

THE SOUNDING BOARD

Fall 2009

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If you or a friend would like to remember the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey in your will, you can do so by employing the following language:

“I give, devise and bequeath unto the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey, 254 Spruce Street, Bloomfield, NJ 07003, a non-profit corporation, the sum of \$__ (or “__ percent of my net estate” or “The following stocks and bonds: __”) to be used for its worthy purposes on behalf of blind persons.”

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PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

Greetings Fellow Federationists,

The 33rd annual State Convention of the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey was held November 6 – 8, 2009. Simply stated, it was a blast. The Crowne Plaza in Clark was the site for this valuable weekend experience. A record 310 conventioners felt the spirit of the Federation and the CAN DO attitude of motivation, inspiration and high expectations. Saturday's activities were broadcast live at www.thruoureyes.org/jaws.html, which you can still access to get a feel for the true convention experience.

Two new divisions were formally established: the Association of Guide Dog Users and the Association of Technology Users. Congratulations to Vincent and Michele Chaney for their work in bringing these divisions to the organization. The State Affiliate has also established an At-Large Chapter, which allows involvement for members who cannot attend chapter meetings due to work or school schedules, lack of transportation and/or the possibility of no chapter near them. In just a few months, 32 new members are attending our monthly conference calls.

We're also pleased to announce the election of Michele Chaney and Linda DeBerardinis to our State Affiliate board. Michele and Linda are both active members who have contributed much time and effort and have shown leadership to our membership. Look for their biographies in the next issue.

Important Upcoming Dates

- Wednesday, December 2, at 8 p.m., Dr. Maurer will be interviewed in a show entitled "Ask the President" on Thru Our Eyes. Check www.nfbnj.org for information on how to listen and call in your questions.
- Saturday, December 19 is our holiday party at the Crowne Plaza in Clark. Contact me at 973-743-0075 for more information.

In this issue, you'll find articles written from the heart and the message is clear: keep moving forward, and always with the spirit of the Federation in mind. I hope you enjoy this issue, and please remember to pass it on to others – family members, neighbors, teachers, whoever you can think of. Spreading our message of positive attitudes is what we continue to do best.

With best wishes,

Joe Ruffalo
President
National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

By Lynn Reynolds, Legislative Coordinator

The main focus for this year has been the two pending bills concerning the quiet car legislation. The National Center has sent several alerts requesting our assistance in contacting our Congressional Representatives to urge them to co-sponsor both the House bill (HR 734) and the Senate bill (S 841). As of this writing, only seven of our congressmen have signed onto the bill. News articles state that several car manufacturers are looking into putting something on their hybrid cars that would emit a sound. The manufacturers are realizing that this change is necessary not only for blind people, but for everyone, but this needs to be nationally mandated so that all manufacturers will have to move forward with it.

If you would like to be added to the legislative alert list, please e-mail me with your contact information. I would like to thank all those who have been making calls. The more contacts we make, the more progress we will see happening.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT 2009 NFB STATE CONVENTION

By Mary Jo Partyka

The NFB of NJ has taken a stand on the following issues, and resolutions have been sent to our local legislators in New Jersey:

Resolution 2009-01

Regarding Silent Cars and the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act

WHEREAS, the blind rely on the sound made by motor vehicles to determine when it is safe to cross streets and driveways, traverse parking lots and otherwise be aware of when moving vehicles are present; and

WHEREAS, since 2003 the National Federation of the Blind has expressed deep concerns about the safety of the blind and other pedestrians due to the silencing of motor vehicles, particularly those hybrid and other electric vehicles that use batteries instead of combustion engines; and

WHEREAS, since 2003 silent vehicles have proliferated and the collective experience of the blind with them has heightened our concerns about their threat to the blind and other pedestrians; and

WHEREAS, the increasing prevalence of silent vehicles will seriously affect the ability of New Jersey's blind population to travel safely and independently unless these vehicles are equipped with an appropriate level of sound; and,

WHEREAS, on January 28, 2009, Congressmen Ed Towns of New York and Cliff Stearns of Florida reintroduced the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act, HR 734 in the House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, on April 21, 2009, Senators John Kerry of Massachusetts and Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania introduced the companion bill S 841 in the United States Senate: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the NFB of NJ in Convention assembled this 8th day of Nov. 2009, in the Township of Clark, NJ, that this organization strongly encourage NJ's congressional delegation to sign on to the Pedestrian Safety Act; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we continue to urge NJ's congressional delegation to confer with members of the NFB of NJ for guidance in this matter.

Resolution 2009-02

Regarding Legislation for the Protection of Guide Dog Teams

WHEREAS, uncontrolled dogs that attack or interfere with guide dog teams are a serious and widespread threat to the safety and welfare of blind citizens of this state; and

WHEREAS, these incidents are in part attributable to the failure of owners to confine and properly train and control their dogs; and

WHEREAS, when a guide dog is attacked or subjected to interference, the blind person's travel is suddenly and severely restricted, often without any warning; and either or both team members become instantly vulnerable to harm by the uncontrolled dog, vehicular traffic or other environmental dangers, since the blind traveler suddenly finds himself without orientation, and the guide, who is bred and trained to be non-aggressive, is also restricted by being harnessed and leashed; and

WHEREAS, the physical and psychological trauma from attacks and interference can be costly in terms of injury, veterinary care, medical care, retraining, replacement and loss of mobility for the blind handler; and

WHEREAS, the cost of the dog and services from a guide dog school can range up to \$50,000 per person/dog team; and

WHEREAS, existing laws at the local level do not address the problem of uncontrolled dogs attacking guide dogs: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the NFB of NJ, in Convention assembled this 8th day of Nov. 2009, in the Township of Clark, NJ, that this organization call upon our state legislators to pass legislation making it a criminal offense to permit loose or

uncontrolled dogs to attack or interfere with guide dog teams and requiring restitution to the blind individual for veterinary and medical expenses, lost wages, transportation, rehabilitation and other expenses directly related to the temporary or permanent loss of the service animal; and to the school where the guide dog was trained to cover the expenses of replacement or retraining of the guide dog team.

Resolution 2009-03

Regarding Access to Talking Glucometers

WHEREAS, in today's market, certain health insurance plans dictate what brand of diabetic equipment a member must use to stay compliant with their treatment regimen, claiming that this strategy is utilized to control costs to the plan and prevent healthcare premiums from rising; and

WHEREAS, today, most insurance companies contract strictly with one manufacturer who provides only inaccessible, non-talking glucometers, thereby presenting a serious obstacle to complying with their testing regimen for the five million people with diabetes who are blind or visually impaired; and

WHEREAS, the most effective way to stabilize diabetes is for a patient to test his or her blood sugar frequently and take action on any blood sugar that falls outside of medical guidelines; and

WHEREAS, because no accessible blood glucose monitors appear on current medical insurance formulary lists, the visually impaired and blind are forced to use blood glucose monitors designed for sighted patients; and

WHEREAS, when blind or visually impaired patients are forced to use non-talking meters, they often do not test at all, thereby drastically increasing their risk of complications, morbidity and mortality; and

WHEREAS, the only way a blind or visually impaired diabetic can acquire an accessible blood glucose monitor is through a long and complicated process of submitting extensive medical documentation, and approval is not guaranteed; and

WHEREAS, the inaccessibility of blood glucose monitors on the formulary lists creates a barrier to independence for the blind in choice, management of health, and control of their diabetes, and hinders their quality of life: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the NFB of NJ, in Convention assembled this 8th day of Nov. 2009, in the township of Clark, NJ, that this organization call upon our state legislators to speedily pass legislation that accomplishes the following purposes: to make it a civil offense to sell inaccessible blood glucose monitors to blind clients; to mandate all insurance companies to have at least one fully accessible glucometer on their formulary list; and to put into place fines or other penalties to ensure compliance with the law.

