

THE SOUNDING BOARD
Spring 2009

Katherine Gabry, Editor
Jerilyn Higgins, Co-editor

Published in print, by e-mail, on the Web and through Newsline 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
www.nfbnj.org

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 Oct. 1, 2009.

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.

The Sounding Board has been printed by Budget Print of Bloomfield, NJ. To subscribe via Newsline, please contact Bill Dougherty at 800-792-8322

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

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Presidential Message	3
Legislative News	5
Resolutions Passed at 2008 NFB of NJ State Convention	5
Meet Our New Board Members	8
What I Learned at the NFB of NJ State Convention	10
<i>Cooking Without Looking A Great Success!</i>	12
Braille Continues to Evolve to Transform Lives	13
Louis Braille Coin Unveiled	14
Internet Disability Talk Show Stars NJ Women	15
“The Eyes Have It” Helps Ramapo College Science Program	16
Support the March for Independence	16
Introducing the NFB of NJ Link Program	17
Tickets Now Available for Covering the Bases	17
Regarding the Novel “Blindness”	18
Northeast Chapter Protests “Blindness” at Local Theater	19
Semester Off, Pitch On: The John Ferry Story	20
A Missed Flight, But No Missed Opportunity	21
What is the NJ Library for the Blind and Handicapped?	22
NJ Authors’ Books Now Available in Accessible Formats	23
NFB of NJ Chapter News	23- 25
Capital Chapter	23
Central Jersey Chapter	23
Cumberland/Salem Chapter	24
Garden State Chapter	24
Northeast Chapter	25
NFB of NJ Programs, Associations & Division News	25 - 29
Adopt Adaptive Equipment	25
Association of Blind Merchants	26
Association of Blind Students	26
Association of Guide Dog Users	26
Diabetes Division	27
Division to Promote the Use of Braille	28
POBC-NJ	28
Technology	29
Letters	29
AccessTech Computer Training Classes	30
NFB of NJ Contact Information	31

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

Greetings Fellow Federationists,

With the weather warming, grass growing and our movement always in motion, I'm proud to announce that the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey continues to make a difference in the lives of the blind.

In this issue you'll read of the many programs, projects and activities in which our members, friends and families are involved. From the north to the south and all in between, the NFB of NJ is involved with blindness issues. Our organization's growth is highlighted throughout this issue as the number of our chapters, divisions, committees, programs and projects continues to blossom.

There were more than 30 contributors to this issue of *The Sounding Board*. The articles range from informational pieces to personal, educational and biographical stories, and much more. I would like to thank all who have taken the time to write articles that make our magazine an extremely important publication not only here in New Jersey, but across the United States as well.

In this issue, please particularly note the articles featuring legislation and resolutions. Be sure to provide Lynn Reynolds, our legislative coordinator, with your e-mail address. Lynn's e-mail is lhr1827@optonline.net. In this issue, you will also read about:

- The movie *Blindness* and the action taken by our members.
- The Louis Braille commemorative coin celebration held in Clark.
- The upcoming activities conducted by members of the NFB of NJ, and yes, we are making a difference!
- Our two newest committees, Guide Dog and Technology.

For the past two issues, *The Sounding Board* has no longer been produced on cassette; however, the publication can be read on NFB-Newsline, and I encourage all to subscribe to this service. NFB-Newsline is the largest electronic newspaper service in the world for blind and print-disabled Americans. It offers more than 275 newspapers and magazines as well as TV listings to more than 65,000 subscribers right through your touch-tone phone. The Federation has also recently announced the launch of NFB-Newsline Online, which sends publications, sections of publications or articles you've selected to your e-mail address for downloading. Go to www.nfbnewslineonline.org to sign up for Newsline Online.

In other exciting news, the New Jersey Library for the Blind and Handicapped will be reading excerpts from *The Sounding Board* on Audiovision and I know our members greatly appreciate this effort. Throughout this issue, partnerships have

been created and strengthened, always keeping in mind the philosophy of the National Federation of the Blind.

The Federation will hold its National Convention, July 3 to 8, in Detroit. Once again, the agenda is filled with important information, workshops, seminars, activities, fellowship, products to examine, the March for Independence and much more. Please check out www.nfb.org for additional information and lots of educational materials that will make a difference.

I would like to thank former State Affiliate Board members Jerry Moreno, secretary, and David Mostello, board member, for their many years of dedicated service. David is an active member in the Capital Chapter, and Jerry and his wife Madeline, “the label lady,” have ... retired? Jerry has been elected Chapter President in North Carolina. We had no doubt he would remain active in the Federation movement even in his retirement. And, by the way, there is no definition for the word “retired” in the NFB vocabulary.

Just a reminder: The dates for distribution for *The Sounding Board* have changed. Our new publication dates are April and November. A special thanks to Kathy Gabry and Jerilyn Higgins for editing *The Sounding Board*. I hope you enjoy this issue, and when you’re finished with your copy, please share it with friends, family, neighbors and co-workers.

And last, but certainly not least, be sure to mark your calendar for two important events scheduled later this year. First, we’re hosting our annual State Convention November 6 – 8, 2009 at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Clark. Second, everyone is invited to our holiday party, also at the Crown Plaza, Saturday, December 19. Details on these events will be available soon on our website at www.nfbnj.org.

Enjoy the spring and get ready for another year of making a difference!

At times, we are blinded by our ability to see.
The more we try, the more we succeed.
Everything is impossible until you do it.
Keep believing. Keep dreaming. Keep learning.
Let's work together. Let's make a difference!

With best wishes,

Joe Ruffalo
President
National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

By Lynn Reynolds, Legislative Coordinator

As many of you will remember, fall 2008 was very active with alerts, especially those regarding the Quiet Car Legislation (HR5734). In January, a new administration, along with the 111th Congress, began. The Washington Seminar was held February 8 – 11, 2009. The NJ delegation met with the aides of our state representatives on February 9. The three issues presented were:

1. Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act (HR5734). This bill was reintroduced and encourages auto manufacturers to equip all hybrid cars with a device that will emit a sound.
2. Technology Bill of Rights for the Blind. We are asking that a bill be introduced that encourages manufacturers to adapt all household appliances, as well as electronic devices used in offices, so that they are accessible for the blind. As it is now, any device that requires the use of a touch screen is not accessible.
3. Social Security Earnings Limits legislation. The aide was presented with ideas for changes regarding the earnings of blind employed individuals who are collecting SSDI. As of this writing, this bill has not been introduced.

I have sent out the Fact Sheets from the Washington Seminar. If you have not received them, please let me know, and I will resend them to you. Also, thanks to all who have taken the time to call their state representatives when asked to do so. It does make a difference.

If you are not on the Legislation Committee e-list, please send me your e-mail address, and I will include you when I receive alerts from the National Center, as well as any issues with our state.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT 2008 NFB STATE CONVENTION

By Mary Jo Partyka

The following resolutions have been sent to our local legislators in New Jersey:

Resolution 2008-01

Regarding Services to Blind Babies and Toddlers from the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

WHEREAS, teachers from the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired are the providers of virtually all essential services to blind babies and

toddlers and their families, teaching parents how to create an environment in which their baby can flourish; and

WHEREAS, recent changes in service levels to babies and toddlers seem to indicate a decrease in service, creating great concern among parents and teachers; and

WHEREAS, caseloads have been redistributed such that teachers who had previously worked solely with blind babies and who had developed expertise in this area have now been given a Braille caseload, and teachers who have taught only older children are now assigned blind babies; and

WHEREAS, both of these situations seem to indicate a decline in services to blind children: Now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the NFB of NJ in Convention assembled this 8th day of November, 2008, in the Township of Clark, NJ, that this organization call upon the Executive Director of the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired to clarify what the present policy is for services to blind babies and toddlers and not to make any cuts in service to this population, to provide training in child development to teachers who will now have babies on their caseloads, and to provide a Braille refresher course for former baby counselors who now teach Braille students; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization call upon the Executive Director to meet with Parents of Blind Children-NJ in the spirit of partnership when services to blind children are under discussion.

