

SPRING 2013

The Sounding Board

The Publication of the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey

IN THIS ISSUE

JANE DEGENSHEIN

answers students' questions
about blindness

ELIZABETH MORGAN

captures 1st place in the NFB's Braille
Readers Are Leaders Contest

BRIAN MACKEY

reports on being a delegate to the
2012 National Convention

MARK COLASURDO

& STEPHANIE ZUNDEL

named National Scholarship winners

PLUS

**Info on the 2013 NFB National
Convention!**



THE SOUNDING BOARD
Spring 2013

Katherine Gabry, Editor
Jerilyn Higgins, Co-editor

Published by e-mail and on the Web through Newsline and AudioVision by
The National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey
www.nfbnj.org

Joseph Ruffalo, President
State Affiliate Office
254 Spruce Street
Bloomfield, NJ 07003
e-mail: nfbnj1@verizon.net

Letters to the President, address changes, subscription requests, letters to the Editor and articles for *The Sounding Board* should be sent to the State Affiliate Office or e-mailed to specialk38@aol.com. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit all articles for space and/or clarity considerations.

Please Note: The deadline for the Fall issue is October 1, 2013.

Sounding Board subscriptions cost the Federation about six dollars per year. Members are invited and non-members are requested to cover the subscription cost. Donations should be made payable to the
National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey
and sent to the State Affiliate Office.

To subscribe via Newsline, contact Elvis Dejesus, 800-792-8322, ext. 810 or edejesus@njstatelib.org

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."

Mission Statement

The National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey, Inc. is an organization of blind and interested sighted people who: plan and carry out programs; work to improve the quality of life of the blind; provide a means of collective action for parents of blind children; promote the vocational, cultural and social advancement of the blind; achieve the integration of the blind into society on a basis of equality with the sighted; and take action that will improve the overall condition and standard of living of the blind.

The National Federation of the Blind Pledge

I pledge to participate actively in the efforts of the National Federation of the Blind to achieve equality, opportunity and security for the blind; to support the programs and policies of the Federation; and to abide by its constitution.

The Sounding Board

In an economy where prices have been rising, we've been successful at keeping our budget consistent for production of *The Sounding Board* while continuing to increase our circulation. About 300 readers receive the publication via e-mail, and we also encourage our readers to sign up on Newline Online, which sends publications, sections of publications or articles you select to your e-mail address for downloading. We're also pleased that the New Jersey Library Talking Book and Braille Center is airing excerpts from *The Sounding Board* on Audiovision. *The Sounding Board* is also available for download from our website at www.nfbnj.org and is broadcast on our radio station, ThruOurEyes.org. We encourage our readers to share the publication with family members, teachers, professionals, neighbors and any other interested parties.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Presidential Message, by Joe Ruffalo	1
Legislative Report, by Lynn Reynolds.....	3
Please Sign the NFB’s Petition, by Chris Danielsen.....	4
Reflections on the Washington Seminar, by Alice Eaddy, Brian Mackey, Anthony Lanzilotti.....	5
Parents of Blind Children-NJ News, by Carol Castellano.....	8
CBVI Director Vito DeSantis Retires.....	9
How to Obtain National Certification in Literary Braille.....	9
Congratulations to NFB Scholarship Winners Mark Colasurdo & Stephanie Zundel.....	10
Dear Jane.....	11
For the Love of Braille, by Elizabeth Morgan.....	14
iCanConnect/NJ Provides Communications Technology.....	15
Gearing Up for the 2013 NFB National Convention.....	16
My Experience as an Alternate Delegate at Convention 2012, by Brian Mackey.....	16
Are you “Register Ready” for the next natural disaster? by Kathy Rawa.....	21
Solving the Training Problems of Election Poll Workers, by Kathy Rawa.....	22
Chapter Goings-On.....	23
NFBNJ Member Recognition.....	23
Please Support Thru Our Eyes Fundraiser.....	24
FYI Information Tidbits.....	25
Letters.....	25
From the Kitchen of Jerilyn Higgins.....	27
NFBNJ Contact Info.....	28

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

Greetings Fellow Federationists!

As we enter the warm spring season, NFBNJ continues working toward our goal of changing what it means to be blind. Here's some of our progress:

- Rebecca Irvin, president of the Northern Chapter, and Solomon Bryant, chapter member, became lifetime members with each other as they were married on February 16. The ceremony followed a chapter fund raiser and all in attendance were honored to witness "true love."
- Parents of Blind Children-NJ has announced election of a new president: Holly Miller. Congratulations to Carol Castellano, who served as president since the group began in 1991. Carol will continue to serve on the POBC board. An article featuring POBC is on page 8.
- Evelyn Valdez graduated from the 9-month program at the Louisiana Center for the Blind. She's relocating to Washington, DC to begin her career with the US Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Congratulations to Mary Jo Partyka as she retires from a 35-year career with the State of New Jersey. Enjoy your retirement, and remember: I have plans for you!
- Congratulations to Serena Cucco on her graduation from Rutgers University with a master's degree in social work. Her career journey has begun!
- Mark Colasurdo, a student at Cornell University, and Stephanie Zundel, a student at Edison High School, will receive National Scholarships this July in Orlando. An article highlighting both is on page 10 in this issue.

Thanks to all who sold and purchased raffle tickets for our Bermuda cruise in April! Jack Truehaft, a member of the Central Chapter, won the free cruise to Bermuda. Twenty-two NFBNJ members and friends made the trip, and it was a great time! With the proceeds from the raffle and our profit of \$100 per cabin booked, the affiliate raised nearly \$3,000.

ThruOurEyes hosts Joe Ruffalo, Jane Degenshein and Jerry Moreno are fund raising to continue producing informative, educational and motivational interviews via the internet. Watch your mailbox for your invitation to the Stay-At-Home Tea Party, and please share the invitation with your friends, family, neighbors and co-workers. We greatly appreciate all donations!

Please review the information on page 16 of this issue pertaining to the National Convention that will be held in Orlando July 1 through July 6. For additional information, please visit the national website at www.nfb.org.

The 37th annual State Convention will be held at the Holiday Inn, 151 Route 72, in Manahawkin, Friday, November 8 through Sunday, November 10. Rooms are available prior to the convention, and you may want to consider coming down on Thursday in order to be ready for the Friday morning activities. For hotel reservations, call 609-481-6100 and provide the code of FFB. Rooms are \$89 plus tax each night and a full breakfast is included. If you need a refrigerator for medical needs, please request it when making your reservation. Additional information will be forthcoming by early September.

On a sad note, Mary Dockery, past president of the Ocean Chapter, has passed. Linda Halm, a member of the chapter, wrote the following, "When I heard that Mary had passed away, we were taking (my son) Mike to Red Lobster for his birthday. The restaurant provided Mike with a Braille menu. That was a project of Mary's: to get local restaurants to provide Braille menus. I'll think of her every time one is available."

Upcoming Important Dates

- July 1 – 6: National Convention, Orlando
- September 28: Fund raiser for POBC
- October 1: Deadline for the Fall issue of *The Sounding Board*
- November 8 – 10: State Convention, Holiday Inn, Manahawkin

As you can witness, the members of our affiliate have made a difference and are still making a difference in changing what it means to be blind.

Please consider getting involved and making a difference yourself.

Sincerely,



Joseph Ruffalo, President

LEGISLATIVE REPORT – SPRING 2013
By Lynn Reynolds, Legislative Coordinator

As in tradition, we kicked off the 2013 legislative year with the Washington Seminar on February 4, 2013. The New Jersey delegation consisted of 13 members who traveled to Washington, DC and presented to our congressional representatives the issues that the NFB is focusing on this year. Below are the three issues, along with a brief description of each one.

