

THE SOUNDING BOARD
Spring 2012

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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."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cruise to Bermuda Flyer	3
Presidential Message, by Joe Ruffalo	4
The Federation Alphabet.....	6
Legislative News, by Lynn Reynolds.....	7
Students Report on the Washington Seminar, by Carlos Herrera and Maxine-Marrie Lomax.....	8
Blindness is Not an Obstacle to Parenting, by John Dragona.....	9
A Moment of Leadership, by Priscilla Garces.....	10
Sighted Church Preschoolers Receive Braille Session, by Brian Mackey.....	12
Establishment of the Glasstown Chapter of the NFBNJ, by Marie Griffin.....	13
Establishment of the South Jersey Shore Chapter of the NFBNJ, by Kathy Rawa and Suzanne Woolbert.....	14
Rick Fox and Debbie Bloomer Establish a New Partnership, by Rick Fox.....	16
Brian Mackey Establishes Data Entry Company, by Brian Mackey.....	16
Kevin Sisco Starts Computer Consulting Firm, by Kevin Sisco.....	17
In Memory of Dr. Edwin Lewinson, by Carol Castellano.....	17
From the Kitchen of Jerilyn Higgins.....	18
NFBNJ Chapter News.....	19
NFBNJ Programs, Associations & Divisions News.....	20
NFBNJ Contact Info.....	23

NFBNJ CRUISE TO BERMUDA FUNDRAISER

NFBNJ and Echevarria Travel are proud to announce a cruising adventure open to all. Come join us as we sail to Bermuda on the Royal Caribbean *Explorer of the Seas*, April 13 – 18, 2013. Royal Caribbean will donate \$100 per stateroom booked to NFBNJ. A deposit of \$100 is due by June 1, 2012. Please join us for a great time out at sea and in Bermuda. Hope to see you all aboard!

A 5 Night Cruise Fundraiser Aboard Royal Caribbean's *Explorer of the Seas* Sailing, April 13 – 18, 2013

Round trip Itinerary from Port Liberty, Bayonne, NJ Includes:

April 13: Port Liberty, Bayonne, NJ
April 14: Cruising
April 15 and 16: Kings Wharf, Bermuda
April 17: Cruising
April 18: Port Liberty, Bayonne, NJ

Deposits of \$100 per person are due by June 1, 2012. Final payments are due Feb. 7, 2013. For each booking, Royal Caribbean will donate \$100 per stateroom to the NFBNJ.

PRICES

Interior Staterooms Category N (prices include taxes, fees, gratuities and travel insurance). Total per person \$736.88 Double Occupancy \$1,473.76

Oceanview Category H (prices include taxes, fees, gratuities and travel insurance). Total per person \$916.88 Double Occupancy \$1,833.76

Balcony Staterooms Category E2 (prices include taxes, fees, gratuities and travel insurance). Total per person \$1,036.88 Double Occupancy \$2,073.76

Some staterooms can accommodate up to 4 passengers. Echevarria Travel can provide these rates upon request. Wheelchair accessible rooms are also available and must be booked as early as possible due to limited availability.

Prices do not include airfare or transportation, shopping, gambling, alcohol, excursions. Once deposit is met, payment plans can be arranged on an individual bases. Passports are necessary for this trip!!!

To book, please call Cheryl Echevarria of Echevarria Travel at 631-456-5394.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Greetings Fellow Federationists!

This winter, we had spring, and this spring, we are having summer! As I write this Presidential Message for the spring issue of *The Sounding Board*, the temperature is expected to reach 90 degrees. Welcome summer!

Since our members are on fire and are spreading the information pertaining to our organization, think cool as you consider joining the cruise to Bermuda in spring 2013. The cruise is open to all: members, families, friends, neighbors and co-workers. The flyer on page 3 provides more information on the cruise. The state affiliate is planning to conduct a fund raiser by selling tickets to go on the cruise. Details will be forthcoming.

Congratulations to Evelyn Valdez, president of the New Jersey Association of Blind Students, who is attending the Louisiana Center for the Blind, and to Brian Mackey, the new secretary of the At Large Chapter, for placing third in his division in the Braille Readers are Leaders contest for 2011.

ThruOurEyes.org celebrated its seventh year of providing information to our listeners. The original show aired March 25, 2005, and in its seven years of production, countless interviews have been conducted, and we've added several shows. Jane Degenshein, president of the Senior Division and an At Large Chapter member, and Jerry Moreno, member of the North Carolina affiliate, co-host "On the Bright Side," airing Wednesdays at 8 p.m. Linda Thomas, a board member of the New Jersey Parents of Blind Children Division, and Johanna Baccan, an At Large Chapter and Senior Division member, host "Looking Good Without Looking." To tune in to any and all of our shows, please visit www.thruoureyes.org. Additional information pertaining to show times and topics can be located on the state website at www.nfbnj.org.

An extremely hot issue was received from the National Center in Baltimore and was forwarded to Lynn Reynolds, legislative coordinator for the affiliate. Lynn's article can be found on page 6 of this issue. Thanks to all who made the calls or hit the send button to the members of the Senate to defeat this issue.

We can make a difference!