Resolution 2008-02

Regarding O&M Services to Blind Children and Babies from the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

WHEREAS, O&M instructors from the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired are the providers of virtually all O&M instruction to blind school-age children, babies and toddlers in New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, mastery of orientation and mobility skills is critical in order for a child to develop age-appropriate independence; and

WHEREAS, children have been placed fourth and last and blind babies and toddlers do not appear at all in the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired's new "order of selection" to go into effect when there are not enough O&M instructors to meet demand; and

WHEREAS, it is widely known that demand for services already exceeds capacity and that blind children and babies are not receiving near the service they need in order to become independent: Now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the NFB of NJ in Convention assembled this 8th day of November, 2008, in the Township of Clark, NJ, that this organization call upon the Executive Director of the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired to

change this policy so that blind babies and children are included in services even when there is a shortage of teachers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization call upon the Executive Director to meet with Parents of Blind Children-NJ in the spirit of partnership in order to develop creative solutions to these ongoing problems.

Resolution 2008-03

Regarding Access to Higher Education Textbooks

WHEREAS, federal law requires publishers of books used in elementary and high schools to provide standardized electronic files to a national repository for rapid cost-effective conversion into Braille and other formats, but no similar requirement exists for books used by students in higher education; and

WHEREAS, digital technology is rapidly changing the way that materials are published, making provision by publishers of electronic files for use by blind students and faculty easy and inexpensive; and

WHEREAS, blind students devote hours searching for existing accessible versions of the books they need through sources including Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic and Bookshare.org and, when not otherwise available, more hours seeking others to scan and correct the books for their use or scanning the books themselves, all before studying can even begin; and

WHEREAS, advocates for the blind have been working at the national level to create consensus with individual publishers and the Association of American Publishers in order to pass legislation for the provision of accessible higher education textbooks on a federal level, but this has not yet been accomplished; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey's blind students continue to struggle to gain access to their college and graduate school textbooks: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the NFB of NJ in Convention assembled this 9th day of November, 2008, in the Township of Clark,, NJ, that this organization call upon the New Jersey State Legislature to take prompt action to pass legislation requiring publishers of higher education textbooks to provide accessible files to blind students enrolled in institutions of higher learning in New Jersey; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization strongly urge the Association of American Publishers to work with the NFB of NJ and the New Jersey State Legislature to craft a mutually agreeable solution that insures access to textbooks for blind students and faculty in higher education.

RESOLUTION 2008-04

Regarding Momentum Toward Solving the Quiet Cars Crisis

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

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

WHEREAS, for much of the time since 2003, the NFB has sought to collaborate with organizations that can ensure that motor vehicles make a sound while in operation, but our requests have gone unheeded; and

WHEREAS, recently, individuals and organizations who have the ability to ensure that motor vehicles emit a sound that will allow the blind and other pedestrians to travel safely have begun to work with the NFB to address our concerns, giving us hope that a solution is on the horizon; and,

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

WHEREAS, the increased prevalence of quiet vehicles will seriously affect the ability of New Jersey's blind population to travel safely and independently unless these vehicles are equipped with a sound: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the NFB of NJ in Convention assembled this 9th day of November, 2008, in the Township of Clark, NJ, that this organization call upon New Jersey's legislators to include the stipulation that hybrid and any other quiet cars must be equipped with a sound loud enough to be heard over other ambient outdoor noise and from far enough away to enable blind pedestrians to perceive that a vehicle is approaching, in any future clean air or other legislation that addresses the fuel efficiency of cars in order to ensure the independent, safe and free travel of the blind and all pedestrians in NJ; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge New Jersey legislators to confer with members of the NFB of NJ for guidance in this matter.

MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

NFB of NJ Secretary Quintina Singleton

When I was in third grade, I was diagnosed with glaucoma. I was certain that my blindness would do nothing but prevent me from living a happy, successful life.

In April 1999, I attended my first NFB of NJ chapter meeting. On that day I made some exciting discoveries. I found that everyone at the meeting was blind, *and* they were also rehab teachers, massage therapists, BEP operators, college students, college professors, computer experts, secretaries, and the list goes on. I was also impressed that they had traveled there by themselves. Blindness was being discussed, like I had thought it would be, but not in the same fashion I had

experienced in the past. It was not whispered softly like a dirty word, but rather issues related to blindness were talked about openly and honestly with no undertones of its existence being a tragedy. Many of those present had helpful suggestions to contribute to the various meeting agenda items.

I left that day with a lot of information on several cassette tapes and in my own head. I was really impressed that the leaders at the NFB – those talking on the informational tapes – were also blind. I appreciated the group's attitude that blindness was something that, with the appropriate training and opportunity, could be reduced to just another characteristic.

At that time I had neither training nor opportunity, so I enrolled in the intense, 9-month training program at the NFB's Colorado Center for the Blind. Through this program I improved my abilities in basic blindness skills, participated in confidence-building exercises like white water rafting, and generally became a much more self-sufficient person. After this experience, I felt ready to go on with the rest of my life, still, of course, remaining active in the NFB.

My efforts in the Federation's movement have allowed me to serve as legislative coordinator of the Northern New Jersey Chapter and president of the NJ Association of Blind Students. Although I have truly enjoyed taking on the responsibilities required by each of these offices, I believe that it takes the participation of all of us to carry out our organization's mission of changing what it means to be blind. This is an effort I will always be a part of whether or not I hold a board seat.

NJ Association of Blind Students President Evelyn Valdez

Confusion and nervousness traveled through my mind and body as I sat with Marine Corps Recruiter Sergeant Cordasco. The print letters began to bend and fade, and I couldn't focus on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Test (ASVAB). The ASVAB is the armed services entrance exam; I took it in my senior year of high school so that I could achieve my dream of becoming a U.S. Marine.

Once I started the test, however, I knew that I couldn't complete it, and my only chance of a military career was destroyed. I felt that I had no other choice than to lie to my recruiter and tell him that I had a bad headache and wouldn't be able to finish the test. I walked out of the room feeling defeated and alone.

How could I tell him that I was unable to see the print text in front of me at the most critical moment? I didn't even know why the letters were doing that.

I had been in my high school's Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, and this was a huge influence in making the military my primary career choice after graduation. I planned to serve a standard four-year term working in the communications field. After the four years, I would go on to college, but remain in the Corps as a reservist until I decided to retire. But after this test attempt, I

realized that the military was not an option. I decided to take the SAT instead, and the same scenario – with the print letters bending and fading – occurred. I guessed throughout the SAT and received a disappointing 840 as a final score.

Retinitis pigmentosa changed my life. It took me on a totally different journey than what I had originally planned. Nine years after I was diagnosed, I earned my bachelor's degree in early childhood education; I will graduate with my master's in special education this May. I am also working as a paraprofessional educator in Hillside, which is my hometown.