- The Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities Act of 2013 (HR831) was introduced by Representative Gregg Harper (R-MS). Congressman Harper, along with 11 original co-sponsors, introduced the Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities Act of 2013 to repeal section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, and to phase out the discriminatory practice of paying workers with disabilities pennies per hour. This bill ends this exploitative practice and gives disabled Americans equal protection under the law to earn at least the federal minimum wage.
- The Technology, Education and Accessibility in College and Higher Education (TEACH) Act calls for minimum accessibility standards for instructional materials used in post-secondary settings. Electronic instructional materials have replaced traditional methods of learning, yet the overwhelming majority of e-books, courseware, applications and other educational devices are inaccessible to disabled students. TEACH ends this “separate but equal” approach. As of this writing, the bill has not been introduced.
- HR164 and S346 provide equal access to the Space Available Program for 100 percent service-disabled veterans. The program currently allows active duty military, Red Cross employees and retired members of the armed services to travel on military aircraft if there is space available, but excludes 100 percent service disabled veterans. As of this writing, Congressmen Andrews, Smith, LoBiondo, Runyan, Holt and Frelinghuysen have signed on to HR164.

We’ve made progress in working to have Dusty’s Law pass in the State Legislature. The State Senate unanimously passed the bill in December. The Assembly bill, A2728, has been stalled in committee. We’re waiting for it to be brought up for discussion.

We need everyone’s help to reach out to our representatives to move forward on the passage of these issues. I will send out action alerts as they are released. To receive these alerts, please send me your email information: lh1827@optonline.net. I would like to thank everyone who has made phone calls and sent e-mails because every contact moves us closer to changing what it means to be blind.

**PLEASE SIGN THE NFB'S PETITION:
SUB-MINIMUM WAGES FOR WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES MUST STOP!
By Chris Danielsen**

Editor's Note: *We received the following communication from the National Center. Chris Danielsen is the Director of Public Relations for the National Federation of the Blind. Please take a few minutes to visit the link and support the NFB in this cause.*

As you know, the National Federation of the Blind is leading the effort to stop the exploitation of workers with disabilities who receive subminimum wages. Written in 1938, Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) discriminates against people with disabilities by allowing the secretary of labor to grant Special Wage Certificates to employers, thereby permitting them to pay workers with disabilities less than the minimum wage. Despite enlightened civil rights legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, this antiquated provision is still in force, with some disabled workers making only three cents an hour.

Please help support our efforts to stop this exploitation by signing the online petition calling for fair wages for workers with disabilities. You can sign the petition at <http://www.nfb.org/fair-wages-petition>.

Once you have signed the petition, be sure to share it with friends, family and fellow Federationists. If you're an affiliate or chapter leader, please encourage all of your members and supporters to sign the petition.

You can also ask your Facebook friends and Twitter followers to sign the petition by posting or tweeting the link:

<http://www.nfb.org/fair-wages-petition>

This petition is an important way to show the disability community, members of Congress and the general public how important this issue is to us. You can add your voice to the growing chorus of support for fair wages in less than a minute. Just visit this link, or paste it into your browser, and sign the petition:

<http://www.nfb.org/fair-wages-petition>

Please sign the petition and forward the link right away. Thanks for helping in this critically important effort.

REFLECTIONS ON THE 2013 WASHINGTON SEMINAR

Editor's Note: *The following three articles were written by first-time attendees at the Washington Seminar.*

By Alice Eaddy, *Vice President of the NFBNJ Glasstown Chapter*

As a first-timer to the Washington Seminar, February 4-5, 2013, I found it very interesting, informative and eye opening. My first impression of the hotel was its echo. Rooms with echoes, such as gymnasiums, are a challenge to someone who is hard of hearing, like me.

I was astounded upon entering the ballroom for the Great Gathering-In. I saw all kinds of differently styled mobility canes, and different types and sizes of guide dogs and harnesses. The room was overflowing with people. The walls were lined with people, and even more people spilled into the hallway, so the doors remained open.

I heard fascinating speakers such as: John Pare, Executive Director for Strategic Initiatives; Anil Lewis, Director of Strategic Communications for the NFB; and Jesse Hartle and Lauren McLarney, governmental programs specialists for the NFB.

All of the representatives I met with encouraged me to contact them any time I feel there is a way they could help me. From my experience, it was evident that the NFB as a whole is effective and has an ongoing rapport with our congressional leaders on The Hill. Joe Ruffalo stated that everyone – our friends, family members, neighbors – should talk to their representatives and encourage them to support the issues presented during the Washington Seminar. When you receive e-mails about the issues, please share them with others, including your representatives.

By Brian Mackey, *Board Member of the Garden State Chapter, Secretary of the At Large Chapter and Producer of ThruOurEyes with Joe Ruffalo*

I've aspired to mingle with the senators and representatives from my state since I was in the LEAD program in 2006, so when Joe Ruffalo mentioned the upcoming Washington Seminar at the New Jersey State Convention last fall, my ears perked up. I quickly contacted Joe and Lynn Reynolds to be considered.

Interested individuals must have participated in some type of legislative activity during the year. I had sent letters to my NJ senator and assemblymen encouraging them to support Dusty's Law (A 2728/S1907), which protects service animals, including dog guides. I had also sent letters to Senators Menendez and Lautenberg asking them to support the UN Convention on the Rights for People with Disabilities (CRPD) Treaty, and I participated in the informational protest against Goodwill in August. I was confident that my legislative activities would convince Joe and Lynn of my dedication to the NFB issues and my desire to attend the Washington Seminar.

In early January, I found out I would be going to Washington. I was ecstatic! Once the issues were available, I thoroughly studied them. I traveled by train with Ryan Stevens, Ed Godfrey and Alice Eaddy. After arriving in Washington, we checked into our hotel, unpacked, ate a quick lunch, and then it was time to concentrate on the final preparations for our Capitol Hill meetings.

During the Great Gathering-In meeting, everyone was psyched with enthusiasm as Dr. Maurer laid out the plan for our Capitol Hill meetings. At the NJ delegation meeting afterwards, Joe Ruffalo distributed affiliate business cards for our Capitol Hill meetings. We organized our presentations, we knew the issues, and our adrenaline was pumping!

Appointment # 1: Congressman Holt. I took a huge gulp as we entered the office; I was nervous about my portion of the presentation. Congressman Holt had been a teacher, so we led with the TEACH Act. Lauren McLarney, the NFB contact for the TEACH Act, was with us and offered additional information. I introduced the Fair Wages bill, and Joe concluded our meeting by conveying the importance of the Space Available program. Congressman Holt's aide stated that the congressman would support our issues, but would not give a definite commitment at this time. After we left, Lauren declared that we did a very good job with our presentations.

Appointments #2 and #3: Senators Menendez and Lautenberg. We outlined the three issues with the senators' aides. They were very receptive and supportive to the issues, but again, they would not commit at this time.

After completing our appointments, we reported our findings to the NFB staff waiting at the hotel. Our mission to promote our issues to our congressional representatives was accomplished, and although we acquired support, no firm commitments were extended.

Attending the Washington Seminar and meeting with our congressional representatives was an awesome experience. I was thrilled, excited, honored, nervous and grateful for this opportunity to represent the NFBNJ. Hopefully, I will have the chance to attend again. I am a proud Federationist and proud to represent our affiliate. Thank you, Joe Ruffalo and Lynn Reynolds.