The torch is burning brightly as we enter the spring season. In this issue of *The Sounding Board*, there are articles written by current and former LEAD (Leadership, Education, Advocacy and Determination) students that feature their experiences attending the Washington Seminar, establishing businesses and attending an employment conference. We're proud of these graduates of the LEAD program who have learned the skills and developed the confidence to establish vocational

opportunities. Two new chapters of the NFBNJ have been formed; read about them on pages 15 – 17 of this issue. The presidents of these chapters, Lydia Keller and Kathy Rawa, are also members of the At Large Chapter, and they both participated in the Leadership Building/Membership Seminar sponsored by the Imagination Fund. It just goes to show that big things happen when you think big, and then do something about it!

Upcoming Important Dates

- June 30 – July 5: NFB National Convention in Dallas. The National Convention will be held in Dallas at the Hilton Anatole Hotel (phone 214-761-7500) Saturday, June 30 through the evening of Thursday, July 5. I urge all of you to make the effort to attend this largest gathering of blind persons in the country. Please visit www.nfb.org for convention details and much more.
- November 9 – November 11: 36th Annual State Convention of the NFBNJ, Holiday Inn (formerly the Crowne Plaza), 36 Valley Road, Clark.

As our magazine was going to press, we were saddened to hear that Dr. Edwin Lewinson, a member of the National Federation of the Blind since the 1960s, died on April 10. Ed was an active member and assisted in the establishment of the state affiliate in New Jersey. He held numerous offices on the state and local levels. Ed enjoyed the Washington Seminars, the national and state conventions, chapter meetings and his grassroots approach to find a solution to the problems facing the blind community. In this issue, an article celebrating Ed's life can be used as an example of his love to make a difference. At this year's state convention, we will honor Dr. Edwin Lewinson as we honor him with a scholarship in his name.

Please visit the national website at www.nfb.org for more upcoming events. More than 20 people had a hand in the preparation of this magazine. We know it contains words of wisdom, encouragement, achievement and inspiration. Please share it with family members, friends and co-workers in order to grow, exponentially, the knowledge presented in these pages.

Thanks for your support in changing what it means to be blind.

Yours in Federationism,



Joseph Ruffalo, President

THE FEDERATION ALPHABET
By Joe Ruffalo

Attitude is everything
Believe in yourself
Commit to a cause
Determination, desire, dream
Expectations that are high
Federation foundation
Goals to reach
History to learn from
Independence through hard work
Just network with others
Keep moving forward
Leadership is gained from each other
Membership is the foundation
Networking is the way to go
Opportunity for all
Philosophy established the organization
Quick response to the needs
Responsibilities, rights and resources
Skills equal success
Travel, techniques, technology
Unity brings results
Victory is the goal
Whozit and wisdom
Xcited breeds excitement
You and youth, true partnership
Zest with all we do

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

By Lynn Reynolds, Legislative Coordinator

Our legislative year kicked off with our annual trip to the Washington Seminar in February. The New Jersey delegation consisted of 25 people, including LEAD students and their mentors, and members of various chapters throughout our state. The delegation met with our congressional members to discuss issues which are summarized below. To see the fact sheets in their entirety, please visit www.nfb.org. The Fair Wages for Persons with Disabilities Act of 2011 has a bill in the House of Representatives (H.R.3086). At the time of this writing, this bill has 63 co-sponsors. The other two issues do not have a bill in either the Senate or the House.

The Portman amendment was brought before the Senate in early March. This would have been part of the Surface Transportation Bill which would have permitted rest areas on interstate and federal highways to commercialize, which would have severely impacted over 500 Randolph-Sheppard blind vendors who have vending locations at many of these rest areas. Thanks to all of you and many people across the country for calling their senators. The amendment was defeated by a vote of 86 to 12. This is an ongoing issue, and when we need to make calls, we will notify all of you.

The state bill we are working on is Dusty's Law, A2728. This bill criminalizes dog attacks and interference on guide dog teams, as well as puppy raisers and their puppies which are being trained to become guide dogs. This bill increases the punishment for these offenses. We need everyone to make calls or e-mail their representatives in both our state and federal offices. To find your representatives, either on the federal level (House of Representatives or Senate) or on the state level (either the Assembly or State Senate), call your town library, town municipal building or city hall, or go to <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/districts/districtnumbers.asp>. The Legislative Information and Bill Room can also help you: 800-792-8630 or 609-292-4840. To be added to my e-mail list for Legislative Alerts, please contact me at lhr1827@optonline.net or 908-251-5510. A synopsis of our current issues follows:

The Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities Act of 2011 (H.R. 3086) H.R. 3086 phases out Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which allows employers to pay disabled workers subminimum wages. This bill will end this exploitative practice, giving disabled Americans equal protection under the law to earn at least the federal minimum wage.

The Home Appliance Accessibility Act (HAAA) Despite the existence of nonvisual access technology, the overwhelming majority of home appliance manufacturers are selling touch-screen, flat panel and digital home appliances that are completely inaccessible to the blind. HAAA calls for a study and minimum nonvisual access

standard for essential home appliances to protect blind consumers from the growing digital divide that threatens our independence.