Thanks to many amazing opportunities and encouragement, I feel honored to have held positions of leadership in the NFB of NJ. No longer does defeat, confusion or loneliness dominate my being. Instead, determination, hard work and the YES I CAN/YES I WILL attitude inspire me in achieving my goals. This organization has given me a tremendous opportunity, and my loyalty will always be here, with those who have given me so much.

WHAT I LEARNED AT THE NFB OF NJ STATE CONVENTION

Editor's Note: *Several NFB of NJ members and LEAD students wrote to us after attending their first NFB of NJ State Convention. Their comments, edited due to space considerations, follow.*

From Elizabeth Morgan, LEAD Student, Southern Region:

This is my first year with the LEAD Program and my first time attending a State Convention. The convention was great! There were many different speakers, and everyone was so friendly and made me feel welcome. The whole event energized me, and after hearing all the speeches, I felt better about myself, and I felt more accepted, which I do not always feel back home in my community. I guess you can say that I received a feeling of empowerment! I feel more confident. I will not say "I can't" anymore because now I KNOW that I CAN! It's all about attitude; I now know that! And, if I don't succeed right away, I still won't quit because then I would be giving up on myself, and I won't let that happen. I am so grateful that I was accepted to attend this convention, as it really helped me to see things differently than before.

It was so amazing to hear the stories, like the skier, the scuba diver, so many great athletes, the photographer (yes, a blind photographer), and all the others who accomplished so much and didn't let their visual impairment get in the way of their dreams or goals. My mother always says that with faith and encouragement you will succeed, and the convention made me see that she is right.

I really didn't know what to expect other than just a weekend away with others "like me." But, I can now say how very thankful I am that I did go, because I

would have missed out on so much – mostly realizing that I AM just like everyone else and I will be successful! This was a very valuable lesson to learn and I hope to carry it with me for the rest of my life. I encourage everyone to attend the convention. I have to also say that besides all the great stories, there was social time and dancing and auctions and prizes and just plain fun! It really was a great weekend. Thank you! Hope to see you next year!!!

From Hamlet Diaz, LEAD Student, Northern Region:

I learned how to put my toothpaste on my toothbrush, which is great because it makes me more independent. I heard about the KNFB Mobile which is a cell phone with a program to read print documents, business cards, receipts and books. Now I know that when I use my cane, I have to walk straight and keep my head straight. I finally realize that organizing my own stuff is very important because it makes it easier for me to find things. For example, when I was packing, I found my soap because I put it in a special place.

This convention taught me that we must always have high hopes in order to be successful in life. Because of the convention, I know that a challenge is an opportunity to grow and achieve. Another important lesson that this convention taught me is that we must make a difference in the world.

I want to have more confidence in myself when I have to travel alone to a place that I have never been. I hope to continue to be more independent every time I go to LEAD events and I want to go to one of the NFB centers before college. When obstacles are in my way, I really want to overcome them.

I would like to thank the Commission for the Blind, the NFB and LEAD because they are always looking for new ways to improve blind people's lives. They are changing what it means to be blind by educating the public. In addition, if it wasn't for NFB resources, many blind people like us wouldn't be able to go to Washington, D.C. to talk to senators or e-mail them about our concerns. Finally, I want to thank my mentor Kurt Bellingrath and all the mentors in the LEAD program, and the NJ CBVI and HIP for the funding and the administration of the program.

From Amanda Kean, LEAD Student, Northern Region:

I had a great time at the State Convention, and I learned a lot from the mentors, the workshops and the seminars. By listening to different people share their experiences about their jobs, I believe that I can go for any job I want.

I have definitely learned a lot while I have been in LEAD, and during the convention I learned even more. One big thing that I learned is that I don't have to be completely blind to learn how to read Braille or listen to books on tape or use a cane. I've learned that even though I have pretty good sight, those tools could help me. I also enjoyed seeing all the different technology that was on display, as some of it may help me to be successful in college.

It was also fun to socialize with everyone and to see friends from other regions that I had met at the Drew Summer Program and Camp Marcella. Talking about different situations with them has helped us all learn about different ways to handle situations that come up, and gives me an opportunity to problem solve. The mentors were also there to help if any problems or questions came up.

I am grateful that I got the opportunity to attend the convention and want to thank you for the experience.

From Angela Perone:

In August of 2008 I was diagnosed with Ischemic Optic Neuropathy and was devastated to learn that I had lost part of my eyesight. I immediately sought out the best specialist in the field, began working with the Commission for the Blind, and, in October, joined the NFB. I went to my very first NFB of NJ State Convention in November. I networked and made a lot of professional, as well as personal, contacts and a lot of new friends. I would like to say "thank you"! I am also a type-2 diabetic, and I would like to let people know that my doctors at the University of Pennsylvania are conducting research on Ischemic Optic Neuropathy. If anyone reading this is interested, please feel free to contact me at 908-725-9044 or clasemt@aol.com (please put in subject box NFB Member).

COOKING WITHOUT LOOKING A GREAT SUCCESS!

By Carol Castellano, President, POBC-NJ



Twenty-five NJ families sat down to a fine Sunday dinner of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches last weekend, after their blind/VI children participated in the POBC-NJ event *Cooking Without Looking* the day before. Our blind chefs, Jerilyn Higgins and Joe Ruffalo (in photo at left, supervising Anthony Tumminello's chopping skills), demonstrated the finer points of chopping vegetables and fruits, opening cans, using measuring cups and spoons, making tuna or chicken salad, spreading butter and peanut butter and jelly, using a sandwich maker to make grilled cheese, making beverages, and, last but not least, constructing a lovely parfait made of pudding, cookies and fruit. Each child had the opportunity to try out every technique and make every item. Instructions to the parents were: Keep your hands to yourselves! Of course we all got to enjoy the fruits of the labor afterwards.

In addition to learning the cooking techniques, the kids made the place settings, washed the fruits and vegetables, and, at the end of the day, cleaned up the tables.

Thanks to our committee for all their hard work in setting up the program – Patty Tumminello, Hannah Hashash, Carla Richardson and Donna Panaro – and to all the other parents who stepped up to help out whenever needed. We greatly appreciate Fountain Baptist Church in Summit, NJ, for donating the use of their kitchen and Fellowship Hall, and their staff who made us feel welcome and helped ensure that the program ran smoothly. Special, special thanks go to our chefs extraordinaire, Jerilyn Higgins and Joe Ruffalo.

BRaille CONTINUES TO EVOLVE TO TRANSFORM LIVES

By Gary Cooper, Media Specialist, Marketing, New Jersey State Library

If asked to name a 12-year-old – any 12-year-old, boy or girl – who created something that is such an important part of people’s lives that it is used every day all over the world, many people would probably shrug their shoulders and give a blank look. Those savvy in the world of social networking might say the two teens who created Myyearbook.com. Others would surely say Mozart, possibly Chopin.

But, although a contemporary of Chopin, this blind young lad’s creation had nothing to do with music, but everything to do with learning and reading when he developed a system of making letters, numbers and words using six raised dots in different patterns. By the time Louis Braille was 15, he published the first-ever Braille book in 1829, then went on to add symbols for math and music in 1837, which undoubtedly made those blind students wishing to play Chopin happy.