By Anthony Lanzilotti, Board Member of the South Jersey Shore Chapter

It was truly an honor and privilege to attend the NFB Legislative Directors Seminar and Washington Seminar this past February. I am forever grateful to the members of the New Jersey Affiliate who put their trust in me to represent the state at this important presentation of three very crucial matters that impact the lives of all blind and visually impaired individuals. While en route to Washington, I remember

thinking how different things would be from my prior personal involvement on the state legislative level as compared to legislative issues at the federal level.

In the days before the Washington Seminar, I had the privilege of attending the Legislative Directors Seminar in Baltimore, where I assisted Lynn Reynolds, New Jersey's Legislative Coordinator. I found this seminar to be very helpful in providing guidance for what I would encounter in the next few days.

On February 4, 2013 everyone assembled at the Capitol Holiday Inn in Washington, DC where Dr. Mark Maurer brought to order the Washington Seminar. In the opening night's presentations, I felt an aura of positive reinforcement.

We broke into small groups to visit the congressmen and discuss the three key pieces of legislation. My group included Ryan Stevens, Ed Godfrey, Alice Eaddy and me. I discovered that most of the meetings were with congressional aides interning for the congressional members. My group met with Congressman Andrews and his aide Vincent Sarubbi Jr., Frank LoBiondo and his aide Rachel Bohlander, Congressman Chris Smith and his aide Bob Angelini, and Congressman John Runyan and his aide Jeff Brabant. I was happy to discuss the TEACH Act (Technology, Education, and Accessibility in College and Higher Education Act), because I am currently a college student facing many of the issues presented. The responses to us on the issues were genuinely positive. Specifically, the response to the TEACH Act was mixed, but all members of Congress were on board for the Space Available program. As for the Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities Act of 2013, Congressman Andrews had reservations; he said that no matter how much training and education an individual may possess, there are different skill levels, and he would like to see a middle ground established.

Attending this Washington Seminar may have meant more to me than many because of my own personal background. My love for law and politics began when I was growing up in the historic city of Philadelphia. We were taught about our great country and the political issues affecting our lives. My mom was a poll worker. Currently, I'm a student at Atlantic Cape Community College majoring in criminal justice. My ultimate scholastic goal is to pursue a law degree. With that goal in mind, I've been an intern for three terms with Assemblymen John Amodeo and Chris Brown and gained special insight to how legislation is handled on the state level.

I am honored and grateful for the experience of attending such a seminar on Capitol Hill, where history and laws are created and passed. I feel privileged to have been enriched by the speeches of Dr. Mark Maurer and the other key speakers. With gratitude, I would like to share the following appropriate quotes. Stevie Wonder said, "Just because a man lacks the use of his eyes does not mean he lacks vision," and Jonathan Winters said, "If your ship hasn't come in yet, swim out and meet it."

PARENTS OF BLIND CHILDREN-NJ NEWS
By Carol Castellano

Greetings Fellow Federationists! POBC-NJ has lots of news. In November 2012 we participated in the State Convention of the NFBNJ. We presented the Family Hands-On Science and Engineering workshop featuring NJ's science ladies, Marilyn Winograd and Dr. Lillian Rankel. Then along with the NJ Student Division, we hosted Getting BVI Kids Ready for a Job, which featured national representative Kevan Worley and Eric Guillory of the Louisiana Center for the Blind.

We just completed our spring seminar called *When I Grow Up* where we were lucky enough to again have Eric Guillory with us. In addition to Eric's talk on competence and confidence, we heard from speakers on the role of the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, children's rights in education, library services, tactile graphics, hippotherapy, music therapy, baby development, Braille, self-advocacy, independent living skills and technology. We thank Eric, John Reiff, Jayne Wesler, Liz Burns, Shirley Keller, Laurie Landy, Ed Goodman, Amanda Ranallo, Pat McKinley, Joe Ruffalo, Evelyn Valdez and Sherlock Washington for giving of their time and talents. A special thanks goes to the children—Jillian Milton, Matthew Whitaker and Andrew Chin—for presenting such a wonderful panel called *Life in the Fast Lane*.

At the end of the day, POBC-NJ had a historic moment. Many of you know that I was the co-founder and first and only president of POBC-NJ since we founded the organization in 1991, and that I was planning to step down this year. It is with great delight that I announce that Holly Miller is the new POBC-NJ president! I hope you will all join me in congratulating Holly! New members of the board are Kenneth Chin, Vera Hough, Alison Stephens and Liz Valois. Rounding out the board are returning members Linda Halm, Kathy Gabry, Mary Colasurdo, Tom Ferry, Susan Flynn, Hannah Hashash, Carla Richardson, May Whitaker and myself. We thank Linda Thomas and Patty Tumminello for their past board service.

CBVI DIRECTOR VITO DESANTIS RETIRES

Editor's Note: *Our congratulations to Vito on his 29-year career of assisting to change what it means to be blind.*

As some of you know, I have decided to retire from state service and from the position as Executive Director of the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired on June 1, 2013.

Looking back at these past 29 years, the last 11 as the Executive Director, I realize how fortunate I have been to be associated with such a dedicated group of individuals here in New Jersey and across the country. I have learned a great deal from all of you and I hope in some ways I was able to return the favor.

It has been my privilege and honor to serve as the Executive Director and to be associated with a group of individuals so dedicated to helping people with disabilities become independent and a contributing part of their communities.

I do plan to stay involved with employment and other issues concerning people with disabilities, but for now my wife and I plan to travel and attempt to break 100 on the front nine. I wish you all the best.

HOW TO OBTAIN NATIONAL CERTIFICATION IN LITERARY BRAILLE

Editor's Note: *The following article is condensed from an e-mail we received from the National Blindness Professional Certification Board and is corroborated with introductory information from the group's website.*

Those who want to obtain National Certification in Literary Braille (NCLB) must pass a 4-part exam administered by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board and be re-certified every five years. Here's more info on the process:

- The NCLB is the only test that is specifically designed for teachers and aides who work with blind children and adults. All other national certifications are intended for transcribers who must be expert in both the Braille code and formatting.
- The NCLB is the result of collaboration from a number of blindness organizations, including the NFB, to find a way that teachers working with the blind can unequivocally demonstrate their knowledge of Braille.
- NCLB certification ensures employers, school administrators, colleagues, consumers, families and other professionals that you possess proficient Braille knowledge and skills to meet your professional responsibilities.
- Go to www.nbpcb.org/nclb for more information, a sample test, study materials, accommodations, costs, scheduling an exam and more!

**CONGRATULATIONS TO NFB SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS
MARK COLASURDO & STEPHANIE ZUNDEL**

The NFBNJ Scholarship Committee proudly congratulates our 2013 National Scholarship winners Mark Colasurdo and Stephanie Zundel. Mark and Stephanie are two of the 30 scholarship winners who will be recognized by the NFB at the 73rd annual National Convention in July for their achievements as blind scholars.

Dr. Marc Maurer, president of the NFB, describes this year's class of scholarship winners as "future leaders of this nation's blind" who are "forging a path in disciplines as varied as engineering, theology, special education, law and psychiatry. They are proof of our conviction that we, the blind of this nation, can compete on terms of equality with our sighted peers, and we are very proud of their accomplishments."

Mark and Stephanie have distinguished themselves as both scholars and leaders. A brief bio on each of them follows:

A former Leadership, Education, Advocacy and Determination (LEAD) student, **Mark Colasurdo** currently attends Cornell University where he maintains a 3.88 grade point average. Before transferring to Cornell, Mark attended Lehigh University, where he was a member of the National Honor Society, Psi Upsilon Fraternity and the Biomedical Engineering Society. He was also a peer mentor. Mark's major is biomedical molecular biology, with a minor in computer science. His vocational goal is stem cell research related to blindness and tissue regeneration.