RESOLUTION 2009-04*Regarding the Provision of Braille to Partially Sighted Students*

WHEREAS, research has shown that partially sighted people who learn Braille when they are young achieve literacy skills on a par with or above the level of sighted peers, while those who learn only print do not; and

WHEREAS, research has also shown that Braille has a positive correlation with employment; and

WHEREAS, the common practice is to teach only print to partially sighted students, even those who are diagnosed as legally blind or who have degenerative eye conditions; and

WHEREAS, many partially sighted students who are denied Braille struggle with reading, experience discomfort and even pain when trying to read, report disliking reading and never read for pleasure; and

WHEREAS, the decision to teach print instead of Braille is based not on objective, standardized measures, but on personal opinion and seriously flawed evaluation tools; and

WHEREAS, educators often rely on the eventual provision of recorded material for partially sighted students when the print becomes too small to read, even though research has shown that students cannot develop full literacy skills using recorded materials; and

WHEREAS, virtually all teachers of Braille in the state of New Jersey are itinerant teachers from the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired; and

WHEREAS, even though the IDEA expresses a presumption for the provision of Braille, school systems throughout New Jersey continue to base their decision on the recommendation of the Commission teacher: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the NFB of NJ, in Convention assembled this 8th day of Nov. 2009, in the township of Clark, NJ, that this organization strongly urge the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired to bring its attitude and advice regarding Braille into line with current research which demonstrates the vital importance of Braille in education, employment and a full, productive life; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon the Commission to significantly increase the number of partially sighted students who receive Braille instruction, especially those whose parents have identified the need for Braille; and to cease the practice of advising against the use of Braille for partially sighted students.

WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND

By Tara M. Carty

Editor's Note: *Tara is a sophomore at Caldwell College majoring in English. She hopes to one day write a novel, and perhaps write for a newspaper/magazine.*

I bet you're asking yourself, "Why did she give the article that title?" Well, if you went to the NFB's National Convention in Detroit this year, it will be our little joke. For those who did not attend, let's just say that you are "out of the loop" for the moment, but you will understand by the end of the article.

By now you're probably wondering, "Who is this person anyway, and why is she telling me about the convention?" My name is Tara Carty, and I am a new member of the At-Large Chapter of the NFB of NJ. I was honored to be selected as one of the NFB's 30 scholarship winners this year, and, on top of that, it was my first convention. I am a rookie in every aspect of the word, and I had no idea what to expect. As a winner of the scholarship, it was mandatory for me to attend the convention. I applied for the scholarship in March and knew that if I was chosen from hundreds of applicants, I would be going to Detroit.

I have two goals for this article. The first is to convince those of you who have never been to the convention to go to Texas next year. Like they say, everything in Texas is big, so let's make it the biggest convention ever, okay? The second goal is much more personal. I want to convey to all of you the amazing spirit of the convention that I felt in Detroit. I met so many wonderful people there, people who have touched my life and re-ignited my energy and motivation. I was astonished to meet so many who were just like me, and I'm not just talking about the blindness, either. Of course, that is always present, but these were motivated, spirited individuals who share my philosophies and demonstrate the same joy and enthusiasm for life that I have.

Why were we there? In my case, the scholarship was number one, and curiosity was number two. I wanted to know what the NFB was all about and go "behind the scenes" of this important organization. What is all this talk about silent cars and why is everyone making such a big deal about this Kindle gadget? These were just some of the thoughts that crossed my mind before I got on the plane.

You'll have to forgive me for skipping around a little, but I have to go back to the title of the article. "What goes around comes around" is an old English saying. People often refer to it when someone does something wrong, but it can also be positive. If you do good, good will find you. I am a firm believer in this, but the reason it applies so fittingly to the convention is because the hotel in Detroit was designed in circles. There were circles all over the place. Picture a triangle with two circles on the bottom and one on top to form the triangle. There was another circle in the middle of the three circles with bridges to get to all these different circles. Oh, and don't forget that each circle had different levels! Is your head spinning yet? It really was not as bad as it

reads; you were fine once you figured out that if you missed something the first time, you would eventually go around the circle and find it.

The circle analogy is very appropriate for me. I am recently blinded, and I felt that going to the convention by myself was representative of my personal journey coming full circle. Don't get me wrong, I have a lot of circles to explore, but as far as my training and accepting my blindness are concerned, I think Detroit was my finish line. For many of you, going on a plane and navigating a gigantic hotel might not be a challenge, but for me, never having traveled on a plane or being so independent was a life-altering experience. I travel around here in New Jersey and live by myself in the dorm at school, but I see Detroit as a major stepping stone. World, look out, because here I come!

I encourage you to use the NFB as *your* stepping stone. Use it as your support system of family, friends and colleagues, and also use it as a platform to enrich the lives of other blind people. This is the reason we were there. This is why I was roaming around in circles with my 2,999 closest new friends in Detroit. It is because we care about the future and those who will follow us. I met an amazing 9-year-old boy named Bill at the convention. He was the smartest little boy I've ever met, and he helped me fix my computer. There is no doubt in my mind he is headed for greatness. The instant I met him, I knew this is why the NFB does what it does. We do it for Bill; we do it for all the children who are told they do not need to learn Braille and those children who are told they can't because they are blind. We do it to show others that we "can" and that we will not accept the word "can't."

I have tried to convey to you what it was like to be at the convention as a rookie, but being at the convention as a scholarship winner is another aspect entirely. It was truly an honor to be in the scholarship class of 2009 or as we call ourselves, "'09, so fine." The scholarship committee mentored us and we gained a wealth of knowledge from it. Our states cheered for us when we were announced, and the support and pride that we felt surrounded us. We received our scholarships on stage and had the privilege of shaking hands with Dr. Maurer and Dr. Kurzweil. We are a part of the scholarship alumnae program and will always be a part of it. If you are a college student or are going to be one, send in that application. Just do it.

So, now you know why the article is called "What Goes Around Comes Around." Everyone I talked to before the convention told me I would enjoy it. They said it would be a life-changing experience. I didn't know what they were talking about until I actually experienced it for myself. Please come and experience it for yourself. I knew only a handful of people from New Jersey chapters before the convention, and now I have met people from all over the country, and even from other countries! The political, social and networking opportunities are vast and priceless. I encourage you to attend the convention next year. I'll be there. Come full circle with us and experience the electricity of the NFB!