The Americans with Disabilities Business Opportunity Act (ADBOA) Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act allows businesses owned by socially disadvantaged groups to obtain federal contracts. Although two-thirds of Americans with disabilities are unemployed or underemployed, disabled people are currently not presumed to be socially disadvantaged. ADBOA amends Section 8(a) to add disabled Americans to the list of those who are presumed to be socially disadvantaged.

Thanks to all of you who are making contacts. Please know that you are making a difference in the lives of blind people in our country. Thank you for your diligence because who knows better than we who are blind what we need to better our lives.

STUDENTS REPORT ON THE WASHINGTON SEMINAR

Editor's Note: *The next two articles were submitted by LEAD (Leadership, Education, Advocacy and Determination) students who attended the Washington Seminar. The first is by Carlos Herrera, and the second is by Maxine-Marrie Lomax.*

By Carlos Herrera

Editor's Note: *Carlos sent this to Heightened Independence and Progress after attending the Washington Seminar.*

I would first like to thank you for granting me the opportunity to attend the Washington Seminar. I was thrilled when I heard that I was selected to participate. I knew that by voicing my opinion to my local congressmen, I would be making a difference in the blind community.

I gained many skills at this event, such as mobility, networking and advocacy strategies that will assist me in school and my career. Being in the atmosphere with almost 600 people from throughout the country who all experience vision loss, I felt more confident in our goals and myself. It was an empowering experience. The two days that we were in Washington D.C. were filled with many learning activities, which I will cherish for years to come. This opportunity was both fun and educational at the same time. My Northern Region mentors, Joe and Jerilyn, along with the other LEAD mentors, provided much time, effort and positive attitudes to assist me in achieving my future goals. I hope the LEAD program will continue to assist other high school students with vision loss to participate in life-changing experiences such as this one.

By Maxine-Marrie Lomax, NJABS Board Member

The New Jersey Association of Blind Students was awarded a grant of \$1,440 to send our president, Evelyn Valdez, vice president Shafeka Hashash, Jason Capati and me to the Washington Seminar. We attended meetings Monday, February 6, to review the three blindness issues we would be discussing with the congressmen. We were also given tips on how to address these topics, which I thought were very helpful because I had never done this before (unlike the other members of NJABS). We were split into groups, and each group was assigned three or four congressmen with whom we would be meeting. On Tuesday, February 7, we met with our assigned groups and together went to our meetings where we discussed the three issues: fair wages, home accessibility and the Americans with Disabilities Business Opportunity Act. It was a long day for everyone, but for me it was exciting. Even though we didn't actually get to meet with the congressmen, I enjoyed meeting with their aides. I hope NJABS has the chance to do this again, for future board members and students.

BLINDNESS IS NOT AN OBSTACLE TO PARENTING**By John Dragona**

Editor's Note: *John was the editor of The Sounding Board until the early 1990s.*

My wife and I, who are totally blind, recently began raising our grandson, despite the prejudice and doubts of the NJ Division of Youth and Family Services. Yet the prejudice continues. Although we raised our sighted daughter independently, and my wife has been working for the Commission for the Blind for over 30 years as a rehabilitation teacher, teaching daily living skills to clients, including infant and child care, DYFS still doesn't get it. Questions like: "How are you going to monitor the baby if you can't see him?" and "Who's going to help you?" got on our nerves until I finally strongly suggested that they get some training to compensate for their ignorance about the capabilities of people who are blind.

Subsequent to a posting in a nationally circulated magazine, I received e-mails from a dozen blind parents supporting me. One such parent was Deborah Kent whose booklet *Parenting Without Sight* is published by the Federation. With Joe Ruffalo's help, I obtained several copies and gave a few of them to our grandson's caseworker at DYFS. However, she refused to accept e-mails from other blind parents that tell how they handled blind parenting. So the ignorance goes on.

It is time for us who are blind, especially for those of us who are parents, to actively convince the closed-minded, prejudiced and inadequately educated state workers of New Jersey that blindness does not stop us from being productive, capable individuals, including parents. Any blind parents who wish to help Tulia and me can send e-mails to tfb@panix.com.

A MOMENT OF LEADERSHIP

By Priscilla Garces

Editor's Note: *Priscilla, a former LEAD student, participated in the College Leadership Program in Detroit in 2010 and is a member of the At Large Chapter.*

Attending the 2011 Summit on Careers for People with Disabilities in Morristown, NJ was one of the best experiences I've ever encountered. I learned how to feel more confident in interacting with people from all backgrounds, as well as tips on networking.

I heard of the summit through an e-mail newsletter forwarded by a career advisor at the John C. Whitehead School of Diplomacy at Seton Hall University. Not only did I register for the conference, but I was also invited to participate in a forum on how students who have challenges can request accommodations. I was one of eight students playing a leadership role in this forum. It was an honor and a privilege to lead the discussion by sharing my experiences getting accommodations in the workplace. In fact, I talked about the dilemmas I faced when I interned with Senators Menendez and Lautenberg. At both their offices, I had to call the main headquarters in Washington, D.C. and briefly explain to staff at tech support the type of software used to access text on a computer screen. After explaining the functions of Jaws for Windows, they made me wait for another phone call approving whether or not I could install the screen reader on the computers. As I shared my experiences and solutions with the multitude of students, employers and educators, one of the employers from NBC Studios said that she appreciated my candor, and that when she looked at my resume she was blown away with what I have accomplished.

