

FALL 2015

The Sounding Board

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

IN THIS ISSUE

MANA HASHIMOTO

Dance without Sight

LOU ANN BLAKE

*Exercising Your Right to Vote
Privately & Independently*

JEREMY CAPATI

Braille Literacy through Technology

SUSAN VANINO

CBVI's New ASPIRE Program

MARY JO PARTYKA

BELL Program



Live the Life You Want

THE SOUNDING BOARD
Fall 2015

Katherine Gabry, Editor
Jerilyn Higgins & Mary Jo Partyka, Co-editors

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 should be sent to the State Affiliate Office or e-mailed to **choirnfb@gmail.com**. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit all articles for space and/or clarity considerations.

Please Note: The deadline for the Spring issue is March 15, 2016.

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 Christian Riehl: criehl@njstatelib.org or 800-792-8322.

JACOBUS TENBROEK LEGACY SOCIETY

Help build a future full of opportunity for the blind by becoming a member of the Jacobus tenBroek Legacy Society. Your legacy gift to the National Federation of the Blind can be made in the form of a will or a living trust, an income-generating gift, or by naming the NFB as a beneficiary of a retirement plan or life insurance policy. You can also become a member of the Jacobus tenBroek Legacy Society by making a legacy gift to your state affiliate. By committing to support an NFB affiliate, your gift will benefit both local and national programs, since all bequests made to affiliates are split evenly with the NFB national treasury. In addition to having the satisfaction of contributing to the future success of the NFB's mission, tenBroek Legacy Society members also receive a specially designed thank you gift and other benefits. For additional information, please contact Lou Ann Blake at the NFB Jernigan Institute by e-mail at lblake@nfb.org, or by telephone at 410-659-9314, extension 2221.

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 knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise the expectations of blind people because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds us back.

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

The Sounding Board is the magazine of the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey. We publish *The Sounding Board* twice a year. Our hope is that through *The Sounding Board*, our members can keep current with local, state and national news and issues of concern. We also aspire to provide a source of hope, inspiration, pride and camaraderie through the personal stories in our publication.

Hundreds of readers receive our publication via e-mail and *Newsline*. We're pleased that the New Jersey Talking Book and Braille Center airs excerpts from *The Sounding Board* on AudioVision. *The Sounding Board* is also available for download in its entirety from our website at www.nfbnj.org. We encourage our readers to share *The Sounding Board* with family members, teachers, professionals, neighbors, friends and any other interested parties. We estimate our circulation to be in the thousands, as readers from across the country regularly report that *The Sounding Board* influences their lives. We hope you enjoy this issue.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

After the Holidays Party Invitation.....	1
Presidential Message, by Joe Ruffalo	2
Pamela Gaston to Receive the Agnes Allen Award, by Carol Castellano.....	3
NFBNJ Member Recognition.....	4
1Touch Self Defense Classes in New Jersey & at State Convention, by Trisha Ebel.....	5
Dance without Sight: Creating New Steps of Freedom, by Mana Hashimoto.....	6
NFBNJ Scholarship Winners, by Mary Jo Partyka	8
NJAGDU Tupperware Fundraiser, by Trisha Ebel.....	10
Legislative Update, by Lynn Reynolds	10
Vendor List for 2015 State Convention	10
Meet Our State Board Members, by Linda DeBerardinis	11
White Cane Safety Day: A Symbol of Independence – October 15, by Marc Maurer.....	12
TBBC Celebrates Blindness Awareness Month 2015, by Mary Jo Partyka.....	13
Exercising Your Right to Vote Privately & Independently, by Lou Ann Blake.....	14
ASPIRE Program, by Susan Vanino.....	16
Braille Literacy through Technology, by Jeremy Capati.....	17
Hidden, A Poem by Sue Tillet.....	18
BELL Rings in New Jersey, by Mary Jo Partyka.....	19
Families Connect as BELL Continues to Chime, by Mary Jo Partyka.....	20
Huge & Heart-Felt Thanks to Our BELL Program Volunteers, by Mary Jo Partyka.....	21
BELL Program Benefits by Receiving Free Books from Seedlings, by Deborah Bond.....	22
Parents Sometimes Have to Get Creative, Adapt & Change, by Suzanne Woolbert	23
Tips for Applying Makeup, by Angela Perone.....	25
Update on the Vehicle Donation & GreenDrop Programs, by Mary Jo Partyka.....	26
GreenDrop Creates Blog to Promote the Program.....	27
Tech Tips.....	29
Did You Know	30
From the Kitchen of the Northeast Chapter.....	30
1TOUCH™ Workshop Flyer	31
NFBNJ Contact Info.....	32



You are cordially invited to the
National Federation of the Blind of NJ's 7th Annual

After the Holidays Party

Saturday, January 9, 2016
1:00 pm to 5:00 pm
Knights of Columbus Hall
94 Bridge Street, Belleville, NJ
Access Link accessible

\$22 per adult; \$12 for children 6- 12 years; free for children 6 & younger

Please include a separate sheet with attendees' names & phone numbers.

All payment must be received no later than December 31, 2015.

Make check payable to NFBNJ and mail to:

Joe Ruffalo, President

NFBNJ

254 Spruce Street

Bloomfield NJ 07003

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

We'll have door prizes, a sing-along & a special appearance by jolly old Santa!

Special note: If you would like an attendee to receive a gift from Santa, please bring a wrapped gift labeled with the name of the recipient.

MISTLETOE MAGIC MENU

Holiday Tossed Garden Salad with Vinaigrette Dressing
Chicken Savoy, Eggplant Rollatini, Meatballs, Pasta with Vodka Sauce
Assorted Cold Cuts and Potato Salad
Chicken Fingers
Rolls and Butter
Homemade Holiday Desserts
Coffee, Tea and Assorted Soft Drinks
Cash bar will be available.

***Please join us in celebrating the holiday season!
We look forward to seeing all of our members, family and friends!***

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

Greetings Fellow Federationists!

During the summer, Judy and I spent much time at President's Beach in Long Branch enjoying the Jersey shore, the sand, the sounds of the ocean, music, friends and good food, especially those super, red Jersey tomatoes grown in my garden! Now, with the fall season upon us, my tan is fading, and I'm reflecting on the year so far. Our eight chapters, nine divisions and numerous programs, projects and committees continue to grow, provide the truth about blindness, and support each other and the newly blind in learning the skills, techniques and positive attitude to live the life you want. This magazine, too, is a testament to our organization, and we thank all who submitted articles. Of course, there's always more to do, and your involvement makes a difference. I hope you'll consider joining us at a chapter or division meeting, and at this year's State Convention, to learn more about our programs and projects, and how you can support our goal of changing what it means to be blind.

Our 39th State Convention – “Live the Life You Want” – is set for November 5 – 8 at the Holiday Inn in Manahawkin. The activities, presentations, demonstrations, networking opportunities and exhibitors will educate, motivate and inspire all in attendance. This year, the convention was extended to a fourth day, which will feature a blind/diabetes workshop in partnership with Meridian Health Center and NJ CBVI, and a demonstration of the KNFB reader on IOS devices. For room reservations, call the hotel at 609-481-6100; use the code NFB. A pre-registration form and additional information can be found at www.nfbnj.org

With a heavy heart, I've accepted a resignation from Lynn Reynolds, who will soon be leaving New Jersey. Since 1999, Lynn has been active in the NFB family on the national, state and local levels. She's currently our Legislative coordinator, Adopt Adaptive Equipment co-chair, Central Jersey Chapter vice president and State Affiliate board member. Her intelligence, thoughtfulness and hard work have made an incredible difference. Lynn wrote, “I am so very thankful for all the opportunities that this affiliate has offered me. I will always have a multitude of memories and appreciation for all the members of the NFBNJ family.” Lynn, thanks for your years of friendship, effort and positive attitude. While we will miss you, we offer congratulations on a new page in your life.

In this issue of *The Sounding Board*, our message is clear: keep moving forward, and always with the spirit of the Federation in mind. Every one of us can make a difference. I hope you enjoy this issue, and please pass it on to others – family, neighbors, teachers, whoever you can think of. Spreading our message of positive attitudes is what we continue to do best.

With best wishes,
Joe Ruffalo, President

PAMELA GASTON TO RECEIVE THE AGNES ALLEN DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD
By Carol Castellano

Pamela Gaston began her career in service to blind and vision-impaired New Jerseyans over 40 years ago. When she was hired, she was told not to think of herself as “just a state worker,” but to understand that the work of the New Jersey Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired was about people’s lives. For the past four decades she has dedicated herself to this principle and continues to live up to it. She has had many career achievements, including organizing major Commission events, writing and designing publications, and initiating activities that have become CBVI traditions, but, when asked, Pam replied, “My greatest achievement is a list of names – the people I have had the honor and privilege to assist in some way.”