**MY LIFE HAS CHANGED
THANKS TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION
By Melissa Hurff**

Editor's Note: *A former LEAD student, Melissa is a sophomore at Glassboro Community College. She attended the National Convention in Detroit with partial funding from the Garden State Chapter and the Joe and Rose Ruffalo Memorial Scholarship. In Detroit, she participated in the first College Leadership Program, sponsored by the National Center. Her reflections are powerful and meaningful.*

I live in a world where I do not know the difference between 20/20 vision and 20/400 vision. However, what I do know is the difference between reading print and reading Braille. When I started middle school, I repeatedly asked my state agency to teach me Braille, but I wasn't successful. They refused to teach me Braille because apparently I "have too much vision." This situation continued throughout high school, which made me very upset, but I never realized how much I truly needed Braille until I attended the National Convention in July.

I cannot express the impact the National Convention had on me. I left home not knowing what to expect, and returned home a more independent, motivated blind individual, along with life-long memories and friendships. My major is music therapy, so I decided to participate in the Braille music session at the convention. In this session, Braille music was discussed as a helpful tool in reading music as a blind person. I asked how to go about learning Braille music, and was told that I must know literary Braille in order to learn Braille music. For that very moment, I realized a hopeless future. I had finally found something to make music classes easier, something that would help me to actually be on the same pace with everyone else, and most of all, to hold my deepest passion in my hands and read like every other musician, but failed because I did not know Braille.

A few other situations such as this occurred during the week. Toward the end of convention there was an unforgettable morning. It was the morning that turned a hopeless future into a brighter future for me. The words of many touching speakers filled my ears with parallel situations to mine, yet encouraging. Some of them had the desire and urge to learn Braille, but were not able to obtain lessons because they, too, apparently had too much vision. Others had lost their vision all at once, and decided to attend training at an NFB center, where they learned Braille and other skills. No matter what the situation, they all, at some point in their lives, realized they needed Braille. It wasn't a question any more. It wasn't an option anymore. It was a necessity, and in the end they all were fluent in Braille, going on to do much bigger and better things with their lives.

As each speaker concluded his or her speech and stepped away from the microphone, more and more tears flowed down my cheeks. It hit me. It was the point in MY life now. I finally realized what had happened the past 19 years, what affected my whole life, what held me back from my full potential. It was not the fact of being or feeling dumb, but rather the fact of being and feeling illiterate. If I would have learned Braille when I was young, I could have applied it at school, home and the outside world. I had always been discouraged from reading for fun because who wants to read a book when their eyes hurt every five minutes? Who wants to listen to books on CDs their whole life? I don't. Thanks to each one of these speakers who helped me realize the fact that recorded books can still make a person illiterate because they are not seeing the material themselves. How will they know how to spell the words they hear? They won't. These speakers put my life into perspective by showing me what life could have been all these years with Braille, and how I can go about obtaining what I want, which is to learn Braille and be fully literate. After the speakers were through and the session was dismissed, I cried in the arms of my old and new friends who understood me and felt the same exact way.

I believe that the absence of Braille during my life limited my education and held me back in every aspect. I want to be able to read to my children, read my own menu at a restaurant, read for my own entertainment and so much more. One day I know I will. I came home from convention determined to learn Braille and started getting Braille lessons through my Garden State Chapter. The National Convention was a life changing experience for me, and I wouldn't trade it for the world. I gained exceptional information, lifelong lessons, friendships and memories.

CAROL CASTELLANO BECOMES NATIONAL PRESIDENT

By Joe Ruffalo

POBC-NJ President Carol Castellano has long served as an officer in the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children. This past spring, in an unexpected turn of events, Carol became NOPBC President! Included in her new responsibilities is presiding over the week-long annual NOPBC Conference at National Convention. All reports indicate that the conference was a great success.

Carol has now become a globe trotter, representing NOPBC and working on behalf of blind children at the National Convention in Detroit, the State Convention of the NFB of Iowa, the Children's Vision Summit in Missouri and the Getting in Touch with Literacy Conference in California. We are proud and happy to have Carol spreading our positive message about blindness throughout the land.

SLAM'N TIME IN MD

Editor's Note: *Twelve Jerseyans attended the NFB's Youth Slam event last summer. Mentor Paul Grenier and student Melissa Lomax share their stories.*

By Paul Grenier

This summer I was privileged to be a part of what is quickly becoming an exciting NFB tradition. I was a mentor for students at the NFB's Youth Slam. At Youth Slam, blind high school students from all over the country get a chance to meet each other on a college campus and work with leading scientific researchers and professionals to break the stereotype that blind people can't do science.

When I was in high school, my chemistry teacher told me it was too dangerous to do the experiments. Instead, he suggested that I stand in a corner and watch from a distance. Not only did this exclude me from the class, but, ironically, the teacher was suggesting that because I was blind, the best way for me to learn was to use my eyes. Thankfully the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and the NFB gave me the support I needed to challenge my teacher and participate in the class. However, the class was still very difficult because neither my teacher nor I had any experience adapting scientific techniques to fit my blindness. How was I supposed to measure fluid in a beaker? How was I supposed to map out coordinates on a chart? How was I supposed to dissect a frog with a scalpel if I couldn't see? We managed to work through some of these challenges, but it was hardly a success story.

With the advent of the Youth Slam program, this scenario need never happen again! The professors at Youth Slam knew a lot about science, and although they didn't know a lot about blindness, we – the mentors – did. It was a match made in Maryland. Blind adults worked with professional scientists to develop top-notch programs that were educational and fun for the over 200 students that attended.

Blind students arrived from all over the country to get a taste of what they could do provided the proper skills and techniques. During the week-long program, students built and launched rockets, designed an environmentally friendly house, worked with voice recognition software and artificial intelligence, dissected sharks, explored space and helped to design and test drive an experimental car for the blind. My group spent most of our time hardwiring sensors to weather balloons and performing atmospheric tests. As a mentor, my main job was to supervise, but I couldn't help getting in on the fun, and I learned more than I thought I ever would about science.

Not only was this program educational but there were plenty of social events as well. We had dances, parties and an extreme events night where we all got to participate in exciting activities like bungee jumping, rock climbing and riding a mechanical bull! Through all the excitement and activity, many strong friendships (and more than a few romances) were forged. The week's events culminated in an independence march in Washington, D.C., where we teamed up with other NFB supporters to march from the

Lincoln Memorial all the way to the Capitol Building to show that the organized blind can achieve anything we want. Once at the Capitol Building, we heard speeches from several important politicians and scientists, but the best part was listening to the rocket launch that carried the bicentennial Louis Braille coin into outer space! At the end of the ceremony we all received official patches from the mission.

It was a very exciting week. The experience of blind adults teaching blind students how to do blind science taught me more about blindness, science and myself than I thought possible in one week. Most importantly, the students went home with a positive attitude towards their blindness and their ability to achieve in science. The next time a teacher tries to tell one of them that he or she can't participate in a science experiment because it's too dangerous for a blind person, I hope that student can proudly say, "Slam that! I've already done science at Youth Slam, and I can do it at home too!"