During the conference, I met a Verizon representative who happens to be blind. He discussed the questions that may be asked at an interview and how to answer them in a positive way. For instance, when you are asked, "What is your weakness?" you could say, "I sometimes feel overwhelmed when I work under pressure, but I am trying to become more organized by using effective time management skills and prioritizing tasks that have time-sensitive deadlines by using a to-do list and calendar." He also suggested that to effectively describe your leadership experiences, imagine yourself telling a story where you are the character and your experiences form flowing scenes in the plot, and that what you have accomplished is the end of the story. Besides learning about resources for finding jobs, one of the speakers spoke about the importance of globalization made possible by social networking. One of the employers showed different pictures from four students who used Facebook, and two of them posted obscene pictures including photos of themselves in a state of intoxication. It is better to use your best judgment when posting on social networks like Facebook. We also enjoyed a formal dinner where I learned

invaluable skills on dining etiquette including basic tips on social etiquette. Not only did I learn very valuable skills, but I got a chance to play the Wii video game with a group of employers and friends. The Wii was an activity where I had fun scoring points, but the experience turned into an interactive form of networking. Since I had a hard time playing the video game, several people volunteered to show me the motion I should use to earn a good score. The activity demonstrated that teamwork is important and that we can be competitive as team players regardless of differentiating characteristics. One of the lessons I learned was that everyone is equal regardless of disability, race, religion or gender.

On the second day of the summit, we split into groups to meet the employers. One of the employers I met works for the federal government in the Human Resources Department of the IRS. She told us of resources helpful for finding federal jobs, such as Schedule A. Schedule A-appointing authorities help facilitate the non-competitive hiring process for veterans and other people with significant physical or cognitive disabilities. In order to qualify, you are required to send a letter of job readiness written by a licensed physician or vocational rehabilitation counselor, along with your job application, through USAjobs.gov. More information can be found in the resource pages at USAjobs.gov. The other employer I met with was a representative from Lockheed Martin, which deals more with science and technology. Both of the sessions were interactive with the employers giving us advice on how to polish our resumes, especially the federal resumes, which are very detail oriented. One of the most important points from these sessions was that it is best to have sighted help when editing a resume since speech alone can sometimes be inaccurate when formatting a resume.

Resources on career opportunities for people with disabilities, including registration, can be found on www.cosdonline.org. On their home page you will find information about upcoming events, an application and guidelines on how to submit a well-polished resume to be a participant in the two-day summit taking place annually at different locations. It is a great opportunity to attend the summit because not only do they fund everything (including hotel accommodations, meals and other amenities), but the opportunity to meet prospective employers along with the increased knowledge of other important skills is of benefit for everyone. In the near future I look forward to becoming an ambassador for the Summit on Career Opportunities for People with Disabilities as a form of sharing my contributions with other students and professionals. In this way, the general public should become more informed about the many invaluable ways the disabled contribute to society.

SIGHTED CHURCH PRESCHOOLERS RECEIVE BRAILLE SESSION

By Brian Mackey

Editor's Note: *Brian is a board member of the Garden State Chapter, secretary of the At Large Chapter and assistant secretary of NFBNJ.*

One day in October 2011 at my local church, Faith Presbyterian Church in Medford, my mom was doing some stuff in the church kitchen, and I was sitting in the Fellowship Room reading a Braille book. At the time, I was getting a head start on the 2011 Braille Readers Are Readers reading contest. While I was reading, Barbara Meimbresse, the director of the Small World preschool program, saw me reading and was amazed. She asked me to come in and read to the preschoolers and give them a simplified Braille lesson. Wow! I was flattered. Of course, I was delighted and thrilled, and I was honored that she asked me. We set a date.

On the beautiful rainy morning of January 29, I arrived at Small World a little anxious, but excited to share my enthusiasm in reading Braille books. The eager and enthusiastic children gathered around my chair. Before I began reading the story to the anxious listeners, I presented a basic history of Braille, what the Braille cell is and how the Braille code works. With the assistance of a willing teacher, I demonstrated how to spell a couple of the students' names on the white board.

I told the children that Braille was first invented in the 1800s during the French Revolution by a blind Frenchman named Louis Braille. Braille was first used to send messages secretly to the French soldiers during the night, so they didn't have to use lights. I also told them how certain combinations of dots represent a certain letter, punctuation mark or word.

After the brief introduction to Braille, it was then time to begin reading the story: "Chicka Chicka Boom Boom." All the children loved this story about the letters of the alphabet trying to get to the top of the coconut tree. Plus it is a fun story to read with the children catching on to the repeating phrase: "Chicka Chicka, BOOM BOOM!"

When I began the introduction about Braille and then began reading the story to the first class, I was extremely nervous. But the children were so well behaved and they eagerly asked questions, and so I slowly became more relaxed. After reading the book to each of the six classes, I gave each child a souvenir: an index card with their name written in Grade 1 Braille. They were so happy and thankful, which in turn gave me a thrill and self-satisfaction.

