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2905 W. Garden St., Peoria, IL 61605

Phone: 309-637-3693

Email: info@cicbvi.org

Website: www.cicbvi.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/cicbvi

Meet CICBVI Board Member Xin Lu: Partially Sighted and Fully Engaged

By Kathryn Eissfeldt, freelance writer at Studio 309 Communications

Even after a career spanning two continents and three languages, Xin Lu's current life goals go all the way back to 4th grade, when she first visited the beach. An avid traveler, Ms. Lu's passion for seeing the world began at age ten, when she first experienced the ocean. She subsequently wrote about her trip to the beach in an article that was published in a local newspaper. Now retired with a son in medical school, Xin makes it a point to see as much of the globe as she can before her vision erodes more. Every year, she takes at least one big trip with her husband, and one with her son. A native of China, she also returns there as often as she can to visit her sister and other family.

With glaucoma that was diagnosed at age 14 and vision issues that were probably present from birth, Ms. Lu now has almost no vision at all in her right eye, and the glaucoma in her left eye is eroding her vision, despite many surgeries and the best care and treatment. As a consequence, it is important to her to see as much of the wider world as possible while she can.

This goal-driven, high-achieving professional woman is used to going after the things she sets her sights on. While her vision issues in childhood prevented her from going into her preferred career of medicine, Xin achieved a career in pharmacy, and she managed so capably that no one during her training was even aware she had a disability.

A career move by her first husband, Doug, took the two of them, plus their infant son Donald, to the University of Chicago. Not being able to drive because of her vision or work because of her visa, the transition was difficult at first. Once she conquered the language barrier by learning English and met new friends, however, she enjoyed her new home and the opportunities for her son.

One last hurdle was that her pharmacist degree would not transfer to the U.S., so Xin decided to retrain and go back to school. She decided to pursue language training in Japanese. She had developed an interest in Japan while working as a pharmacist in Beijing, where her hospital was funded by Japan and had many Japanese patients. As part of her degree in Japanese, she got to study, live, and work in Japan for a year, an experience that she enjoyed to the fullest. Not only did she gain language skills and confidence, her visit also led her indirectly to the next part of her career.

Based in the city of Kyoto, she visited Osaka and there observed many of the large pharmaceutical companies that she had used during her years as a pharmacist in the Japanese hospital in Beijing. This experience inspired Xin to go back to business school so that she could work in the pharmaceutical industry. Back at home in Chicago, she finished an MBA and, after a brief stint at an insurance company, went to work as a treasury analyst for a large Japanese pharmaceutical company, then called Fujisawa, now named Astella, in

Deerfield. Xin stayed there until 2011, rising to become the treasury and risk manager of over two billion dollars of investments at this 9th-largest pharmaceutical company in the world.

By this time, she had met and married her second husband, Charles, to whom she's been married 16 years now. In 2007, Xin was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was a very dark time for her not only because of this, but also because her father was dying, and she could not go to China to visit him because of her own cancer treatment. However, using her usual perseverance, Xin made a full recovery, although a retinal bleed as a side effect of her cancer drugs further reduced her vision.

Interestingly, almost no one at her job knew that she has a disability until by 2011 it became too difficult to work due to her glaucoma, and she retired. Soon after that, her husband Charles decided to take a new opportunity in Peoria, becoming the CEO of Heartland Community Health Clinic, and the couple moved here about one and a half years ago.

Since then, Xin has gotten involved with Advocates for Access, as well as joining the C.I.C.B.V.I. Finance and Programs Committees and the board of directors of the Central Illinois Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired. She loves that at the Center "people come together and share their energy to serve others." The Programs Committee is a natural fit for her, she says, because as a visually impaired person, she can understand what kind of activities might be appealing for people with low or no vision. Xin notes that "the board of the Blind Center is really involved, and members really care. I'm very impressed." She plans to stay active and keep contributing her time, energy, and financial expertise as she learns more and more about the Center, its members, and their needs.