By Melissa Lomax

This summer, I attended the NFB Youth Slam for the second time. I was assigned to an awesome group nicknamed the Paparazzi because we were the only group assigned to the Slam News Video track, which allowed us to see all the great things that the other students were doing. Riding a mechanical bull, dissecting sharks, conducting investigations, driving a car ... students were trying new things, working together and proving that blind people can do more than what is expected of us.

Additionally, I enjoyed seeing each track's finished product. I especially loved the outcome of the Slam Robots track. Students spent the week programming a robot to distinguish between white and black, avoid obstacles and, ultimately, navigate its way on a pre-designed track. On the last day, I interviewed a group as they tested out their robot for the first time. Although I had a feeling that their hard work would pay off, I was still shocked and very excited to see the robot moving along the track completely on its own.

Aside from learning new things, the Youth Slam was a great place for meeting people. In addition to catching up with old friends, I made new friends from all over the country. I also received great advice from some of the Youth Slam mentors. For instance, Mike May, a downhill skier, advised all Youth Slam students to go above and beyond their limitations. Also, our very own NFB president, Mark Maurer, offered some deep advice on kissing, "When you decide to kiss somebody, you should do nothing else. You shouldn't try to text while you're doing it, or you shouldn't smoke a cigar while you're doing it, or try to figure out your income tax."

Youth Slam was a wonderful experience. I met new people, gained knowledge and walked away with some great advice from mentors. Moreover, I learned how to navigate a huge college campus, which definitely helped me become acquainted with my university's campus. I would absolutely encourage any high school student who is interested in attending the Youth Slam to take advantage of this opportunity.

**LEADERSHIP, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY and DETERMINATION
(LEAD) PROGRAM CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY**
By Eileen Goff

It was in December of 1999 that Heightened Independence and Progress began to administer the LEAD Program on a statewide basis. Prior to that, a regional pilot program demonstrated that LEAD had the potential to be recognized as a valuable program for New Jersey's high school students with vision loss. Since the onset, the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired has provided funding for LEAD, and the program has continued its growth.

LEAD functions on a regional basis for many activities, and there are also some statewide programs. LEAD participants generally attend activities in the region in which they reside (North, Central, South.) Each year approximately 50 students are enrolled in LEAD. A sampling of activities includes computer technology training, employment and mobility skill development, trips to theaters and other cultural events, visits to malls and restaurants, self-defense training, social skill development and so much more. Overnight statewide events include a visit to the NFB National Technology Center and for a few students who have demonstrated leadership qualities, a trip to "The Hill" in Washington, D. C.

The six dynamic LEAD coordinators who work with each participant are what really make the program the huge success that it is. Most coordinators have been with LEAD since its kick-off, and others have joined the staff in more recent years. The quality of these true LEADers is exemplary! They are: Joe Ruffalo, Jerilyn Higgins, Sherlock Washington, Ohmny Romero, Holly Westefeld and Ryan Stevens. The coordinators are all excellent mentors and role models for the young adults in the program. They are people with vision loss who lead admirable, successful life styles. Additionally, there is a dedicated core group of volunteers who assist with operations.

The program welcomes new students, whether they are just entering high school, or decide to participate later. Participants graduate from LEAD upon graduation from their high school.

Those eligible to participate in LEAD are high school students who are on grade level, demonstrate appropriate behavior and have vision loss. In most situations, referrals come from staff of the NJCBVI. LEAD is a program of Heightened Independence and Progress, and is not affiliated with any other agency or organization. Contact Maria Valentin, LEAD Administrator, for further information at 201-996-9100 or mvaltin.ber@hipcil.org. Heightened Independence and Progress is a Center for Independent Living run by and for people with disabilities. The central office is located in Hackensack.

LEAD TRIP TO BALTIMORE INSPIRES TEENS

Editor's Note: *Heightened Independence and Progress administers the LEAD program for New Jersey high school students who are blind or visually impaired. The program is funded by the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Each year, the students, mentors and volunteers travel to Baltimore to learn LEAD philosophy from leaders in the blindness field at the NFB's National Center.*

From Alicia Ucciferri:

Of all the trips I've been on during my three years as a LEAD student, the 2009 Baltimore trip was, without a doubt, among my favorites. It inspired me to make changes in my life that could be instrumental in my future. Because I now understand more fully the objectives and philosophies of the National Federation of the Blind, I am becoming more enthusiastic about being involved in my blind community. I was also able to contrast the means by which various blind college students are able to be successful, which helped me to reflect more seriously on my own future as a college student. I am now more acutely aware of the adjustments I will need to make to my current methods of note-taking, reading, etc., and know to prepare accordingly. I am still slightly intimidated by the prospect of living in a college environment, but I now feel that, through LEAD and the NFB, I have been blessed with a network of people who care about my success, and that feeling alone gives me great comfort. The trip helped me to realize that I am never alone, and it opened new doors for me in the areas of communication and preparation.

From Shafeka Hashash:

Thank you for giving me a weekend filled with educational value. It was a great opportunity to learn about adulthood through social and educational activities. Marc Riccabono, Evelyn Valdez and other students told us about their college and career experiences, and these were 100 percent interactive sessions that included our questions, comments and stories as well.

We also took a three-part tour of the National Center. One part informed us of Newslines, in another we went to the National Center's store that sells equipment people can use at home, and lastly, we went to the technology wing, which I found to be the most interesting. We learned about the new BrailleNote Plus and advancements in scanners, cell phones and embossers, as well as updates in Kurzweil technology. We were also able to try out all the equipment.

The adults running the Baltimore trip were enthusiastic, involved and shared their own knowledge on the topics discussed. Their attitudes showed how much they cared for all the students and loved what they did to teach blind teenagers about the future. This trip taught me valuable skills that I will use in college – such as how to approach professors – and kept me entertained, excited and waiting for more through each activity.

MAKE DO AND MAKE IT WORK

By Louis Scrivani

I lost my sight when I was 24, just as I was starting a career as a plumber/electrician. While on the job, I was hit by a truck.

I had always enjoyed working outside, working with my hands and using tools, but after the accident I was very apprehensive about working with tools. My father tried to get me interested and involved, but I was pretty indignant. Why even bother to try? I simply assumed I would fail. In fact, it took me 15 years to give it a try.

It was after I got married that I decided to get back into woodworking. I selected a few small hand tools and used part of the basement as my workshop. I started small, with bird houses and a few music boxes. With time and practice, I moved on to larger projects like a bookshelf, printer stand and footstool. At last I was back in the swing of things!

In one respect, I felt fortunate because I had a visual memory of how things look and how they are set up. A good visual memory also helps me with safety issues and building. But there are other blind woodworkers who never had any sight. I am amazed by those who never saw and do it as well as I do, if not better. It's not so much a competition, but has become more of a therapy for me. I love doing the work, and it keeps me busy. It's a "self-challenge."

If you ask my wife, however, it's the exact opposite. When I mess up, she hears my yelling and swearing. My dog doesn't like it either because he thinks he's in trouble and runs for cover. My wife, on the other hand, has learned to ignore my outbursts. I have trouble understanding how my wife, who is also blind and an avid knitter, seems to stay calm when she makes mistakes. She just redoes the work. I suppose wood is very different from yarn. With wood, you can't just rip it out and start over; you have to get it right, change the plan or scrap the wood.