The NFBNJ is pleased to acknowledge the outstanding contributions Pam Gaston has made by announcing her as the second recipient of the Agnes Allen Distinguished Service Award. We hope you will be with us at the NFB State Convention this year where we will hear more about Pam’s career at CBVI and bestow the award on this most deserving individual.

The Agnes Allen Distinguished Service Award is presented to individuals who are not members of our organization, and who have made substantial contributions to improving the quality of life for the blind of New Jersey. This recognition represents the highest honor that can be given by our affiliate to a non-member, and the recipients of this award will be individuals we can regard as true friends of the blind—supportive of our progressive philosophy about blindness, instrumental in championing programs that will benefit the blind community, and dedicated to initiatives that will generate hope and promise in innumerable ways. Congratulations, Pamela Gaston!

With this award, the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey honors the life’s work of Agnes Allen. Agnes was born on the 18th of January 1924, the sixth and last child born to Mary and Louis Stone. A serious fall from a porch swing when she was five years old left Agnes blind. She attended the Pittsburgh School for the Blind where she developed a lifelong love of learning and education, and developed her independence, confidence, capabilities and optimism. Agnes became the first blind graduate of Mount Mercy College, graduating summa cum laude. She took the formation provided by the Mercy Sisters to heart and strived to live a life of service.

The only member of her family to graduate high school and college, Agnes held positions as a social worker, proofreader and salesperson. She later earned a master’s degree in English and embarked upon a teaching career. Agnes instructed blind and deaf-blind students, young children, and adults in Braille, English, math, music and life

skills, and encouraged them to accept their disability and tackle any obstacle that stood in the way of achieving independence.

Her dedication to the advancement of blind persons is evident in the fact that she was still tutoring blind students after her 90th birthday. A long-standing and active member of the National Federation of the Blind, Agnes has served as an officer of both the New Jersey and Connecticut affiliates, helped to found chapters, and participated in state and national conventions. She participated in many Braille literacy campaigns and for years volunteered in the NFBNJ's BRAILLE mentoring program. Her book, *A Life Without Sight*, was written to encourage blind persons and their families to make the most out of the life they were given. Agnes's message to all is "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness."

Agnes Allen is the mother of three daughters and the grandmother of nine grandchildren. Her example of generosity, love of neighbor, and joyful, positive attitude has been a great blessing to her family, friends, and colleagues. She is deeply respected and dearly loved.

NFBNJ MEMBER RECOGNITION

Mary Jo and Stan Partyka became grandparents to Emaline this summer, and their son Keith recently returned from a 27-month stint in Rwanda

At the 2106 National Convention in Orlando:

Carol Castellano, named national director of programs, NOPBC

Bill Cucco, elected board member of the NOPBC

Jane Degenshein, elected board member of the National Association of Senior Blind

Alice Eaddy, elected president of the NFB's National Deaf-Blind Division

Patricia Ebel, certified as 1 Touch instructor

Nicky Gacos, elected President of the National Organization of Blind Merchants

Jerilyn Higgins, certified as 1 Touch instructor

Holly Miller, elected second vice president of NOPBC

Lynn Reynolds, elected board member of the National Organization of Blind Merchants

Joe Ruffalo, received *The Twig is Bent* award for his continued support of the NOPBC

GET READY FOR THE NFBNJ STATE CONVENTION!

Editor's Note: *The articles on pages 5 – 10 preview events and activities set for the State Convention – “Live the Life You Want” – Nov. 5 – 8, 2015 in Manahawkin. A detailed schedule and registration information are available at www.nfbnj.org*

1TOUCH SELF DEFENSE OFFERS CLASSES IN NEW JERSEY & AT STATE CONVENTION By Trisha Ebel

Editor's Note: *Trisha Ebel is an active member of the NFBNJ and president of the New Jersey Association of Guide Dog Users. She is a certified 1Touch coach and also serves on the 1Touch Board of Directors as secretary. To sign up for the 1Touch workshop at the State Convention, please see the flyer on page 31. For more information on 1Touch, contact Trisha at 201-456-0091 or patriciaebel0302@comcast.net.*

I was introduced to the 1Touch Project at the 2014 NFB National Convention in Orlando. As I read through the agenda, in the sports and recreation section, I saw something named 1Touch Project that seemed intriguing. I decided to take the 2-hour self-defense workshop, and after that, I knew I wanted to pursue it further.

I worked with Miranda Brown, the executive administrative assistant of 1Touch, to set up a coaching certification course in New Jersey. I'm pleased to report that this past March, New Jersey had its first coaching certification class! Seven people took the course: five from New Jersey, one from Vermont and one from Ohio. The class was 2 ½ days, and I must admit that it was very exhausting, both mentally and physically. After I finished the course, for the next few days I didn't want to think about it or practice at all, but on the 3rd day, I was ready to rock and roll!

The 1Touch Project is the first comprehensive, hands-on, self-defense project designed for people with vision loss taught by people with vision loss. The beauty of the project is that it can be adapted for any disability, including blindness, deafness, deaf-blindness or multiple disabilities. The project is for children, seniors, veterans and professionals in the blindness field. Not only does one learn how to protect themselves, there are other benefits as well: increased independence, self-confidence, spatial orientation, mobility and dexterity, tactile sensitivity, social interaction, communication skills, building enthusiasm and feelings of self-worth, and greater health, both physically and psychologically.

Jerilyn Higgins and I are both 1Touch certified coaches, and together we've instructed more than 100 students between the ages of 14 – 92. If you're interested in learning more about the project, or if you're interested in taking a workshop, please don't hesitate to contact me. We also do private lessons as well!

DANCE WITHOUT SIGHT: CREATING NEW STEPS OF FREEDOM

By Mana Hashimoto

Editor's note: *Mana Hashimoto is a choreographer, contemporary dancer, dance instructor and the founder of Dance without Sight workshop. The New York Times has called Mana the "serene, imposing center of the storm," and in 2010, she received the Asian American Arts Alliance Award. Mana has toured, performed and taught dance workshops in North America, Europe and Asia. She is passionate about improving access to dance performance and dance education for blind and low vision individuals. Mana sings in her church choir every Sunday, and she lives with her 11-year-old daughter in New York. To learn more about Mana's performance and workshop, visit her website www.manahashimoto.com or e-mail her at manahdance@gmail.com. **Mana's workshop at the State Convention will be held Friday afternoon, November 6.***

Do you remember what kind of child you were when you were little? I was a dreamy child, and I always loved to look at the sky. During the day, I loved to ride my bike and look at the white clouds floating in the sunny, light blue sky. At night, I would look at the silver moon hanging in the tranquil dark blue heaven.

I grew up in Tokyo and started classic ballet training at 4 years old. When I was a teenager, one day, I suddenly lost my vision - half of my sight was gone. The condition was called optic nerve atrophy, which has no cure.

The difficulties extended beyond the physical challenges. As a low vision individual in Japan, I faced stigma from both my community and some family members. At times the stigma was obvious, other times it was subtle, but all the time I felt helpless. I felt lost.

I needed to take a different step, and so I came to the United States to pursue my artistic dream. I studied at the New England Conservatory and Berklee College in Boston and dance schools in New York. While studying at Martha Graham School in New York City, I began to lose more vision. For the next few months, I lived in fear as I lost the rest of my sight. Finally, 6 months later, I was completely blind. When that happened, I felt relieved. I thought to myself: Now I have nothing more to lose. What do I still have to fear?

If there is one place where any dream is possible, that place is America. Even after losing my sight, wherever I went in New York, even when I went grocery shopping, I would secretly carry my dance shoes with me in my backpack, hoping somehow I would find a chance to dance again. I never doubted that I could dance: I have my legs, my head, my arms, I have my body - I simply lost my sight. Most of all, I still have my passion and my dream.

Soon, my opportunity arrived. A friend took me to a ballet class at Broadway Dance Center. In class, I learned the movements through touching her body to follow the

instructions. Three months later, I performed on the stage. I was pursuing my dream again! For the next 14 years, this dream would take me to stages across North America, Europe and Asia.

Dance has been my freedom. I especially enjoy dancing solo because when I dance, I am in the moment of complete latitude. Unlike in daily life where I face barriers, on stage I don't have to depend on anyone's help. I can decide where to go, when to move. I can be totally independent in the limelight.

And I want to share this amazing feeling of freedom with everyone. That is why I founded Dance without Sight workshop. In my workshop, I share with participants my own experience of how I re-learned dance after vision loss. Since our bodies are an important part of dance, participants learn the movements by touching my body as I simultaneously provide verbal description of each move. They also feel various costumes, repertoire and dance shoes, and they feel with their feet the tapes on the stage that serve as landmarks.

Without sight, dance doesn't become darkness; it becomes a rich, multisensory experience. Dance is often believed, or misbelieved, to be a strongly visually oriented art form. In fact, dance can be experienced through touch, a sense natural to many blind individuals. Through touch, participants can feel my mind, feel my energy, and feel my feelings and emotions as we dance. Through each touch, through our fingers, we all share the beauty and power of dance with our hearts.