Braille, who was blinded by accident at age 3, developed the system because of the way blind students were taught in 1821 Paris: Teachers talked and the students listened. He wanted a better way to learn. Although it took until 1868 – 16 years after his death – for his system to be accepted, it spread worldwide and is the standard used globally today, with those raised dots recognized by both the blind and sighted.

“Braille skills are integral for the blind and visually impaired to have full, independent, successful lives,” said Adam Szczepaniak, director of the New Jersey State Library for the Blind and Handicapped. “It’s such a necessity and yet it is little recognized for its importance. Seventy percent of blind people without Braille skills are unemployed, while 85 percent of the Braille-literate population holds jobs.”

It was a creation so important that countries all over the world are commemorating the bicentennial of his birth, January 4, 1809.

LOUIS BRAILLE COIN UNVEILED

By Mary Jo Partyka

In December 2008, Joe Ruffalo asked if I would be the New Jersey representative on the Commemorative Coin Committee Braille Readers are Leaders campaign. I spoke with members throughout the United States on several conference calls. During January, most states observed Louis Braille's birthday by hosting events in bookstores where customers were able to see blind people reading Braille. Most affiliates provided the opportunity for people to have their names written in Braille and some chapters actually had Louis Braille birthday celebrations.

In New Jersey, more than 100 people attended our Commemorative Coin Event to Promote Braille Literacy on March 28 at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Clark. The event was sponsored by the New Jersey Association to Promote the Use of Braille and the State Affiliate and was filmed by Pine Barren Films. Participants were able to feel the Louis Braille coin which was released in Baltimore on March 26 and chocolate replicas of the coin. Braille alphabet cards, the book *The World Beneath My Fingers* and Louis Braille pins were distributed. Agnes Allen, who formerly taught Braille and lived in New Jersey, and Vito DeSantis, the Director of the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, spoke about the importance of Braille in their lives. A Louis Braille coin was raffled off and the State Affiliate presented a coin to Agnes Allen for her dedication to teaching and reading Braille for so many years. But the highlight of the event was the reading of the proclamation signed by Governor Jon Corzine designating March 26, 2009 as Braille Readers are Leaders Day. Blind persons, ranging in age from 7 to 84, read parts of the proclamation; the readers were Rebecca Irvin, Beatrice Olivetti, Priscilla Garces, Maher Dhoshi, Jessie Scannell, Agnes Allen, Hamlet Diaz, Isabel Rodriguez, Kyle Kreske, Anthony Tumminello and Sammy Hashash. The Braille Division contacted state and local politicians and similar proclamations were sent to us by State Senator Frank Lautenberg and Congressman Donald Payne. The day ended with the American Outlaw wrestling Braille illiteracy to the ground with the songs "Celebrate" and "Ain't No Stopping Us Now" and the sound of fireworks bringing everything to a memorable conclusion.

Although much planning and work went into this event, I think that we were successful in communicating our message that Braille is essential to the lives of blind people everywhere, and so our work continues. One of my goals is to speak at schools and Lions Clubs to increase awareness of the importance of Braille literacy. Another goal is to raise funds to support this cause.

For more information about the Braille Readers are Leaders campaign, visit Braille.org. To purchase the commemorative coin, please visit the U.S. Mint's Web site at www.usmint.gov. Questions? Please contact me at 609-888-5459.

INTERNET DISABILITY TALK SHOW STARS NJ WOMEN

By Kate Blisard

Editor's Note: *This article is reprinted with permission from Able Newspaper LI-NY-NJ, Feb 09 edition.*



“From Our Hearts to Your Home” is an Internet disability talk show hosted by Jane Degenshein and Trish Ebel who are both visually impaired (from left in photo, along with Trish’s service dog Rainy).

The one-hour show is aired on the second Wednesday of each month at 8 p.m. Tuning in to www.throureyes.org or clicking on your Podcast will get you to the show.

Ebel and Degenshein became friends while taking a computer class. They formed Eyes Closed Hearts Open or ECHO for visually impaired and blind persons. The group collected recipes from the members, their families and friends and published “From Our Hearts to Your Home – EZ Recipes You Can Make with Your Eyes Closed.” An Internet disability talk show was born.

The first show premiered April 2008 featuring the hosts interviewing each other. “We enjoy doing the show. We promise if you tune in you will be sitting there with a big smile on your face,” said Ebel. “We work with terrific people who make the show possible.”

In a recent episode guest Gerry Moreno described the Victor Stream, which downloads books, music and described videos for free. Moreno spoke about how he and his sighted grandson watched *Toy Story* together using the program.

A segment called the Book Corner gave a review of *See Jane Run* and the Cooking Corner gave a recipe for a holiday drink. Shout Outs is a segment that applauds persons who have made a difference in their own lives or a difference in the lives of others. The monthly show shares resource information and listeners are encouraged to call in with comments and questions.

There are plans to expand the show’s repertoire to include guests, topics and information of interest to the disability community at large.

“THE EYES HAVE IT” HELPS RAMAPO COLLEGE SCIENCE PROGRAM
By Michele Daly

Adult Marsh Access (AMA) is the name given to science-based educational programs funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation that was awarded to Ramapo College of NJ. Located at a NJ Meadowlands Commission facility in Lyndhurst, these programs have been created to introduce adults with various disabilities to science by modifying a program’s content, materials and science equipment.

The Eyes Have It is a group that has become involved in helping the AMA staff understand the needs of people who are blind or visually impaired. Over the last year and a half, The Eyes have provided the AMA staff with invaluable suggestions, ideas and unconditional support that has resulted in the development of science programs with appropriate modifications for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Throughout the next year and a half, the AMA hopes to continue their partnership with The Eyes so that the results of this grant, which is being used as a nationwide pilot program, can assist in introducing more adults with disabilities to the exciting field of science.

For more information on this exciting program, please contact Trish Ebel at aimang4@verizon.net.

SUPPORT THE MARCH FOR INDEPENDENCE!
From the National Federation of the Blind

When you sign up for the March for Independence/Imagination Fund campaign, you volunteer your time to send out e-mails to your friends and colleagues. Making a donation yourself is not required. You put in the time and talent, and what follows is a treasure that will help put Braille in the hands of blind kids; sponsor science, education, math and technology programs for blind teens interested in these fields; and help newly blinded veterans, college students, and seniors losing vision and their families. A few hours of e-mailing can literally change what it means to be blind for so many!

Register to participate at <http://www.marchforindependence.org/>. If you can’t actually be there, you can be a virtual marcher. And when you register, you’ll get your own web page and all the tools you’ll need to spend a little time changing a lot of lives. For more about how funds raised through the March for Independence and the Imagination Fund are changing what it means to be blind visit <http://www.marchforindependence.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5145>.

INTRODUCING THE NFB OF NJ LINK PROGRAM

By Mary Jo Partyka

Are you someone who realizes that your vision is not what it used to be? Do you wonder how blind people read, use the computer, get around the neighborhood, hold jobs and do schoolwork? Or do you have a child who is blind and wonder how he'll get along in the sighted world?

Are you a blind person who has knowledge of Braille, technology and blindness skills? Would you be interested in talking to someone who is losing their vision to give them help and encouragement?

