

THE SOUNDING BOARD
Fall 2011

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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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You're Invited to the NFBNJ's After the Holiday Party!

Saturday, January 7, 2012, 1 – 5 p.m.

Crowne Plaza Hotel • 36 Valley Road • Clark, NJ (Access Link accessible)

\$25 per adult and \$10 for children under 12

Make your check payable to NFBNJ and please include each attendee's name, phone number and meal choice. Mail to:

Joe Ruffalo/National Federation of the Blind of NJ
254 Spruce Street
Bloomfield NJ 07003

All payments must be received by December 27, 2011.

For additional information, call Joe at 973-743-0075.

We will have door prizes, a silent auction, a sing-along and a special appearance from jolly old Santa! Special note: If you would like a gift from Santa, please bring a wrapped gift labeled with the name of the recipient.

MISTLETOE MAGIC MENU

Chef's Holiday Salad with Cranberry Vinaigrette

Entrée (choose one):

Stuffed Chicken with Spinach and Ricotta Cheese

Honey Glazed Salmon with Cilantro Olio

Jr. Rib Eye topped with Garlic and Crisp Onions

Vegetarian dinner is available upon request

Warm Rolls and Butter

Fresh Seasonal Vegetables

Baked Sweet Potato with Cinnamon Butter

Chef's Tiered Holiday Desserts

Freshly Brewed Regular and Decaf Coffees, Herbal Teas and Assorted Soft Drinks

Special children's menu: Chicken Fingers and Fries

Please join us in celebrating the holiday season!

Greetings Fellow Federationists!

Once again, the members of the largest organization of the blind in the nation and in the state continue to change what it means to be blind. Since the last publication of *The Sounding Board*, our members have been busy with a variety of events and activities.

The budget cuts faced by the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired were cause for concern, especially because the cuts were targeted towards children's education, and in particular, the cutting of 20 10-month teachers. Carol Castellano's article in this issue highlights how our members mobilized, the process that took place and the results of our efforts. As you will read, we were successful, however Governor Christie vetoed the line item.

The Imagination Fund once again has provided our members with the opportunity to spread the word of our independence. Monies were awarded to the NFBNJ, and in particular, to Thru Our eyes, our internet video/audio programs; the New Jersey Association of Blind Students, which held an extremely successful seminar in May with 120 in attendance; and funding to allow several members to attend the Leadership/Building Membership Seminar weekend held in Baltimore in early September.

In all our chapters and divisions, our membership is growing. So many blind and visually impaired New Jerseyans can identify with the philosophy of the Federation. Listenership with Thru Our Eyes has increased as Lenny and his crew have added more opportunities to watch and/or listen. Our Students Division has grown with involvement from members both old and new, and the Leadership/Building Membership Seminar has resulted in the establishment of our newest division, the New Jersey Association of Senior Blind, a division of the National Federation of the Blind. For more information on this newest division, contact Jane Degenshein at 973-736-5785. We're also proud to announce the start-up of two new chapters. The Glasstown Chapter, which includes Cumberland and Cape May counties, became official on December 3 in Vineland, and is most capably led by Lydia Keller (856-858-3518). The Greater Atlantic County Chapter will be established January 21 in Absecon, and Kathy Rawa (609-216-8757) will be taking the lead on this new chapter.

In April, the Leadership, Education, Advocacy and Determination (LEAD) program participants traveled to the National Center in Baltimore for a weekend seminar. An article highlighting the partnership of the NJ CBVI and HIP in administering the program is featured in this issue. Students from the Northern Region also wrote to us with their reflections on the weekend seminar, and these letters are included in this issue.

The 35th State Convention of the NFBNJ was held Friday, November 11 through Sunday, November 13 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Clark. With over 300 in attendance, the excitement filled the convention hall from the opening moments to the closing gavel. If you weren't able to join us, check out the agenda on our website at nfbnj.org. We celebrated 35 years of the NFBNJ as an affiliate of the NFB, 35 years of the Northern Chapter, 20 years of the Garden State Chapter, and 20 years of Parents of Blind Children - NJ, a division of the National Federation of the Blind. We honored Carol Castellano and the families who have established this strong parents group that continues to make a difference in changing what it means to raise a blind child. We were also proud to announce this year's NFBNJ state scholarship winners: Shafeka Hashash and Mark Colasurdo. An article highlighting both of these remarkable students is found in this issue.

An extreme pleasure for me was welcoming former New York Governor David Paterson to our convention. Governor Paterson addressed the audience with information pertaining to the importance of fighting for Fair Wages for People with Disabilities, House of Representatives bill H.R. 3086. This bill calls for the elimination of Section 14C of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which allows sub-minimum wages to be paid to people with disabilities. Please contact Lynn Reynolds at lhr1827@optonline.net and provide her with your e-mail address to keep abreast of this issue and all other legislative concerns.

We presented and passed two Resolutions at the conference. The first Resolution states our disappointment that the executive director of the NJ CBVI, Vito DeSantis, declined our invitation to address the audience, which meant that there was no one to present the programming, projects and policies of our state agency to our membership. The second Resolution discusses the importance of striking 14C of the Fair Labor Standards Act, as discussed above and in Lynn Reynolds's article in this issue. The full Resolutions are posted on our state website at www.nfbnj.org.

As of this writing, the Saturday video and audio from the convention are being prepared. You will be able to watch or listen at www.thruoureyes.org. In addition, WCTC conducted a live radio show from the ballroom on Friday, November 11. Burt Baron of WCTC radio interviewed leaders of the NFBNJ to get their take on the significance of the convention and the importance of getting involved. Burt and his wife attended our banquet and will partner with us in future events.

Our National Convention was held in Orlando, Florida this past July. An article highlighting the opportunity to "Ride Into History" appears in this issue and was written by a new member of the Garden State Chapter.

Our 3rd Annual After the Holiday Party will be held Saturday, January 7, 2012 at the Crowne Plaza in Clark. A flyer appears in this issue. Please consider joining us for an afternoon of fun. Members, friends and families are welcome.

Upcoming Important Dates

- January 4: Louis Braille's birthday and the ending of the Braille Readers are Leaders Contest
- January 7: 3rd Annual After the Holiday Party, 1 – 5 p.m., Crowne Plaza Hotel, Clark
- January 21: The organization and establishment of the Greater Atlantic County Chapter in Absecon
- February 6 – February 9, 2012: Washington Seminar
- March 31: National Scholarship applications due
- April 1: Deadline for articles for the Spring/Summer edition of The Sounding Board
- June 30 – July 5: NFB National Convention in Dallas
- November 9 – November 11: 36th Annual State Convention of the NFBNJ, location to be announced

As you can see, our members are getting involved and making a difference. In this publication alone, more than 35 people contributed ideas and/or articles. Don't wait for someone else to take the lead. Get involved. You can make a difference in changing what it means to be blind.

Yours in Federationism,



Joseph Ruffalo, President

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

By Lynn Reynolds, Legislative Coordinator

One of the main issues of this year's National Convention and the subject of a Resolution passed at our State Convention was the sub-minimum wage for sheltered workshops. During the National Convention, a petition was made available for all attendees to sign. Below is an excerpt from an article written by Mary Ellen Thompson which appeared in the NFB of Maryland's summer newsletter. This lays out the issue and some of the reasons for the NFB's position:

"Since 1938 the federal government has sanctioned the practice of paying many workers with disabilities less than the minimum wage, which is guaranteed to other Americans. This practice was codified as Section 14C of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Sheltered workshops and other businesses must apply to the U.S. Department of Labor for exemptions from paying the minimum wage. The Department in turn is supposed to inspect these facilities to determine whether payment of less than the minimum wage is warranted. However, several years may elapse before federal inspectors review the practices of any given facility.

"The NFB has worked for decades to eradicate this discriminatory treatment of disabled workers, but 2011 brought new urgency to the fight. In June we discovered that, as part of the process of renewing the Workforce Investment Act, which includes vocational rehabilitation, a new section, 511, had been added. It provided that placement of a rehabilitation client in sub-minimum wage employment would be equivalent to a competitive employment outcome. As of this writing, Section 511 is a part of the proposed Workforce Investment Act legislation."