And as we dance, we learn that life is about forming your own style and creating your own steps. Dancing with my white cane is part of my style. My cane is my life partner that gives me independence. It is also a part of my body. It is like my extended fingers. Being blind helps me see dance in a new light. I used to observe my every dance move in the mirror like an outsider. But now I can focus on expressing my dance from within. As my perspective changed, so has my view on beauty and dance. Instead of following strictly the style one is taught, each of us can create our own dance, both on stage and in life.

Now I realize why I was so mesmerized by the sky when I was little! Looking at the endless spreading sky gave me a sense of freedom. The sky exists for every human being in this world, whether you are happy or sad, black or white, Asian or Hispanic, blind or sighted, a man or a woman. The sky reflects our collective dreams. And through dance, I found my sky. I found my freedom. I could not have reached this point without my blindness or my challenges. Today, even though I cannot see the sky, I can still feel its enormity, the enormity of freedom and the dream that awaits us. And that is why I will continue to keep working to make dance accessible for everybody, every human being, just like the sky exists for all of us.

NFBNJ SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS**By Mary Jo Partyka**

The National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey's Scholarship Committee is pleased to recognize Ida Behreini, Daniel Frye, Phil So and Danielle Sykora as this year's scholarship winners. Ida, Daniel, Phil and Danielle will attend the State Convention in November and will receive their scholarships at the banquet on November 7. Based on their past histories, it is anticipated that all of these students will achieve great things throughout their educational and vocational journeys. Congratulations to all!

Ida Behreini, from Bayonne, is a freshman at Drew University and plans to major in English with a specialization in journalism. Ida graduated from a high-tech high school where she excelled and earned a 3.8 grade point average. Ida was an involved student, and she exhibited leadership qualities when she established several fund raisers and a book club. Ida is a Braille reader and uses JAWS. She acquired a guide dog this summer. She believes she must clear some obstacles to succeed in college, but she is excited about getting involved in residential life and student-run organizations. She believes that by being an outgoing person, she can educate her peers about the capabilities of blind/visually impaired people.

Daniel Frye, of Newark, received an NFB National Scholarship in 1990 which enabled him to graduate from Erskine College in Due West, SC with a bachelor's degree in history and a minor in government. In 1993, he earned a juris doctor degree from the University of Washington Law School. Now, Dan plans to earn a master's degree in vocational rehabilitation counseling by taking online courses at the University of San Diego. In the future, he may seek to earn a doctorate in either educational leadership or vocational education, but for now, his educational goal is to earn specific credentials to show respect for the body of knowledge inherent in the profession of vocational rehabilitation and as a means of modeling to his staff the importance of obtaining a quality background in this unique field. Dan's leadership qualities are evident in his position as executive director of the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NJCBVI), which he has held since 2013. In this position, Dan has reached out to stakeholders to take part in the design and planning for the agency, and supported our BELL program by assisting in securing a \$5,000 grant from the NJCBVI Board of Trustees for supplies and equipment. According to Dan, "I use a variety of blindness skills to manage my daily life, such as cane travel, Braille and a variety of computer-assisted technology. The most important issue facing the blind community today remains broad public misunderstanding about the capacity and capability of our community to function normally in all aspects of daily life. Blindness impacts us in employment opportunities,

social and political participation, information access, and a variety of discrimination, occasionally blatant and, more often, unconscious.”

Danielle Sykora, is a freshman majoring in environmental science at Delaware Valley Community College in Doylestown, PA. Danielle is a graduate of Warren Hills High School where she earned a grade point average of 3.79 and was a member of the track and field team, the choir, the National Honor Society and the Future Farmers Club, of which she was elected secretary. She has also been active in the 4H club and volunteered at her local animal shelter where she walked dogs, cleaned cages, socialized the dogs with one another and assisted her coworkers. During high school, Danielle participated in the LEAD (Leadership, Education, Advocacy and Determination) program where she demonstrated excellent blindness skills. She is a Braille reader and a white cane user, and she obtained a guide dog last summer. Danielle says her goal is to continue to provide a positive attitude, and to demonstrate proper skills and techniques in order to teach the sighted public that blindness is not the characteristic that defines her future.

Phil So, from Fort Lee, received an NFB National Scholarship at the 2002 Kentucky National Convention in Kentucky and has not stopped believing and teaching the Federation philosophy of raising peoples’ expectations to live the lives they want ever since. Phil is pursuing a master’s degree in education and computing at Columbia Teachers College, where he maintains a 4.0 grade point average. His educational goal concerns the intersection of technology, disability and policy in teaching computer skills to blind students. With his background in a variety of software applications, website creation and technology accessibility in education and work settings, Phil plans to become a social entrepreneur and bring innovative solutions to solve challenges facing blind people with differing abilities. Phil also believes in giving back to his community. Since 2011, he has served as a board member at City University of New York Baruch College’s computer and job placement center for the blind and visually impaired. In 2012, Phil served as the moderator at the center’s conference concerning employment, technology and the visually impaired. He also set up a workshop for the center’s board of directors to spend a day with Google engineers at their New York office. In 2012, Phil became a member of the Access Advisory Board at the Lower East Side Museum where this organization’s goal is to make tours and exhibits more accessible to visitors with disabilities. In summary, Phil wants to expand economic and educational opportunities to people with different disabilities.

NJAGDU TUPPERWARE FUNDRAISER

By Trisha Ebel

The New Jersey Association of Guide Dog Users is sponsoring a Tupperware fundraiser through November 10, with 40% of the sales going to the Division. Our Tupperware representative, Christina Brino, will have samples available at the State Convention. For a print catalog, or if you have any questions, please contact me at 201-456-0091 or Patriciaebel0302@comcast.net. Here's the Tupperware link: http://www.tupperware.com/b/10106844011?fundraiser=55f32979d8687b303cb84d8d&field_subjectbin=&field_price=&field_color_map=&searchRank=-product_site_launch_date&searchSize=12&searchPage=1&searchBinNameList=subjectbin%2Cprice%2Ccolor_map. Thanks for your support!

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By Lynn Reynolds

We're currently following two legislative issues. First, the TIME Act has a bill in the Senate, recently introduced as S2001; in the House, it's HR188. This Act is requesting all certificate workshops that pay sub minimum wages to disabled workers to phase out this practice within a 3-year period. As of this writing, none of the New Jersey House members or our two senators have signed on as co-sponsors. We need to reach out to our representatives to encourage them to do so. The other issue is the SMART Act, which will make it mandatory for institutions of higher learning to make all digital textbooks accessible for all blind and print disabled students.

We need to get involved by making phone calls, sending e-mails and setting up meetings with our representatives to advocate for the things that we need as blind people to have equal opportunities so we can "live the lives we want."

VENDOR LIST FOR 2015 STATE CONVENTION

The vendors confirmed at press time are:

NFBNJ	NJCBVI
3DPhotoWorks	New Jersey State Library/TBBC
C TECH	SafeGuard Marketing
E.A.S.Y., LLC	SW Unlimited LLC
Educational Testing Service (ETS)	The Braille Depot
Eye Assist LLC	The Family Resource Network
Heightened Independence & Progress	The Seeing Eye
Mackey Enterprises LLC	

A SOUNDING BOARD ONGOING SERIES
MEET OUR STATE BOARD MEMBERS
By Linda DeBerardinis

Editor's Note: *This series continues, leading up to the 40th anniversary of the NFBNJ in 2016.*

My name is Linda Jo Mazarella DeBerardinis. I was born and raised in Philadelphia, and moved to the Garden State about 25 years ago, where I call Delran home. I feel blessed to have two fantastic daughters, three wonderful granddaughters and two adorable great-grandchildren.

My children made very good subjects for my passion: photography. Prior to becoming blind, I took photos of everything – from statues to animals, from people to scenery. I often framed my favorite prints, or decoupage them to wood.

My other interests include wild life and traveling. My two favorite vacation spots are Colorado and Sanibel Island, Florida. When my girls and I visited Colorado in 1982, I was awed by the beauty of the majestic Rocky Mountains. Sanibel Island is just off the West Coast of Florida. I have visited this island with and without my sight, and every year find it more enchanting. I love waking up and hearing unusual birds singing! It is a wildlife-protected island, where the beauty makes relaxing easy.

I was employed at Amtrak for many years, and I met my wonderful husband there. He passed away close to three years ago, but those who knew him knew he was the sweetest man around. Mario was always supportive of me and, in turn, the NFB, as well.

I lost my eyesight overnight from a brain tumor operation, where my optic nerve was damaged during the surgery. I was 39 years old. In 1993 I found the NFB, and things haven't been the same since! I went to my first meeting as a timid woman, guided by my mother, but soon my natural "people person" instincts took over. I love making people laugh and helping others, and I've found a perfect fit with the NFBNJ.