If you could answer yes to the first or second group of questions, you may be interested in becoming part of the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey's Link Program. One of the goals of the New Jersey Association to Promote the Use of Braille (NJAPUB) is to help increase Braille literacy. But many people may not know what Braille is and may need encouragement. They may also have questions about daily living skills, technology, etc. Our goal is to create a mentoring program where a mentee (newly blinded person) will be paired with a mentor who can be a source of support and inspiration for them. You can communicate in person if you live nearby, through e-mail or by telephone.

If you are interested in joining this new endeavor or if you have questions, please contact Mary Jo Partyka at 609-888-5459 or at choirnfb@gmail.com or Sue Tillett at 609-924-7489 or suetillett@verizon.net. We need your support to get this program off the ground.

TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE FOR COVERING THE BASES

By Pam Gaston

The NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired hopes that you will join us at *Covering the Bases*, an event to promote the full community inclusion and awareness of the potential and achievements of individuals who are blind and visually impaired. Please join us Thursday, July 16, 2009, 6:30 p.m., at Waterfront Park, 1 Thunder Road, in Trenton, NJ for this exciting evening when the 2007 & 2008 Eastern League Championship Winning Trenton Thunder Baseball Team (the Double "A" Affiliate of the NY Yankees) take on the Portland Sea Dogs.

CBVI will make pre-game presentations to recognize some of our consumers who have made outstanding academic achievements. The most important goal of this event is to provide a fun-filled evening for all who come out to join us.

For more information or to purchase tickets (\$7 each), contact Pam Gaston at 973-648-3333 or Pamela.Gaston@dhs.state.nj.us.

REGARDING THE NOVEL “BLINDNESS”

By Mary Fernandez

Editor’s Note: *Mary Fernandez is a college freshman from Woodbridge, NJ.*

In 1995, José Saramago, a Portuguese author, published his novel *Blindness* in Portugal. Two years later the novel was translated and distributed throughout the U.S. and other English-speaking nations. In 1998, Saramago was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, and in October 2008, the film adaptation of the novel was released.

The novel and film take place in a fictitious city where a virus has struck. The virus leaves its victims instantly and inexplicably blind. The blind can see only a white mist, and thus the disease is referred to as the White Sickness. The disease is highly contagious, so the government moves the blind and those who have been in contact with them to an abandoned mental hospital. One of the first people to go blind is a doctor, but for some reason his wife never catches the disease; she insists that she be taken with her husband so that she can assist him.

As more people start filtering into the hospital, the quality of life decreases exponentially. Because they are blind, they cannot go to the bathroom, they do not know where they are, and soon violence and complete degradation take over. As the story continues, Saramago depicts the blind not as people, but as animals stripped of all civility and human thought processes.

The potential misinformation that this movie could cause concerns me greatly. The only exposure that most people have to blindness is through the media, and whether it is through Ray Charles or Daredevil, the image most have of blindness is nothing like the reality.

Obviously in Saramago’s story, blindness is portrayed as the ultimate tragedy; the doctor says, “I would rather be dead than blind.” His point: If I can’t use my eyes, there is no point in living.

This is a lie. I am perfectly happy, I am an Emory College student, I have friends, boyfriends, I go to parties and have an excellent quality of life. Blindness: the ultimate punishment? It is not a tragedy; it is merely a condition.

The novel also emphasizes the lack of hygiene and perpetually refers to criminal tendency in the blind internees. However, the reality is that when someone goes blind, they do not forget where they are standing, nor do they forget that the place to go to the bathroom is actually the bathroom. Their brain is not impaired, and their hearing does not suddenly become supersonic as the author would have us believe. In fact, once a person adjusts to their blindness – which does not take as long as the author suggests – they lead perfectly normal lives. I, and every other blind person I know, get dressed independently every day, manage to match our clothes and even go as far as putting on makeup without looking like clowns.

Saramago used blindness as a metaphor. His idea was to portray the blindness that humans have in their souls, and how that could lead us to become uncivilized and behave like animals. This is a great point, but most blind people do not lose their ability to perceive the world just because they cannot see it. We are as astute as the next person. We know what is going on in the world, and we are not trapped in a dark bubble that envelops our lives and makes us helpless and inferior.

As an American citizen, I uphold the right to speak freely. However, these stereotypes abuse this freedom. Saramago portrayed the blind as everything people believe blindness to be, and then some. He tore away the dignity of his characters, not even bothering to give them names. He refers to them as “pigs” and even goes as far as to state that the blind know they are inferior to the sighted. If this column accomplishes nothing else, I would just like to let it be known that absolutely nothing in this storyline is true of the lifestyle of a blind person. Let it be known that it is a callous misrepresentation, and that it is offensive in the extreme.

NORTHEAST CHAPTER PROTESTS “BLINDNESS” AT LOCAL THEATER

By Bea Oliveti

Editor’s Note: *NFB of NJ members rallied to protest the release of this film at the AMC Loews Theaters in Wayne and Secaucus; NFB members also protested at 72 other locations in 38 states. Here’s the story of the Northeast Chapter’s protest:*

When our chapter got the call to action from the National Center to protest the movie *Blindness*, we were rarin’ to go as we were already enraged at the horrible and inaccurate way this movie portrays us! So Friday, October 4, President Dan Facchini and nine other members went to the AMC Theater in Secaucus to hold up signs and give out flyers explaining to people that this movie doesn’t tell the truth about blindness. When we got there, we were asked to leave the area where we were standing (the front of the theater), so we proceeded to walk up and down the street, where there were a small number of pedestrians. We walked in a line, with our canes and dogs, chanting to indicate that this film doesn’t tell the truth and that “We play blind people in real life.” Several people driving by in their cars honked their horns in agreement with our signs and several pedestrian movie-goers stopped and asked us what movie we were protesting, and we believe we discouraged them from seeing *Blindness*. So we feel we reached our goal to that extent.

Although there was no media coverage at the time of the protest, we later made it into one of our local newspapers, the *Bergen Record*. So our protest was a success in that we got our message out there and showed people who we are in real life!

SEMESTER OFF, PITCH ON: THE JOHN FERRY STORY**By Peter Foy, Staff Writer, The Purchase Independent,***the online news source of Purchase College, Posted in Issue 181, Feb. 5, 2009*

I'm sure most of Purchase's student body (excluding those that just came last semester) know of John Ferry, Junior Studio Composition. Seeing that he is a 6 foot tall, nearly blind, black man with a facial deformity who can frequently be found singing on his way to the Music Conservatory Building, he definitely stands out. Thing is, most people really don't know Ferry for what he really is: a fun-loving and talented intellectual who has had numerous hardships throughout his life and has overcome all of them.

I remember when I first met Ferry my freshman year, I found myself pleasantly surprised to see what a friendly guy he was. Ferry's condition might make another person disdainful and nihilistic towards others, but instead Ferry is exuberant and full of life. We quickly discovered we had similar tastes in film, music, television and books, and became good friends. Over the next few semesters, I came to realize what a special person Ferry really was.

Although Ferry's childhood wasn't tumultuous, he's had more problems than most kids. It may be hard to believe, but Ferry's body and face conditions used to be much worse. He has had a total of 36 surgeries in his life, with 10 of them being facial reconstructions. Ferry did attend school, but remembers also spending a lot of time in hospitals. His bad vision also lent itself to Ferry becoming distant with his peers.

Music became Ferry's way to escape his woes. Ever since he was young, he claims that he had a passion for music. Ferry listened to records and quickly fell in love with artists like Frank Zappa and the Beatles. Although he learned to play the piano at age five, Ferry's main concern was his vocals. "There are home movies of me from when I was 3 years old of me just singing," he said. "I love making music, but singing is my true passion." At around age 7, Ferry's "ego kicked in" and he knew that he wanted to be a musician for the rest of his life.

