

SPRING 2015

# The Sounding Board

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

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Live the Life You Want

**THE SOUNDING BOARD**  
**Spring 2015**

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

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**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](mailto: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 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 we also encourage registration with Newsline Online, which sends publications, sections of publications or articles you select to your e-mail address for downloading. 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](http://www.nfbnj.org). We encourage our readers to share *The Sounding Board* with family members, teachers, professionals, neighbors 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.

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## PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

### Greetings Fellow Federationists!

After a long, cold winter, we certainly deserve to hear the birds finally singing their songs of spring! Since the last issue of *The Sounding Board*, the NFBNJ hosted a resoundingly successful 38<sup>th</sup> State Convention: *Transforming Dreams into Reality*. One of the many highlights of the convention was our partnership with the NJ CBVI in conducting an employment skills seminar. The convention also included presentations, workshops, division meetings, and educational, inspirational and motivational messages. Awards were presented to: Alex Anderson, a national scholarship winner, who received two state scholarships; Jennifer Velez, former Commissioner of the NJ Department of Human Services, who received the first Agnes Allen Distinguished Service Award for diligence in creating new opportunities for the blind of New Jersey; Wells Fargo Bank in Toms River for their \$1,000 donation to our general education fund that helps us promote outreach in the community; and the Puerto Rican Association for Human Development for allowing us to use their space for our BELL program

Plans are already underway for our 2015 State Convention, November 5 – 8, 2015, in Manahawkin. Information will be posted on the state website at [www.nfbnj.org](http://www.nfbnj.org) and will be distributed by our secretary, Brian Mackey. And since you're making plans for the State Convention, don't forget to consider attending the NFB's 75th anniversary at the National Convention Sunday, July 5 through Friday, July 10, 2015, in Orlando. Visit [www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org) for hotel information and consider pre-registering for the convention.

With the NFB's 75th anniversary approaching, I've provided a recipe for all to prepare, serve and enjoy.

### **Federation Favorites: Live The Life You Want!**

*Best served prior to the main course or can be used as a dessert*

*Serves: The entire affiliate*

Add a full cup of each of the following:

*desire    determination    positive attitude    involvement    philosophy    history*

1. Pour all of the above into a chapter and/or division.
2. Stir with love, hope and determination to transform dreams into reality.
3. Spread on high expectations.
4. Serve to all that are striving to live the life they want.

Thanks for your continued support, interest and effort to change what it means to be blind!



Joe Ruffalo, President

## **THE AGNES ALLEN DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD**

**By Rick Fox**

At the 2014 State Convention, NFBNJ inaugurated the Agnes Allen Distinguished Service Award. This award will be presented to individuals who are not members of our organization, and who have made substantial contributions to improve the quality of life for the blind of New Jersey. This recognition will be given by the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey at our annual State Convention, but only as often as circumstance merits. This recognition represents the highest honor that can be given by our affiliate, and the recipients of this award will be individuals we can regard as true friends of the blind—those who are 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.

In establishing this award, the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey has decided to honor the life's work of Agnes Allen.

Agnes Allen was born January 18, 1924, the sixth and last child born to Mary and Louis Stone. When she was five years old, she had a serious fall from a porch swing. The doctors told Agnes's mother that she had six months to live. Thankfully she survived, but the accident left her totally blind.

Agnes thrived at the Pittsburgh School for the Blind where she developed a lifelong love of learning and education. The school taught Agnes many things but most of all it enabled her to be independent, confident, capable and optimistic. After graduating from the Pittsburgh School, Agnes became the first blind graduate of Mount Mercy College, graduating Summa Cum Laude. Agnes 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. When Agnes had the opportunity to attend graduate school at the University of Pittsburgh, she earned a master's degree in English and embarked upon a teaching career. Agnes instructed blind and Deaf Blind students, young children and adults, and encouraged them to accept their disability and tackle any obstacle that stood in the way of achieving independence. She taught Braille, English, math, music and life skills. Her dedication to the advancement of blind persons is evident in the fact that she was still tutoring blind students after her 90th birthday.

Agnes has been a long-standing and active member of the National Federation of the Blind, serving as an officer of both the New Jersey and Connecticut affiliates, helping to found chapters, and participating in state and national conventions. Her dedication to the cause of Braille literacy is evidenced by her years of volunteering in the NFBNJ's

Braille mentoring program and her participation in many Braille literacy campaigns. 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 is the mother of three daughters and a grandmother of nine. 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.