Today, I attend every New Jersey State Convention. In addition to serving on the State Affiliate's Board of Directors, I'm the treasurer of my chapter, a member of the Scholarship Committee and a member of the Membership-Building Committee, and I serve as the coordinator for the GreenDrop Program. My dedication and love for this wonderful organization can never be measured. I'm very grateful to those who have encouraged me along the way. It's now my turn to encourage others and give back what I have learned. I am a true Federationist!

WHITE CANE SAFETY DAY: A SYMBOL OF INDEPENDENCE – OCTOBER 15**By Marc Maurer**

Editor's Note: *This article is reprinted with permission. In addition, the Nebraska Center for the Blind has created a video training series called "Pathways to Independence." The link to their video on cane travel can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VV9XFzKo1aE&feature=em-sub> digest-*

In February of 1978 a young blind lady said, "I encounter people all of the time who bless me, extol my independence, call me brave and courageous, and thoroughly miss the boat as to what the real significance of the white cane is."

The National Federation of the Blind in convention assembled on the 6th day of July, 1963, called upon the governors of the fifty states to proclaim October 15 of each year as White Cane Safety Day in each of our 50 states. On October 6, 1964, a joint resolution of the Congress, HR 753, was signed into law authorizing the President of the United States to proclaim October 15 of each year as "White Cane Safety Day." This resolution said: "Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives... that the President is hereby authorized to issue annually a proclamation designating October 15 as White Cane Safety Day and calling upon the people of the United States to observe such a day with appropriate ceremonies and activities."

Within hours of the passage of the congressional joint resolution authorizing the President to proclaim October 15 as White Cane Safety Day, then-President Lyndon B. Johnson recognized the importance of the white cane as a staff of independence for blind people. In the first Presidential White Cane Proclamation, President Johnson commended the blind for the growing spirit of independence and the increased determination to be self-reliant that the organized blind had shown. The Presidential proclamation said: The white cane in our society has become one of the symbols of a blind person's ability to come and go on his own. Its use has promoted courtesy and special consideration to the blind on our streets and highways. To make our people more fully aware of the meaning of the white cane and of the need for motorists to exercise special care for the blind persons who carry it, Congress, by a joint resolution approved as of October 6, 1964, has authorized the President to proclaim October 15 of each year as White Cane Safety Day.

Now, therefore, I, Lyndon B. Johnson, President of the United States of America do hereby proclaim October 15, 1964 as White Cane Safety Day.

With those stirring words President Johnson issued the first White Cane Proclamation which was the culmination of a long and serious effort on the part of the National Federation of the Blind to gain recognition for the growing independence and

self-sufficiency of blind people in America, and also to gain recognition of the white cane as the symbol of that independence and that self-reliance.

The first of the state laws regarding the right of blind people to travel independently with the white cane was passed in 1930. In 1966, Dr. Jacobus tenBroek, the founder of the NFB drafted the model White Cane Law. This model act - which has become known as the Civil Rights Bill for the Blind, the Disabled, and the Otherwise Physically Handicapped-contains a provision designating October 15 as White Cane Safety Day. Today there is a variant of the White Cane Law on the statute books of every state in the nation.

From 1963 (and even before) when the NFB sought to have White Cane Safety Day proclaimed as a recognition of the rights of blind persons, to 1978 when a blind pedestrian met with misunderstanding regarding the true meaning of the white cane, is but a short time in the life of a movement. In 1963, a comparatively small number of blind people had achieved sufficient independence to travel alone on the busy highways of our nation.

In 1978 that number has not simply increased but multiplied a hundredfold. The process began in the beginning of the organized blind movement and continues today. There was a time when it was unusual to see a blind person on the street, to find a blind person working in an office, or to see a blind person operating machinery in a factory. This is still all too uncommon. But it happens more often and the symbol of this independence is the white cane. The blind are able to go, to move, to be, and to compete with all others in society. The means by which this is done is that simple tool, the white cane. With the growing use of the white cane is an added element--the wish and the will to be free--the unquenchable spirit and the inextinguishable determination to be independent. With these, our lives are changed, and the prospects for blind people become bright. That is what White Cane Safety Day is all about. That is what we do in the National Federation of the Blind.

TBBC CELEBRATES BLINDNESS AWARENESS MONTH 2015

By Mary Jo Partyka

The NJ State Library Talking Book & Braille Center (TBBC) hosted its Fall Festival Saturday, October 10, 2015 at the Grounds for Sculpture. TBBC serves NJ residents who are visually impaired and people with reading disabilities. This year's activities started with a 2-hour continental breakfast with the vendors, followed by the opportunity to attend book club group discussions, innovative hands-on workshops and walking tours of the grounds. Approximately 200 people attended the festival. The weather was so nice that I could feel the enthusiasm of those touring the Grounds for Sculpture. The docents provided explanations which pointed out the nature of the different sculpture pieces in each group. I hope you will consider attending future Fall Festivals.

EXERCISING YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE PRIVATELY & INDEPENDENTLY

By Lou Ann Blake

Editor's Note: *Lou Ann Blake from the National Center submitted the following article on the Help America Vote Act and blind people being able to exercise their right to vote. A video on the subject is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_yTfEO2Kz8.*

As the 2016 election season approaches, it is extremely important that voters who are blind or visually impaired know their rights and how to apply them when barriers to the right to vote privately and independently are encountered at the polling place. While sighted voters are able to take for granted the right to vote privately and independently, it is not uncommon for blind and visually impaired voters to encounter barriers to the exercise of this right at the polling place. Poorly trained poll workers and the absence of an accessible voting system may result in the blind voter having to vote with assistance. However, when a blind or visually impaired voter knows her rights and how to apply that knowledge, barriers encountered at the polling place can frequently be removed.

Your Right to Vote Privately and Independently

Prior to the passage of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) in 2002, voters who were blind or visually impaired had to rely on sighted assistance to mark their ballot. HAVA has enabled voters with disabilities to fully exercise the fundamental right to vote privately and independently by requiring that every polling place have at least one accessible voting system for all federal elections. In addition, many states have enacted legislation to require at least one accessible voting system in each polling place for all state and local elections.

What to Expect at Your Polling Place

If you are voting on Election Day, you will need to go to the polling place for your election district or precinct. The location of your polling place will be indicated on your voter registration card. You may also be able to find your polling place location on the website of your local or state board of elections.

Once you have arrived at your polling place, you will need to check in with poll workers by giving your name and requesting an accessible voting system. Be aware that you may need to repeat your request to use an accessible voting system. After your check-in process is complete, a poll worker will show you where the accessible voting system is located and hand you the headphones and control box. Once the audio ballot has started, the poll worker should walk away so you can vote in private.

What to Do When Things go Wrong

Poll workers have many responsibilities on Election Day. In addition, the training they receive on the accessible voting system is frequently insufficient to equip them with the

knowledge they need to set up and operate the system, and to resolve any problems that may occur. Consequently, it is not uncommon for blind and low vision voters to encounter poll workers who do not know how to set up or operate the accessible voting system.

If upon your arrival at the polling place for a federal election, poll workers tell you that the accessible voting system is not available or not working, or if the system malfunctions while you are voting, it is extremely important that you politely, but firmly, insist on your right to vote privately and independently. Request that an accessible system be brought to the polling place, or that a technician be sent to the polling place to repair the system. If poll workers offer to assist you in marking a paper ballot, politely decline this offer, and firmly, but politely, repeat your desire to vote privately and independently using an accessible system.

In many cases when a voter is patient and politely, but firm, insists on her right to vote using an accessible system, poll workers are able to resolve the problem. However, if poll workers have made every attempt to honor your request, but are unable to provide an accessible voting system that operates properly, you should still exercise your right to vote by voting with assistance.

If you are unable to vote privately and independently on an accessible voting system at your polling place during a federal election because there is no accessible system available or the system is not operating, the most important thing you can do is to file a HAVA complaint with your state or local board of elections. While HAVA guarantees the right of blind and visually impaired voters to vote privately and independently, it does not provide them a means to enforce this right through private action when it is violated. Therefore, filing a HAVA complaint is the most effective way blind voters can be sure that problems are brought to the attention of election officials and the U.S. Department of Justice, which has authority to enforce HAVA. Because there is no private right of action under HAVA, it is imperative that blind voters who are not able to vote privately and independently at their polling place during a federal election file a HAVA complaint so that the Justice Department has a true picture of the problems that voters with disabilities are experiencing.

Make Your Voice Heard

The United States Constitution guarantees the right of all blind and visually impaired citizens to vote, and the exercise of this right is vital to the function of our democratic form of government. With the passage of HAVA, it is now possible for blind and visually impaired citizens to exercise their right to vote both privately and independently. Making your voice heard through voting is imperative because state and federal elected officials implement policies and pass legislation that directly affect our lives as blind or visually impaired people. Make your voice heard. Register to vote and exercise your right and responsibility to vote!