Mark has been a member of the New Jersey Association of Blind students since 2009 and is currently vice president. Mark was a member of the College Leadership Program in 2011, and with the knowledge learned, he's given back to the members of the Students Division. He has attended several national and state conventions, Rolex 24 and several Washington Seminars, and has participated in several STEM programs sponsored by the Jernigan Institute as a member and as a mentor volunteer.

Mark is optimistic, determined, motivated and ambitious. He enjoys solving problems, he's open-minded, and he's a true leader.

Stephanie Zundel was admitted to Vanderbilt University as an early acceptance. Her goal is to earn a degree in speech pathology and psychology. Her hard work during her high school years has earned her numerous awards. She is a member of the National Honor Society and the Spanish National Honor Society, and she scored 2100 on the SAT. In addition to serving on the Student Council as secretary and treasurer, she has tutored elementary school students, participated in school musical performances and is a member of the boxing club. She has also earned a black belt.

Stephanie is active in the LEAD Program, where she has also demonstrated her leadership skills. She participated in a Youth SLAM activity in her junior year and was assigned as a group leader at the event. She is a member of the NFB Central Jersey Chapter and a member of the New Jersey Association of Guide Dog Users. She has written letters to New Jersey legislators to move a bill pertaining to service animals.

For the past several years, Stephanie has organized fund raisers to support the local animal shelter, where she's a volunteer caregiver. Inspired by her work at the shelter, she founded and is the president of Edison High School's Promote Animal Welfare for Salvation (PAWS). The club's members volunteer on Saturdays walking, cleaning, grooming and caring for the animals. Stephanie hopes to organize a similar program at Vanderbilt. In recognition of her efforts on behalf of animals, Stephanie was awarded the Junior Hero Award presented by the Animal Welfare Federation of New Jersey; Governor Chris Christie received the Senior Hero Award.

Stephanie has demonstrated a capacity to learn, teach and lead. She is motivated, thoughtful and caring, and she promotes the philosophy of the Federation. We are proud to announce her as an NFB 2013 National Scholarship winner.

DEAR JANE ...

Editor's Note: *Jane Degenshein recently visited students at Benjamin Franklin and George Washington middle schools in Ridgewood. The visits were arranged by speech-language specialist Wendy Padykula to educate the students about how having a visual impairment would impact their lives and to explore compensatory strategies, including technology, that assist those with visual impairments. The students also explored how one can maintain a positive attitude in any situation or difficulty. Jane's active involvement in the NFBNJ made her an excellent role model for the students; she is president of the Senior Division, co-host of On The Bright Side, a member of the Technology Division and a member of the At Large Chapter, as well as facilitator of Eyes Closed Hearts Open (ECHO). The speech language specialist, Wendy, reports that the students loved every minute of Jane's presentations, and that they adored Jane! Her words of wisdom in response to their questions below clearly demonstrate why she is a leader in the blindness movement in New Jersey. Lucky kids to have had Jane as a role model!*

Hi Jane!

I am in 6th grade and I am 12 years old. There were so many things that I learned from you, but there were two things that really caught my ear! The first thing that I learned from you is how you use your phone. I think it is amazing how you use your

phone because of the little robot voice that says everything. The next thing that I learned from you is the scanner on your phone that tells you what the object is. I think that is so awesome.

Something I admire about you is how you do the same things from when you were sighted. One example is that you can still play the flute amazingly well!

A question I have for you is how do you eat food? Is it hard to use your knife and fork? I am just a little curious.

Something cool and interesting about me is that I dyed the top of my hair white. I dyed it because I can make it into a Mohawk so the top of my hair would be white, and the rest of my hair would be brown because brown is my natural color. The main reason I dyed my hair is because I wanted to be like my favorite soccer player who has the same hairstyle. His name is Neymar Da Silva.

In conclusion, I think you are so interesting and hope to see you again.

Jane's reply:

It is so nice of you to write to me. Thank you for asking Mrs. Wendy to invite me to speak with all of you. It was my pleasure to share about my different ways to access information on the computer and the iPhone too. Everyone needs to find a way that makes them unique. I like to play the flute and have been playing for about 50 years, can you believe that???(Now is when you are supposed to think, "Hey, she doesn't look that old!")

Regarding food: I hope you will put your meal on your dish in quadrants (think of a clock, so 12, 3, 6, and 9 o'clock). So that is how I place my food, and close your eyes after that, and you can feel the difference of the knife and fork or spoon. Cutting meat can take a few times but it is fun to learn new ways to conquer a task. Don't you feel good about yourself when you do that???

Keep up your questioning mind and always continue to be considerate of others.

Hi! I am 12 years old and I'm in 6th grade. When you came to GW I learned that when you're blind you can have a talking computer to tell you what you type. Also, I learned that when you're blind you can make lots of friends. I admire that you can play the flute very well. What I want to ask is: What's your favorite thing about being blind?

What I want you to know about me is that I like playing a lot of sports.

Jane's reply:

I think you have some great comments about me. Yes, I do have loads of friends and that is what makes my life so much fun as they are all different from each other.

I celebrate their differences, like if I want to play my flute, I will call a friend who loves music, or when I have finished a great book, I call a friend to share it. Having many friends means that you can share a special part of yourself with the right one!

Being blind means that I cannot judge you for how you look, or how you dress, or your race or religion, or how important you are. I can only rely on the way you treat me! It is liberating to just treat people the way you wish to be treated.

My secret is this little quote: It is nice to be important, but it is more important to be nice. It was fun meeting you and continue to play your sports!

Dear Jane,

I'm 12 years old and almost 13. I'm in 6th grade. You taught my class and me some great things, and we all admire you. Two things that I learned from you is all the technology that blind people use and how amazing it is. Another thing I learned from you was how to use your walking stick. I thought that was really awesome.

I admire you a ton because you don't treat anyone any more different from anyone else and how much you adore teaching kids. Another reason why I adore you is because you can play the flute so AMAZING.

I have some questions for you. I was wondering how you choose your clothes and how you eat because what if you were using a knife or fork?

Something interesting about me is that I love football, dance and Marvel. Marvel is a series of the super heroes that's in the movie "The Avengers." Dancing is one of my top hobbies and I wouldn't be who I am today if I didn't dance. I dance almost every day and hopefully will do that forever

Jane's reply:

You have many interests which make you special. I love to dance too! Thank you for enjoying my presentation and all the technologies that I shared with you. Yes, I remember how excited you were to use my "long white cane."

I use the app from my iPhone to help in the colors of my clothes. Remember when we use the Tap Tap See app, and it can tell me the correct dollar amount, a color of an item, like a green hat, a red glove?

Eating is easy when I learned the different way to tackle it. I divide my plate into four parts called quadrants so that one food item is at 12, or 3, or 6 or 9 o'clock. Using the utensils takes a little practice, but it can be done! Give it a try sometime and you will be surprised how simple it can become.

Often, when a person is different than we are, we can't imagine how they do certain tasks, but if you use your mind and stretch it a bit, you can find a way to get it done. Thank you for writing and continue to be the best you can be!

FOR THE LOVE OF BRAILLE**By Elizabeth Morgan**

“On one thing ... there can be no doubt. The National Federation of the Blind is absolutely and irrevocably committed to the achievement of Braille literacy for the blind of this country. On this issue we will not equivocate; we will not compromise; and we will not quit. It must—it will be done.”