The HELP Committee is planning to mark up this bill this fall. Be watching for what happens to it, and, if you have the chance, educate your neighbors and your members of Congress about this issue.

There are 67 facilities that possess a special "sub-minimum" wage certificate in the State of New Jersey, which not only allows them to exploit the labor of people with disabilities through the payment of wages less than the federal minimum wage, but it also denies these same individuals the opportunity to receive the training and support necessary to become competitively employed. NFBNJ's Resolution regarding this issue is available in its entirety on our website at www.nfbnj.org.

I would like to thank all of those who make the calls and write letters and e-mails as requested by the National Center and also regarding issues from our state. If you are not on my Legislative Alert list, please e-mail me with your e-mail address, and I will add you to the list.

BUDGET UPDATE: MAYBE ONLY HALF WAS LOST*Number of Teachers Goes from 61 to 52***By Carol Castellano, President, POBC-NJ**

It was a long, hard budget season. In February we were informed that the Commission for the Blind had to submit approximately \$1.5 million worth of proposed budget cuts to the governor. The one proposal accepted by the governor's office was to eliminate the position of "10-month instructor." This meant that 20 teachers—some of the most experienced and effective at the Commission—would be let go. It also meant that every penny of the cut would come from services to blind and visually impaired children. From the information we had, we calculated that one-third of the Commission's teaching staff would be eliminated as a result of this cut. Parents of Blind Children-NJ sprang into action to try to protect services to our children.

Parents and children spoke at every budget hearing. In fact, Budget Committee members learned of the proposed cuts from us! In all, more than 20 parents and children testified, and countless more parents and blind adults wrote letters, sent e-mails and called their representatives' offices. Although the Commission characterized this cut as "an efficiency" and claimed it would not have a negative impact on services, key legislators of both parties were sympathetic to our cause and did not think the cut should be made. When it came time to submit their budgets at the end of June, both Democrats and Republicans restored the money to the budgets they proposed for legislation. Unfortunately, the next day Governor Christie vetoed that line. The teacher positions would be gone.

According to an August memo issued by Commission Executive Director Vito DeSantis, the Commission offered existing vacant 12-month positions to the targeted 10-month teachers in March. However, not all of these positions were jobs teaching children. This meant that many of the teachers would be able to remain employed at the Commission but not necessarily as teachers.

In the meantime, the Communication Workers of America, the union to which Commission teachers belong, filed a court challenge stating that any layoff of teachers should be done by seniority. According to Vito's memo, the court agreed, and the Commission offered a settlement to resolve the matter, involving converting five existing vacant positions into teaching positions.

What's the bottom line? How many teachers did we lose in the end? It seems a simple question, but it's hard to get an exact answer. According to Amy Ricciardi, Education Coordinator at the Commission, there were 61 teachers at the beginning of February, but there were also several vacant teacher positions. Now there are 52 teachers. In Vito's memo, he says that all but three of the 10-month teachers were placed into 12-month jobs at the Commission, but he does not say how many of

these jobs were in departments other than education. Amy says it's difficult to say exactly how many teachers—or teaching positions—were lost. Some teachers retired, one took a job in another state, and the exact count depends on whether you include teaching positions that were vacant back in February.

We are left with many questions: How many teachers—or teaching positions—were actually lost? How many positions were lost in education (as opposed to other departments)? Are any teacher positions vacant? Have there been cutbacks in service? And, perhaps most puzzling of all, if moving 10-month teachers into vacant 12-month teaching positions and converting other positions into teaching positions to prevent layoffs was a good solution, why wasn't this the idea the Commission presented to the governor initially?

I'm glad that after all our efforts, we did not lose the full 20 teachers. However, we fear that services to children will still suffer. The Commission's Northern Office went from 21 teachers to 17; the Central Office from 23 to 21; and the Southern Office from 17 to 14, and, so, caseloads have gone up. In the Northern Office, the average caseload went from 30 to 37 students. In the Central Office, the average is now 40, and the Southern Office is 38. National standards recommend no more than 12 students per teacher.

Way back in June, Vito said that the Commission was drawing up plans for new year-round services and that "stakeholders" would be included in the process. So far, this has not occurred. Lately it has become extremely difficult to reach Vito. Phone calls are not returned and e-mails go unanswered. Over the many years he has been Executive Director, Vito was always responsive to consumer calls, so this is a new development (since February). I hope that communication lines will be open again soon so that parents can become informed regarding Commission plans, and provide what we know would be valuable and necessary input to the process.

Thanks to all the POBC parents, kids and friends who wrote, called, testified, drove all over the state and helped us get press for our cause: Dana and Paul Altman, Wendy Amodeo, William Black, Eileen Brouwer and Kirk, Carol Castellano and Serena Cucco, Anne Marie Cavallo and Stephen, Amy Darlington, Anju Dharia and Krish, Trish Digan, Mita Doshi, Carla Evans, Tom and Gail Ferry, Susan Flynn, Marsha Gephart, Kathy Gerena, Audrey Golden, Marie Griffin and Liz Morgan, Linda Halm and Michael, Shafeka Hashash, Purnima Hernandez, Jerilyn Higgins, Vera Hough, Sajid Ishaq, Michele Kozlowski, Ken Lawrence, Holly Miller, Magaly Milton, Gerard and Pam Peterson, Dr. Sal Pizzuro, Carol Reed and Melanie, Lynn Reynolds, Carla Richardson and Kayla, Joe Ruffalo, Ellie Schwartz, Pam Smith, Alison Stephens and Nate, Ryan Stevens, Linda Zani Thomas, Patty Tumminello and Anthony, Liz Valois, Roni Vandermark, Tamara Villagran, Frank Virgilio, Sarah Weinstein, Kristen Witucki and Tami Wolfelsperger.

MY FIRST NFB NATIONAL CONVENTION

By Eileen Carr

Editor's Note: *Eileen is an active member of the Garden State Chapter. Three times a week she swims at the Y, and she's also active in her church. She recently purchased a PC and is patiently waiting to start a computer class in January.*

For five of my 84 years, I have been visually impaired as a result of macular degeneration. In July 2011 I attended my first NFB National Convention in Florida. It seemed exciting enough to fly to Orlando on my own; however, the convention itself was incredible! There were 2,900 people in attendance from every state and many countries as well. There were hundreds of folks using guide dogs and even more hundreds using white canes. One young woman was guided by a horse named Confetti, a beautiful white animal covered with black spots and perfectly comfortable in the midst of crowds of people.

That same week, I was a passenger in a car driven by a blind man. I was invited to ride by Joseph Ruffalo, the NFBNJ Affiliate President. We were joined by two boys, Hank Miller, age 10, and Brian Woolbert, age 12. Our driver was Anil Lewis, former president of the Georgia affiliate and currently the Director of Strategic Communications at the National Center. This amazing ride was accomplished through the use of special gloves worn by the driver, as well as the special seat he sat upon. These two items are high tech equipment that deliver information to the driver. The driver had to be specially trained. We rode on a test track specially set up with obstacles. Whenever Joe and I met afterward during convention week, Joe would say, "Eileen we made history!" and indeed we did.

Michael Hingson was an inspiring speaker who told the story about his rescue from the 80th floor of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. His Seeing Eye dog guided him and many other people down 80 flights of stairs to safety. He has written about his experience in his book "Thunder Dog."

I also attended sessions concerning computer technology and JAWS, and Newline, a method of reading the newspaper and magazines using the telephone. Additional seminars were for seniors, lawyers, diabetics, teachers, students, merchants, children, Braille, parents of blind children and multitudes of others.

The speech that impressed me the most was given by Dr. Mark Maurer, NFB president. He pointed out (very vigorously) that it is incumbent on blind people to educate themselves by whatever means to join in the work force competitively. I must admit that my previous thoughts about sheltered workshops seem antiquated.

Now that I have returned home, I feel that I need to put into practice what I have learned. It will require work, but I feel it will enable me to become more independent and be able to correspond better with family and friends, blind and sighted alike.