ASPIRE PROGRAM

By Susan Vanino

Editor's Note: *Susan Vanino is the Support Program Coordinator for the ASPIRE Program. She is a licensed social worker with a master's degree from New York University. Susan began losing her own vision during childhood, struggling alone for many years to adjust to blindness, and this is just one of the reasons she's so passionate about the ASPIRE Program. Susan welcomes your questions and thoughts about the program. You can contact her by phone at 973-648-2821, or by e-mail at Susan.vanino@dhs.state.nj.us. The ASPIRE program is offered through the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. CBVI Executive Director Dan Frye will present at the State Convention on Saturday morning, November 7.*

As the number of seniors losing vision continues to rise, many of the "older blind" are dealing with difficulties associated with living a quality life with vision loss. Life events such as chronic and debilitating vision loss and the diminishing ability to participate in once cherished activities can take a heavy toll on an aging person's emotional well-being. Vision loss can often give rise to negative emotions such as anxiety, sadness, loneliness and lowered self-esteem.

I am very enthusiastic about ASPIRE, an exciting new program now offered by the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) that is likely to change the quality of life for many older adults living with blindness and vision impairments. ASPIRE – **A**ssistive **S**upport **P**rograms for **I**ndependence, **R**enewal and **E**ducation – is a state-wide network of peer support groups designed to provide individuals who are living with vision loss the opportunity to gain the necessary coping skills, information and education needed to thrive.

ASPIRE is administered by the Independent Living Unit of CBVI, and though geared towards those with vision loss who are 55 years or older, the program is available to all adults interested in attending. Our peer support groups connect people who share the same life experience. Through attendance in monthly group meetings, program participants talk with one another for emotional support, to exchange useful information, and to find practical solutions for challenges related to low vision and blindness. ASPIRE helps people with vision loss to realize they are not alone and that they can achieve much more than they ever thought possible.

BRAILLE LITERACY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

By Jeremy Capati

Editor's Note: *Jeremy Capati, a former New Jersey LEAD student, interned at the White House this past spring and at the National Center this past summer. He is currently a student at Ramapo College. In this article, he describes how he came to the realization that Braille really would make his life more full. This article is also available at www.nfb.org.*

As a summer intern for the Jernigan Institute, I came to realize that there were many areas in which I needed to improve in order to gain more confidence and independence. It has been about 10 years since I became blind, and I have to credit the National Federation of the Blind for pulling me off the dark path that I was going down. The Federation shed light on the importance of receiving training, and as a graduate of the Colorado Center for the Blind, I can state that I can confidently use the majority of the blindness skills taught there. My pride and stubbornness allowed me to leave the center with the perception that it was acceptable to barely read and write Braille.

After my training at the Colorado Center, I returned to college and was still a successful student by using technology and other strategies to avoid the reality that I was still missing an integral piece by not applying Braille to my daily routine. Currently, I am comfortable with access technology such as JAWS, Kurzweil 1000 and Voiceover for the iPhone. My next move is to consistently practice and apply Braille. I had the patience to learn to use access technology, and with that same patience, I must take my development as a blind person to another level in finally accepting the need for Braille.

My direct supervisor and the executive director of the Jernigan Institute, Anil Lewis, has shared how the Federation challenges interns and other Federationists to be better. The feedback from the Federation can be direct: The NFB tells it like it is, even if it is something one would not want to hear. Anil's honest assessment of my skills in the areas of technology and Braille was a wake-up call. It turns out that I have some limitations. For example, during the National Convention in Orlando, a critical part of the week was deliberating the types of policies that the Federation will engage in with the Resolutions Committee. I was selected to speak in favor of a resolution on the ABLE Act, which allows the disability community, including those who are blind, to set up an account that enables us to set aside money for housing, employment, transportation, healthcare, etc., without impacting benefits such as supplemental security income. Since I focus on memorizing my presentations when I speak formally, I lose a crucial part of public speaking, which is being comfortable and confident. My presentation to the Resolutions Committee was a disorganized, rambling train of thought that could have been avoided if my preparation had included Braille and a concise set of bulleted notes

(in Braille) to refer to as needed. I have experienced this situation a number of times in college, as well, and it's time to be proactive in being a well-rounded person.

The accessible technology week of my internship was timely. The access technology team laid out the various hardware and software options that I could use to be more independent and productive in school, as well as in the work force. I realized that I could be a more proficient Braille reader and writer with the use of technology. Towards the end of the week, I reached out to President Riccobono to share my thoughts and listen to the advice he had. He reinforced the value of Braille and emphasized that it's never too late to become more proficient. He suggested practicing reading and writing 30 minutes a day and including Braille in my daily routine. The use of technology to increase my Braille skills would be applied in increments and at different levels. The first level is to have hard copy of Braille to read while listening to my screen reader, JAWS, or to Voiceover on my iPhone. As I read and listen, the audio reassurance from JAWS can guide me in the recognition of words and gradually build speed. This is a basic and cost-effective way to combine technology and Braille, and allows me to practice independently. Next is to use a Braille display or BrailleNote to read and write messages, and this is an ideal option to increasing my reading and writing speed. This is a straight-forward plan for combining technology and Braille that requires a great amount of time and patience.

Consistent motivation and discipline in the use of Braille and technology will enhance my blindness skills. I admit that this will be a difficult process, especially as I near graduation and hope to enter the work force, but as the NFB has shown time and patience in mentoring me, I must give myself the same energy in becoming a more complete blind individual.

HIDDEN, A POEM BY SUE TILLET

Editor's Note: *Sue Tillett has been a member of the Capitol Chapter since its founding in 2000. She also belongs to the Guide Dog and Braille Divisions. Here is a poem she wrote:*

Hidden

They say the eyes are windows to the soul,
letting you look deep inside.
Without working eyes, is a person not whole?
Is their entrance to the soul denied?

We bare our soul through words and touch
with soul mates near and far -
our laughter, joy, confessions, tears
revealing who we are.

At times we hide, and act demure
to protect our fragile psyche.
With eyes cast down, we feel secure
from others' piercing scrutiny.

But I have found a different key,
Hands are the way to the soul for me.

BELL RINGS IN NEW JERSEY

By Mary Jo Partyka

New Jersey's second BELL (Braille Enrichment through Literacy and Learning) Program was held once again at the Puerto Rican Association for Human Development (PRAHD) located in Perth Amboy, NJ, July 13 - 24, 2015. The BELL Program is open to blind and low-vision students ages 4 – 12. The goals of the program include enhancing the children's Braille skills and teaching Activities of Daily Living (ADL) which will support them in becoming more independent and self-sufficient. The six students who participated in this year's program enjoyed the lessons and activities very much.

The person who spent the greatest amount of time planning and coordinating the program was Barbara Shalit, a certified teacher of the blind and visually impaired formerly employed by the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NJCBVI). Ms. Shalit managed the coordination, selection and scheduling of volunteers; planned the daily lessons and schedules; organized materials and supplies; collaborated with the BELL team members and the PRAHD staff; set up field trips; communicated with some of the teachers of the visually impaired who work with the students during the school year; and maintained ongoing communication with parents and volunteers.

The other members of the BELL team included Joe Ruffalo, NFBNJ president, Jerilyn Higgins, an ADL instructor, Holly Miller, a leader in POBC-NJ, and Mary Jo Partyka, president of the Braille Division/NJ.

In conformance with the goals of the BELL Program, the students worked on their Braille skills each day. Ms. Shalit prepared appropriate and individualized lessons for each child, based on their abilities. The volunteers acted as Braille mentors, working with each child on a one-to-one basis and helping them to read and complete worksheets. In ADL class, the emphasis was on preparing healthy snacks, making sandwiches, spreading, cutting fruits and vegetables, and pouring. Science lessons focused on the dwarf planet Pluto, which corresponded with the historic study of the New Horizons probe in mid-July, and basic flower parts, using large lilies.

Music was also a big part of the program. The children learned the song "All About That Braille," the "White Cane Song" and the dance moves to the "Cha-Cha Slide" developed by the South Carolina BELL Program in 2014. The BELL students also participated in a joint music program with the host facility's summer school children, which included a sing-along and exposure to the guitar and saxophone.

This year more emphasis was placed on communicating the NFB's philosophy – *Live the Life You Want* – to the parents and students. In addition to the parent seminar Joe Ruffalo and Holly Miller conducted the first day, Carol Castellano, from POBC-NJ, spent several hours discussing concerns expressed by the children's parents. Dan Frye,

executive director of NJCBVI, visited our program and talked about the importance of Braille and the challenges of being different from sighted people. Prior to the beginning of this year's program, Ms. Shalit compiled biographies of blind role models – some famous blind people, as well as members of our affiliate – and their stories were used to inspire the children. In addition, each morning the children were excited to tell what they did independently since the day before – and ring their bells – and what they would like to learn to do independently.