*– Kenneth Jernigan, "Of Braille and Honeybees,"
1994 NFB National Convention banquet speech, Detroit, Michigan*

Editor’s Note: *Liz finished in first place in the NFB’s Braille Readers Are Leaders Contest/Beginners category, reading 3,924 pages in the 3-month contest. Fellow New Jerseyan Brian Mackey took third place, reading 1,749 pages. Liz reflects on her feelings for Braille in this article.*

Where would we be without BRAILLE?! Braille means no less to me than print means to the sighted community. With Braille, I can read and write just like my sighted friends and family, and it puts us on an equal playing field. That is why Braille is so essential.

Without having Braille in school, it would be difficult for blind and visually impaired students to participate and receive the same education as their sighted peers. But Braille is not just for school; it’s also for enjoyment! I don’t know what I would do without Braille.

Becoming a Braille reader may be scary for some, but it shouldn’t be. I was fully sighted until the seventh grade. After an annual eye exam, I learned that I had a brain tumor. I underwent immediate surgery and then lost sight in both of my eyes, at the same time. Learning Braille wasn’t hard, and it didn’t take long before I was reading and writing Braille. In fact, I became more motivated and less sorry for myself after mastering the Braille code. For some it may be hard to understand, but Braille has increased my independence.

Hearing a book is absolutely not the same as reading it. The more I read Braille, the better I get at it. I have Braille cookbooks, Braille literature and leisure reading materials. I also enjoy reading along with the congregation in my church, so I have obtained religious materials in Braille, including songs and sections of the Bible.

I take my Braille with me everywhere. When I’m sitting in a waiting room for an appointment, or riding in a car or on a bus, you will always spot me reading Braille. Others sit there reading their books and magazines, and I spend my time doing the same thing. What better way to promote the use of Braille? It’s a great conversation starter, and I absolutely love it when people ask me about Braille.

When I go out to a restaurant, I always make sure to ask for a Braille menu. If they don't have one, I politely tell them that most blind people like to read the menu themselves and don't want to rely on others to read the menu to them, so they should consider having some available for customers.

Being part of the Braille Readers Are Leaders Contest gives me the feeling that I am taking a stand in the fight to keep Braille alive. I love reading as much now as I did before I lost my sight. We must do whatever we can to promote the use of Braille so that the quality of our lives does not decrease. It is essential to me and so many other blind people.

I have print/Braille/picture ("twin vision") books, which I read to my young nieces. They seem to enjoy it as much as I do! The oldest one asked me, "Aunt Lizzie, would you teach me how to read like you do?" She tells her friends and classmates that her aunt reads dots on papers. So, for her birthday, I will be giving her a beginner Braille book, and I will teach her more about Braille and hopefully she will get to love Braille as much as I do!

If I'm not in school this summer, I plan to volunteer at a children's day care center and at a local nursing home reading Braille books to them. I absolutely recommend that others participate in Braille-related contests, book readings and programs. Although I really do read a lot, the contest motivated me to increase my reading. Thank you to the NFB for having a great way for all of us to use our skills and show our support for Braille literacy. I love Braille!

iCanConnect/NJ PROVIDES COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

If you have a combined vision and hearing loss, and if you cannot afford to purchase telecommunications equipment so that you can use a telephone, e-mail, access the Internet, or use other types of communications technology, then the iCanConnect/NJ program may be for you! iCanConnect is the Federal Communications Commission's program to provide telecommunications devices to people who have both vision and hearing loss and are in need of such equipment. Under the program's guidelines, applicants must provide verification of their status as low-income and meet the definition of "deafblind." The equipment distributed – for example: phones, computers, fax machines, iPads – must enable the individual to successfully use telecommunications devices. In New Jersey, the Center for Sensory and Complex Disabilities at The College of New Jersey and the NJ Commission for the Blind are working together to implement the iCanConnect program. For more information, visit njcsd.org, or call 609-771-2575, or e-mail iCanConnectNJ@gmail.com.

GEARING UP FOR THE 2013 NFB CONVENTION

Editor's Note: *Convention 2013 is rapidly approaching! If you're considering attending, please read the article below.*

National Convention preregistration is open through May 31, 2013. The fee to preregister online is \$25; it will be \$30 at the door. Banquet tickets can be purchased online for \$50, and will cost \$60 if you wait to buy them at Convention. To preregister online or obtain a pdf to register by mail, go to www.nfb.org/registration.

MY EXPERIENCE AS AN ALTERNATE DELEGATE AT CONVENTION 2012

By Brian Mackey

Editor's Note: *Brian Mackey is currently a Garden State Chapter board member, At Large Chapter secretary and NFBNJ affiliate secretary.*

May, 2012: Ring. Ring. "Hello Brian, this is Joe (Ruffalo). It is my pleasure to tell you that the NJ affiliate board has unanimously nominated you as our alternate delegate to this year's National Convention."

As Joe told me the duties of the alternate delegate, my mind raced! When he finished his explanation, he asked if I would accept the nomination. How could I *not* accept? I expressed my gratitude to Joe for the great honor and privilege to represent our affiliate, and I promised to do a great job.

The main responsibility of a delegate is to bring information from Convention workshops, General Session and the banquet back to the chapter. Joe asked me to attend certain workshops that he would be unable to attend. My mom and I had mapped out which meetings we wanted to attend. During our planning, Linda DeBerardinis, Garden State Chapter treasurer, asked us to attend the Public Affairs meeting and the Back to Basics meeting (for chapter building). How could I refuse?! Shuffle, shuffle and shift of schedules to accommodate the new workshops. Ring, Ring. Michele Chaney, NJ Technology Division president, asked me to attend certain technology workshops so I could discuss this topic at our NJ State Convention technology workshops. This was an overflowing schedule of workshops, division meetings and seminars. So mom and I devised a plan of divide and conquer in order to try and attend all of these meetings, and we were up for the challenge. For example, while I was attending the NFB Jernigan Institute Access Technology seminars on Saturday, mom was attending the Employment Seminar. Attending

convention is not a vacation, but a fact gaining, networking opportunity, especially with my new responsibilities. We got our gym shoes ready to burn some rubber!

In general, convention is a time to mingle and observe and discuss NFB philosophies with dynamic NFB role models. New friendships are formed as you attend seminars on topics from new technology to new resolutions. But I was looking at this convention from a different aspect and with different goals. I started the workshop marathon on Saturday morning at the Access Technology seminar, while mom went to the Job Seekers Seminar. The Access Technology Part 1 workshop discussed the differences and the pros and cons of the iPhone and an Android. Basically, the iPhone allows finger movement across the icons with general sweeps, while the Android requires precise finger placement. iPhone's current operating system is accessible, while the Android's newly released operating system, Jellybean, should be more accessible. The iPhone needs 3G or the Internet for Siri to work, while Android has voice recognition with or without the Internet. Part 2 of the Access Technology workshop discussed QuickBooks, which I learned and aspire to use in my company, Mackey Enterprises LLC, to complete basic accounting/data entry assignments. Currently, QuickBooks is not totally accessible, but John Martin is in the process of writing a JAWS script to eliminate this problem. Anyone interested in participating in the beta testing for this new JAWS script can visit www.doitblind.com and fill out the contact form at the bottom of the page. I was amazed and impressed by the very knowledgeable presenters.

Next up – Community Service. Many people attended the general information part of the meeting. I learned that community service can benefit the community and the NFB chapter, as well as the volunteers themselves. Volunteers help the community with needed projects, demonstrating their skills and willingness to work, and sometimes employers consider the volunteers as potential employees. This is a win-win for all.