SOME THOUGHTS ON BEING A FEDERATIONIST

By Marion Gwizdala, President, National Association of Guide Dog Users

When I speak with many blind people who find out I am a leader in the Federation, I often hear them say, "The NFB should ..." You can fill in the blank with a myriad of suggestions of what needs to be done to improve the lives of the blind. Generally, my response is, "Are you a member of the NFB?" The most frequent answer is "No!" This opens the door for me to share that the Federation is a membership organization – a grass roots movement in which each member must be actively involved in order for us to improve our lives. It is not Dr. Maurer; it is not the Board of Directors; it is not the people who work at the National Center for the Blind; it is not our divisions, our affiliates or our chapters! It is each and every member of the movement! I then invite them to become a member of the NFB and hear the same tired excuses of not being a joiner, not having enough time, not wanting to choose sides, not agreeing with the philosophy, yada yada yada yawn!

"In other words," I say, "you want someone else to solve your problems for you and are unwilling to help. Is that right?" Of course, they think I am a rude, obnoxious, belligerent Federationist, what my wife and I would call "C.B." - Confirmation Bias - the bias that "All Federationists are (fill in the blank)" and this experience confirms this belief!

I praise those of you who have joined me in our effort to improve the lives of the blind. You have not made it someone else's problem to solve; you have made it yours. To paraphrase the words of Mahatma Gandhi: "You are the change you want to see in the world."

LEARNING TO BE A LEADER FROM LEADERS: NFB LEADERSHIP BUILDING SEMINAR

By Brian Mackey

Editor's Note: *Brian is a board member of the Garden State Chapter.*

What makes a good leader? If you look around the NFB, it is fortunate to embrace and employ the talents of many strong, passionate and dedicated leaders from which members, like myself, can aspire. My leadership idols include Dr. Maurer, Pam Allen, Ever Lee Hairston, Joe Ruffalo, Mark Riccobono, Anil Lewis, Carol Castellano and Linda Deberardinis. While attending the NFB National Convention in Orlando, Joe Ruffalo mentioned the upcoming Leadership Building Seminar, which spiked my interest. This seminar was for individuals interested in becoming Federation leaders who would expand our local chapters, recruit new members and promote the Federation philosophy. I reflected on my Federation membership, my beliefs about the NFB, and what I wanted to give and get from the NFB, and then I didn't hesitate in contacting Joe to inquire about attending this seminar. The rest is now history.

On Friday afternoon I boarded the stifling hot bus (with no air conditioning) filled with other excited individuals on the way to Baltimore and to self-improvement. Luckily the bus ceiling air vents kept us a little cooler, but our excitement and anticipation brewed until we arrived at the Jernigan Institute. Upon our arrival, Jason Ewell and Joanne Wilson warmly welcomed us. Over dinner we refreshed our energy and had lively conversations as to what we may learn on Saturday.

Dr. Maurer began the seminar Saturday morning affirming what it means to be an NFB leader. Leadership requires oodles of imagination, heaps of goodwill and bunches of hard work, along with an ample amount of good times while successfully completing the job. Hint: If you don't want to do the work – and enjoy it – then don't take the position! Dr. Maurer expressed that you have to want the job and be willing to work hard in order to do a good job. We learned that leadership is the capacity to imagine how things could be better, to inspire others to join the team and together accomplish a task that improves the life of others. To enhance the lives of others, we need to cultivate new approaches, new ways of thinking and new ways of dealing with old situations. To enrich our chapters and divisions we need to encourage new members to join and to get involved in various committees, projects or an office.

After Dr. Maurer's powerful and motivational speech, we broke into groups for an ice-breaker. Together we discovered why we each became a Federationist, why we are members and why we want to be an NFB leader. I am a Federationist because it encourages and nurtures me to be more self-confident and independent as a blind individual. Within the NFB, I can associate with other blind individuals, share together what we have learned and promote blindness awareness. Our groups

discussed where to locate other blind people and how to bond with them. Other blind persons could be found at eye doctor's offices, college disability services offices, churches, senior centers, transportation services (such as buses, trains, planes and taxis), Facebook, Twitter and through friends' referrals. How can we bond with other blind individuals? We all can easily speak about our different eye conditions. Then we discussed resources available through the NFB: NEWSLINE, the Independence Market, International Braille and Technology Center (IBTC), the free white cane program, mentoring programs, training centers, listservs, Bookshare, Learning Ally, NLS BARD, the NFB website and publications, word of mouth, Washington Seminar and many others. And that was just the first part of our day!

We then toured the IBTC and the Independence Market. The IBTC fascinated me with the hundreds of devices available to the blind that were made in the U.S. I checked out Braille embossers, Apple products, the KNFB reader and many more. Onward we went to the Independence Market that supplies a wide variety of merchandise for the blind/visually impaired along with free pamphlets about the NFB.

Our afternoon session instructed us on how to make phone calls to potential NFB members and how to discuss the free white cane program, NEWSLINE, and the digital talking book player. While on the phone with the new contact we could ask, "Are there any services that the NFB might provide for you today?" We also learned how to handle negative responses. Then back to our groups!

Dinner was great, but the day was not yet over. Our blindness skills and group camaraderie were tested in our participation in two of three challenges: driving the Blind Driver Challenge interface simulator, using a real chain saw to cut wood and testing our knowledge about NEWSLINE. Together we cheered and encouraged our group members in the activities. I especially enjoyed the driving skills test of the Blind Driver Challenge interface simulator. What an awesome experience. Perhaps someday a blind individual – maybe me – will drive! I look forward to witnessing future improvements to the Blind Driver Challenge. And those chain saw users – yes, they all survived. There were no lost fingers or toes, and they each brought home a souvenir: their cut piece of wood! Then, off to bed for a well-deserved night's sleep.

On Sunday, we were presented with several "what-if" scenarios, which we brainstormed, and then our seminar came to an end.

What a great experience! I learned that I have an inner strength and, with NFB encouragement, I can promote my self-confidence and build my leadership qualities. I learned that a leader is loving, enthusiastic, able, determined, ethical and responsible. Together we learn, we support, we encourage others, and we promote the fact that blind individuals are capable of full participation in society. Thank you, Joe and the NFB for a great learning experience.

POSSIBILITIES
By Carol Castellano

Editor's Note: *This article was originally published in Future Reflections, the magazine of the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children. As POBC-NJ celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, we thought the message is as clear today as it was 20 years ago. Today, Serena is a graduate student at Rutgers University working on her master's in social work, and John is a communications analyst for Governor Lincoln Chafee in Rhode Island.*

It took my daughter Serena a long time to decide just what she wanted to be when she grew up. Whereas my son was only four when he decided that he would be a dinosaur scientist, it wasn't until she was seven that Serena realized that her destiny in life was to be a folksinger. Happily she played the chords to her favorite song, "Michael Row the Boat Ashore," on my guitar.

Then came the presidential campaign of 1992. Serena was eight. She sat rapt before the television listening intently to the speeches of both parties. After the summer's two national conventions, she realized that it wasn't a folksinger that she wanted to be after all;—it was a folksinging senator. By late fall, having heard all three presidential debates, Serena was going to be president.

Her barrage of questions about how she could learn to be president and conversations about what politicians do kept up for so long that my husband and I were convinced she really might go into politics when she was older.

In the late spring of that year, Serena went out with her father to pick early snow peas from the garden. Coming inside with her basket of peas, she told me she was very interested in gardening. "That's wonderful," I replied. "You'll be a big help to Daddy."

Overnight Serena's interest must really have taken root, because the next day she asked me if I thought the gardens at the White House were too big for the president to tend, since the president is such a busy person. "Yes," I replied. "I'm sure there's a staff of people who take care of the White House gardens." "Well then, I won't be a gardening president," she told me. "I'll just be a gardener."

The desire to be a gardener was still but a tender shoot when Serena took a piano lesson just a few weeks after picking those peas and realized it was a pianist she wanted to be!

Serena is at such a wonderful stage of life! Interested in everything, trying everything out, she sees the world as her plum, ripe for the picking. She believes in herself, as we believe in her. And since what people believe largely determines what

they do, it is critically important for parents of blind children (and other adults in the child's life) to have positive beliefs about blindness and what blind people can do.