When it came time for Ferry to apply to college, he obviously began to look for music schools. Purchase stood out for its prestigious music conservatory and he immediately liked the campus. After failing to get into the studio production program, he then checked out the studio composition teachers. Ferry found that the professors were much more to his understanding, and he got into the program on his first audition.

Even though he'll have to stay another year before graduating, Ferry doesn't mind his super-senior status. Purchase has welcomed him into their community with open arms and he's made more friends than ever here. Ferry is planning to make an album for his senior project and is already looking for collaborators. Besides music, Ferry has a multitude of other interests including reading, movies, conversation and people. Seriously, I don't think it's possible to talk to this guy and find that you don't have at least one thing in common. While some might be put off by Ferry's politically

incorrect and often vulgar sense of humor at first, I'm sure anyone who really gets to know him will understand that he means to entertain rather than offend. Next time you see him on campus (listen for someone singing Amy Winehouse lyrics), say hi. I assure you that you won't regret it.

A MISSED FLIGHT, BUT NO MISSED OPPORTUNITY **By Melissa Hurff**

Editor's Note: *A college student and former LEAD student, Melissa is a member of the Garden State Chapter and the NJ Association of Blind Students. She demonstrates leadership, education, advocacy and determination in this situation.*

I was flying alone from Philadelphia to North Carolina and had a layover in Detroit. My plane had left Philadelphia an hour late, so I didn't arrive in Detroit until after my second flight had already departed. Unfortunately, there were no more flights to North Carolina that night. Since it was the airline's fault that I had missed my second flight, they would pay for me to stay in a hotel over night and re-book my flight for the morning. The man working at the airline called the hotel.

"Hi, can you send a shuttle bus to the airport because we have a blind passenger who will be staying at your hotel tonight?"

"Uh, she can't come here if she's blind," said the hotel employee.

"She can't?" asked the airline employee.

"No. Unless she has someone with her, she can't stay here."

"Oh, okay, bye," the airline employee said.

I was furious! "They can't say that! That's discrimination! I could sue them for that!" I was taken to the manager of the airline, who understood me perfectly because she has a child with autism.

The airline decided to send me on a different shuttle to the hotel so I could present my case for staying there. I was afraid I would not have a place to stay for the night if they still refused me after I confronted them, but then I realized that they couldn't refuse me! Being in the NJ LEAD program taught me a number of ways to advocate for myself, and I knew from the moment I stepped into the hotel that I would need to use every advocacy skill I had ever learned. As I walked up to the front desk, not only did I have my cane, but I had my proud attitude of being blind.

"Can I help you?" asked the hotel receptionist.

"Yes, we called here and you said I can't stay here because I'm blind?" I asked.

"Well you can't really get around," the receptionist remarked.

"Oh, okay! Well you can call the police if you want," I said confidently. The receptionist turned around to secretly talk to her co-worker, and then turned back to me and said, "Actually we found a room for you on the first floor, sweetie."

I learned many things that night, but the biggest lesson I learned was to never let anyone push me around just because I'm blind. We must always stand up for our rights as blind citizens and never give up. No ... actually, never give IN to people who try to discriminate against us just because we are blind.

WHAT IS THE NJ LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND AND HANDICAPPED?

By Anne McArthur and Gary Cooper

Editor's Note: *The library's Fall Festival is scheduled for Saturday, October 3, 2009. Details will be provided in future LBH newsletters.*

The New Jersey State Library connects people with information through its service to libraries, government and people with special needs. One of the three bureaus of the New Jersey State Library – the Library for the Blind and Handicapped (LBH) – offers services without charge to anyone living in New Jersey who, for any physical reason, cannot read printed material. The other two bureaus in the State Library Network are the Library Development Bureau and the State Library Information Center.

The New Jersey State Library, which is affiliated with Thomas Edison State College, coordinates, promotes and funds the New Jersey Library Network. Last year, attendance at New Jersey's public libraries was well over 45 million with total circulation of almost 54 million.

"New Jersey has approximately 295,000 blind and visually impaired residents," said Adam Szczepaniak, director of LBH, which has the state's largest Braille collection with over 13,500 titles, of which almost 10,000 were circulated last year.

"Our mission at LBH isn't just to provide free accessible reading materials," he continued, "but also to provide information, including information on and access to the latest technology, such as Web-Braille. Web-Braille is part of the National Library Service's website which allows a member to either read a Braille book online with their software or download the book to their computer or Braille output device."

LBH also provides programs and services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, loans assistive technology from the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, offers Audiovision which broadcasts local, national and international newspapers via closed-circuit radio or Internet streaming, and administers the NFB-NEWSLINE service in New Jersey which provides audio access to over 275 newspapers and magazines by touch-tone telephone.

For more information about NJLBH, contact Anne McArthur, Head of Outreach and Audiovision, at 609-530-3242. For information on the State Library and its programs, contact Nancy Dowd at 609-278-2640, ext. 122, or Gary Cooper at ext. 108.

NJ AUTHORS' BOOKS NOW AVAILABLE IN ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

Carol Castellano's book *Making It Work: Educating the Blind/Visually Impaired Student in the Regular Classroom* and Joe Cutter's book *Independent Movement and Travel in Blind Children: A Promotion Model* are now both available in Braille from the National Library Service. Both books are also available in recorded form from the NJ Library for the Blind, and *Making It Work* is in the process of being produced digitally. Catalog numbers for the books are:

Making It Work In Braille: BR17492 Recorded: RC65756 Digital: DB65756

Independent Movement In Braille: BR17388 Recorded: RC65079

NFB OF NJ CHAPTER NEWS

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

CAPITAL CHAPTER, by Mary Joe Partyka, President

Since the last *Sounding Board*, our chapter members participated in a Meet the Blind Month activity where we visited two senior centers. We spoke about blindness, answered questions and gave out literature. The people seemed to appreciate the information and the efforts we made to make them more aware of the needs of blind people.

We had our Christmas party at an Irish restaurant called Kilarney's and the food and festivities were nice, except for the football game in the background. We gave the restaurant a Braille menu in appreciation for their services.

We are in the process of planning new projects for the year and trying to increase our membership. Please join us! (Just a reminder that we don't meet in July, September, November and December.)

CENTRAL JERSEY CHAPTER, by Jerilyn Higgins, President

We're pleased to announce our upcoming events: May 9 will be our 10th anniversary breakfast and elections, and on June 6 we will participate in a flea market in Metuchen. And of course, we are preparing to attend the National Convention in Detroit.

Just a reminder that our chapter does not meet in July or August, but we resume our regular meetings September 12, 2009.

CUMBERLAND/SALEM CHAPTER, by Alice Eaddy

Our Meet the Blind Month activities were very exciting. First, we had an information booth at the Deerfield Township Harvest Festival October 11 and 12. We distributed literature and Kernel books, and demonstrated the Braille slate and stylus as well as a typical Perkins Braille Writer. We had access to a money identifier and several color identifiers, too. Our second event was an information expo at the Cumberland County Mall October 18. We again demonstrated Braille usage systems and helpful devices used by the blind. We offer our sincere thanks to Lydia Keller for chairing the Cumberland County Mall activity.