Dick Davis emphasized that any volunteer work in which you participate is also a plus on your resume. Volunteering offers opportunities to network and sometimes makes a difference between you or someone else getting a job. This was not a new idea for me, since my mom had me volunteering with her at the Ronald McDonald House when I was about 10 years old. Conchita Gonzales was so impressive telling us about her volunteering in Mexico. She told us to seek out other blind people to learn how to do things you don't know how to do. She also said volunteering gives you different opportunities to find your "passion" and, possibly, your career. The workshop enlightened me to the fact that the more the blind volunteer and work in the community, the more non-blind persons learn about us and what we can do. The

division itself is still in the development stages, but hopes to be a viable division by the next convention. *Finally*, time for a late night dinner and bed.

An early morning wake up to begin day two. Mom and I began the day with a quick trip through the Independence Market and Exhibit Hall. Both offered new products from vendors and state affiliates.

Then it was off to the Built-In Accessibility of Apple Technology workshop to learn all I could for Michelle Chaney. Even though I knew some hand gestures to navigate the iPhone, these knowledgeable presenters educated us on many more. So much to learn and take in! For example, I learned about VoiceOver and how to navigate through the screens, how to confirm a command, how to add appointments to your calendar, and how to move from page to page of app. Whew!

A quick dinner and mom and I were off to the Membership Committee meeting. This room was packed with members from many different states and chapters. Patty Estes, Maine president, mesmerized us with her bubbly personality as we learned how she developed a small group of blind individuals into a viable chapter. The main objective is to build membership whether a person is young, old, technology savvy or not, good health or not, but all have blindness in common. The secret ingredient to membership building is performing follow-ups with potential members. We need to recruit new members, keep them and train them to become the next generation of NFB leaders. That's a goal for me! We were also able to purchase an SD card loaded with over 73 hours of speeches by Dr. Jacobus tenBrook, Dr. Jernigan, Dr. Maurer, Dr. Schroeder, Ray Kurzweil, and Parent of Blind Children leaders, such as Carol Castellano, and 141 text documents. What a great tool to have to influence and inspire members instead of just directing them to the NFB website.

Day three began early with Mom working the New Jersey table in the Exhibits Hall and the public relations committee meeting, while I attended the Board of Directors meeting. Then excitingly I was off to the LookTel's new iPhone Apps workshop. Fantastic workshops presenting apps for money reading, the Recognizer app, and the Breadcrumbs GPS app! The Money Reader app uses your phone camera to scan and read paper money without the need of an Internet connection. Because money has unique characteristics, it doesn't matter how the money is positioned, it will be recognized. The Money Reader (\$10 in the App Store) currently recognizes US currency, Canadian currency, the British pound, the Euro and the Australian dollar. Personally, I couldn't wait to get this one! The Recognizer app uses the camera to recognize products you may purchase. You do need to build your own database, since this would differ from person to person. For basic label reading, you don't need an Internet connection. The Recognizer has a barcode scanner, which does require an Internet connection. The Recognizer (\$9.99 in the App Store) can recognize

medicine bottles very reliably. The Breadcrumbs GPS app was recently developed and should be available after convention. As you travel, you leave breadcrumbs, which you can string together to make different travel routes. Your phone can tell you by text message where you are in relation to your breadcrumbs, and audio description in feet and the face of a clock, or vibration when the power button faces the breadcrumb. Friends with iOS devices can share breadcrumbs. Pass a breadcrumb; you can set the app to automatically look for the next breadcrumb. Hansel and Gretel could have used this app! The current cost is \$10, but it's due to be \$20 in a few months.

Time to divide and conquer again. Mom went to the Braille Book Fair to scramble for some new Braille books for me, while I went to the NJ delegation meeting and a quick visit to the Back to Basic workshop. There were great recommendations on how to find new members, remembering to do follow-ups, make meetings fun and to develop mentors. I ended the evening by attending the always impressive Louisiana Center for the Blind play by Jerry Whittle. This year's great production, "One Man With Courage" retells the story of Jacob Bolotin, a child of Polish immigrants who became the world's first blind doctor. Truly an inspiring story!

Tuesday morning and General Session began. During the Roll Call of States, all the affiliate presidents announce who is the delegate and alternate delegate, any affiliate updates, when and where their state convention will take place, if they have a national rep for their state convention, and who will be on the nominating committee. Our dynamic NJ leader, Joe Ruffalo, announced our State Convention, and that we did not have a national rep assigned yet. When Joe announced my name as the alternate delegate for New Jersey, I was beaming with pride! I wanted to make sure to do a great job as an alternate delegate, to make Joe proud, and to become like the great NFB leaders we have and I admire. Of course my proud mom took a picture as my name was announced!

Dr. Maurer's annual Presidential Report cited the inspiring NFB accomplishments through the year. A major win for Hank Miller and his mom, Holly, was his finally receiving Braille instruction after a hard fought 3-year battle with his local school board. My mom wished she had been as strong as Holly in fighting for me to receive Braille, which I finally received in my senior year in high school (and only 20 minutes once a week).

Mark Riccabono mentioned that there will be a Braille symposium taking place at the NFB's Jernigan Institute this fall to explore the best practices in Braille instruction and to seize solutions to the barriers blind people face in order to learn Braille. Hopefully in the future Braille will be easier to receive for more blind individuals.

During the At Large Chapter luncheon, Joe Ruffalo explained that the initial idea of an At Large Chapter developed when he attended a West Virginia state convention as their national rep. Joe stressed that other affiliates do not have to make theirs like NJ, but to create one that works best for their affiliate. The basis for an At Large Chapter is to offer blind and interested sighted individuals an opportunity to gain NFB knowledge and to attend a chapter meeting via conference calls because they might not be able to attend a chapter meeting. A member of the At Large Chapter can also attend regular chapter meetings, such as the Garden State Chapter, as I do. The goal is always to increase chapter membership or to create new chapters and divisions within the affiliates. New members can be recruited through our *Braille Monitor* list, *Future Reflections* list and the White Cane list. Examples of new growth within the NFBNJ from the At Large Chapter are the formations of the South Jersey Shore Chapter, Glasstown Chapter and the Seniors Division.

During General Session, 26 resolutions were presented; some passed quickly; some required some discussion before passage; and only two resolutions failed to pass. This is watching and admiring the power and vision of the NFB.

Convention came to a rousing conclusion with the banquet. An outstanding group of scholarship winners was presented. Who knows, perhaps one of them will be a future leader in the NFB. And then we were moved, excited, stimulated, energized, motivated and invigorated by Dr. Maurer's powerful banquet speech, "The Intersection of Love and Law." Dr. Maurer acknowledged the fight for Braille for Hank Miller, struggling to achieve accessible testing for law school students and the fight to achieve fair wages for disabled workers with Goodwill Industries. The NFB fights to achieve independence for all blind persons, and our relentless spirit will not allow us to give up our fights. I believe in Dr. Maurer's statement that our future is bright with promise and we, the NFB, will make it so. The roar of the NFB members brought an end to the evening.

My thanks to Joe Ruffalo and the NJ affiliate for the honor to be the alternate delegate. This was an exceptional experience that I will always remember and treasure.

ARE YOU “REGISTER READY” FOR THE NEXT NATURAL DISASTER?**By Kathy Rawa**

Editor’s Note: *Kathy is the president of the South Jersey Shore Chapter of the NFBNJ. More info is available at: http://www.ready.nj.gov/plan/special_needs7.html. Unfortunately, the link to register online doesn’t work, so call New Jersey’s 211 phone service to register, or register with your county’s Office on Disability Services.*

New Jersey has experienced a number of natural disasters in the past few years, and many of these situations have caused residents to be displaced. New Jersey has a special needs registry – NJ Register Ready – and all of us should seriously consider registering. This registry is free, voluntary, strictly confidential and a great way to protect yourself in a major emergency.