If we are told (in a journal article or by a teacher of the blind, say) that blind children usually do not or cannot learn how to do a certain task, and if we come to believe this, chances are we will not give our child the experience or opportunity anyone would need in order to do this task. And chances are the child won't learn to do it.

Imagine, though, if we and our blind children were never told that blind people couldn't accomplish a certain thing. Imagine what the results might be if everyone believed that blind people could do anything they wanted to! Well, I believe this and attending NFB National Conventions has solidified this belief for me. It is this belief which guides the way I bring up my daughter.

My husband and I know personally or have heard speak a blind high school teacher, college professor, mathematician, scientist, car body mechanic, industrial arts teacher, Foreign Service officer, engineer, a high-performance engine builder and a man who has sailed solo in races from San Francisco to Hawaii. This makes it possible for us to glory in the exhilarating feeling of watching a child look toward the future and see only possibilities.

MEET THE NFBNJ 2011 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS: SHAFEKA HASHASH AND MARK COLASURDO

Congratulations to Shafeka Hashash and Mark Colasurdo, well-deserving recipients of this year's NFBNJ scholarships. We're also pleased to announce that Shafeka was a NFB national scholarship winner. Both Shafeka and Mark participated in the *Opportunity Plus* program sponsored by CBVI and administered by Heightened Independence and Progress this past summer. Shafeka worked for John DeWitt & Associates, and Mark worked in a chiropractor's office. Shafeka and Mark received the CBVI/TBBC Covering the Bases Award for outstanding involvement in their community. We are confident that both Shafeka and Mark will change what it means to be blind. A biography of each student follows.

Shafeka Hashash and her family became involved in the NFBNJ's Parents of Blind Children when Shafeka was five years old. While her mom, Hannah, serves on the board of POBC, Shafeka has emerged as a leader in her own right. She has participated in the Washington Seminar and presented at several State Conventions and POBC seminars. Shafeka is vice president of the NFBNJ's Students Division, and this past year, she submitted a successful grant proposal to the Imagination Fund to conduct a seminar planned by students, for students.

Shafeka graduated this past June from Bergen Academy for Business and Finance, an extremely competitive high school. She demonstrated her involvement and leadership qualities as the captain of the mock trial team, chair of the Joint Crisis Committee and a member of the Junior Statesmen of America. She was recently a guest speaker at CBVI's teacher conference

Shafeka has received numerous honors and awards in international efforts in the field of disability and advocacy sponsored by the Clinton Global Initiative, and the following academic awards: Governor's Award for Outstanding Student, Senate Citation for Exceptional High School Students, member of the National Honor Society, honor roll throughout high school, member of the dean's list for four years and finalist in the New Jersey Scholar Program.

Shafeka has served as an intern with Congressman Steve Rothman since September 2010. In addition, her work experience in a deli has provided the opportunity to teach others that blindness is a different ability, not a disability.

Shafeka is attending New York University and studying political science and international relations with an emphasis on Middle Eastern studies. She plans to continue her education by attending law school or graduate school for international studies and aspires to be a foreign service worker in the United Nations or a non-governmental organization. Her goal is to work in the Middle East in international law with a focus on disability rights awareness and advocacy.

Mark Colasurdo attended the Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Science, an advanced magnet high school that focuses on math, science and technology. In the fall of his junior year, Mark enrolled in the NFB Louisiana Center for the Blind. Mark knew no Braille when he arrived at the Louisiana Center, but after four months there, he was reading Braille at 80 words a minute. His skill and confidence in Braille was further demonstrated when he took his SAT exam using Braille and achieved a score of 2100. In high school, Mark was a member of the National Honor Society and was active in sports. He was a member of the cross country team and the indoor and spring track teams, and Mark's team members witnessed his determination to achieve his educational, vocational and personal goals.

As a member of the NFB, Mark has raised funds for the Race for Independence and attended Rolex 24 in Daytona this past winter. At this event, he, along with hundreds of others, witnessed Mark Riccobono, a blind driver, making history. Mark has attended several National and State Conventions, the Washington Seminar, the College Leadership program and the 2011 Youth SLAM. The SLAM program features science, technology, engineering and math for high school students with vision loss,

and all subjects are taught by blind mentors. Mark was also an active member of New Jersey's Leadership, Education, Advocacy and Determination (LEAD) program.

In the summer of 2010 Mark was granted an internship at Children's Specialized Hospital where he worked with children who had disabilities or were terminally ill. He has also worked as a waiter, bus boy and kitchen worker.

At Lehigh University, Mark is enrolled in the Integrated Degree in Engineering and Arts (IDEAS) honors program. He plans to study bio-medical molecular biology and minor in computer science. Mark's educational goal is to attend medical school, and his vocational goal is to become a research scientist or doctor. His main interest is in stem cell research pertaining to blindness and tissue regeneration.

GROWING UP ON THE WILD SIDE

By Sue Tillett

Editor's Note: *Sue's entertaining and informative essay on growing up in the 1960s was published in a recent edition of Future Reflections. Below you'll find the beginning of the essay; the website address for the essay in its entirety is listed at the end of the article.*

My parents knew nothing about how to raise a totally blind child. Fortunately for me, they set the gold standard for not being overprotective and for not letting me use my blindness as an excuse to get out of doing things at home. (I used it to the hilt in school though, something I am not proud of today.) My parents kept up a united front, so we kids couldn't play one against the other. They gave us a lot of freedom if we didn't abuse it. We could roam all over town, as long as we showed up at six o'clock for dinner. That meant six o'clock – not one minute after six!

I was the middle child of three, with a brother nine months older and a sister five years younger. My brother taught me to wrestle, climb trees and join in neighborhood games. Since I wasn't taught to use a cane, he walked me to and from school until I began walking with friends. My parents constantly got calls from neighbors saying, "Your daughter is up in our tree," or "Sue is on our garage roof!" My parents calmly told them to go back inside. "Don't look," they'd advise. "She'll get down the same way she got up there."

Like most blind students in New Jersey at that time, I started out in my neighborhood school. I disliked school from my first day. To me it was a hardship that simply had to be endured. Kids teased me; I had some learning difficulties; and teachers felt sorry for me and pushed me along, ignoring the problems.

When we were six and seven, my brother Jeff and I were allowed to take the train together from Princeton to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to visit our grandparents. When I was seven I was allowed to take the trip alone. In fifth grade, when my parents shipped me off to Perkins School for the Blind, I traveled from New Jersey to Boston and back on my own. Without a cane, I was completely at the mercy of conductors, bus drivers, flight attendants, the Travelers' Aid Society and the kindness of strangers. At Perkins I was always being punished for the terrible things I did – standing up on the swings, sliding down the banisters and sneaking off to my room for a little privacy.

In the fall of 1963 I left Perkins and returned home to attend high school. I began my freshman year with trepidation. After four homesick, unhappy years at Perkins, however, I was thrilled to be living at home again and delighted to be back in public school. I worked hard and even made the honor roll my first semester.

The Braille versions of my high school textbooks rarely arrived on time. Eventually I hired a couple of classmates as readers. I used a slate and stylus to take notes in class, and often asked classmates if I could share their notes. When I took a test I would type my answers on a manual typewriter, or I would have to stay after school and take the test orally with the teacher. My father read to me faithfully every single day of our life together. He gave me a wonderful appreciation for books, although I was an adult before I enjoyed reading on my own for pleasure. I was, and still am, a slow Braille reader, but I wouldn't trade Braille for anything. I can't imagine how I would have gotten through school or held my various jobs without it.

Outside of school I had an active social life. I joined a Mariner Scout troop and made some good friends. We had wonderful troop leaders. They got us involved in service projects, took us on camping and canoe trips, and taught us to sail. Our troop owned two sailboats and two canoes, and we spent many afternoons on a nearby lake. We all became good sailors. During my senior year, 10 of us took a week-long cruise on a 59-foot schooner out of Mystic, Connecticut.

