

Junior – ages 11–15

Senior – ages 16–21

## **Deadline and Prizes:**

* The deadline for contest entries is **February 11, 2024.**
* Winners will be notified by the end of March 2024.
* There will be first, second, and third place winners in each category, as well as a grand prize winner who will be awarded an iPad mini and invited to read his/her essay at the American Council of the Blind's National Conference and Convention in July 2024.
* Teachers of first-place winners also receive prizes.

Go to [**http://badiecontest.org**](http://badiecontest.org/) for complete details and to submit your entry!

# **Tax Time Approaches**

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is conducting a pilot program for its new free Direct File Service for paying taxes. They are looking for ACB members to test out the program and provide feedback on its accessibility and usability with assistive technology. The pilot is operating in the following states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Nevada, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington and Wyoming, and participants will be compensated for their time. To learn more, visit [**https://www.irs.gov/about-irs/strategic-plan/direct-file**](https://www.irs.gov/about-irs/strategic-plan/direct-file). Interested participants can contact Swatha Nandhakumar, ACB's Advocacy and Outreach Specialist, at [**snandhakumar@acb.org**](mailto:snandhakumar@acb.org).

# **Public Comment Period for Draft Audio Description Specialist Certification Criteria**

The Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals (ACVREP) Board of Directors, on the recommendation of the Audio Description Specialist Subject Matter Expert (SME) Committee, approves the posting of the CAUDES draft certification criteria for public comment from communities worldwide.

ACVREP and the SME Committee invite Audio Description professionals, community members, advocates, and users to provide comments and feedback on the Certified Audio Description Specialist (CAUDES) draft certification criteria. Your input is critical to ensure the highest quality certification.

This certification will formally recognize individuals who demonstrate knowledge of, and proficiency in, Audio Description best practices across a wide range of formats and venues. Areas of practice include, but are not limited to, pre-recorded media, performing arts, interactive displays, live events, museums, and education.

The draft CAUDES criteria documents will be posted on [**https://www.acvrep.org**](https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001Ar2raiWTKxLOw5DF63xgrf98wxMRF1Yp7P1JlqBra0aVL21IRO-Qf78WjkaLhr4vxxyI59odk8agDb4LjHpwzke-Fx-lEzwsLWMpng6KtLm3C8LomVQ31hE8s8LW6m_9OZsoUP5XrHDq3dpoGYh1ng==&c=0BvHAZnqEzjejfMzB00AKsv9Y4NaV2dbBzM1MBuMrtPElVcxDbyZzw==&ch=LDXmonKQr39FE_91SkVgfVl1_Hm_sEAZWpuLP54ZzgVaa2PbAavpVQ==) in the "News & Information" section for download beginning on February 1, 2024. The public comment period will close on March 31, 2024. Written comments can be submitted to [**comments@acvrep.org**](mailto:comments@acvrep.org), putting CAUDES in the subject line. If you have questions about the public comment process, please email them to [**comments@acvrep.org**](mailto:comments@acvrep.org).

# **ACB Advocacy Regarding Hetlioz, Non-24**

ACB is engaging in some advocacy surrounding the medication, Hetlioz, Vanda Pharmaceuticals, and the non-24 sleep-wake disorder.

If you, or someone you know, have non-24, have had experience with Hetlioz, and would be willing to assist in our advocacy, please email Kim Charlson at [**kimcharlson@acb.org**](mailto:kimcharlson@acb.org).

# **Affordable Connectivity Program Winding Down**

The Affordable Connectivity Program will stop accepting new applications and enrollments on February 7, 2024. Consumers must be approved and enrolled with a service provider 11:59 p.m. Eastern on February 7 to receive the ACP benefit.