The members of the BELL team cannot begin to thank PRAHD Director Yvonne Lopez and her staff for the extra effort they put forth to make our program successful. On a tip from Ms. Lopez, Verizon personnel visited our program on the last day of class, videotaped the students in action, and interviewed students and staff. The video is available at http://cdnapi.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/openGraph/wid/1_5c6ghkhe

As you can see from this article, it takes an enormous amount of time, resources, commitment, and money to run the BELL program. We are extremely grateful to and would like to thank the Chester, Bloomfield and Nutley Lions Clubs, as well as family, friends, and members of our affiliate divisions and chapters for their financial contributions which made this program possible again this year.

FAMILIES CONNECT AS BELL CONTINUES TO CHIME

By Mary Jo Partyka

Although the BELL Program officially ended on July 24, the “bell” continues to keep families connected! Mom Lana Savron-Abbott reports, “It all started with BELL camp. Ryan and Ethan became friends last year. They didn’t see each other for (a whole) year, yet, they were best friends again this past summer at BELL Camp. It was like no time had passed at all.

“After this year’s program concluded,” she continues, “Ethan’s family invited us over for a day of swimming, playing and Braille enrichment where we made chocolate chip cookies using the extra-large chocolate chips as Braille dots. Next summer, Ethan and Ryan plan to spend a week together at sleepaway camp.

“At the BELL Program, not only do the students learn to enrich their Braille skills, they also build their socialization skills. By the use of these skills, Ryan and Ethan made a lifelong friendship in which they feel 100% accepted, and as they grow, they will be able to discuss similar challenges that they face and celebrate achievements together. If it wasn’t for BELL, they may not have found each other.”

According to Rachel Bodek, parent of Schmuel, “After Schmuel attended the BELL Program and was introduced to the cane, I thought to myself that if I want him to be

comfortable using the cane in the community, I have to do the same thing. Even though I don't need the cane most of the time since I have good peripheral vision, I started using it, and told myself and my kids that there is nothing to be embarrassed about when using the cane and announcing to the world that I am visually impaired. That is how God created me, and I need to be proud of who I am. The other day, I gave Schmuel's twin the option of whether I should use the cane while walking with him. He instantly responded, 'Sure, then all the cars will stop for you.' That day, we proudly used our canes together. Thank you for all you have done and what you will continue to do for the visually impaired population through the BELL Program."

HUGE & HEART-FELT THANKS TO OUR BELL PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS!

By Mary Jo Partyka

The BELL Program is grateful for all our wonderful volunteers who served as mentors and role models for the children. We couldn't have done it without them! Here are some specific examples of how the volunteers participated:

- **Christina Brino** assisted with ADL, read to the children, and taught them how to use the slates and styluses they received from the free slate program sponsored by the Jernigan Institute.
- **Amy Albin, Renee West, Jerilyn Higgins, Peggy Kane, Jillian Milton, Siham Atshan** and **Ann Wasserman** helped the students with their Braille reading and writing lessons, and took turns reading books to the children at lunch time.
- **Hank Miller** helped the children with Braille, taught them a song and demonstrated Braille technology.
- The sighted volunteer graduate students **Hannah Canuto** (who is studying to become an optometrist) and **Qoc Anh Tren** (who is studying to become an occupational therapist) taught the students songs and dance moves, provided help supervising the children, read to them, and played with them in the gym.

"I was surrounded by energetic and positive kids that valued being independent and knew of the importance of Braille for their future," Hannah Canuto said. "(The) teachers and volunteers, both blind and sighted, supported these children and were great role models. Volunteering at the BELL program will be something I will take with me, especially as I pursue optometry."

"I was so glad to be part of the BELL program," said Christina Brino. "Barbara and all the other volunteers did a wonderful job. I wish they had a similar program to BELL when I was younger. The program makes learning Braille so much fun and interesting. It is also wonderful how the children learn activities of daily living at an early age."

BELL PROGRAM BENEFITS BY RECEIVING FREE BOOKS FROM SEEDLINGS

By Deborah Bond

Editor's Note: *Deborah Bond is the founder of Seedlings, which provides Braille books to children from age 0 to 21 years old. This is a great service since it helps children read Braille rather than relying solely on technology. Seedlings is such a great service that it was granted a \$10,000 Jacob Bolotin Award at the 2015 National Federation of the Blind National Convention for providing braille books at low cost to the children who can enjoy them.*

Seedlings Braille Books for Children is a small nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing the opportunity for literacy by providing high-quality, low-cost children's literature in Braille. When I founded this program in 1984, my goals were to make more Braille books available and to keep them affordable. With the help of volunteers, grants and donations, Seedlings has kept its average price to \$10 per book. A popular give-away program we offer is Seedlings Book Angel Program. Through this program, blind and visually impaired children ages 0 to 21 in the United States and Canada can get two free books per year. Over 30,000 free books have been distributed through this program since its inception in 2002. In recent years, grants and bequests have enabled Seedlings to give away over 40% of these books.

As a result of such a bequest, Seedlings has given \$200 worth of Braille books to each of the BELL program sites for three years in a row. Over 2,100 Braille books have been distributed by Seedlings since 2013 to children across the country who have attended the BELL program. According to my recollection, Seedlings had received a bequest from a donor and decided to use part of it to send free books to the BELL sites. When we read about the BELL Program, we thought it was right in line with what Seedlings wants to accomplish: More opportunities for Braille literacy for the nation's blind. We contacted the National Federation of the Blind to see if some free books would help, and NFB gratefully accepted our offer. I'm sure these books have helped the children tremendously in their efforts to learn Braille.

According to Barbara Shalit, the teacher for the BELL Program in New Jersey, "Because of the generosity of Seedlings, we can meet the needs of a wide range of emerging and proficient Braille readers. Silence falls when the BELL mentors read a Seedlings book and when eager little hands read to each other."

For more information about Seedlings and its books and programs, please visit seedlings.org or call toll-free at 800-777-8552.

PARENTS SOMETIMES HAVE TO GET CREATIVE, ADAPT & CHANGE

By Suzanne Woolbert

Editor's Note: *Suzanne Woolbert is employed as a rehabilitation teacher with the New Jersey Commission for the Blind. In this article, she shows how raising her own children gave her an understanding of how important it is for all children to become independent, although there is no guarantee that it will happen to all of them. As Suzanne says, "If you want to live the life you want, a great way to get your kids started is to foster independence early."*

In my job as a rehab teacher, I sometimes have the privilege of working with teenage students on independent living skills. Being a totally blind single mom, I have the awesome – and often daunting – task of raising two teenagers: Bryan, 16, who is legally blind, and Lauren, 14, who is perfectly sighted. They each present an array of challenges for me and have required different teaching methods through the years. It was most important for me to keep my expectations reasonable and high for both of them.

From infancy, Bryan and Lauren learned differently. With Bryan, I became very adept at placing objects in his hands and helping him to manipulate and maneuver them, with a great deal of verbal description. "Bryan, let's spin the big orange ring," or, "Let's pull the red wagon," as I placed the handle in his hand and helped him pull it across the floor. With Lauren I would say, "Watch mommy," as I spun the toys on her high chair, and she imitated me. Or, "Jump like the monkey," as she watched a favorite video character and copied what she saw. Lauren reached her baby milestones early, walking at 9 months and feeding herself at 13 months. Bryan tried hard, but struggled to meet these milestones on time, needing constant direction and repetition. Exhausting? You bet! I grew tired of describing and jumping up to assist whenever he became frustrated because he could not make something work.

Moving through their toddler years, Bryan needed hands-on direction to hold a fork correctly and wipe his mouth with a napkin. Lauren watched me in the kitchen, and would grab a towel to dry a dish, or grab the broom and sweep the floor. Bryan learned to find the tag at the back of his shirt, but had to practice many times to get the shirt over his head, his arms through the sleeves, and make it face the right direction. Lauren watched and, almost effortlessly, buttoned, snapped, zipped and tied a bow.

In elementary school, Bryan needed less orientation to tasks and began to figure out how to do things that interested him, such as playing video games with simple graphics and building vehicles out of Legos. He was often required to help Lauren with her math problems or print out her reading assignments. In return, Lauren might have to help him find a lost object or read something he could not see. Probably the most difficult

concept for Bryan to grasp was tying his shoes. I tried different visual and tactile methods, and finally, after much practice and frustration, he got it! Yahoo!

Both Lauren and Bryan came into their own in high school. Lauren is a skilled athlete and made striker on the varsity girls soccer team. She's also artistic and her paintings hang in the rooms of our home, in my work cubicle, and in the art gallery in her school. Bryan attends a performing arts high school and is a gifted piano player and vocalist, participating in venues including church choirs, school congregations, charity benefits, street fairs, holiday parties and more. Bryan is part of the tech crew at his school and does light and sound work backstage for other performers. Both Lauren and Bryan maintain A averages and have been inducted into the National Honor Society.

Today, I have very similar expectations for both kids: They are responsible for cleaning up after themselves, making beds, putting laundry away, taking care of their hygiene, preparing simple meals and more. Are they both lazy and rebellious teenagers at times? Of course they are. Did having a mom who is a rehab teacher help Bryan to learn every necessary life skill that he will need for the rest of his life? Of course not.