Woodworking is possible and doable for a person who is totally blind, but there are certain challenges and adaptations that have to be considered. Tools used in woodworking can sometimes be a bit restrictive, but I try to adapt those products so that they can be used without sight. I guess I'm a problem solver at heart. Some of the steps, like staining in the finishing of a project, might require a sighted family member or friend to give it a once over. I have done my own staining, and sometimes I get it right, while other times I either miss a spot or go at it too aggressively.

As a blind woodworker, I have to make extra jigs, or special guides, to accomplish jobs such as cutting or drilling wood. But, hey, those are things that fully sighted woodworkers do for themselves as well.

Really though, a major difference is safety. The old saying is “measure twice, cut once.” This is especially true when you’re blind. I measure twice, and then check, and then check again to be sure that my hands are clear from the blade. Safety is so important. I have established certain rules for myself, like if I’m feeling sleepy or under the weather, then I won’t let myself go near the shop. My energy level starts to run low around three in the afternoon, so that’s my quitting time. Like any smart woodworker, I also use a safety mask and am aware of what I am wearing when I go to my shop – no long sleeves or jewelry.

Hearing what’s going on is important to me, so I don’t use protective ear plugs, and this is one of the really big differences between blind and sighted woodworkers. I use an audio feedback level that emits a different sound for each state of the level: high, right on or low. I also use a talking tape measure. Although it measures to one sixteenth of an inch, it is good, but not great. There are other measuring devices like tactile rulers and yard sticks, but I prefer the talking output. Another device I use for more exact measuring is the Rotomatic, which is available from the NFB. The Rotomatic is a three-eighths inch threaded rod, with markings at every half inch. It has two nuts, and every turn of the nut equals one-eighth inch, one quarter turn of the nut is one sixty-fourth inch, and so on. I also use the click rule, which is similar to the Rotomatic, but it’s contained in a tube, and when you slide out the rod, each clicking sound is one-sixteenth inch.

Not every blind woodworker does everything exactly the same. You have to find what works best for you and what makes the most sense. Also, I would advise anyone interested in woodworking to take lessons before using any tools or attempting any projects, as tools can be dangerous and cause major injuries.

Larry Martin, of Woodworking for the Blind, volunteers his time to bring visually impaired woodworkers up to date. He narrates magazines such as *Fine Woodworking*, *Woodwork*, *Woodsmith*, *Woodworking*, *American Woodworker* and *Woodcraft* and records them onto CDs, which he then mails to members of this blind woodworkers group. In addition, he has put together a blind woodworkers manual, which is also available on CD. For more information, contact him at woodworkingfortheblind@comcast.net.

Remember: When things get tough, don’t quit. Try to find a way to make things work for you and make modifications where you can. If you have suggestions or input, please contact me at lscrivani@verizon.net.

HOW MANY CHILDREN IN AMERICA ARE NOT TAUGHT TO READ?

By Marc Maurer, President, National Federation of the Blind

The answer is 90 percent if the children are blind. Most Americans are shocked to hear this statistic. And we should be. The blind read and write using Braille, so why is our educational system failing to teach Braille to so many children? Why are these children being denied the opportunities that come with a proper education? What if you could not read and write? Where would you be today?

There are three primary reasons for this educational crisis: (1) there are not enough Braille teachers; (2) some teachers of blind children have not received enough training; and (3) many educators do not think Braille instruction is even necessary.

To bring critically-needed attention to this educational crisis, the United States Congress authorized the minting of the 2009 Louis Braille Bicentennial Silver Dollar with a portion of the sale of each coin going toward a revolutionary and comprehensive Braille literacy campaign.

Learning to read and write is fundamental to education, which in turn is paramount to full and equal participation in American society. This coin, the first U.S. coin to have proper tactile Braille, symbolizes independence, opportunity and the potential of blind people to make significant contributions to society when they are taught to read and write using Braille. To learn more, read our report *The Braille Literacy Crisis in America*, or watch our video *Making Change with a Dollar*. Please purchase this unique and beautiful coin now and help solve this educational crisis for blind children in America.

The law authorizing this 2009 silver dollar requires that any coins not sold by midnight on December 11, 2009, be melted down. Time is of the essence – a 90 percent illiteracy rate is not acceptable and the opportunity to purchase this coin will soon be gone. Be part of the solution. Give the gift of literacy. Create new opportunities. Buy the Louis Braille Bicentennial Silver Dollar today.

Editor's Note: *The Louis Braille Bicentennial Silver Dollar is available only until Dec. 11, 2009. To order, go to Braille.org and follow the links to the U.S. Mint.*

A LETTER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA: THE IMPORTANCE OF BRAILLE LITERACY

By Hamlet Diaz

Editor's Note: *Hamlet is a junior at North Bergen High School where he is Student Council Secretary. His letter to President Obama, in part, follows.*

I would like to make you aware that there is a Braille literacy crisis in America. Ninety percent of blind children in America are not being taught to read or write in

Braille. There are three reasons why this crisis is happening. First, there are not enough Braille teachers. Second, some teachers of the blind have not received enough training to know how to teach Braille, and third, many educators don't think that Braille instruction is necessary.

My friends and I were shocked to learn that only 10 percent of blind children in America can read and write in Braille. This is unacceptable. I would like to tell you more about myself and my feelings about Braille.

I was born in the Dominican Republic. I was born legally blind. I can see lights, people and shadows. I went to school in the Dominican Republic, but they didn't have materials for blind people, so in 2003, I came to live with my grandmother and my uncle in the United States. My aunt is my guardian. I was 10 years old, and it was very hard for me to separate from my parents. I remember crying a lot on the way to the airport. I reminded myself that I was going to America to study, and that I would not let my parents' sacrifice be in vain. It took me three years to learn to speak English and to read and write in Braille. Now I am 16 years old and I am a junior in high school.

There are people who believe that Braille instruction is not important. I believe that this is wrong because even though there are electronic devices that read to you, blind children need to use Braille to read our textbooks and understand what the teacher is talking about. Also, if blind children just listen to a recorder, then they will not learn how to spell. Even if some children are legally blind, it is better for them to use Braille than to use their vision because they will be able to write and read faster in Braille. If they use the little vision that they have, it will take them a long time to read and write, and their eyes will hurt because they are forcing their eyesight.

Last year during the anniversary celebration of Louis Braille's birth, I read, in front of an audience, part of a proclamation that NJ's Governor Jon Corzine wrote. If I hadn't known Braille, I would have had to ask somebody to read me my part over and over again until I memorized it. Instead, when it was my turn to read, I just stood up, took my Braille copy and started reading. There are two advantages to that. First, I didn't have to memorize the lines, and second, when I was reading the Braille copy, I was looking at the audience because all I had to do was to stand straight and use my fingers to read.

Eighty-five percent of blind people who know how to read and write in Braille are employed today. I would like you to tell the American people why Braille is important to blind children. Also, please encourage more teachers of the blind to get additional training so that they can start teaching Braille. More importantly, you should provide more funding to each state so that teachers can receive enough training so that they can start teaching Braille. I hope that you do this because I would like to see the number of blind children learning Braille increase.