Members of our chapter attended the State Convention, and some of us also attended last year's National Convention in Dallas. One of our members attended through the Kenneth Jernigan Scholarship. We finished the year with a Christmas luncheon held at Bennigan's in Vineland. Members exchanged cards and holiday cheer while enjoying an afternoon on the town. The group would like to thank Pam Hayes for setting up the arrangements for this event.

For the upcoming year we're working on ways to increase our recruiting efforts and maintain our exposure in the community at large. The chapter is particularly interested in planning some type of white cane activity.

GARDEN STATE CHAPTER, by Ed Godfrey, President

Greetings from the Garden State Chapter! Our December holiday party at the Mandarin Buffet was fun and filling as we sang songs, exchanged gifts and filled our bellies.

January brought two new members, both of whom have been involved in the LEAD program. Welcome Melissa and Alicia!

The special guests at our February meeting were none other than our own illustrious President Joe Ruffalo and wonderful First Vice President Jerilyn Higgins. Joe shared his wisdom, support and some of his famous jokes. We all appreciate that Joe and Jerilyn took time out of their busy schedules to visit us.

Our treasurer, Linda DeBerardinis, who is working with membership building at the National Center, recently corresponded with Jason Ewell, who is on the NFB's Affiliate Action Committee. Linda reported that we had a record-breaking number of 22 people attending our February meeting, with seven new attendees and four new members. There were also several students present, all current and former LEAD students.

Jerilyn Higgins gave some information to one of the new members who is interested in the BEP Program. There is also the possibility of a new person writing press releases; she owns two restaurants, which may be good for some future fundraising opportunities. Our chapter purchased Braille instruction books for one of the college students, and Ed Godfrey will be tutoring her.

In the near future we plan to read to children at a local library and are planning a Braille demonstration. It certainly seems that the NFB of NJ's Garden State Chapter is on the move!

Some of our members have already made their reservations to attend our National Convention. We hope to see you there!

NORTHEAST CHAPTER, by Debbie Azzarone

The Northeast NJ Chapter of the NFB of NJ started the year with a focus on membership building and fundraising. Our last few meetings consisted of welcoming potential members and discussing new and better ways to raise money and at the same time spread the word about the NFB and blindness issues.

We sent our legislation rep, Dana Hemmings, to Washington last month where she sat in on meetings with our senators and pointed out our concerns with various issues.

Bea Olivetti, our corresponding secretary, is heading up a committee to encourage sponsorships and to register with the Imagination Fund. We are hopeful that the situation with the economy does not affect fund raising and sponsorships.

We closed out 2008 with several gift wrapping fundraisers at local Barnes & Noble stores. We had a lot of fun, and we believe got a lot of good feedback from the customers. We also had our annual Christmas party at Lieto's in New Milford. Not only did our members enjoy a delicious meal, but we also took advantage of this opportunity to treat several people who have offered much appreciated assistance to us throughout the year.

Our chapter co-hosted the State Convention this past fall and contributed door prizes; we also gave gift certificates to each of the scholarship winners.

We are now meeting at a new location: St. Mathew's Church, 800 Roosevelt Street in Secaucus, the third Saturday of every month. Please join us for refreshments, socializing and information. We have a lot of fun as we promote blind awareness and education.

NFB OF NJ PROGRAMS, ASSOCIATIONS & DIVISION NEWS

ADOPT ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT, by Lynn Reynolds

We recently received a donation of 40 computers from an ophthalmology group in New York City. Since not all of these computers were working, Brian Keene tested the parts and combined the components of the donated computers to produce 30 working computers, 16 of which were adopted at the State Convention, and 14 more were adopted by other individuals. I would like to thank Brian for his hard work and all the time he has given to accomplish this incredible goal.

Other items recently adopted include three Closed Circuit TVs, a Type and Speak and a BrailleLite. We continue to maintain a list of items that people are looking for, and as items are donated, they are matched as soon as possible.

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

ASSOCIATION OF BLIND MERCHANTS, by Lynn Reynolds

The National Association of Blind Merchants sponsored the BLAST Conference April 1 - 4, 2009 in Indianapolis. This conference was for all those who are involved or have an interest in the Randolph-Sheppard program, as well as any entrepreneurs who are looking for motivation in improving their businesses. We were presented with training from Disney, Sam's Club and a "green" training which dealt with environmental issues. One of the highlights was a team building activity of assembling bikes which, when completed, were donated to the local Boys and Girls Club.

We are working on issues on the state level dealing with training and developing a stronger presence to make a difference in the enhancement of our program. Five members of our division are on the State Committee of Business Enterprise Operators. We are working to keep our program moving to higher levels in training and expanding our opportunities.

Anyone interested in information on the Randolph-Sheppard program, please contact Nicky Gacos, Dan Facchini, Jack Truehaft, Anna DeSantis or me.

ASSOCIATION OF BLIND STUDENTS, by Quintina Singleton

The New Jersey Association of Blind Students is going strong in 2009! Please join us on our monthly conference calls to hear about NJABS plans for the future. We meet the second Sunday of each month between September and June at 8 p.m. There are no conference calls in July or August.

The Dial-in number is 712-580-7704 and the pass code is NJABS1 (652271)

You are also invited to visit our website www.njabs.org. For more information or if you have questions, please contact NJABS President Evelyn Valdez.

ASSOCIATION OF GUIDE DOG USERS, by Vincent Chaney

The NFB of NJ is off and racing with one of our newest committees. Our members walk with six feet! Now, if I have your interest (or maybe you're just simply puzzled), we are NFB of NJ members who have chosen a mobility partner

with a cold nose and a tail. Yes, we are the NJ Association of Guide Dog Users. As we are now a growing group, do you know of anyone who would like to join us? We ask you to please pass this information on to them.

One of our goals is to document accessibility issues to public establishments such as restaurants, taxis, theaters, work places, etc. We will be advocates for the guide dog user community and will work to inform public places of the legal rights of those who use service dogs.

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

DIABETES DIVISION, by Vincent Chaney

We're proud and excited to have had our first Diabetes Division workshop at the State Convention. Thirty-five people stopped by the presentations and hands-on demonstrations sponsored by the two companies that were with us. Jordan Benis and Tina Rockwell from Advanced Diabetic Solutions (888-377-6382) discussed the Prodigy Voice and worked with many members to acquire the meter and the scripts/prescriptions with which to test. They also donated \$500 and gave us a Prodigy Voice which was raffled to help fund the Diabetes Division. To further support the Diabetes Division, they've offered to assist in the printing of pamphlets and join us at meetings, and they will return to the 2009 State Convention.

Michael Jansky from Medtronic MiniMed demonstrated the insulin pump and the Continuous Glucose Monitor (GCM). Michael described the design of the pump and how it is able to deliver insulin 24 hours a day and adjust deliveries during periods such as the body's "dawn phenomenon." He shared with us that his company has received very few calls regarding accessibility (such as size of the print on the pump or having the pump talk). He strongly advised us to become advocates and contact his company at 1-800-MiniMed (1-800-646-4633).

The Diabetes Division plans to have monthly dial-in meetings and hopes to get together once or twice before the annual State Convention for a luncheon. The Diabetes Division is open to all who have Type I or Type II diabetes, have or know a family member or friend who has diabetes, or are interested parties. Topics such as diabetes management, insulin, insulin pumps, how to draw insulin with a visual impairment, oral medications, blood testing, diet and any other concerns of diabetes will be open for discussions, or the topic of a presentation by an expert. We look forward to creating a network to help each other.