At the end of the day, Barbara asked me if I might be interested in reading to the students again in the future, to which I heartily thanked her and agreed. This was such a great opportunity to introduce Braille and demonstrate how blind individuals can read as well as a sighted person by just using a different technique.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GLASSTOWN CHAPTER OF THE NFBNJ
By Marie Griffin, Board Secretary, Glasstown Chapter

The formation of a bright new chapter began in Cumberland County, NJ on December 3, 2011. This NFB chapter, comprised of very excited people, is called the Glasstown Chapter. It has been designated as "Glasstown" because of the extensive history in our area relating to its glass production. The three principal cities of Cumberland County are Vineland, Millville and Bridgeton, with Vineland being the largest city, area-wise, in the State of New Jersey.

After recently attending an "NFB Leadership/Membership Building Workshop" in Baltimore, several of us determined that it would be fabulous to establish a new chapter to accommodate the needs of blind and visually impaired people in this community.

We have so much to offer. We are ready to share ideas, show our support, and assist in any way possible. One of our goals is to open doors for those without sight, as well as to open people's minds to a better understanding of blindness and that it is merely a nuisance. We intend to educate, advocate and raise public awareness. One way we intend to do this is through fundraising activities.

Our chapter is proud to say that we have received the distinguished honor of being presented a proclamation by local government officials welcoming us into the community.

We are regularly working with local media to get the word out about the Glasstown Chapter and about the NFB in general. We strive to gain exposure for, and recognition of, the Federation. We have to remember that: "People don't know, what they don't know!" In other words, we must give them the information in order for them to understand.

There are lots of community groups out there and WE ARE ONE OF THEM. We will network and build relationships with individuals and businesses. The Glasstown Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey will continue to grow and become an integral part of this community. We **are** changing what it means to be blind!

Editor's Note: *The Joint Legislative Commendation by Senator Van Drew and Assemblymen Albano and Milam follows:*

Whereas, Senator Jeff Van Drew and General Assembly Members Nelson Albano and Matt Milam, as the duly elected representatives of the 1st Legislative District, are please to honor and congratulate the Glasstown Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey upon their Establishment Celebration.

Whereas, The strength and success of the State of New Jersey and the United States of America rest upon the abilities and talents of our dedicated citizens that show exceptional efforts to promote and improve our community; and

Whereas, The citizenry of the First Legislative District, through their elected representatives, recognize the Glasstown Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind as an inspiration to all and whose energy and achievements help us glimpse a future of hope and promise; and,

Whereas, Through hard work and dedication the Glasstown Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind has brought honor and pride to the community and to the citizens of this state, New Jersey, therefore,

Be It Known To All That The Undersigned Hereby Honors:

The Glasstown Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey
Upon Their Establishment Celebration

Signed This Day December 3, 2011

And extends sincere best wishes for continued happiness and success in the future.

Jeff Van Drew, Senator

Nelson Albano, Member of the General Assembly

Matt Milam, Member of the General Assembly

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOUTH JERSEY SHORE CHAPTER OF THE NFBNJ

By Kathy Rawa and Suzanne Woolbert

“Good morning ladies and gentlemen ... and guide dogs ... and welcome to the first-ever *Meet and Greet* of the South Jersey Shore Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey!” (Applause)

That’s the way 15-year-old Alex Anderson, recently blind, opened the meeting at the John D. Young Memorial Lions Blind Center in Absecon, on January 21, 2012. His remarks were followed by a salute to the flag and our national anthem, accompanied by two other young students on keyboards and drums. To keep the mood light and fun, Bryan and Suzanne Woolbert followed immediately with new lyrics to our anthem’s tune to promote and inspire newcomers to join the new chapter of the NFBNJ. Mikayla Gephart, 12, was given a basket full of door-prize tickets, labeled in Braille, so that she could have the pleasure of calling out the first winning number.

Before giving up the microphone, Suzanne shared some of her experiences with NFB and her hope for the future of this new chapter. Keeping her remarks brief, she quickly introduced Kathy Rawa, the chapter’s coordinator, praising Kathy’s efforts and the work she did to organize this meeting. Expressing her gratitude and appreciation for those who had helped make this meeting possible, Kathy spoke

about the purpose and function of an NFB chapter in South Jersey, and what it could mean to its members. She outlined several of the eight divisions that currently exist within our affiliate and could be of particular interest to new members, including Seniors, Guide Dog Users, Technology and Students. In closing, she proudly introduced State Affiliate President Joe Ruffalo.

Joe congratulated Kathy and the new group for its efforts and continued with the history, philosophy and purpose of the NFB. He emphasized NFB's involvement with legislation that has brought about new laws to promote and advance the abilities of the blind. But, most importantly, he talked about the blind themselves, and changing what it means to be blind. He opened the floor to questions and was met by several curious and heart-felt questions, which he answered with knowledge and insight.

After resounding applause, the floor was open to anyone who wanted to share their experience and hope for the group, with the comment that "everyone in this room is important, and we'd love to hear from all of you." Remarks were followed by a "get-to-know-you" game, called "Whoozit," and the meeting ended with lunch and dessert presented by volunteers.

During this time, prospective new members had the opportunity to come forward and ask questions, and choose from a wide variety of literature, some in Braille and large print. The excitement never lagged, as individuals found old friends they hadn't seen in a while, as well as new friends who shared some of their interests. A group of men and young boys outside waiting for their rides were heard sharing their interest in antique cars and making plans to attend a car show together. Others could be heard talking about looking for employment, Braille literacy and forming a kids' band. Overall, the meeting was met with great enthusiasm, and plans were made for the establishment meeting in March.