BRAILLE AWARENESS DAY

By Mary Jo Partyka

On October 24, approximately 35 people gathered at the Grace Lutheran Church in Perth Amboy to celebrate Braille Awareness Day. The purpose of the day was to highlight the importance of Braille and how it increases peoples' opportunities for literacy in education, employment and daily living skills. In addition to lively music, participants had the opportunity to do a craft involving Braille, played games where they had to read Braille to win a prize, and heard testimonials from people who learned Braille and how it helped them in their lives. We also raffled off a Louis Braille Commemorative Coin and garden tools. In addition to sandwiches, we had cupcakes decorated with the letters b, r and l and many other delicious desserts. Several parents of blind children attended and discussed the struggles they are having so that their children can learn Braille.

I hope you will consider participating in similar events when we have them in the future.

BRAILLE READERS ARE LEADERS CONTEST SET TO BEGIN

Editor's Note: *The NFB of NJ is running our own contest in conjunction with the NFB program. All New Jersey Braille readers who participate in the program will be entered into a drawing for a Louis Braille coin. There will be one winner in K-12, and one winner in the adult division. So register now, and start reading!*

Braille readers from all over the country are signing up for the Braille Readers Are Leaders contest. Don't be left behind! Sign up today for either the K-12 or adult contest.

Dates to Remember

- Register by November 1 to get a Braille Readers Are Leaders T-shirt
- Contest reading period: November 1, 2009-January 4, 2010
- Reading logs and entry forms are due January 22, 2010

Don't forget that you can form a Braille Readers Are Leaders team with your friends to be eligible for an additional prize. For more information, visit www.nfb.org/bral or contact Natalie Shaheen by phone at 410-659-9314, ext. 2293 or by e-mail at nshaheen@nfb.org.

THE NATIONAL BRAILLE CHALLENGE

By Kathy Gabry

Congratulations to 8-year-old Mihir Doshi, from Somerset County, who qualified to enter the Ninth Annual National Braille Challenge in Los Angeles last June. Mihir competed with 60 other blind or visually impaired kids from around the country in this academic competition.

For the past nine years, the Braille Institute has organized the Braille Challenge to encourage blind kids to study Braille. The organization works with teachers and agencies in the U.S. and Canada to encourage their students to participate in a regional Braille Challenge event. The top students in each regional competition advance to the National Challenge in Los Angeles. Sponsors of the Braille Challenge include Perkins School for the Blind, Freedom Scientific, the National Federation of the Blind, Seedlings Braille Books for Children, National Braille Press, City National Bank and Independent Living Aids, LLC.

The registration period for the 2010 contest is November 2 – December 18, 2009. For more information and to see how to sign up for a regional challenge, log on to <http://brailleinstitute.org> and click on the Braille Challenge.

NEW NAME FOR LBH:

THE NJ STATE TALKING BOOK AND BRAILLE CENTER

By Anne McArthur

This year the New Jersey Library for the Blind and Handicapped will enter into a dramatic improvement in its services with the transition to digital books, magazines and players. The library believes that now is also the appropriate time to integrate another key change: On July 1, 2009, the New Jersey Library for the Blind and Handicapped officially changed its name to the New Jersey State Library Talking Book and Braille Center. The new name defines the library's main materials, rather than the disabilities that make customers eligible.

The library is proud to continue to serve those who are blind or visually impaired. The name change will promote greater awareness among people with physical or mobility impairments and learning disabilities who may not be aware of their eligibility for our services. The change in our name better reflects the services that the library offers all New Jerseyans with print disabilities, while continuing the library's mission of promoting literacy for all.

STUDENT HONORED BY TRENTON THUNDER

By Nancy Dowd, Press Officer at the NJ State Library

Sixteen-year old Shafeka Hashash of New Milford was one of six people honored at “Covering the Bases, a Night Out with the Trenton Thunder.” Hosted by the New Jersey Department of Human Services’ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Trenton Thunder Baseball Team, the event promoted full community inclusion and awareness of the potential and achievements of individuals who are blind and visually impaired. Miss Hashash was nominated by the New Jersey State Library Talking Book and Braille Center to receive the certificate of recognition at the event.

Miss Hashash is the first blind student accepted at Bergen County Academy, where she is studying for an International Baccalaureate. She has been an active member of the National Federation of the Blind since second grade. She spoke in Washington on behalf of blind children on the issue of “no child left behind,” and has spoken to congressmen in Washington about quiet hybrid cars, funding for digitalizing Braille books and other aspects of quality of life for the blind student. She is also an accomplished pianist and artist.

THE NFB PAC PLAN

By Ryan Stevens

The Preauthorized Contribution Program (PAC) is one of the major fundraisers for the National Federation of the Blind. It is the program through which we can make easy, monthly donations to our national treasury, and it brings in about \$360,000 a year to the organization. These general funds go to support our scholarship program, our legal advocacy, our public education campaigns and more. A person can give as little as \$5 a month to the program. All we need is your bank’s name, bank account number and the bank’s national routing number. Your bank can give you all of this information with one simple phone call, or you can send a voided check, which also has all the information we need. We can also take contributions from a savings account as long as the account permits external withdrawals and you provide your bank’s name, your account number and the bank’s routing number.

PAC is not only for individuals. Any of New Jersey’s chapters or divisions can get on the plan or increase their monthly contributions as well.

If you would like to start or increase your contribution to PAC, please send me an e-mail with your home address, and you will receive an application from me.

WHAT NEWSLINE MEANS TO ME

By Hamlet Diaz

Editor's Note: *With the confidence he has gained through the LEAD program, Hamlet, a high school junior, decided to run for Student Council Secretary in spring 2009. Our congrats to Hamlet ... he won the election!*

One day, my Braille teacher, Debbie Bloomer, told me that there is a service for the blind called NewsLine. She demonstrated the service to me by using her cell phone, and I heard the voice in the cell phone talking about Barack Obama's pastor. I was interested in using this service, so we called Bill Dougherty at the NJ Library, who said that the library would send me a letter with my password and a local phone number so I could start using the service.

Last summer, they sent me the letter and the information, but I thought, "Why am I going to use this service if I can read the newspapers on the Internet?" So I never checked my password or used the service.

And then, suddenly, everything changed. On Nov. 7, 2008, I went to the NFB of NJ State Convention, and I saw a demonstration of NewsLine. On Nov. 8, 2008, I told Ms. Bloomer that I had changed my mind: I wanted to use that service.

NewsLine lets me know what is happening in the world every day, especially in politics. NewsLine also allows me to read magazines. My favorite magazine is *The New Yorker*, where I enjoy the columns "Shouts and Murmurs" and "Fiction." No matter what stress you have, you will laugh by listening to the articles in these two sections. Thanks to NewsLine, I have a favorite columnist: Karl Rove (the former senior adviser and deputy chief of staff to former President George W. Bush).

I would like to thank NFB for providing this cool service to blind individuals, and I hope that the NFB continues to inspire many people just like me.

