



Media Release

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White Cane Safety Day observance features sports figure's mother and former Arkansas Secretary of State

Annette Fisher, mother of sports figure and Little Rock native Derek Fisher, and Sharon Priest, executive director of the Downtown Little Rock Partnership and former Arkansas Secretary of State, will be the featured speakers at this year's White Cane Safety Day observance at 10 a.m., Tuesday, October 14 in the auditorium of World Services for the Blind, 2811 Fair Park Blvd. in Little Rock.

The event, coordinated by the Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind (DSB), is part of October's Blindness Awareness Month. The white cane is a symbol of independence, because it increases mobility for people who are blind or visually impaired. The white cane also raises awareness for pedestrian safety. People who are blind or visually impaired make up about three percent of the Arkansas population. Last year DSB provided services to about 2,000 people.

Governor Mike Beebe has issued a proclamation naming October 15 as White Cane Safety Day although the observance will occur a day in advance.

Mrs. Fisher is the grandmother of Fisher's daughter Tatum, who had retinoblastoma, a rare cancer that affects the retina. Tatum is now age 8, but was diagnosed with retinoblastoma at 11 months old. Due to his daughter's health at the time, Fisher had asked to be released from his basketball contract. He later rejoined the Lakers and won two more NBA titles. Fisher, who formerly played college basketball for the UALR Trojans, is now the head coach for the New York Knicks. He played professional basketball for 18 seasons and served as president of the National Basketball Players Association. The family's story is one of hope and inspiration.

Priest will provide updates on the revitalization efforts and services being provided by the Downtown Little Rock Partnership, a nonprofit organization representing people who live, work, and invest in downtown Little Rock. Priest was the first woman elected Arkansas Secretary of State in 1994. She was elected to public office six times from 1986 to the present, including Little Rock Board of Directors (1986-90), Vice-Mayor of Little Rock (1989-90), and Mayor of Little Rock (1991-92). She currently chairs the Arkansas State Election

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Improvement Study Commission, the State Board of Election Commissioners, and the Capitol Arts and Grounds Commission. She is a former president of the National Association of Secretaries of State.

Children from the Arkansas School for the Blind will demonstrate use of the white cane and mobility skills enhanced by GPS technology. The event involves agencies and organizations throughout the state that provide services to individuals with blindness.

The day has been observed every year since President Lyndon B. Johnson signed it into law in 1964. The first White Cane Ordinance was passed in 1930 in Peoria, Illinois and granted pedestrians carrying a white cane protections and the right-of-way. Other states, including Arkansas, soon adopted similar laws.