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

This past September, the Braille Division was fortunate to receive a \$2,500 grant from the Imagination Fund. We sponsored a Braille workshop at the State Convention where we brought in examples of how Braille can be used. We also presented Braille blankets to Agnes Allen and Genevieve Petrillo, who were on our Braille panel, and to the American Red Cross of Northern New Jersey which has been transcribing books into Braille since 1922. We also presented the Red Cross with a proclamation in Braille and print which they can keep as a memento.

In January, Quintina Singleton and I traveled to New York to attend the Braille Challenge where we saw some interesting exhibits and where children were tested on their Braille skills. The enthusiasm shown by the parents and children was compelling.

Our goals for this year are to develop the NFB of NJ Link Program where newly blind people will be matched with current chapter members. Although the goal of the Link Program is to promote interest in Braille, people could talk about any facet of blindness that interests them. We hope to be able to match people according to where they live so they could meet in person, talk on the telephone or correspond through e-mail.

The Braille Division will also be sponsoring a Braille seminar for parents and children on September 12 in Perth Amboy, NJ.

POBC-NJ, by Carol Castellano, President

Greetings, fellow Federationists! POBC-NJ has had a busy season, assisting families, teachers, grad students, reporters and many others from 11 states and even Mozambique! It is the very heart of what we do — provide valuable information, support and advocacy to help blind/visually impaired children develop and grow, and to spread real understanding about blindness and the abilities of blind people.

We have worked on local, state and national committees, corresponded with our state officials regarding the Commission for the Blind's budget, and gone to Washington, D.C. to educate Congress about issues important to blind people. Two of our POBC high school students participated as guest speakers via an online discussion group in an assistive technology class at The College of New Jersey. Thank you Shafeka and Patrick for helping to educate our future teachers of the blind. In these, and many other ways, POBC-NJ continues to be a force for the benefit of blind children in New Jersey and throughout the country.

TECHNOLOGY DIVISION, by Michele Chaney, Project Chair

Calling all interested parties who would like to join our new Technology Division! Please send an e-mail to msc732@optonline.net and in the subject line put "Technology Division Committee." In the body of the e-mail, state your full name, address, phone number and the e-mail address that you want us to use to contact you. Or call 732-251-8650 and leave a message that you are interested in joining the Technology Division. Please speak slowly and clearly, stating your full name, address and phone number. We look forward to working with all of you.

LETTERS

Dear NFB of NJ,

I would like to thank you for the terrific weekend I had during the NFB of NJ State Convention. I was able to learn an enormous amount during the convention. Between the stories I heard and the presentations that were given, my mind was filled with information. As a young adult, I was encouraged to see how successful and confident my peers are. Your support has helped us become the fine individuals we are today.

Thank you for selecting me as a scholarship recipient. The scholarship will help me tremendously as I continue to go through school studying for a master's degree in social work at Caldwell College.

It was great to see all the people who are pushing for equality for the visually impaired. We have come a long way and it's all because of people like you.

Looking forward to next year,
Daniel Hohman

Dear Scholarship Committee and Fellow Federationists,

I would like to thank Joe Ruffalo, the State Scholarship Committee and the State Board of the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey. After the extraordinary honor of being named a 2008 National Scholarship Winner, it was another unexpected honor to receive a state scholarship this year, too! Although the scholarships and the money that come with them are very nice, and I am grateful to the Federation for them, I am extraordinarily thankful for all that I have learned from the Federation, including the confidence I've gained in myself as a blind person and the ability to help other blind people. I look forward to continuing to learn from my Federation family and teaching what I know about blindness.

Sincerely,
Trevor Saunders

GET CONNECTED!**AccessTech****COMPUTER TRAINING CLASSES****AVAILABLE FOR****BLIND AND LOW VISION NJ RESIDENTS**

Did you know that you can learn to use a computer even if you are blind or visually impaired? AccessTech classes are fun and free-of-charge. Little or no computer experience is needed!

LEARN TO:

- Send and receive e-mail
- Surf the Web
- Play easy-to-use games on the Internet

LEARN TO USE:

- The latest assistive technology hardware and/or software
- Screen readers, such as JAWS For Windows
- Screen magnifiers, such as ZoomText

SPONSORED BY:

The New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

LOCATIONS:

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

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

NFB OF NJ 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

Quintina Singleton 732-428-4932

Treasurer

Tom Ferry 973-694-5922

Board Members

Evelyn Valdez 908-206-8701

Dan Facchini 201-906-8655

Lynn Reynolds 908-251-5510

Ryan Stevens 856-858-3518

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

3rd Sat., Lawrence Library, 2751

Brunswick Pike, Lawrenceville

Mary Jo Partyka 609-888-5459

choirnfb@gmail.com

Central Jersey Chapter

2nd Sat., Grace Lutheran Church,

Perth Amboy, 10 a.m. - noon

Jerilyn Higgins 973-239-8874

jdhiggins@rcn.com

Cumberland/Salem Chapter

3rd Mon., Tri-County Independent

Living Center, Millville

Anna Jordan 856-696-3905

ajjordan29@comcast.net

Garden State Chapter

3rd Sat., Kennedy Memorial Hospital,
Cherry Hill, 10 a.m.

Ed Godfrey 856-848-6372

egodfrey137@comcast.net

Northeast Chapter

3rd Sat., St. Mathew's Church

Secaucus www.ThruOurEyes.org

Dan Facchini 201-906-8655

danfb@verizon.net

Northern Chapter

3rd Sat., Beth Israel Hospital, 201

Lyons Ave, Newark, 10 a.m. - noon

Rick Fox 973-743-6107

richardfox1@comcast.net

Ocean Chapter

2nd Sat., Denny's, Brick Blvd, Brick

Mary Dockery 732-349-2456

mary-ob43@comcast.net

NFB of NJ Divisions*Association of Blind Merchants*

Lynn Reynolds 908-251-5510

lhr1827@optonline.net

Association of Blind Students

Evelyn Valdez 908-206-8701

tweetybaby19@comcast.net

Diabetes Division

Vincent/Michele Chaney 732-251-8650

mssc732@optonline.net

Parents of Blind Children

Carol Castellano 973-377-0976

blindchildren@verizon.net

Promote the Use of Braille

Sue Tillett 609-924-7489

suetillett@verizon.net

Mary Jo Partyka 609-888-5459

choirnfb@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
 blindchildren@verizon.net

Braille Mentoring Program

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

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

Guide Dog Committee

Vincent Chaney 732-251-8650
 msc732@aol.com

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

Imagination Fund

Evelyn Valdez 908-206-8701
 tweetybaby19@comcast.net

Legislative Coordinator

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

Membership

Quintina Singleton 732-428-4932
 qmsingleton@comcast.net

Linda DeBerardinis 856-764-7014
 www.blindchildren.org
 ldeber@comcast.net

NFB Newslines

William Dougherty 800-792-8322
 http://www.nfb.org/newslines1.htm

Scholarship

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

Thru Our Eyes/Internet Radio

Lenny Azzarone 201-794-1942
 vdoman@optonline.net

Youth Slam

Evelyn Valdez 908-206-8701
 tweetybaby19@comcast.net

PLEASE NOTE:

Deadline for the Fall 2009 issue of *The Sounding Board* is

October 1, 2009.

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

CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB AT

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

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