A dynamic and driven individual, she also helps put on Chinese culture and dance exhibitions and plays a traditional Chinese lute instrument in a small group for fun. She and her husband just returned from a trip to Alaska, and Xin has many more travel plans in the works. She used to take her son to see the world and expand his horizons as he grew up, and now he takes her, despite his busy schedule in medical school.

This adventurous spirit has carried Xin Lu through careers in pharmacy and finances, through living in China, Japan, and the U.S., through a lifetime of high achievement despite vision issues from birth, through motherhood, marriage, and moves. She brings this energy to her involvement at the CICBVI and all she does. The Center is grateful for her passion and contributions, as we are for all of our wonderful, dedicated volunteers.

Fourth Annual Uftring Auto Group “Run the Gig”

The Fourth Annual Uftring “Run the Gig” run/walk to benefit the Center will be held on Sunday, September 25th. Uftring Auto Group will be hosting the tailgate party after the walk/run with food, refreshments, and entertainment. Register today at www.runthegig.com or download a registration form from the website and mail it in. For all blind or visually impaired patrons who want to participate in the walk/run, please call the office at 637-3693 to sign-up.

Terri Lynn Nuts & Candies

Terri Lynn Nuts & Candies will be sold once again from September to November, to help support programs and services of the Center.

Please pre-order so you can receive your delivery in November and in time for the holidays. The following choices will be available and on a first come basis: Pecan Halves \$12, Black Walnut Pieces \$12, Deluxe Mixed Nuts (no peanuts) \$12, Giant Whole Cashews \$12, Pistachios \$11, Praline Pecans \$10, Milk Chocolate Bridge Mix (fruit & nut) \$8, Milk Chocolate Coated Almonds \$10, Milk Chocolate Coated Peanuts \$7, Giant Malted Milk Balls \$7, and Dark Chocolate Cranberries \$8.

Pet Food Gift Cards

Thanks to the Oppenheim Trust Fund and other donations, the Center is distributing gift cards to patrons with a pet or guide dog. The gift card amount will be \$50 for pets and \$100 for a guide dog. Please call the office at 637-3693 to sign-up by Tuesday, September 8th by noon.

Volunteer Jam Session Coordinator Wanted

The Center is still looking for a couple or an individual to coordinate Jam Sessions. Jam Session is a music program that happens the third Saturday of every month at the Center. Music is provided by Center patrons and volunteers. The responsibilities of the Jam Session coordinator include: coordinating the Jam Session meal, recruiting volunteers to help with the setup, clean up, and serving of the meal, in addition to coordinating the music program. If you or someone you know would be interested in being the volunteer Jam Session coordinator, please contact the Center's office at 637-3693.

Kroger Community Rewards Program

Please make sure your Kroger Plus Shopper's Rewards Card is registered with the Kroger Community Rewards Program. This is important because the Center receives a donation from Kroger based on a percentage of your purchases. For those who have not registered, simply create an account with Kroger and register your Kroger Rewards Card with Community Rewards. Choose "Center for the Blind

& Visually Impaired" on the list. The website is www.kroger.com/communityrewards. The office is available to help with registering for this program.

Center's 60th Anniversary Gala Video

The Center's 60th Anniversary Gala was a memorable night. If you would like to receive a copy of the video taken at the 60th Anniversary Gala, please contact the office.

Free Giveaway

Free stylus and four line slate with 28 cells. Only one available. Please contact the office if you are interested in having it.

Gil's Supper Club Outing

As part of the Center's programs, we will be dining at Gil's Supper Club in Hanna City on Saturday, October 29th at 4 p.m. Gil's is a full service restaurant with a variety of delicious dishes. Braille and large print menus will be available before the outing. The Center will provide rides to and from the restaurant. Meals will not be covered by the Center. Please bring enough money to cover the cost of your meal, a drink, and tips. Please call the office to make reservations by Tuesday, October 18th by noon.

Spirit of Peoria Sightseeing Cruise

The Spirit of Peoria Sightseeing Cruise has been scheduled for Saturday, October 8th. This cruise is an hour and a quarter long. It begins and ends at the riverfront dock in downtown Peoria, with the Spirit cruising up and down the Illinois River. We board around 1:15 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Please contact the office to make reservations for this event by Tuesday, September 20th by noon.