Without additional funding from Congress, the FCC anticipates that the current ACP funding is projected to run out in April 2024.  This date is an estimate and may change.  As a result, the FCC has begun taking steps to wind down the ACP, which means:

* No new ACP enrollments will be accepted after February 7, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. Eastern.
* Households that enrolled with an ACP internet company before February 7, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. Eastern will continue to receive their ACP benefit until ACP funds run out as long as the household remains enrolled and eligible for the benefit.
* When ACP funds run out, households participating in the ACP will no longer receive the ACP discounts.

For more information, visit [**www.fcc.gov/acp**](http://www.fcc.gov/acp).

# **Changes at Hadley**

In the coming weeks, we will be changing our web and email addresses from **Hadley.edu** to **HadleyHelps.org**. We needed to make this move as our scope has expanded beyond academics.  
  
[**HadleyHelps.org**](http://click.email.hadleyhelps.org/?qs=c046788030ba0f7fea3203105b3b6d020cc01883fa3e084b0aed7858360b72accbb1556d0a50b547d0a4d4bfd310a664caa3216236643d9d3fbac00433acdf26) web address already works. If you type in [**Hadley.edu**](http://click.email.hadleyhelps.org/?qs=c046788030ba0f7fb28f59874099d575662f0e47edede03d9f71bde1e6dcec7abfaf5aae37e22ef92ba135faabe0774742e0dff8a3e0b23abdc9a179ac57ab2b) by accident, you will be automatically redirected to [**HadleyHelps.org**](http://click.email.hadleyhelps.org/?qs=c046788030ba0f7fd35485bea62a19a63e97169ec67d581bc7db6be35d326c02023030f60d117c7838ce93b79c0d193ff310c2754313c65bcd035eeb59c75ac4)and your emails forwarded accordingly. Be sure to update your bookmarks to the new address.

# **Researchers Need Your Help**

We are researchers from the Center for Accessibility and Inclusion Research at the Rochester Institute of Technology and TU Dublin conducting a research survey on the use of accessibility overlays. We are seeking insights from blind and low-vision computer users who are 18 years or older about experiences using accessibility overlays. We are offering a raffle of $100 to a winner drawn from up to 2,000 survey respondents.

Accessibility Overlays are a broad term for technologies that aim to improve the accessibility of a website. Some claim to fix any problems in the site's code that are preventing assistive technology from being used easily. Examples include AccessiBe, UserWay and EqualWeb. If you have used accessibility overlays, you may qualify for this study.

Survey link: [**https://rit.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\_2sG2yZYSVEqhUcm**](https://rit.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2sG2yZYSVEqhUcm)

For more information, contact Tlamelo Makati at [**txmgbl@rit.edu**](mailto:txmgbl@rit.edu).

# **Help Us Improve the Website Accessibility of a Popular Restaurant Chain!**

We're a team of three master's students – Joyce, Kayla, and Sofia – from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. We're reaching out to individuals with diverse visual abilities to participate in a user experience interview focused on a popular restaurant’s website accessibility.

We’re specifically looking for participants who are blind and participants with low vision to take part in a 60-minute interview. All you need to do is browse the restaurant's website on your smartphone or computer, using any assistive technology tools you normally use (if any), while we observe and ask questions. Our interview sessions will be recorded. The recordings will be deleted promptly after our research concludes to ensure confidentiality.

Are you interested in sharing your thoughts on potential challenges and frustrations in the website's menu design? Your participation and invaluable feedback will positively impact the experience of all individuals with visual impairments who use this website. We will compensate you **$25 for your time**! If interested, please fill out the brief form linked below, and one of our team members will contact you to schedule a convenient interview time if you qualify for our study.

Link to form: [**https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd74b13NyscbHlHKQzO2y13yk1LnH4Ju7qlohKPQ03lCC9A4w/viewform**](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd74b13NyscbHlHKQzO2y13yk1LnH4Ju7qlohKPQ03lCC9A4w/viewform)

If you have questions, contact Sofia Sandoval at (818) 964-8942, or via email, [**smsandov@usc.edu**](mailto:smsandov@usc.edu).