With my friends I was fearless and outgoing, but I was a totally different person in school. I never raised my hand if I didn't understand something and only rarely if I did. Despite all my activities and adventures, I was not completely comfortable in my skin as a blind person. I was ill at ease with anyone I didn't know, and I just wanted to be invisible.

To read the rest of Sue's compelling story, please go to <http://www.nfb.org/images/nfb/Publications/fr/fr30/2/fr300205.htm>.

JOIN LEAD TODAY!

LEAD – Leadership, Education, Advocacy and Determination – is a program for high school students, grades 9 through 12, who are on grade level and experiencing vision loss. The LEAD program was established in 1998, is funded by the NJ CBVI and is administered by Heightened Independence and Progress (hip). The program mentors are successful blind adults who teach, enhance and demonstrate the skills and techniques of blindness. Past activities have included: Activities of Daily Living, Financial Procedures, Interviewing Skills, Resume Writing, Job Opportunities for the Blind, Audio Described Plays and Movies, Mobility, Shopping Techniques, Assistive Technology, Scholarship Opportunities and many more. To learn more about LEAD, contact Maria Valentin (201-996-9100) or call your regional coordinator today.

Northern Region: Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex, Warren

Mentors: Joe Ruffalo, 973-743-0075, Jerilyn Higgins, 973-239-8874

Central Region: Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Somerset, Union

Mentors: Sherlock Washington, 732-208-5353, Ohmny Romero, 732-888- 2170

Southern Region: Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Salem

Mentors: Ryan Stevens, 856-858-3518, Holly Westerfeld, 609-296-6330

THE LEAD EXPERIENCE IN BALTIMORE

Editor's Note: *Below is a collection of thoughts from the Northern Region LEAD students regarding the Baltimore LEAD weekend event. Each student expressed thanks for attending the event, and told us which activities were most meaningful.*

Tanessa Caswell: The Baltimore experience had a great impact on me. I love to see women and gentlemen taking their time to change what it means to be blind. I enjoyed the seminars this year because they were all about what it takes to be independent, especially in the work force. This is important for me because I start college in the fall. I also learned how to properly act at an interview. I made many memories and learned many lessons that will remain with me for a lifetime.

Michael Clapcich: One of the things that I will remember is that it doesn't matter whether you are a blind employee or a sighted employee, either way, you need to have certain good qualities to be a strong employee. The workshops were realistic; there were explanations, demonstrations and hands-on opportunities for the proper ways of working as a car washer, a cook in a fast food establishment, working in retail, etc. I also enjoyed going to the Independence Market because I was able to

purchase a talking watch without the assistance of anyone. This experience gave me more confidence in myself.

Hamlet Diaz: Before this trip, I had thought that it was only up to me to determine whether I have potential or not, but the people with whom I surround myself also determine my potential. It is my responsibility to surround myself with people who are going to expect great things from me, and this will force me to work harder to achieve my goals. Those people are the ones who will help me to succeed in life.

Another thing that I learned from the trip is how to act on a job interview. When blind people arrive at an interview, they should explain to the interviewer right away their method of transportation and what they use to take notes. The interviewer will use that information to determine whether the employee will be reliable. A thank you letter should always be written to the interviewer, too.

I know that all of those things that I learned will help me to succeed in life. I hope that future LEAD students receive the opportunity to attend this type of seminar.

Anthony Gilio: I recently joined the LEAD program and am so glad I did. This was my first year attending the Baltimore event, and I learned a lot. The activities were great. All of the blind and visually impaired people on the panels speaking about their lives were inspiring. Before this trip I never went shopping without help. At the Independence Market I had the experience of shopping independently. I also loved the technology center. I could have spent a week there. It was all awesome.

Alfonso Harrell: I learned that no matter what vision a person has, they can reach their goals. I had a great time discovering ways of accomplishing tasks we have in life. Finding role models who have done what I want to do and being able to ask the questions that I needed answered will help me to find the strength to achieve my goals. The obstacles and opportunities will be determined with our hard work and desire to make a difference in all our lives.

Shadiyya Harrell: This is my first year in LEAD and attending the Baltimore trip. Learning skills and techniques is vital to improve your confidence. Once your confidence has been lifted, it makes it somewhat easier to move forward to accomplish your goals. This was evident throughout the weekend. The agenda provided an overview of possibilities; with hard work and motivation, I know that achieving my goals is possible.

Shafeka Hashash: My favorite parts of the Baltimore event were hearing the stories of other blind persons and how they overcame hurdles. One story that is very different from my own but that had a great impact on me was from a BISM student who lost his vision immediately following a shooting. His recovery process and his will, strength and ability to persevere were incredible. His story and those of all the other mentors provide

truth, some comedy, and I know touched all of the students in their own way because each of us has experienced situations similar to those of the speakers in Baltimore.

I always enjoy visiting the International Braille and Technology Center, as well as the NFB Independence Market. The staff at the IBTC provides a nonbiased approach to technology, since all their equipment is purchased rather than donated. Lastly, I enjoyed the job panel that included a blind lawyer. I aspire to go to law school, so to hear another talk of his journey and how his dreams became his reality just strengthened my dreams all the more.

Carlos Danny Herrera: The weekend in Baltimore tremendously changed my attitude regarding blindness. I learned the correct way of interviewing for employment. Also, there is so much information to gain from touring the building, visiting the technology center and viewing all the adaptive equipment in the Independence Market. This is my third year attending the Baltimore weekend and with each year I gain more knowledge and confidence to deal with my vision loss. The opportunities and possibilities I know now are endless.

Kyle Kreske: I learned a lot, and I met many competent blind and visually impaired people. The entire agenda was meaningful. I learned a great deal regarding adaptive equipment from the Braille and Technology Center, and from the panels I learned how to conduct myself during an employment interview. I feel this experience will better prepare me for my future.

Claress Knight: This is my first year in LEAD and the first time I have attended the NFB Baltimore trip. I was amazed with all the interesting things I saw, learned and participated in. I enjoyed the workshops dealing with retail sales, car washing, cooking, etc. The blind/visually impaired people on the panels were so inspiring and the tour of the technology center and the Independence Market were amazing. I enjoyed the seminar on job interviewing and learned the proper way to conduct myself in an interview, both the pros and cons. The video shown regarding the blind driver challenge was so encouraging, learning that one day blind people will be able to drive.

Jade Ramos: This trip was really motivational for me. My favorite part was when we did the mock interviews. I've wanted to get a job for a while and the interviews helped me to see what is actually going to happen when I do apply. Another thing I enjoyed was the games we played because I was able to see different views on what blind/visually impaired people think they can and cannot do. I also enjoyed the seminar and workshops. The video about the blind driver challenge at the Daytona race track was amazing!

Daniel Romero: This was my last year at the Baltimore trip, and, once again, I left with a huge amount of knowledge that I will use in the future. It was really interesting to listen to people's thoughts on subjects such as "Would you let a blind person do the electric work in your house?" "Would you let a blind person cut your hair?" "Would you date a blind person?" It was an amazing experience to talk with Marc Riccabono, who drove the car made for blind individuals. Best of all, it was on a personal level. I looked at new note takers at the IBTC, and I might request one from CBVI for college. This is coming from someone who is not a note taker fan. I've been using computers since eighth grade, and I'm about to graduate high school.

It's always a great pleasure to see the staff from BISM. When I talk to them, it reminds me to really consider attending a training center. I will be setting up a tour at the Blind Industries and Services of Maryland (BISM) training center.

I'm extremely appreciative of everything I've learned. Continue providing this program for kids in the future. They need to become better people with fun incorporated into it.

Allison van Etten: Thank you for the trip to Baltimore. I really enjoyed being there. I enjoyed the presentations about the car that is being developed for the blind to drive. It was very interesting, and I can't wait to try it. I was able to learn new things at the workshop I attended relating to cooking, and I also learned the proper strategies of job interviewing. I like traveling to new places. It gives me a sense of independence to do this without my family's help. I feel this was a very worthwhile experience.