KNFB READER MOBILE

Submitted by Jerilyn Higgins, from the knfbReader datasheet

The knfbReader Mobile is a major advancement in portability and functionality of print access for people who are blind or visually impaired. Developed under the direction of assistive technology pioneer Ray Kurzweil, the knfbReader Mobile software package runs on a multifunction cell phone and allows the user to snap a picture of virtually any document, including mail, receipts, handouts and memos. The document analysis technology determines the words and reads them aloud to the user, thereby providing a truly portable solution to reading on the go. For more information, contact knfb Reading Technology, Inc. by phone at 877-547-1500 or on the Web at www.knfbReading.com.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

The National Federation of the Blind has announced that applications are now being accepted for the 2010 National Federation of the Blind Scholarship Program. Thirty scholarships totaling \$100,000 will be awarded to blind students from the United States and Puerto Rico. The scholarships are available to blind students who will be enrolled in college or a graduate program beginning in the fall of 2010, including incoming freshmen. Scholarships range in value from \$3,000 to \$12,000. By applying for a national scholarship, you are also automatically considered for an NFB of NJ scholarship.

Information on the NFB scholarship program is posted online at www.nfb.org/scholarships. The deadline for applications is March 31, 2010. Questions may be directed to NFB Scholarship Committee Chairman Mr. Anil Lewis by e-mail at Scholarships@nfb.org, or by phone at 410-659-9314, ext. 2415.

BRAILLERS FOR THE BLIND OFFERS FREE BRAILLER REPAIR

By Chuck Phelan

Braille for the Blind Volunteer Repair Service provides an inexpensive repair service to Perkins Braille owners. The volunteers, all retirees who formerly worked in technical pursuits, repair with either new or used parts, as available, and the service is free except that they request reimbursement for their cost of any new parts that must be installed in Braille they repair. All machines are logged by serial number to ensure the return of each machine to its proper owner.

The group provides pick up and delivery in a 25-mile radius of Millington, NJ. Owners can also ship a unit for repair, carefully packed in a box (not its carrying case), insured with the U.S. Postal Service, and with the legend "Free Matter for the Blind" in the upper right corner of the package address side. Please note that the U.S. Postal Service will charge a fee for the insurance. A card with the owner's name, address and other contact information should be included in the package, along with a statement describing the nature of the problem.

The Braille for the Blind Volunteer Repair Service also accepts donations of used or damaged machines that can be used for spare parts. For further information, please contact Chuck Phelan at 908-647-9226 or 908-229-0041 or via e-mail at fixnbraille@juno.com.

NFB OF NJ CHAPTER NEWS

Editor's Note: *Contact and meeting information for all Chapters, Programs, Associations and Divisions are located on pages 31-32 of this issue.*

CAPITAL CHAPTER, by Mary Jo Partyka, President

Since the last issue of *The Sounding Board*, the Capital Chapter had its annual picnic and conducted its Meet the Blind Month activity at the Fall Festival of the New Jersey State Library Talking Book and Braille Center. Our Chapter gained several members as a result of the state membership drive, and we are lucky to have them, as well as our members who have been in the Chapter for some time. Come and join us at our meetings. We would like to see new members from the Mercer County area at our meetings.

CENTRAL JERSEY CHAPTER, by Jerilyn Higgins, President

In October, we worked at the Braille awareness event sponsored by the NFB of NJ's Division to Promote the Use of Braille. We were also the host chapter for our State Convention this year, and we sponsored an awesome Talent Show. On December 19 we will be attending the joint NFB holiday party at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Please come out and join us in changing what it means to be blind!

CUMBERLAND/SALEM CHAPTER, by Anna Jordan

Since the last issue of *The Sounding Board*, our chapter participated in a community day activity at the Cumberland County Mall. Our chapter had a booth where we displayed and demonstrated the Perkins Brailler, slate and stylus, the color identifier and other adaptive equipment. We also handed out a lot of literature concerning the blind. On October 3, four of our chapter members went to the Talking Book and Braille Center in Trenton. We are also pleased to announce that we have two new members: Eunice Spells and Eddie Stagges. We're also working diligently on our At-Large Chapter list.

GARDEN STATE CHAPTER, by Ed Godfrey, President

We're pleased to announce that eight new members have joined our chapter, and that six of our members attended the National Convention in Detroit this July.

The release of the Louis Braille Commemorative Coin last spring prompted our chapter to take part in a roll-out event April 26 at Barnes & Noble in Cherry Hill. Adding to our display of information, we had the Louis Braille coin to show all who came near our table. We are pleased to report many of our members have already purchased their coins.

We held our annual picnic in September. This was our best picnic ever, due to our new members infecting the old with their excitement! There were 34 members and guests in attendance.

Unfortunately the weather wasn't very cooperative for our Meet the Blind Month activities at the WalMart in Cinnaminson in October. We were rained out on the 18th, but on the 25th we were successful. We distributed literature, promoted the Louis Braille coin, and gave out alphabet cards. One of our members Brailled people's names to take home with them.

Our president, Ed Godfrey, continues to instruct Melissa Hurff in Braille. This will help her with potential employment in the future. Ed also attended Representative Robert Andrews's family picnic where he had the opportunity to talk with Congressman Andrews about legislation pertaining to the blind and encouraged him to co-sponsor House bill HR 734, regarding the quiet car legislation.

NORTHEAST CHAPTER, by Debbie Azzarone

The Northeast Chapter recently observed Meet the Blind Month by sharing the experiences and challenges that our recording secretary, Jessica Scannell, faces as a student at Montclair State, as well as all she has overcome since birth as a blind person. This event was held at the Rutherford Senior Center. Jessica was joined by our chapter president, Dan Facchini and our state president, Joe Ruffalo. Information about adaptive technology and simple tips and tricks for everyday living were distributed and gratefully received.

WTOE Radio, our chapter's web radio show, is happy to announce that it received another Imagination Fund grant this year, and we will continue to broadcast shows every Wednesday evening at 8 p.m. EST. Listen live at www.thruoureyes.org.

We have only one more meeting left for this year. Our December meeting will be a holiday party for the chapter, and we're looking forward to it! During December, we're also planning our second annual gift wrapping fund raiser at a local Barnes & Noble book store. This is a fun and effective way to meet people and spread the word about the NFB.

NORTHERN CHAPTER, by Rick Fox

The Northern Chapter is pleased to announce that we have a new meeting place, within an easy walk, bus or Newark Light Rail ride from Newark's Penn Station or Broad Street Station. We still meet on the third Saturday of the month from 10 a.m. to noon, but our meeting place is now the Special Services Room (3rd Floor) at the Newark Free Public Library, 5 Washington Place. We hope this more accessible location makes it possible for more people to participate in chapter activities.

NFB OF NJ PROGRAMS, ASSOCIATIONS & DIVISION NEWS**ADOPT ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT, by Lynn Reynolds**

We've received some items that are ready for donation: two tabletop magnifiers, one rolling magnifier, a CCTV and a desktop computer.

If you are interested in donating any equipment or are in need of a piece of equipment, please notify Ed Godfrey or me. Please keep in mind that a piece of equipment may need to be repaired, but the cost of repair is usually less than purchasing a new one. Also keep in mind that once a match is made, it is up to the two parties to set up the transfer of the item.