On March 3, 2012 the South Jersey Shore Chapter of the NFBNJ was formally established. The Constitution was read, in Braille, by Rick Fox, Chairman of Chapter Building. President Joe Ruffalo read the slate of nominated officers: Kathy Rawa – President; Michelle Baldwin – Vice President; Judy Fern – Secretary; Marsha Gephart – Treasurer; 2-year Board Members – Eunice McFadden, Michelle Foster; 1-year Board Members – Ida Goldberg, Kimberly Arroyo.

Following the elections, President Kathy Rawa expressed the importance of teamwork and how honored she was to be elected to this position. She spoke of herself as a conductor with each member being an instrument – there cannot be any music or harmony without everyone working together in balance. The excitement and enthusiasm continued as we announced the addition of a Youth/Student Group within the new chapter. The final announcement was the change of location of the new chapter to Ocean City Free Public Library.

RICK FOX AND DEBBIE BLOOMER ESTABLISH NEW PARTNERSHIP

By Rick Fox

On January 1, 2011, Debbie Bloomer retired after an accomplished career of over 30 years, 18 years of which were spent teaching blind children. When De Witt & Associates closed its doors in February, 2012, Rick Fox found himself unemployed after a long and fulfilling career teaching computer skills to blind people of all ages. When Rick and Debbie, who have been married for 16 years, began talking about future plans, they kept coming back to a few basics. The need for good and imaginative computer training remains strong, and the availability of remote training via the Internet often eliminates the necessity of travel by either students or instructor alike. The need for good and imaginative training in Braille and other blindness skills for children, their parents and school districts also remain strong. Why not establish a business to provide both types of services?

In March, 2012, B & F Technology and Teaching was officially established. If you're a blind person, and feel you need to broaden your computer skills, e-mail us at bftt@comcast.net. If you're a parent of a blind child and would like to learn enough about assistive technology to help and supervise your child more effectively, drop us a line. The Internet will allow us to provide training with minimal cost and maximum convenience. If your child needs the services of a certified and experienced teacher of the blind, call us at 973-641-5067 or e-mail us at bftt@comcast.net. We would be honored to serve you.

BRIAN MACKEY ESTABLISHES DATA ENTRY FIRM

By Brian Mackey

I have been involved in NFBNJ since the early 2000s and am currently secretary of the At Large Chapter, board member of the Garden State Chapter and assistant secretary of the NFBNJ. After graduating from the Harris School of Business's computerized accounting program, I established my own sub-contracting data entry accounting service company, Mackey Enterprises LLC, in November 2011.

As a data entry specialist, I can receive data in a number of ways, such as e-mail or on a flash drive. I enter the data I receive into QuickBooks, Excel, Word or JAWS to perform the tasks my employers request – such as preparing accounting reports, letters and mailing labels – for businesses and individuals.

My first job was for a private company. They hired me to record income and expense data into QuickBooks. Of course, I am hoping to grow my business in the near future. I have the tenacity to stick with an assignment until its completion. I also possess the ability to listen to and process the information presented through spoken and technology transmitted words. My contact information is: Brian Mackey, 14 Andover Drive, Medford, NJ 08055, 609-953-6988, bmackey88@gmail.com.

KEVIN SISCO STARTS COMPUTER CONSULTING FIRM**By Kevin Sisco**

Is your computer running slowly? Is your system infected by a virus? I can solve those issues and more! I am a totally blind person and have started working for myself as an IT consultant for homes and businesses. I can be found on the web at <http://kevinsconsulting.webs.com> or at 973-590-8976.

IN MEMORY OF DR. EDWIN LEWINSON**By Carol Castellano**

I met Ed Lewinson when my daughter Serena was a baby. My first memory of him was at the first NFB of NJ State Convention that we attended, sometime in the 80s. A man was speaking about a special whistle he was distributing, telling us that this whistle would finally enable blind people to leave their homes and go out on the street and be safe. At that point, a man in the audience raised his hand, stood up and said, "Excuse me, but I am going to go out on the street whether I have your whistle or not. I'll take my chances going out and being free." That was my introduction to Ed Lewinson. I never forgot that moment.

Over the years our organization and my family developed a relationship with Ed. He was always up for anything. When we asked him to make school presentations or speak at our seminars for parents and teachers, he never turned us down. I remember the feeling in the room the first time he spoke to the teachers. They were sitting there wondering how on earth a blind child could learn, and there before them was Ed, who had earned a doctorate from an Ivy League college, who had taught at a university for 30 years, and who had traveled the world independently. Just by virtue of standing there, he raised expectations for a whole generation of blind children in New Jersey.

We used to give Ed a ride home after NFB parties. Inevitably we'd get lost somewhere around the Oranges. Ed would say, "Well, you ought to be seeing a CVS coming up on the right in about three blocks." And he would get us to his home. Ed was a modest man. He never bragged about his many achievements. I never even knew he had a doctorate until I asked him for a bio for one of our programs. In our conversations in the car, as we'd be catching up with each other's activities, he would casually mention that he had recently been in Iraq or that he'd been a part of CORE.