COMPUTERS AVAILABLE

By Joe Ruffalo

The At-Large Chapter received a donation from one of its members who worked for an insurance company that was upgrading its computers. John Vernaleken discussed the need for the computers for our chapter, and a deal was made. About 37 computers were delivered to Brian Keene's home in Fair Lawn. During the next several months, Brian reviewed each computer and got all of them ready for distribution. At this writing, 28 computers have found homes, and several computers are waiting to be adopted. If you're interested in one of these computers, please contact Brian at bkeene777@gmail.com (in the Subject line please write "Free Computer Program") or 201-797-5628. Brian will provide the specifications and answer all your questions. Thanks to John for asking; thanks to Brian for receiving, working on and distributing the equipment; and thanks to Brian's wife, Ilene, for agreeing to store the equipment in the basement.

A LETTER IN SUPPORT OF LEARNING ALLY

By Priscilla Garces

Editor's Note: *Priscilla wrote this letter to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in support of the accessible educational materials project and Learning Ally. Priscilla is a former LEAD student, a member of the College Leadership Program 2009, a member of the Students Division and a recent graduate of Seton Hall University.*

Learning Ally has a long-established relationship with the Department of Education and has had broad support in Congress, state departments of education and 10,000 schools from coast to coast. I urge you to continue that support by holding a competition for the development, production and distribution of educational materials in accessible formats to students with visual impairments and other print disabilities.

As a student with a visual impairment, it is vital that the funding should be continued because of the fact that many of us have the right to equal opportunity. Equal opportunity includes the accessibility of materials in alternative formats as well as the right to equal education. Since 1997, Learning Ally has helped me tremendously throughout my education due to the timely manner in which books are accessed as well as the ease of learning through listening. Not only did Learning Ally lighten the load of my heavy backpack, but the books on tape made me understand the academic material since I focus better when someone else reads the material to me rather than reading the texts myself. Recorded books, along with my braille computer, make studying more efficient since the recorded materials are crucial supplements added to the use of braille for visually impaired people. Learning Ally greatly benefits other people with print disabilities because reading materials become easier through listening which motivates them to excel academically and keep up with the rest of the students in the classroom.

Thanks to Learning Ally, I have had the privilege of becoming part of the National Academic Honor Society in high school. As a college student, I have greatly benefited from this program being that I was able to participate along with my sighted peers in terms of academic success. Every night I would get out my portable Daisy player and read my textbooks anywhere on campus in order to catch up with my assignments. Throughout college I maintained a GPA of 3.00 because of their support and motivation in knowing that anyone can accomplish great success through their hard work and effort no matter their disability. Learning Ally's support will be uncertain if the funds are discontinued. By the shifting of funds, many students will fall further behind in their education due to lack of accessible materials. By students falling behind in their schoolwork, their GPA and academic success would be significantly impacted because of textbooks being produced in other alternative formats in an

untimely manner. The quality of Digital MP3 books recorded by a computer-generated synthetic voice greatly affects the students who have significant learning disabilities due to the lack of understanding of the reading material.

Therefore, Learning Ally is a critical partner in the success of hundreds of thousands of students, and federal support of their efforts, leveraged with private philanthropy, has made much of their work possible. Continue USDE's 30-year commitment to students with disabilities and hold the competition.

THOMAS EDISON: RENOWNED DEAF INVENTOR & CREATOR OF SOUND TECHNOLOGY **by Michele Guttenberger**

While developing his telephone transmitter in July of 1877, Thomas Edison envisioned a machine that could record and play back telephone messages. Edison laid out the designs for his idea and gave it to his machinist, John Kruesi, to construct. A pivotal milestone in history was made the first week of December 1877 when a sound generating machine called the phonograph was invented. The phonograph was one of the most remarkable inventions of its time. However, what is even more awesome is that it was invented by a person who was completely deaf in his left ear and had 80 percent hearing loss in his right ear. Without argument, one can say that the phonograph was invented by a deaf inventor.

Edison's hearing loss was a result of childhood scarlet fever. He sustained further hearing loss at the age of 14 from a head trauma incident. Edison spent his entire adult life with almost total hearing loss, yet he felt inspired to make these sound machines that he physically could not fully appreciate. We are reminded that physical challenges do not disable great visionary minds. They instead trigger these great minds to journey beyond their own physical boundaries to inspire invention of that which is closed off to them in their everyday world.

This past August, the Thomas Alva Edison Museum started workshops on how to make the museum more welcoming for visitors who are blind or visually impaired. Joe Ruffalo, Carol Castellano and Christena Gunther (from Access & Community Programs at The Metropolitan Museum of Art) offered their advice and perspectives on the potential talents the blind have in presenting the world from a different angle. This may be the start needed to lure visionaries with physical sight limitations to invent visual wonders that only they can revolutionize from a sightless perspective.

You can see the display of Edison's phonograph inventions at the Thomas Alva Edison Museum, 211 Main Street, West Orange. The museum is open Wednesday through Sunday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the fee is \$7. Visit our website for more details: <http://www.nps.gov/edis/index.htm>.

A REFLECTION ON 9/11
By Rachael Degenshein Lapidis

Editor's Note: *Rachael is a former editor of The Sounding Board. She is the daughter of Jane Degenshein and the niece of Joe Ruffalo.*

Ten years ago today, the day before my 19th birthday and about a week before my sophomore year of college was to begin, I was woken up around 9 a.m. by a phone call from Justin Lipper. He told me to turn on the TV – a plane had hit the World Trade Center. I was in my childhood home and still in the stupor of sleep and shock as I walked dazedly through the house trying to find my mother. She was in the basement on her exercise bike, watching the coverage. It was before the second plane had struck, and we watched together, her pedaling an outlet for the anxiety we were both feeling, while I paced a diagonal on the carpet. We had no idea what was happening and being just a few miles from New York City, panic was starting to rise in me. We could see the skyline's rising smoke and ash from our windows. Should we leave? Where could we go? Were we safe?

It was hard to comprehend how the world changed in that instant – seeing all the people running from places they had considered safe; witnessing the stalwart resolve of others and the selfless sacrifice for strangers and for country.

We could not contemplate the world ever being the same again – ever feeling at ease flying on a plane, ever looking at those around us without suspicion, ever wondering what this all meant; how or whether we should try to appease those who attempt to hurt us.

We got a call, I don't know whether it was that night or the next, from our cousin Linda. She had purchased a block of tickets to see the unstoppable, record-busting show *The Producers* on Broadway months before. Now some of those who were supposed to go were too afraid to go into the city. Did we want the tickets? I could understand their reluctance. Those were days heavy with solemn anticipation. My mom and I decided to go. I think it was the first night the theaters rose from black, but it might have been the second. I remember how empty the streets were. I had never seen New York without the bustle, and probably never will again. The city was in a stupor; it had been knocked out of its natural state. Still, everyone we encountered looked at us, and I mean *really looked*. There was a sense of connection with the other people who walked out in the open that day, with the servers at the restaurant, with the subway token takers. There was a palpable, resonant frequency, thrumming like a low hum.

The show was a riotous release. The audience needed to laugh (that's what audiences do) and the performers needed to perform (that's what they do) and both played their roles a little more earnestly than normal ... maybe. Nathan Lane did not perform, but Brad Oscar and Matthew Broderick were as good as we could imagine. We almost forgot our circumstances in those few hours. We almost forgot that this theater was still situated in the place and time that would forever be post-9/11 New York.

At the end of the show, after the curtain call, the cast assembled on stage and led the standing, appreciative audience in a round of God Bless America. The tears rolled (and now, as I remember), but the sense of connection with these strangers and with the country was one of the strongest musical experiences of my life.

Ten years later, flying has become an entirely different enterprise, and a number of our fears have allayed, or lie dormant, because no other attack has been successfully completed. I cannot fathom the loss of those in the towers that day, or of those who loved them. The personal experiences of the rest of us seem colorless by comparison, but the full array paints the picture of a nation changed.

The twin experiences of morning panic and evening resolve are fresh and almost reassuring to me now. This is what it means to be human. This is most connected I have felt to humanity and to my own humanity.

SIGN UP FOR THE BRAILLE READERS ARE LEADERS CONTEST!