We all must realize that the heart of public safety is personal preparedness, and so each of us should be prepared for an emergency response – before, during and after a disaster. Planning in advance is especially important if you may have difficulty evacuating by yourself due to a disability, a language barrier or a lack of transportation. During Hurricane Sandy, there were some emergency evacuation transportation problems because transportation services either did not have information or the information they had was not up-to-date.

New Jersey’s Register Ready has been designed to assist emergency responders in locating and safely evacuating those who have special needs. Emergency responders need to know where you are and how to assist you in the event that evacuation is required in a safe and orderly fashion.

I registered through the Atlantic County Office of Emergency Management. Many of us in Atlantic County were very lucky to have a presentation at the Lions Blind Center. We were all informed that every year it is our responsibility to go online again and update our information. This service is available throughout New Jersey and has been available for approximately six years. Be prepared! Take the necessary step and protect yourself. It could save your life.

SOLVING THE TRAINING PROBLEMS OF ELECTION POLL WORKERS

By Kathy Rawa, President, South Jersey Shore Chapter

I never truly realized all the difficulties that the blind and visually impaired endured at election sites until I became blind and moved to Atlantic County. I lived in Bergen County and worked the polls there for almost 25 years. Bergen County officials had thoroughly trained me in all aspects of the voting process, including how to open and close a machine, assist a person in using the machine, complete a provisional ballot and document the books. No one in Bergen County could be certified to work the polls until they were able to perform all these duties. I never encountered a blind person in my 25 years working the polls in Bergen County.

In Atlantic County, where I have been working the polls for four years, the training of poll workers is very different. All the potential poll workers assemble in a courtroom. There can be as many as 80 people listening to a training presentation. In Atlantic County, as throughout the State of New Jersey, all poll workers are trained in all aspects of the voting experience. Once they are working in their district, they may have designated duties, but all poll workers must be able to work every duty at an election, including providing accommodation assistance, if requested.

In Atlantic County, I found that training on an important device – the AVC Audio Voting Keypad – was being overlooked. This device gives voters audio instructions on how to vote, and a keypad is used to read the ballot and make the voter's selections. When I mentioned this device to the Election Board instructor at a recent training in Absecon, the instructor briefly let me hold it and press a few buttons. With this kind of instruction, how could the poll workers understand this machine? At the polling site where I work, no one knew how to use it. I demonstrated it so that anyone coming to our district would understand its use and importance. Since I brought this issue to their attention, Atlantic County is now providing advanced, hands-on training on the AVC Audio Voting Keypad.

I've also been in contact with Lou Ann Blake, director of the Help Americans to Vote Act (HAVA), and shared with her my training and experience as a poll worker, and what I observed were the areas needing change and reinforcement.

As New Jersey's representative to HAVA, I'm encouraging chapter presidents to contact me with voting problems their members are experiencing. Also, before this year's elections, contact your Election Board and explain your needs. Mention the AVC Audio Voting Keypad. Send or bring them information from the NFB's Independence Marketplace and offer to train the poll workers. If you still have problems when you go to the polls, contact the Election Board again and explain how you were treated. Please remember this: Don't let an unpleasant experience prevent you from your right to vote. Contact your Election Board and help us in our cause to change what it means to be blind!

CHAPTER GOINGS ON

- Not only was the Northern Chapter the first to be established in the State of New Jersey, but we are the first chapter to have our president exchange her wedding vows at a fund raiser! On February 16, 2013, President Rebecca Irvin married Solomon Bryant at a chapter fund raiser. All present were happy that they were able to witness and participate in this beautiful ceremony.
- The Central Jersey Chapter is participating in the Lions Club Flea Market June 8 to spread the word about the NFB and to raise funds for their scholarship program.
- The Senior Division is reaching out to those who receive a free white cane from the NFB to motivate them to join New Jersey's chapters and divisions.
- The Secaucus Fire Department recently presented safety tips for the blind and visually impaired in the event of fire or other emergency situations to the Northeast Chapter.
- The Senior Division has started a book club.
- The South Jersey Shore Chapter is reaching out to the community to participate in outreach activities and speaking engagements, and will be participating in the Heart Walk in May and the Breast Cancer Awareness Walk in October.

NFBNJ MEMBER RECOGNITION

Editor's Note: *Please share your story – or your friend's story – of success! When one person achieves, others are inspired to succeed, and this is yet another way we change what it means to be blind.*

Tara Carty graduated from Caldwell College with a bachelor's degree in English.

Serena Cucco received her master's degree in social work from Rutgers University.

Nicky Gacos recently received two honors. First, he's been confirmed by the New Jersey State Senate as a member of the State Employment and Training Commission, and second, he's been appointed to the Government Affairs Committee of the National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) in Chicago. Nicky has served NAMA in a variety of capacities at both the local and state level, and he's worked for more than a decade to bring partnership and collaboration between the Randolph-Sheppard community and the vending industry represented by NAMA.

Anthony Lanzilotti received the Donald J. Sykes Award for his achievements at Atlantic Cape Community College.

Brian Mackey finished in third place in the NFB's 2012-2013 Braille Readers Are Leaders Contest for Adults/Beginner's category. Brian read 1,749 pages.

Elizabeth Morgan finished in first place in the NFB's 2012-2013 Braille Readers Are Leaders Contest for Adults/Beginner's category. Liz read 3,924 pages.

Kathy Rawa received the Donald J. Sykes Award for her volunteer work at the Bacharach Institute of Rehabilitation and with the NFBNJ.

Jess Scannell is attending the Louisiana Center for the Blind.

Evelyn Valdez has graduated from the 9-month program in blindness training at the Louisiana Center for the Blind. She begins her career with the US Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, DC in June.

Stephanie Zundel was awarded the 2013 Junior Hero to Animals Award by the Animal Welfare Federation of New Jersey in recognition of her volunteer work at the Edison Animal Shelter.

PLEASE SUPPORT THRU OUR EYES FUNDRAISER

With initial start-up funding from the Imagination Fund, the Northeast Chapter of the NFBNJ founded an Internet radio program called ThruOurEyes in 2005. Since then, we've grown steadily to over 10 monthly shows. "On The Bright Side" is co-hosted by Jane Degenshein and Jerry Moreno the second Wednesday of each month and is lively and full of information. "Thru Our Eyes" is hosted by Joe Ruffalo the third Wednesday of each month and focuses on issues important to the blind and visually impaired.

To raise much-needed funds, we've invited everyone to a Stay-at-Home Tea Party. It works like this: Using the tea bag we sent you, brew yourself a cup of tea, settle in and listen to one of our informative WTOE radio shows, share the tea with a friend, or watch TV. Then, be sure to support ThruOurEyes with a donation so that we can continue to grow and provide additional services to the blind. On your check, please note "ThruOurEyes" in the memo section, and mail it to: NFBNJ, 254 Spruce Street, Bloomfield, New Jersey, 07003.

Know that your donation makes a huge difference!

FYI INFORMATION TIDBITS

- **Adopt Adaptive Equipment** has received requests for CCTVs and a note taker since the last writing of this article. 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, please contact either Lynn Reynolds or Ed Godfrey. Some equipment may need repairs, and when a match is made, the two parties must work out the exchange.
- **Take 'im down, Anthony!** Anthony Ferraro, a student at Saint John Vianney Regional High School in Holmdel, is one of the best wrestlers in New Jersey. He's also blind. Read about his outstanding wrestling season this year online at http://www.nj.com/hssports/blog/wrestling/index.ssf/2013/03/st_john_vianneys_anthony_ferraro_has_battled_through_blindness_to_find_success_inspire_others.html
- **Vehicle Donations Now Accepted** – The NFB has partnered with Vehicles for Charity in a vehicle donation program. The program accepts almost any vehicle, including automobiles, boats, motorcycles, RVs, dirt bikes, boats, trucks and tractors. The donation may be eligible for an exemption on the donor's federal income tax return. For more info or to donate your vehicle today, visit www.nfb.org/vehicledonations, or call 855-659-9314.