Ed had a profound influence on my development as an advocate and activist. His courage—to live his convictions and take a stand in challenging circumstances—will inspire me for the rest of my life. Ed closed the many meetings he presided over with these words: "Any old business? Any new business? Any monkey business?" I will miss Ed, but I will never think of him without smiling.

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 (and she brings her goods to work where Joe Ruffalo eats them all!).*

Coconut Cupcakes

Ingredients:

2 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups butter, at room temperature	1 cup coconut milk
2 cups granulated sugar	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups coconut, plain or toasted
4 large eggs	8 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
2 tsp each vanilla and almond extracts	2 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups powdered sugar
3 cups all-purpose flour	
$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp each baking powder, baking soda and salt	

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°. In a large bowl, cream together 2 cups butter and granulated sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Mix in 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons each vanilla and almond extracts.
2. In another large bowl, combine flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Add to butter and sugar mixture in 3 batches, alternating with coconut milk. Stir 1 cup flaked coconut into the batter.
3. Fill 30 paper-lined muffin cups (1/2-cup capacity) in two or more muffin pans about 2/3 full with batter. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the center of a cupcake comes out clean, 15 to 20 minutes. Cool for 10 minutes before removing muffins from pans. Cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, beat cream cheese, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon each vanilla and almond extract until smooth. Gradually beat in powdered sugar. Frost cupcakes and sprinkle with remaining coconut.

NFBNJ CHAPTER NEWS

Editor's Note: *You'll find contact and meeting information for all our Chapters, Programs, Associations and Divisions on pages 23-24 of this issue.*

CAPITAL CHAPTER, by Mary Jo Partyka, President

Our Chapter held our holiday party at the LaForchetta Restaurant. This year we are concentrating on finding ways to attract new members to our chapter. One way in which we are advertising our existence is on a Facebook page called Capital Chapter. Any Federationist is welcome to post on our page. I hope you will consider joining us either at a chapter meeting or on our Facebook page.

CENTRAL JERSEY CHAPTER, by Jerilyn Higgins, President

On April 14, 2012 we celebrated our 13th annual anniversary at Haley's Harp and Pub in Metuchen. June 9 we will be participating at the Lion's Club flea market to hand out NFB literature and fund raise. If anyone has items for the chapter to sell, please call Lynn Reynolds, CJC vice president, at 908-251-5510. Presently we are planning our Meet the Blind Month activity for October 2012. For those interested in brushing up on their Braille, call Barbara Finan to schedule a time before or after the chapter meeting: 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.

For anyone living in Middlesex County who is interested in joining us: If you are registered with Middlesex County Area Transit (MCAT), please call Kelly Leary to reserve a ride to the meeting at 732-388-1322.

Please come out and join us in changing what it means to be blind. We would love to have you join us.

GARDEN STATE CHAPTER, by Ryan Stevens

Greetings, fellow New Jersey Federationists. Here's what's been happening with our chapter over the fall and winter:

- On October 15, 2011, we joined with the Wexford-Lees Community Yard Sale in Cherry Hill as our "Meet the Blind Month" fundraiser and outreach event. It was truly successful on both fronts, raising over \$500 for our treasury, and handing out lots of NFB literature. We'd like to thank Marie Griffin for putting so much effort into decorating our table. It really brought the people over to talk to us.
- We had 17 members attend the 2011 State Convention in Clark.
- We are in the process of arranging quarterly fundraising nights out at Pizza Huts around southwestern New Jersey after we held a successful one on November

16, 2011 at the restaurant in Glassboro. The great thing about an event like this is that it gives our members a chance to get together on a casual, social basis.

- On December 3, we had our annual Holiday Party at the John F. Kennedy Hospital cafeteria. About 20 members of the chapter came and enjoyed the camaraderie and the spirit of the season.
- Ryan Stevens and Elizabeth Morgan represented our chapter at the 2012 Washington Seminar. Each returned with full reports to the chapter's membership.
- One of our board members, Brian Mackey, has become the correspondence assistant to our state affiliate secretary Bea Olivetti. We know he will do a wonderful job in this position.
- One of our rank and file members, Jim Holliday, is the co-founder and assistant program director for a new online multi-format music radio station. The home page is <http://www.wics.cc>. We wish Jim luck in the new venture.
- Finally, on Saturday, September 23, 2012, we will be holding our annual chapter picnic at Red Bank Battlefield Park in National Park, Gloucester County. All are welcome.

NORTHERN CHAPTER, by Rebecca Irvin

The Northern Chapter is off to a great start and moving forward in our endeavors to change what it means to be blind. Recently we discovered that we were the first chapter to be established in the New Jersey Affiliate. Help us to celebrate this exciting event this fall; more details to come.

NFBNJ PROGRAMS, ASSOCIATIONS & DIVISIONS NEWS

ADOPT ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT, by Lynn Reynolds

We have received requests for CCTVs and a note taker since the last edition of *The Sounding Board*. We were able to make some placements of CCTVs. If you are in need of a piece of equipment or would like to donate an item for which you no longer have use, please contact either Ed Godfrey or me.