Submitted by Mary Jo Partyka

At this year's NFBNJ State Convention, the Braille Division honored the following people, mostly youth, who participated in the 2010-2011 Braille Readers are Leaders contest sponsored by NFB National: Mehira Doshi, John Dowling, Mikayla Gephart, Zyshon Goldsmith, Isabel Nutt, Ashlee Preston, Omar Tzic and Brian Mackey. Because they took the time to read Braille and to participate in a forum which appears to be undervalued today because of technological inroads, we salute them.

The 2011-2012 National Braille Readers are Leaders contest began November 1 and will continue until Louis Braille's birthday on January 4, 2012. Prospective participants can register at any time during the contest period. All information concerning this contest can be found at www.nfb.org/bral. I hope many of you will consider participating this year.

If you are interested in learning Braille, our Division sponsors a Braille Mentoring Program where prospective Braille learners are paired with those who are proficient in Braille. Please contact me for more information.

PRESCRIPTION-READING DEVICE NOW AVAILABLE TO ALL BLIND AMERICANS
From the En-Vision Press Release

Editor's Note: *En-Vision America is trying to persuade major pharmacy chains that this program is valuable to blind customers. The pharmacy chains maintain that there isn't enough need for them to spend the money to participate in the program. If you can benefit from this program, please contact En-Vision America.*

En-Vision America, Inc. has announced a program to aid the blind and visually impaired in obtaining accessible prescriptions. Under its Pharmacy Freedom Program, eligible individuals can get a free ScripTalk Station reader that allows them to access their prescription label information. Participating pharmacies attach a small RFID, or radio-frequency identification, label to each prescription. The RFID label includes all the printed information that's available to a sighted person, including warnings, dosage information, side effects, script number and doctor's name. The ScripTalk reader provides a safe, private, independent way for the blind and visually impaired to manage their medications, and it helps pharmacies comply with ADA regulations in serving their patients. In fact, it is the only product on the market to provide full label information in a way that meets ADA, FDCA and HIPAA regulations. To sign up for this free service, contact Anna McClure at En-Vision America to provide your pharmacy details and get your free reader: En-Vision America, 1845 Hovey Ave., Normal, Illinois 61761; 800-890-1180, fax 309-452-3643; www.envisionamerica.com.

FYI ...

- Just a reminder that **NFB-NEWSLINE** now offers subscribers the ability to access job classifieds and apply for open positions. To access the job listings, subscribers call in to Newsline (the listings are currently only available via phone) and press 9 from the main menu. From there, subscribers can set up their search profile by identifying the zip code from which the job listings are culled, and create and save their search preferences by category and keyword. The job listings are pulled fresh from the classifieds provider on each call, so subscribers always get the most up-to-the-minute search results.
- Ron Gardner, at the National Center, is compiling a list of **veterans who are blind**. It doesn't matter if the vet was blinded in combat or has since become visually impaired or blind. One of the goals of this project is to build the NFB's National Association of Blind Vets, which is under the direction of Dwight Sayer. For more information and/or to get on the list, contact Ron at rgardner@nfb.org.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF JERILYN HIGGINS

Editor's Note: *Jerilyn is an active member of the NFBNJ and serves as first vice president, chapter president, scholarship chairperson and co-editor of The Sounding Board. She is employed as an ADL instructor in the Essex SCILS program and is a Northern Region mentor in the LEAD program. In her spare time, Jerilyn can be found in the kitchen cooking.*

Baked French Toast Casserole

I love this Paula Deen breakfast recipe! I make it when family comes to visit.

Ingredients:

1 loaf French bread (13 – 16 ounces)	1 tsp vanilla extract
8 large eggs	¼ tsp ground cinnamon
2 cups half-and-half	¼ tsp ground nutmeg
1 cup milk	Dash of salt
2 TBS granulated sugar	Praline Topping (recipe follows)

Directions:

1. Slice French bread into 20 slices, 1 inch each. (Use any extra bread for garlic toast or bread crumbs.) Arrange slices in a generously buttered 9 x 13 flat baking dish, in two rows, overlapping the slices.
2. In a large bowl, combine the eggs, half-and-half, milk, sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Beat with a rotary beater or whisk until blended but not too bubbly.
3. Pour egg mixture over the bread slices, making sure all are covered evenly with the milk-egg mixture. Spoon some of the egg mixture in between the slices.
4. Cover with foil and refrigerate overnight.
5. The next day, preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
6. Spread the Praline Topping evenly over the bread and bake for 45 minutes, until puffed and lightly golden.
7. Serve with maple syrup.

Praline Topping

2 sticks butter	2 TBS light corn syrup
1 cup packed light brown sugar	½ tsp ground cinnamon
1 cup chopped pecans	½ tsp ground nutmeg

Combine all ingredients in a medium bowl and blend well. Makes enough for Baked French Toast Casserole.

NFBNJ CHAPTER NEWS

Editor's Note: *You'll find contact and meeting information for all our Chapters, Programs, Associations and Divisions on pages 35-36 of this issue.*

CAPITAL CHAPTER, by Mary Jo Partyka, President

Since the last issue of *The Sounding Board*, our members met with staff from the Outspoken Library, which is in the building where we meet. The Outspoken Libraries are located in most counties in New Jersey, and their purpose is to make themselves available to blind patrons who are unable to download books from the BARD site or who want more information about Newsline or Audiovision. Our goal is to educate Outspoken Library staff concerning the need for speech options so that blind people will be able to use this equipment independently. During the summer, we enjoyed our annual picnic, and in October, we had a booth at the Quakerbridge Mall, where we distributed NFB literature for our Meet the Blind Month activity.

CENTRAL JERSEY CHAPTER, by Jerilyn Higgins, President

In September, we had a delicious lunch at Haley's Harp and Pub in Metuchen. Following the meeting, there was a demonstration on the iPhone and how to download several apps, which are all accessible. For our Meet the Blind Month activity, we had a table in the Menlo Park Mall and handed out NFB literature and discussed blindness issues. In November, we met for an early informal chapter meeting/breakfast in the hotel restaurant, before the excitement of the State Convention began. December 9, 2011 was our holiday party at Haley's Harp and Pub. For those interested in brushing up on their Braille, call Barbara Finan to schedule a time before or after the chapter meetings: 732-738-1996. Each month our chapter members participate in the Grace Lutheran Church food drive by bringing the food item of the month to our meeting.

All those living in Middlesex County, interested in joining us and are registered with Middlesex County Area Transit (MCAT), please call Kelly Leary to reserve a ride to our meeting: 732-388-1322.

GARDEN STATE CHAPTER, by Ryan Stevens

This year commemorates our chapter's 20th anniversary, and we've had some momentous events, as well as members' notable accomplishments, to celebrate. First, in April, one of our members, Sandy Litzenger, gave a Blind Awareness and Guide Dog presentation at Woodcrest Elementary School in Cherry Hill. The children were very receptive to all the information Sandy had to offer and were enamored by Kelsi, her guide dog. Sandy wanted to share blind awareness, as well as the proper

rules when you meet a guide dog. Next, we had five members attend the National Convention in Orlando in July, including first-timer Eileen Carr. While in Orlando, Eileen had the opportunity to ride in the “blind car” that had been driven at the Daytona Speedway back in January. She said that witnessing history firsthand was a truly inspiring experience.

Over the summer, member and current LEAD student Elizabeth Morgan attended a college preparatory course at the Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center in cooperation with Raritan Valley Community College, where she earned college credits while still in high school. She was one of only 11 students throughout the state to attend. We are very proud of her.

We held our elections in August, and speaking of LEAD students, three graduates from the Southern Region are now members of our board. Melissa Hurff was elected to her first full term as secretary after doing a fantastic job finishing out an unexpired term. Also, Charles “CJ” Hilliard and Brian Mackey are now freshmen board members. It’s wonderful to see the next generation taking leadership roles. President Ed Godfrey, Vice President Ryan Stevens and Treasurer Linda DeBerardinis were also re-elected to help our younger officers as they take on their new responsibilities.