So, how does this connect with other children I work with? Well, I get to see the whole gamut. I have met visually impaired high schoolers who can prepare their own lunches, and others who can't hang their clothes or find the milk in the refrigerator. Others are already traveling independently on Access Link, and others don't walk out their front doors alone. Some middle schoolers are combing their hair, dressing themselves, and pouring cereal into bowls, and others are relying on parents to zip their jackets and put book bags over their shoulders. Does this mean that some parents are better equipped to teach their blind children independence skills? Of course not.

What it means, though, is that most of us, including me, need lessons in patience and follow-through. It means that we cannot – and should not – take the easier, faster way out very often, to do things for our kids that they should be learning to do for themselves. It means that, sometimes, we need to let them make mistakes or messes until they get it right, or even, occasionally, get hurt or scared. It means that if we want our children to be living independent lives as adults, we need to invest the time in our children ... now! I, for one, do not want Bryan to be living under my roof when he is 30, and I trust that other parents feel the same. We want them to grow up, be happy and be self-sufficient.

TIPS FOR APPLYING MAKE UP

By Angela Perone

Editor's Note: *Angela is a board member of the Senior Division of the NFBNJ.*

In July 2008, I lost part of my vision due to ischemic optic neuropathy. In November 2010, I heard Linda Thomas and Johanna Baccan on a radio show called *Looking Good without Looking*. They were talking about fashion and how to apply makeup if you were blind. When I was fully sighted, I used to apply makeup, but I was nervous about doing it with low vision. I called them for some pointers, and we met at a State Convention. Linda and Johanna taught me how to apply makeup, and we even took before and after pictures. I was surprised with the difference and the confidence I gained in applying makeup on my own. I can't thank Linda and Joanna enough! I hope their tips will help you in feeling more confident about applying makeup, too.

Tips for Makeup Success

Purchasing your makeup: Visit the makeup counter at one of the big department stores at the mall and ask for their recommendations for your coloring. I went to Macy's and used Clinique products: moisturizer, foundation, pressed powder, blush, eye shadow, lip liner, lipstick, eye brow liner and mascara. Loose powder can also be used. Be sure to get a good set of makeup brushes and a magnifying mirror, too.

Applying makeup: Thoroughly cleanse your face, and then apply moisturizer all over, including your neck area. Avoid the eye area. Apply foundation using your fingers or a sponge, and be sure to cover whole area.

Applying powder: Apply pressed or loose powder the same way as above (for makeup).

Applying blush: Smile and feel the "apple" of your cheek bone. Place blush on the area of the "apple," but not above. Do 2-3 coats. If you have a sighted person available, ask them if it is ok.

Lipstick and lip liner: Follow the outline of the lips when applying.

Eye shadow: Follow the eye socket and use 1-2 coats.

Eyebrow liner: Follow the upper eye socket, feel your brow, apply liner.

UPDATE ON THE VEHICLE DONATION AND GREENDROP PROGRAMS

By Mary Jo Partyka

The National Federation of the Blind continues to partner with Vehicles for Charity on a vehicle donation program. This program accepts almost any vehicle for donation including trucks, cars, boats, motorcycles, and recreational vehicles. Donations may be eligible for a tax donation on the donor's federal income tax return. The organization receives an average of \$360 for each vehicle donated. We need your help in order for this program to succeed. You can visit the Vehicle Donation material webpage at nfb.org/vehicle-donation-materials where you will find ideas on how to share this program with potential donors. Remember our main job is to let the public know about the Vehicle Donation Program. On this website you will find flyers, mail inserts and press releases that can be shared with businesses and the local media.

According to Alice Kallaugher from the National Center, donations from New Jersey include 13 vehicles in 2014, and seven vehicles so far for 2015. The New Jersey contact for the Vehicle Donation Program is Anthony Lanzilotti, who can be reached at tti777@gmail.com or by calling 267-414-0410.

In terms of GreenDrop, the National Federation of the Blind has teamed up with this organization to collect donations of clothing, household items, kitchenware, toys and games, sporting goods, baby items, and movies, books and CDs. See the NFBNJ or goGreendrop.com for more information. Your donations can be taken to specified drop-off locations, or you can arrange for a pickup by calling (888) 610-4632 or by going to nfbpickup.org. The funds raised from this program go into the National Federation of the Blind's General Fund to support programs for veterans, blind STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) students, and seniors as well as the ongoing efforts to improve equality for the blind.

According to Alice Kallaugher, New Jersey donated 190.5 skids which is equivalent to 24 standard GreenDrop trucks of donations. Each skid is approximately 50 bags of donations. These statistics indicate that New Jersey has taken a very active part in supporting these programs.

The New Jersey contact for the GreenDrop program is Linda DeBerardinis, who can be reached at ldeber@comcast.net or by calling 856-764-7014.

For further information on the Vehicle Donation or GreenDrop Programs, please contact Alice Kallaugher at akallaugher@nfb.org or call her at 410-659-9314, extension 2282.

GREENDROP CREATES BLOG TO PROMOTE THE PROGRAM

Editor's Note: *GreenDrop, LLC, is a paid professional solicitor, and they are working with the NFB to collect clothing and household items that are then sold to benefit the NFB's general fund, which supports programs for blind STEM students, veterans and seniors, as well as the ongoing efforts to improve equality for the blind. The interview below is condensed from the original, which is available at <https://www.gogreendrop.com/blog>. You can also visit GreenDrop on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/gogreendrop>.*

To give donors a sense of how their donations make an impact, GreenDrop sat down with Joe Ruffalo, President of the NFBNJ. He shared with us his journey and what the team at the NFB means to him.

GreenDrop: *Tell us about yourself and your experience with the NFB.*

Joe: After coming home from Vietnam and working in retail for several years during the 1970s, I began to experience some vision loss; however, I was able to continue as a retail manager for about seven years. In need of direction – already married for five years and with two kids – I began searching for ways to continue my life as a husband, father and provider, but I encountered many roadblocks along the way. A lot of people said, “You can’t do this” and “You can’t do that.” Needless to say, I wasn’t a happy camper.

Thankfully, I met some good people along the way who believed in me even before I believed in myself. And, they happened to be members of the National Federation of the Blind. It turned out the NFB was doing everything I wanted to do. Its members were doing things with pride and dignity, and I knew I needed to have a part of that in my heart. I decided to get involved with the NFB through various leadership roles. In 1993 I became President [of the New Jersey affiliate], and still hold that position today. In 2001, I was elected to the National Board of Directors of the NFB and currently remain on the board. The confidence I gained through my leadership with the NFB helped me get involved with my community – as a Cub Master, Boy Scout leader, member of the Lions Club and the Knights of Columbus.

GreenDrop: *How did you find out about the NFB?*

Joe: Though my friend’s sister, who was an active member of the organization. She invited me to a meeting, which I originally didn’t want to attend. But, she called me six times! Finally after the sixth call, I accepted. Talk about persistence.

At that time I had some usable vision. I always thought my vision was better than no vision, but it wasn’t. People at the NFB were doing things I couldn’t. Those same people pushed me and told me to pick myself up. If you make a mistake, so what, you learn from it. So when I say the organization is important to me, it is. The National Federation

of the Blind is nothing more and nothing less than its members reaching out to help others. None of us gets paid for what we do, but we still get it done as volunteers.

GreenDrop: *What would you say makes the NFB so unique?*

Joe: Its members. We share information with each other. We embrace each other. We cry with each other. We laugh with each other. And when one of us succeeds, we all succeed. I love working with students because they are our future.

GreenDrop: *What are your main responsibilities as president of the NFBNJ?*

Joe: I'm retired, but the NFB keeps me extremely busy. And I love every minute of it. My main responsibilities are to grow and build the Federation and to provide love, hope, and determination to each person that I come in contact with. When a person who is experiencing blindness knows that someone cares and believes in them, this usually sparks an interest to gain additional knowledge to live the life they want. I guess, at times, I serve as a cheerleader by providing the history and philosophy of the Federation, and I represent that it is respectable to be blind.

One of my primary roles is correspondence. I get up at 5 or 6 a.m. every day, check my e-mails, and review my weekly calendar. Then I check my messages and return phone calls. Most calls I receive are from newly blind individuals seeking assistance. Essentially I make sure everything at the New Jersey affiliate runs smoothly.

GreenDrop: *What would you like our readers and donors to know about the NFB?*

Joe: The NFB was established in 1940, making it the largest and oldest organization of the blind in the country. Funds generated from GreenDrop open many doors for the blind and will make a difference in people's lives.

GreenDrop: *On behalf of GreenDrop, thank you so much, Joe! It was a pleasure speaking with you! Be sure to check back to the blog for updates on the NFB.*

GreenDrop welcomes your new or gently used items, including: clothing and shoes, household items, kitchenware, games and toys, small appliances, electronics, sporting goods, books, CDs, videos and baby items. All bags and boxes must be labeled NFB in order for you to receive credit for your donations. Our contact in New Jersey is Linda DeBerardinis: 856-764-7014 or ldeber@comcast.net To schedule a pick up, call 888-610-4632 or go to nfbpickup.org.