The first Agnes Allen Distinguished Service Award was presented to New Jersey Department of Human Services Commissioner Jennifer Velez. Commissioner Velez was appointed in 2007 by Governor Jon Corzine. Under her leadership, the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) has embarked upon a strategic plan that will introduce a new service delivery model that will enhance vocational rehabilitation, independent living and education programs for blind and vision-impaired residents of New Jersey. Within the past year, CBVI has undertaken to develop new programs for the benefit of children and transition-age youth, adopted measures to improve the quality of services at its comprehensive training facility, the Joseph Kohn Training Center, and exhibited a willingness to honor the "choice" provisions in the Vocational Rehabilitation Act by authorizing out-of-state training to blind recipients of VR services when it has been determined that New Jersey would be unable to provide certain necessary components of training. Mostly, however, it is noteworthy that the relationship between CBVI and the organized blind of New Jersey has dramatically improved during the past year, and that leaders of the Commission and Department of Human Services have invited and encouraged our participation in the molding of a new and expansive array of Commission services that will benefit our community.

Commissioner Velez, who recently resigned her position, had ultimate responsibility for these programs, and we deeply appreciate her leadership and involvement in helping to bring these reforms to life. Commissioner Velez was always a responsive and respectful public servant, willing to take into account our perspective on the programs that most influence our access to education, training and other important services. We are fortunate to have had Commissioner Velez in New Jersey to lead the Department of Human Services and champion our causes in the halls of state government.

## MEET THE 2014 SCHOLARSHIP WINNER: ALEX ANDERSON

**Editor's Note:** *Alex Anderson received a 2014 NFB national scholarship and two state scholarships. He is a former Leadership, Education, Advocacy & Determination (LEAD) student who credits many of his adaptive skills to his participation in this program. Alex's spirit of determination was tested last November when he traveled on a Greyhound bus for nine hours from Boston to Manahawkin to attend our State Convention. As Alex was writing the article below, he mentioned that he was on his way to the NFB of MA State Convention. Subsequent to the Massachusetts convention, Alex and his grandmother informed us that Alex is now on the board of the Massachusetts Association of Blind Students. Congratulations, Alex!*

My name is Alex Anderson and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the NFB Scholarship Committee for awarding me the state scholarship, and both the Ferry and Facchini families for providing me with the monetary funding for college. Without this money, I would not have been able to attend such a great school. Brandeis is an incredible place and I love every second of every day that I spend here. It's a wonderful feeling watching all of my hard work in high school and the results of my application to college pay off. The process of applying for the national and state scholarships was an important part of that work. Hearing that I won those scholarships was an incredible moment in my life because the NFB is so important to me.

My first semester was certainly a new experience, and I learned from both the positive and negative things that happened to me. I made some incredible friends and learned many valuable things both in and out of the classroom. I joined several clubs on campus and became more involved with the National Association of Blind Students. This shining organization which taught me so much about how I could live my life is now an integral part of my capacity to pursue my dreams and expand my horizons. As I write this article, I am getting into the swing of my second semester. I decided to pursue a double major in English and music theory, and hope to minor in philosophy. I am thrilled and honored that I was chosen to win these scholarships, and I am doing my best every day to live up to – and exceed – the expectations of the National Federation of the Blind.



## **SUMMARY OF RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE 2014 STATE CONVENTION**

**By Ryan Stevens**

Greetings, my fellow New Jersey Federationists! As many of you know, as of April 2014, I have once again taken the helm of the affiliate's Resolutions Committee, so, once again, I have the honor of giving an overview of the resolutions that passed at our 2014 State Convention. Below is a summary of these policy issues. To read the entire texts of these resolutions, please visit [www.nfbnj.org](http://www.nfbnj.org).

Resolution 2014-01, authored by Brian Mackey, concerns the need to increase the availability of Access Link paratransit transportation to eligible riders who live beyond the federally and state mandated minimum distance of three fourths of a mile within New Jersey Transit fixed bus routes. This resolution calls upon New Jersey Transit to work with NFBNJ and other disability advocates to determine an appropriate distance requirement.

Resolution 2014-02, authored by Lynn Reynolds and Nick Gacos, concerns the need for blind entrepreneurs to receive high-quality training to ensure that they are qualified to manage and operate vending facilities approved by New Jersey's Business Enterprise Program. This resolution calls upon the New Jersey Committee of Blind Vendors and the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NJCBVI) Business Enterprise Program management to review and adopt the Hadley School for the Blind's online training program as the core coursework for the Business Enterprise Program, to make the necessary adjustments to the hands-on training, and to create a short-term curriculum to address state requirements.

