



Fun Facts about White Cane Day

- On October 6, 1964, a joint resolution of the Congress, HR 753, was signed into law authorizing the President of the United States to proclaim October 15 of each year as "White Cane Safety Day". President Lyndon Johnson was the first to make this proclamation.
- The President of the United States annually recognizes White Cane Day through the Blind Americans Equality Day Proclamation on October 15th to acknowledge the abilities of people who are blind and to promote equal opportunities for all Americans.
- The mission of White Cane Day is to educate the world about blindness and how the blind and visually impaired can live and work independently while giving back to their communities, to celebrate the abilities and successes achieved by blind people in a sighted world, and to honor the many contributions being made by the blind and visually impaired.
- Blind people have used canes as mobility tools for centuries, but it was not until after World War I that the white cane was introduced.
- In the United States, the introduction of the white cane is attributed to George A. Bonham of the Lions Clubs International. In 1930, a Lions Club member watched as a man who was blind attempted to cross the street with a black cane that was barely visible to motorists against the dark pavement. The Lions decided to paint the cane white to make it more visible.
- The first special white cane ordinance was passed in December 1930 in Peoria, Illinois granting blind pedestrians protections and the right-of-way while carrying a white cane.
- The long cane was improved upon by World War II veteran's rehabilitation specialist Richard E. Hoover at Valley Forge Army Hospital. In 1944, he took the Lions Club white cane (originally made of wood) and went around the hospital blindfolded for a week. During this time he developed what is now the standard method of "long cane" training or the Hoover Method. He is now called the "Father of the Lightweight Long Cane Technique." The basic technique is to swing the cane from the center of the body back and forth before the feet. The cane should be swept before the rear foot as the person steps. Before he taught other rehabilitators, or "orientors" his new technique, he had a special commission to have lightweight, long white canes made for the veterans of the European fronts.