For more information on the GreenDrop program, visit <https://www.gogreendrop.com>

TECH TIPS & INFORMATION

Kevin's Consulting is on the Air! – Tune in to Kevin's Consulting the third Tuesday of the month, at 8:30 a.m., radio dial 1500 AM or listen on the web at <http://www.wghtradio.com> (hit ENTER on the "Listen Live" link). Topics covered include how to protect yourself online, and why and how people hack into computer systems, and much more. You don't want to miss this show!

Adopt Adaptive Equipment – Do you have a piece of blind/low-vision technology that you would like to donate to someone who can use it? Or are you in need of a piece of equipment which will enable you to do something more independently? If you can answer "yes" to either of these questions, you may be interested in our Adopt Adaptive Equipment Program. If you would like to donate or acquire such technology, please call Joe Ruffalo at 973-743-0075 or Ed Godfrey at 856-848-6372, and we will match requests with what people need, based on availability. We will connect the two parties, and they will be responsible for arranging the exchange of the equipment. The most popular items which have been donated are CCTVs. Please know that there is no charge for these items. Thank you to all who have donated in the past as these items have made a difference in peoples' lives. – *Submitted by Lynn Reynolds*

New VoiceOver Website – I wanted to let you know about a wonderful, free website filled with specific VoiceOver commands and tutorials/tests for you. Just go to: www.voiceover-easy.net. You will be asked specific information about the phone you have and the IOS device you are using. After receiving this information, the lessons will populate for that exact configuration. The site is all in text form and the person who developed this site is a good friend of mine. I highly recommend that you take a look and see how you like this site. – *Submitted by Jane Degenshein, President, Technology Division of the NFBNJ*

Freedom Scientific has several free training webinars on the agenda this fall: "New in JAWS 17" on October 14, "Windows 10 Basics with JAWS and MAGic" on October 28, "Introduction to Office 2016 with JAWS and MAGic" on November 11, "Domain-specific Scripts for Web Pages with JAWS" on November 24, and "Voice Profiles with JAWS and MAGic" on December 9. Thought many might find this an incredible way to learn. For more info, go to <http://www.freedomscientific.com/Services/TrainingAndCertification>. – *Submitted by Jane Degenshein, President, Technology Division of the NFBNJ*

DID YOU KNOW ...

NFB Channel Now Available on Newsline - For subscribers using the telephone access method: Find the new NFB National Channel under Option 1 from the main menu. One of the first offerings on the channel is the NFB's recently published e-book, *Building the Lives We Want: The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary History of the National Federation of the Blind*. Revisit and celebrate NFB history through this exciting new e-book!

List of Great Books for Parents & Students Available through NFBNJ.org – Carol Castellano's books *Getting Ready for College Begins in Third Grade* and *Educating the Blind/Visually Impaired Student in the Regular Classroom*, as well as Joe Cutter's book *Independent Movement & Travel in Blind Children: A Promotion Model*, as well as other **must reads** for parents and students are available on our website. Check them out!

Social Security has Updated More Publications – To see all Social Security publications, go to <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/>. To stay connected with Social Security, open a mySocialSecurity account at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount/>.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF THE NORTHEAST CHAPTER: CRUNCHY CHEDDAR CHICKEN

This recipe was submitted by Jessica Scanell. Jessica is a board member of the Northeast Chapter and the Braille Division. She is a magna cum laude graduate of Montclair State University with a degree in Family and Child Studies. She also earned a graduate certification to teach kindergarten through 5th grade. Jessica is also a graduate of the Louisiana Center for the Blind, where a computer instructor shared this recipe with her. She hopes you have a chance to make it and enjoy it as much as she does.

Ingredients – Serves 4

1/2 teaspoons freshly ground red pepper	3/4 cup Hidden Valley Original Ranch Dressing
1/2 teaspoon of salt	
1/4 cup shredded white cheddar cheese	1 cup crushed cornflakes
	4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Combine cornflakes, cheese, salt and pepper in a pie plate.
3. Evenly coat the chicken with the dressing and dredge in the cornflake mixture.
4. Place the chicken on a parchment-lined cookie sheet and bake 30 – 35 minutes.

Announcing A 2-hour introductory 1TOUCH™ Workshop

At the State Convention • Holiday Inn • 151 Route 72 East • Manahawkin

Saturday, November 7, 2015 at 3 p.m. Cost: \$10

Please Note: You must submit payment and your waiver form to reserve your spot.

1TOUCH™ is the first comprehensive self-defense program designed specifically for the blind. It will empower you, raise your self-confidence and improve your self-esteem. Just one touch will give you the hope, faith and courage to travel independently.

For more information:

Trisha Ebel at 201-456-0091 or patriciaebel0302@comcast.net

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

Space is limited. To register, send your \$10 check payable to Jerilyn Higgins and completed waiver form **by Oct. 23, 2015** to Jerilyn Higgins, 2 Old Farm Road, Verona, NJ 07044

Waiver and Release

In consideration of participating in today's 1TOUCH™ program, I, the undersigned, freely understand and acknowledge that 1TOUCH™ involves physical contact which might result in serious injury or death. I agree:

1. To comply with the terms and conditions for participation. If I encounter any hazard, whether from myself or from others, during my participation in the 1TOUCH™ program, I agree to withdraw from participation, alert a 1TOUCH™ representative of my withdrawal and remove myself from participation.
2. To indemnify and hold 1TOUCH™, its Director, its Coaches and its Agents harmless from any and all injuries I may incur while participating.
3. To grant all rights, title and interest in and to my name, image, voice or statement, including any and all photographic images, audio or video recordings captured during the 1TOUCH™ program.

I certify that I am in good physical health and have no disclosed or undisclosed conditions or injuries that would impact upon, impair or prevent my participation in the 1TOUCH™ program.

In the event I am injured during the course of the 1TOUCH™ program, I consent to being medically attended or treated by a physician, a nurse, athletic trainer or other medical emergency personnel.

Name _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

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

Mark Riccobono 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

Rebecca Bryant 973-732-6559

Linda DeBerardinis 856-764-7014

Alice Eaddy 856-765-0601

Dan Facchini 201-906-8655

Anthony Lanzilotti 267-414-4010

Lynn Reynolds 908-251-5510

NFBNJ Chapters*At-Large Chapter*

Conference call last Thurs. of the month, 8 p.m., except July & Nov
712-432-0180, enter code 460994
Joe Ruffalo 973-743-0075

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., JKTC, New Brunswick, 10 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.
Ryan Stevens 856-520-0016
rysteve@comcast.net

Glasstown Chapter

First Sat., Inspira Fitness Center, 1430 W Sherman, Vineland 9:45 a.m.
Lydia Keller 856-696-3518
lydiakeller@comcast.net

Northeast Chapter

Third Sat., St. Mathew's Church, Secaucus 10 a.m.
Dan Facchini 201-906-8655
danfb@verizon.net

Northern Chapter

Third Sat., Free Public Library, 3rd Floor, Newark, 10 a.m. – noon, Braille classes immediately following
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.
Anthony Lanzilotti 267-414-4010
Tti777@gmail.com

NFB of NJ Divisions*Blind Merchants*

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

Blind Students

Shafeka Hashash 551-697-1568
snh278@nyu.edu

Braille Division

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

Deaf-Blind Division

Alice Eaddy 856-765-0601
cheiro_alice@aol.com

Diabetes Division

Joe Ruffalo 973-743-0075
nfbnj1@verizon.net

Guide Dog Users

Trisha Ebel 201-456-0091
patriciaebel0302@comcast.net

Parents of Blind Children

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

Senior Blind

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

Technology Division

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

Programs, Projects & Committees*Adopt Adaptive Equipment*

Joe Ruffalo 973.743.0075
nfbnj1@verizon.net

Ed Godfrey 856-848-6372
egodfrey137@gmail.com

BELL Program

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

Holly Miller 732-610-5478
pobcnj@gmail.com

Blind Children's Resource Center

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

Braille Mentoring Program

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

Building Chapters & Membership

Rick Fox 973-743-6107
richardfox1@comcast.net

GreenDrop

Linda DeBerardinis 856-764-7014
ldeber@comcast.net

Legislative Coordinator

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

NFB Newsline

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

Public Relations/Press Releases

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

Resolutions

Ryan Stevens 856-520-0016
rysteve@comcast.net

Scholarship

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

Vehicle Donation Program

Anthony Lanzilotti 267-414-4010
tti777@gmail.com

CHAPTER AND DIVISION UPDATES CAN BE FOUND ON THE NFBNJ WEBSITE

Deadline for the Spring 2016 issue is March 15, 2016.

CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB AT

www.nfbnj.org www.blindchildren.org

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