LETTERS

Dear National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey Scholarship Committee,

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude to you for making the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey 2012 scholarship possible. I was thrilled to learn of my selection for this honor, and am deeply appreciative of your support.

Upon my graduation from Ramapo College of New Jersey, I plan to continue my social work education on a master's level. I would like to pursue a career where I can assist people with disabilities in reaching their full potential. Thanks to you, I am one step closer to that goal.

By selecting me for the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey 2012 scholarship, you have lightened my financial burden, which allows me to concentrate my efforts exclusively on my academic studies. Thank you so much for your support.

Sincerely,
Susan Vanino

JOE RUFFALO (AT LAST) SUCCEEDS IN OBTAINING HANK MILLER'S LETTER

Editor's Note: *Joe wasn't successful in getting the original, but he did get a copy via e-mail.*

Dear Joe,

At the Board Meeting of the National Federation of the Blind which occurred in November of 2012, you asked me to give you a copy of Hank Miller's letter. I made an effort to avoid the request by saying it was only in Braille. You told me that I could then send the thing to you. You have now written again to reiterate your suggestion that I give you Hank's letter.

I think very highly of you. However, I am keeping the letter. I worked on Hank's case, and I think highly of Hank. Nevertheless, I shall now, forthwith, without further delay or shillyshallying, set about the task of dictating Hank's letter with all of its individualistic elements, so that you may have a copy. May the New Year be good to you, and may the Federation remain strong in New Jersey. With you in the state, I feel certain it will.

Affectionately,
Marc Maurer, President
National Federation of the Blind

Dear Dr. Maurer,

This is Hank from New Jersey. I wanted to write to you so I could thank you for having the NFB help me get Braille. I am getting Braille every day at school. I have a really great Braille teacher, her name is Mrs. Vaughan. She makes learning Braille easy. I don't know all my contractions yet, but I've learned a lot of them, as I hope you can tell by this letter. I think I'm doing really well, since I've only been learning for about two and a half months.

This summer, I went to the Louisiana Center for the Blind for three weeks. I had a lot of fun there. They made us work hard but we did a lot of cool stuff, too. I found out I love jambalaya. I made new friends that I want to stay in touch with. The teachers were great. I want to go back next year. I think Braille is going to be a big help to me in school. I'm trying to learn it as fast as I can. I can't wait until I can read really fast for as long as I want. I will be at the next convention for sure. I hope I get to talk to you there.

Thank you very much,
Hank Miller

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 a Northern Region mentor in the LEAD program and has taught activities of daily living for many years. In her spare time, Jerilyn loves to cook for her family.*

No-Bake Ice Cream Sandwich Dessert Cake*Ingredients:*

24 ice cream sandwiches, any flavor Large container Cool Whip, thawed
Chocolate syrup

Directions:

1. Place 12 sandwiches on bottom layer of a 13x9 baking dish – you may have to cut the sandwiches to fit; if there are spaces, fill them with chocolate chips
2. Layer ½ of the Cool Whip, then chocolate syrup, then the second ½ of the Cool Whip, and top with chocolate syrup, making a swirling design
3. Place in freezer for approximately 2 hours, until frozen throughout

Healthy Granola Bars*Ingredients:*

Non-stick cooking spray 1 teaspoon cinnamon
2 cups Quaker instant oatmeal 1/2 teaspoon salt
3/4 cups of dried cranberries 1/2 cup of honey
3/4 cups of walnuts chopped 1/2 cup of vegetable or coconut oil
3/4 cups of toasted wheat germ 2 large eggs
2 tablespoons of brown sugar

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees
2. Spray a 9x13 cooking pan with non-stick cooking spray
3. Line the pan with foil, extending the foil 2" over the short ends of the pan
4. Spray the foil with non-stick cooking spray
5. In a glass pie plate, spread oats and cook in microwave for 4 minutes, in 1 minute increments
6. In a large bowl, combine cranberries, walnuts, oats, wheat germ, brown sugar, cinnamon and salt, and then stir in honey, oil and eggs, and mix until well blended
7. Transfer to the prepared pan and with wet hands press down evenly
8. Bake for 35 minutes
9. Transfer to a cooling rack, and when cooled, cut into 24 bars

NFBNJ CONTACT INFORMATION**NFB National Center***President*

Marc Maurer 410-659-9314

NFB State Affiliate*President*

Joseph Ruffalo 973-743-0075

First Vice President

Jerilyn Higgins 973-239-8874

Second Vice President

Mary Jo Partyka 609-888-5459

Secretary

Brian Mackey 609-953-6988

Treasurer

Tom Ferry 973-694-5922

Board Members

Evelyn Valdez 908-803-4891

Dan Facchini 201-906-8655

Lynn Reynolds 908-251-5510

Ryan Stevens 856-858-3518

Linda DeBerardinis 856-764-7014

Michele Chaney 732-251-8650

NFBNJ Chapters*At-Large Chapter*

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

Capital Chapter

Third Sat., Hamilton Twp Public
Library, 10 a.m. - noon

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
lydiakeller@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 Bryant 973-723-6559
rirvin14@optonline.net

South Jersey Shore Chapter

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

Kathy Rawa 609-965-3734
SoJerzyShor609@aol.com

NFB of NJ Divisions*Association of Blind Merchants*

Dan Facchini 201-906-8655
danfb@verizon.net

Association of Blind Students

Shafeka Hashash 551-697-1568
shafekah@gmail.com

Association of Guide Dog Users

Vincent Chaney 732-251-8650
vgc732@optonline.net

Association of Senior Blind

Jane Degenshein 973-736-5785
Jdegen16@comcast.net

Braille Division

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

Diabetes Division

Vincent Chaney 732-251-8650
vgc732@optonline.net

Parents of Blind Children

Holly Miller 732-542-3633
pobcnj@gmail.com

Technology Division

Michele Chaney 732-251-8650
msc732@optonline.net

Programs and Projects*Adopt Adaptive Equipment*

Lynn Reynolds 908-251-5510
lhr1827@optonline.net

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

Blind Children's Resource Center

Carol Castellano 973-377-0976
www.blindchildren.org
blindchildren@verizon.net

Braille Mentoring Program

Sue Tillett 609-924-7489
suetillett@verizon.net

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

Building Chapters & Membership

Rick Fox 973-743-6107
richardfox@comcast.net

Legislative Coordinator

Lynn Reynolds 908-251-5510
lhr1827@optonline.net

NFB Newsline

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

Press Release Committee

Tara Carty 973-650-4438
sugarfreet@gmail.com

Scholarship

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

Thru Our Eyes/Internet Radio

Lenny Azzarone 888-572-0141
www.ThruOurEyes.org
vdoman@optonline.net

CHAPTER AND DIVISION UPDATES CAN BE FOUND ON THE NFBNJ WEBSITE

Deadline for the Fall 2013 issue is October 1, 2013.

CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB AT

www.nfbnj.org www.blindchildren.org www.thrououreyes.org

To receive *The Sounding Board* and other information via e-mail,
please contact Brian Mackey at bmackey88@gmail.com