ASSOCIATION OF GUIDE DOG USERS, by Vincent Chaney

The NJ Association of Guide Dog Users (NJAGDU) is proud to say that we are making a difference. Resolution 2009-03, Attack of a Guide Dog, our first submission while still a NFBNJ committee was reviewed on our October 17, 2011 monthly conference call with Assemblyman Robert Schroeder attending, and on March 15, 2012 was introduced to the Assembly as a bill, A2728, by Assemblyman Schroeder

designated as Dusty's Law. The Senate version of this bill will be introduced when the next Senate quorum meets. We are now asking our NFBNJ family, friends and all persons you know residing in New Jersey to aid us in our cause to have this bill become law. We need you to call or e-mail your senators and assemblymen in New Jersey and ask them to sign or co-sign the bill and encourage the chair of the Law and Public Safety committee to schedule A2728 for a hearing.

We have discussed the importance of becoming involved with the NJ DMV and the need to update the state's driver's educational manuals and test as another project. Much of the public does not understand the purpose of the white cane or the guide dog and the individual walking with these methods of travel being blind.

During our monthly conference calls, we 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 comes together during monthly conference calls to make a difference in living with diabetes and a visual impairment. We had EJ McKenna from Advanced Diabetic Solutions join us during a monthly dial-in meeting, and we're planning for other guests as well. The topics covered typically include diet, neuropathy, seasonal weather effects on sugar levels, the diabetic kidneys, exercise, accessible blood glucose meters, blood testing, oral medications, insulin, insulin pens, insulin pumps and many other interests of our members. We share information and network together in support of each other. Please join our NFBNJ Diabetes Division and don't feel alone with diabetes and a visual impairment.

PARENTS OF BLIND CHILDREN, by Carol Castellano

Greetings Fellow Federationists! In November 2011, at the State Convention of the NFB of NJ, POBC-NJ celebrated 20 years of serving families with our "Possibilities" mini-seminar. In honor of POBC-NJ's anniversary, national guests Barbara Cheadle and Sharon Maneki made the trip to NJ to be with us.

"Possibilities" featured a "Heart to Heart" talk from national representative and former Jersey girl Ever Lee Hairston, a focus on education expectations from myself and TBVI Barbara Shalit, and a hard-hitting message from POBC secretary and *Sounding Board* editor Kathy Gabry on the responsibility of parents to make the possibilities happen for their child.

The seminar continued with presentations on Discovery Travel from instructors at the Colorado Center for the Blind, and social networking from students Shafeka Hashash, Maria Lomax and Danny Romero. Next up was the technology portion of the program which featured the latest in electronic brailers from David Pillisher and in accessible music tech from Bill McCann of Dancing Dots.

Mary Jo Partyka and Rebecca Irvin of our NJ Association to Promote the Use of Braille followed next with recognition of this year's Braille Readers Are Leaders contest participants, Mikayla Gephart and Brian Mackey. Next we heard a very poignant presentation on believing in yourself from POBC board member Linda Thomas and her partner in *Looking Good without Looking*, Johanna Baccan. We closed out our very successful day with a cane walk, IEP consultations and technology demonstrations. Hope we'll see you at our next event!

TECHNOLOGY DIVISION, by Michele Chaney

We opened our new season with our e-mail list serve going live. We covered how to sign on to the nfbnet.org. Here you will find array of interests that you can sign on to, including the NFBNJ's Technology Division. At the end of this article you will find the steps how to sign on to njtechdiv.

On another conference call we covered the iPhone, apps, where to find the guide on your iPhone and tutorials for the iPhone. At the NFBNJ State Convention, we had a workshop on the Booksence, Victor Stream and using a variety of apps on the iPhone.

For the 2012 NFBNJ State Convention, we are reviewing topics such as:

- What can you do with your iPhone other than make calls?
- Transferring files and folders from one MS Office to another MS Office
- Working in Windows 7
- Reading MS Excel Spreadsheets
- Transferring your address book in Outlook Express to MS Outlook

Please let us know the topics you would like to see at the workshop at this year's State Convention. My contact information is on page 24 of *The Sounding Board*.

To sign on to Njtechdiv:

1. Go to www.nfbnet.org
2. Click on Join or Drop NFBnet Mailing Lists. Note that this brings up the list of e-mail list serves. Click on Njtechdiv
3. You will now be on the Njtechdiv screen and will be able to sign up for this list
4. Enter your information: your e-mail, name and your created password
5. Click on Subscribe

Please note that you will receive an e-mail confirming your wish to join; you will need to reply to this e-mail to finish your enrollment.

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Ryan Stevens 856-858-3518

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Michele Chaney 732-251-8650

NFB of NJ Chapters*At-Large Chapter*

Last Thurs, 8 p.m., except July, Nov
712-432-0180, enter code 460994

Capital Chapter

Third Sat., Lawrence Library,
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

Garden State Chapter

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

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

Glasstown Chapter

First Sat., Trinity Episcopal Church,
800 E. Wood St., Vineland 11 a.m.

Lydia Keller 856-696-3518
ljkfly1950@verizon.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

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Salem Chapter

At press time, the chapter is
confirming a new meeting location

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South Jersey Shore Chapter

Third Sat., Ocean City Free Public
Library, Ocean City, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

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Thru Our Eyes/Internet Radio

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Deadline for the Fall 2012 issue is October 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.