We had planned our annual picnic, this one to celebrate our milestone anniversary, on August 27 at Red Bank Battlefield Park. We even had commemorative T-shirts made to mark the event. Sadly, Hurricane Irene caused its cancellation. We did, however, wear the shirts at our September 17 meeting, take a group photo, and celebrate at the post-meeting lunch.

Four of our members, Marie Griffin, Melissa Hurff, Sandy Litzenger and Brian Mackey, attended the Leadership Building Seminar at the National Center in Baltimore over the weekend of September 9 - 11. This seminar focused primarily on building membership at the chapter level. Melissa also represented the Students Division.

For Meet the Blind Month, our chapter had a table at the Cherry Hill Charity Yard Sale. Some of our members donated items to sell for fundraising, and, of course, we handed out informational pamphlets and Kernel Books.

Several members attended the NFBNJ 35th Annual State Convention in Clark; and, in a really nice twist of fate, the national representative was our chapter’s founder, Ever Lee Hairston. What a great way to re-energize our Federation spirit.

NORTHEAST CHAPTER, by Debbie Azzarone

Autumn greetings from the Northeast Chapter! Let's start off with happy news. We had two graduates in our chapter this year: Jessica Scannell, who graduated from college, and Shafeka Hashash, who graduated from high school and has started her college adventure at NYU. We couldn't be prouder of them both.

We had two social events this year: Our annual chapter anniversary party in the spring and our annual barbecue this summer. We also continued with our fund raisers at Shop Rite, where we were very successful. Our weekly web radio show, Thru Our Eyes, is still going strong. Please tune in every Wednesday night at 8 p.m. at www.thruoureyes.org for some entertaining and informative shows. Lenny and Lori, who run the show, are crossing their fingers that the Imagination Fund will come through again this year with a grant to keep the station going. All of you: Please remember to contribute and raise funds for the Imagination Fund; they are a big help to all of us in every chapter.

I hate to end on a sad note, but this wasn't a good year for us in terms of losing members. We lost our dear friend and longtime member Francine Plescia earlier this year. She fought a long hard battle with cancer, but God took her home and put an end to her suffering. We also said good-bye to Louise Facchini, an original member as well, and our president's, Dan Facchini's, mother. Before our membership grew too large to fit, Louise hosted our meetings and our summer barbecues at her home. We all miss them both very much.

NORTHERN CHAPTER, by Rebecca Irvin

The Northern Chapter is off to a great start for the fall! We're adding new ideas and new committees, such as Health and Fitness, along with our very important established committees, like our Legislation Committee. Our goal is to provide committee responsibilities to all who would like them. Please come out and join us!

SALEM CHAPTER, by Anna Jordan, President

Greetings to all! Our location has recently changed, and we're now meeting at the Tri County Independent Living Center, 1501 Oakland Ave, Millville, NJ. Four of our members attended the Leadership Building Seminar at the Jernigan Institute in Baltimore. In other news, we had a fundraising celebration at the Cumberland Mall where we also spread the word about blindness to our community. Come and join us in securing equality and opportunity for the blind.

NFBNJ PROGRAMS, ASSOCIATIONS & DIVISIONS NEWS

ADOPT ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT, by Lynn Reynolds

We were able to recently assist in filling a request for a CCTV, thanks to Joe Ruffalo, and 28 computers were donated to our members. We also have a request for another CCTV. If anyone has a donation they would like to make, or if there are any requests, please contact Ed Godfrey or me to be added to our list. Please remember that that some donations may require repairs and that exchanging the equipment is done between the two parties.

ASSOCIATION OF GUIDE DOG USERS, by Vincent Chaney

As advocates of guide dog users, we in the NJAGDU Division work to inform public places of the legal rights of those who use service dogs. We plan to proactively advocate the two resolutions we submitted in 2009 and 2010. Our proposals are to follow-up on Resolution 2010-01, altering the guide dog laws from a civil offense to a criminal offense in New Jersey, and Resolution 2009-03, Attack of a Guide Dog. Our members wrote letters to their assembly and senate persons to support the respective bills regarding the Attack of a Guide Dog bill this year. When our division is prepared, we will look to our NFBNJ family and friends to contact their senators and assembly persons in New Jersey to aid us in our cause. We are pleased to report that Assemblyman Robert Schroeder (District 39) joined our monthly conference call on October 17. We were inspired and appreciative of his participation in our call and for his guidance in setting up an advocacy plan.

Marion Gwizdala, President of the NFB NAGDU Division, joined us to share information about the NAGDU Information & Advocacy Hotline. The hotline is available anytime by calling 888-NAGDU411 (888-624-3841), or help NAGDU save toll charges by using the local number of 813-658-5749.

We have discussed information about the new federal guidelines for a service animal that took effect on March 15, 2011: a service animal is “any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.” We have also taken time during our meetings to share experiences we have had with our guide dogs with the other members on the teleconferences.

The NJAGDU includes members who have been working with their dogs less than one year to those working for many, many more than that. If you are a guide dog user in New Jersey, we invite you to join our division, to interact with our members and support our causes.

DIABETES DIVISION, by Vincent Chaney

The Diabetes Division is proud to have celebrated our third anniversary as a division at this year's 35th State Convention. We're also pleased to have had our fourth workshop at the convention. We have had guest speakers join us during our monthly dial-in meetings. The topics covered on our monthly meetings include diet, accessible blood glucose meters, blood testing, oral medications, insulin, insulin pens, insulin pumps, and any other diabetic medicines or products that interest our members. We share information and come together to support each other. Research has shown that to network with others having similar conditions will add years to a person's life. Please join our NFBNJ Diabetes Division and not feel alone with diabetes and a visual impairment.

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

The Braille Division participated in a fantastic event at the State Convention! We partnered with Parents of Blind Children, and, as part of our workshop, we honored the Braille readers who participated in the Braille Readers are Leaders contest sponsored by NFB National Center.

The Braille Division sponsors a Braille Mentoring Program in which those who are avid Braille readers can help someone who wants to learn the fundamentals of Braille. Please contact me for more information.

MERCHANTS DIVISION, by Anna DeSantis

The National Association of Blind Merchants held its 11th Annual Business Leadership & Superior Training (BLAST) Conference in Nashville September 20-24. This year's event was attended by approximately 600 people and was an exceptional learning experience. The conference offered many interesting speakers and breakout sessions devoted to a variety of business opportunities, all of which increase our business knowledge and ventures. The Randolph-Sheppard Act is the law under which blind merchants all over the country are able to own and run their own businesses. The majority of American blind people who are employed are employed under the Randolph-Sheppard Act.

Nick Gacos, president of the National Association of Blind Merchants, did an outstanding job in organizing and running this year's BLAST. Next fall's conference is being planned in Chicago. This is a worthwhile conference to attend. The dates will be posted in the Spring edition of *The Sounding Board*. Anyone interested in our program should contact me or Lynn Reynolds.

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Michele Chaney 732-251-8650

**NFB of NJ Chapters, Meeting Info
and President's Contact Info***At-Large Chapter*

Last Thursday, 8 p.m.

712-432-0180

and enter code 460994

Capital Chapter

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

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

Central Jersey Chapter

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

Jerilyn Higgins 973-239-8874
jdhiggins3@verizon.net

Glasstown Chapter

First Sat., YMCA, Vineland, 11 a.m.

Lydia Keller 856-696-3518
nfbnj@yahoo.com

Garden State Chapter

Third Sat., Kennedy Memorial Hospital
auditorium, Cherry Hill, 10 a.m.

Ed Godfrey 856-848-6372
egodfrey137@comcast.net

Northeast Chapter

Third 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

Third Sat., Free Public Library, 3rd
Floor, Newark, 10 a.m. - noon

Rebecca Irvin 973-723-6559
rirvin14@optonline.net

Ocean Chapter

Second Sat., Ocean County Public
Library, Toms River

Michael Halm 732-370-1797
Mbhrr15@gmail.com

Salem Chapter

Third Mon., Tri-County Independent
Living Center, Millville, 10:30 a.m.

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Deadline for the Spring 2012 issue is April 1, 2012.

CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB AT

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

To receive *The Sounding Board* and other information via e-mail,
please contact Beatrice Oliveti at beatrice.oliveti@gmail.com.