Swimming

Free swimming at Five Points in Washington, IL on Thursday October 20th at 4 p.m. Please contact the office to make reservations by Tuesday, October 4th by noon.

Hike At Forest Park

We will go hiking at Forest Park on Tuesday, October 25th at 2 p.m. Please contact the office to make reservations by Tuesday, October 11th by noon.

Upcoming Events, Meetings, Fundraisers, and Holidays

Wednesday, September 7th – Open House – Noon

Saturday, September 10th – Beauty and the Beast Show – 7:30 p.m. –
Peoria Player's Theatre

Tuesday, September 13th – Board Meeting – 4 p.m.

Wednesday, September 14th – No Open House meal. Center patrons will be attending the Cubs versus Cardinals ball game in St. Louis

Saturday, September 17th – Jam Session – 3 p.m. – 6 p.m. – Free meal

Wednesday, September 21st – Open House – Noon – Free meal

Sunday, September 25th – Uftring Auto Group Fourth Annual “Run the Gig” Walk/Run – Registration begins at 1 p.m. – Race begins at 2 p.m.

Wednesday, September 28th – Open House – 5:30 p.m. – Free meal

September Birthdays

September 3 – Joyce Feix

September 4 – Margaret Orth

September 18 – Leia Stewart, Ann Creech, and Cyndi Gill

September 20 – Duane Hall

September 21 – Tricia Lacey

September Anniversaries

September 21 – Ronald and Patricia Aldred

Meal Menus For September

September 7th – Noon – Chili cheese dogs, chips, fruit salad, and cookies.

September 14th – No Open House meal

September 17th – Jam Session – Gondolas (gondolas are Avanti's famous signature sandwiches), chips, and dessert.

September 21st – Noon – Baked hamburger casserole, corn, applesauce, cookies, and Jell-O.

September 28th – 5:30 p.m. – Baked chicken breast, mashed potatoes, green beans, salad, rolls, pudding, and cookies.

Bingo will be played at all Open Houses unless otherwise noted.

Reservations need to be called in no later than noon on the day before the Open House.

Donations – Monetary And Other

Thanks to the following for their monetary donation: Carol and Jerry Klokkenga, Bob Coney, Tom Vogel, Patrick Mark Lee, Joe May, and Anonymous. Thanks to the following for their in-kind donations: Illinois Social Club for donating food items and Bingo prizes; Flores Music for donating their time and services to setup our new sound system, Ron Selby for donating napkins; and Cyndi Gill for donating candy bars.

Donations Wanted

The Center has a need for donated supplies. The wish list includes cases of water and 12-24 packs of canned sodas, especially Coca-Cola, Diet Coca-Cola, and Diet Pepsi. We can always use prizes for Bingo as well.

Beauty And The Beast Show

The Center is planning to go to an evening show of Beauty and the Beast at the Peoria Player's Theatre on Saturday, September 10th. To reserve, please call the office by Thursday, August 25th by noon, so that the Center can make reservations when the show is open to the public. These tickets go fast so please reserve early.

Interesting Dates Throughout The Month Of September

September 2 – U.S. Department of Treasury Established. On this day in the year 1789, the third Presidential cabinet department, the U.S. Department of Treasury was established by an act of Congress. The Department of the Treasury is an executive department and the treasury of the United States federal government. It was established to manage government revenue. The Department is administered by the Secretary of the Treasury, who is a member of the Cabinet.

September 5 – Labor Day. This day is dedicated in honor of the worker and is also appropriately called the "workingman's holiday".

September 21 – World Peace Day. This day is observed annually on September 21st. It is dedicated to world peace, and specifically the absence of war and violence, such as might be occasioned by a temporary ceasefire in a combat zone for humanitarian aid access.



Free Matter for the Blind & Visually Impaired

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Quote For The month – “New beginnings are often disguised as painful endings.” By Lao Tzu