ASSOCIATION OF BLIND MERCHANTS, by Lynn Reynolds

As I have stated in my reports in the past, those of us in the Randolph-Sheppard Program are facing many changes and challenges. Besides Congress wanting to change our program, we are facing drastic cutbacks in the post offices in our state and around the country. Mail has decreased due to the increased use of e-mail and online bill paying, so the post office will be cutting back on its number of employees. Also the state office buildings are losing positions, and this affects the traffic at those locations. As a group, we need to think about how to keep our program going. We will be working with the NJ Commission for the Blind to develop strategies.

On May 20 – 22, 2009, several of our members went to Washington to meet with our members of Congress to promote our program. We were able to meet with two of our representatives, along with aides from the other offices. We need to stress the importance of this program and to keep this program going, as it provides opportunities for blind people to have the chance to run their own businesses.

Our goals are to work with the state and federal governments to keep our program intact. If anyone is interested in becoming a manager of their own

business and would like more information on training, etc., please feel free to contact me, Nicky Gacos, Jack Truehaft, Dan Facchini or Anna De Santis.

ASSOCIATION OF GUIDE DOG USERS, by Vincent Chaney

You may hear the clicks of the paws of our dog guide partners as we stride by you. We are the NJ Association of Guide Dog Users, now up and running as a division with the submission and approval of the NFB of NJ Guide Dog Protection Resolution and established goals for the group.

Do you know anyone who would like to join us? Please pass this information on to them. We are advocates for the guide dog user community and will work to inform public places of the legal rights of those who use service dogs.

We're also creating a network to support each other. When questions come up about working with your guide dog and you're not sure where to turn, our team will be there to help you out. If you have an interest in joining us, if you're considering working with a guide dog and have questions, or would like to help, please contact us.

DIVISION TO PROMOTE THE USE OF BRAILLE, by Mary Jo Partyka

Since the last issue of *The Sounding Board*, the New Jersey Association to Promote the Use of Braille (NJAPUB) was preparing for the Braille Awareness Day celebration which took place on October 24, 2009 at the Grace Lutheran Church in Perth Amboy. The purpose of this event was to make people more aware of the importance of Braille in the lives of blind people. You can read more about this event elsewhere in this magazine.

The NJAPUB also purchased three Braille is Beautiful kits which were sent to Elizabeth Morgan, Shafeka Hashash and Isabel Rodriguez who will use them to start Braille clubs in their high schools. This is a new venture for the division and we are excited about it.

If there is anyone interested in learning or teaching Braille, please contact me, and I will do my best to put a team together so that one more person can learn Braille.

In my role as the State Coordinator of the Louis Braille Commemorative Coin, I am encouraging all Chapters and Divisions and members to stress the need to purchase coins now. No more coins will be available after December 11, 2009. It is also important that members make presentations to Lions Clubs and other civic organizations to encourage them to buy coins. We still have to sell 200,000 more coins to meet our goal of selling 400,000 coins. The best way for a person to purchase a Braille coin is to go on Braille.org which will link people directly to the U. S. Mint. They can either call the Mint or order online but they have to do it with

a credit card if they are calling over the phone. They can send a check if they want to but have to include how many of each coin they want, their name and address and the amount of payment. It is better to order as many coins as possible at one time because there is a one-time shipping cost.

POBC-NJ, by Carol Castellano, President

Greetings, fellow Federationists. We hope that everyone had a restful and fun-filled summer and that we are all filled with renewed energy as we enter the fall and winter seasons ahead. POBC-NJ has had another busy season of assisting families and teachers. As you know, we provide support, information, referrals, training and advocacy to families and teachers of blind/visually impaired children. We offer our newsletter *In Touch* and the Blind Children's Resource Center website, along with phone, e-mail and in-person support, and meetings and events for families and teachers. Our next seminar will take place in spring 2010.

This year, we've provided information to hundreds of parents, grandparents, students, teachers, school administrators, social workers, nurses, special needs financial planners, disability service providers, attorneys, television producers and newspaper reporters from New Jersey, seven other states, Canada and Argentina! Our members continue to represent the interests of blind children on boards and councils throughout the state.

TECHNOLOGY DIVISION, by Michele Chaney, President

The Technology Committee became the Technology Division at the State Convention. Our constitution states that all should have the opportunity for technology, and our goals are to have classes, demonstrations of devices, tutorials and a private list serve. Our Board includes President Michele Chaney, Vice President Vincent Chaney, Treasurer Anna DeSantis, Recording Secretary Mary Jo Partyka, Corresponding Secretary Lynn Reynolds, and Board Members Ryan Stevens, Ed Godfrey and Evelyn Valdez.

Our conference call in January will focus on how to keep our computers healthy. Each conference call will also provide technological updates.

If you're interested in joining the Technology Division, please contact me. If you decide to e-mail me, write "Technology Division Join" in the subject area, and in the body of the e-mail, please include your full name, address, phone number and e-mail address.

GET CONNECTED!

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LOCATIONS:

Statewide at public libraries and other community facilities; inquire for current sites and counties served.

ENROLL: Contact 877/447-6500 ext. 227, or info@4dewitt.com



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Lynn Reynolds 908-251-5510

Ryan Stevens 856-858-3518

Linda DeBerardinis 856-764-7014

Michele Chaney 732-251-8650

NFB of NJ Chapters, Meeting Info and President's Contact Info*Capital Chapter*

3rd Sat., Lawrence Library, 2751
Brunswick Pike, Lawrenceville,
10 a.m.

Mary Jo Partyka 609-888-5459
choirnfb@gmail.com

Central Jersey Chapter

2nd Sat., Grace Lutheran Church,
Perth Amboy, 9:30 a.m. - noon

Jerilyn Higgins 973-239-8874
jdhiggins@rcn.com

Cumberland/Salem Chapter

3rd Mon., Tri-County Independent
Living Center, Millville, 10:30 a.m.
Anna Jordan 856-696-3905
ajjordan29@verizon.net

Garden State Chapter

3rd Sat., Kennedy Memorial Hospital,
Cherry Hill, 10 a.m.
Ed Godfrey 856-906-4516
egodfrey137@comcast.net

Northeast Chapter

3rd Sat., St. Mathew's Church
Secaucus, 10 a.m. coffee, meeting at
11 a.m. www.ThruOurEyes.org
Dan Facchini 201-906-8655
danfb@verizon.net

Northern Chapter

3rd Sat., Free Public Library, 3rd
Floor, Newark, 10 a.m. - noon
Rick Fox 973-743-6107
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Ocean Chapter

2nd Sat., Ocean County Public
Library, Toms River
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Programs and Projects*Adopt Adaptive Equipment*

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PLEASE NOTE:

Deadline for the Spring 2010 issue of *The Sounding Board* is **March 1, 2010.**

Articles received after this date will be held for the Fall 2010 issue.

CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB AT

www.nfbnj.org www.blindchildren.org www.throureyes.org www.njabs.org

To receive *The Sounding Board* and other information via e-mail,
please contact Quintina Singleton at qmsingleton@comcast.net.