Resolution 2014-03, authored by Rick Fox, concerns the exclusion of blind employees under the NJCBVI'S current technology training contract with Advancing Opportunities and calls upon the NJCBVI to investigate this matter, and to redress this situation, insuring that qualified blind people have an equal opportunity for employment at Advancing Opportunities under the Commission's RTAC contract.

Resolution 2014-04, authored by Joe Ruffalo, concerns the need to eliminate the paying of sub-minimum wages to workers with disabilities and calls upon the 12 members of the New Jersey delegation in the United States House of Representatives to co-sponsor the Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities Act of 2013 and any similar legislation which may be introduced in subsequent Congressional terms. The resolution also condemns and deplores the actions of all New Jersey employers who take advantage of the unfair, discriminatory and immoral provision found in the Fair Labor Standards Act which allows sub-minimum wage payments.

## WASHINGTON SEMINAR UPDATE

By Lynn Reynolds

The following issues were presented by 12 members of the NFBNJ during the Washington Seminar in late January. Thanks to all members who followed up with letters to their Congressional representatives. We will keep all up to date with progress regarding sponsorship for both issues.

1. **The Transitioning to Integrated and Meaningful Employment (TIME) Act (HR 188)**  
Passed in 1938, Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act allows employers to pay workers with disabilities sub-minimum wages. This antiquated provision breeds low expectations and discourages disabled Americans from reaching their full potential. HR 188 responsibly phases out the use of Section 14(c) Special Wage Certificates over a 3-year period, ending the era of segregated, sub-minimum wage work. To co-sponsor, contact Scot Malvaney, Policy Director for Congressman Gregg Harper, at [scot.malvaney@mail.house.gov](mailto:scot.malvaney@mail.house.gov) or 202-225-5031. Questions can be directed to Rose Sloan, NFB Government Affairs Specialist, at [rsloan@nfb.org](mailto:rsloan@nfb.org).
2. **The Technology, Education, and Accessibility in College and Higher Education (TEACH) Act**  
Electronic instructional materials have replaced traditional methods of learning in post-secondary education, but the overwhelming majority of e-books, courseware, web content and other technology is inaccessible to students with print disabilities. Pre-existing law already requires equal access in the classroom but fails to provide direction to schools for how that applies to technology. The TEACH Act creates voluntary accessibility guidelines for educational technology to improve blind students' access to course material, stimulate the market and reduce litigation for schools. The bill has not yet been introduced, but for more information, please contact Lauren McLarney, NFB Manager of Government Affairs, at [lmclarney@nfb.org](mailto:lmclarney@nfb.org).

The members of the NFBNJ appreciated the time, professionalism and attention that was paid to the issues. We look forward to working with Congressman Payne to bring our goals to fruition.

## MEET THE NEWEST DIVISION OF THE NFBNJ: THE DEAF-BLIND DIVISION

By Alice Eaddy

**Editor's Note:** *Alice, who has been active in the NFBNJ since 2007, is the president of this new division. Alice's biography appears on page 8. Here are the aspirations and expectations of the newly formed Deaf-Blind Division:*

Does the NFBNJ really need a division for the Deaf-Blind? These somber insights are from the *SSPNJ Training Manual*: "Individuals with Deaf-Blindness have co-existing vision and hearing loss that significantly impacts their ability to sustain independence. National research studies such as the *Transition to Adulthood National Study for Youth with Deaf-Blindness* (Petroff, 1999, 2009) report that Deaf-Blind adults are often severely isolated, have few opportunities to obtain peer support and interaction, and generally lack connections with their communities and families. As a result, poor health, depression, loneliness and an overall reduced quality of life are common in this population. To address these needs, an extensive community-based support system is often necessary."

So, yes, a Deaf-Blind Division is not only necessary, it is another tool in a community-based system of support. We are the Deaf-Blind leading the Deaf-Blind, and we want those who live with a combined loss of sight and hearing to know that they can have a role in the world, be employed and have a community of friends. We go to college, work, volunteer, play sports and are active members of our community. We work together to raise awareness of the issues of Deaf-Blindness both in New Jersey and on the national level through programs and initiatives of the NFB's Deaf-Blind Division.

Each of our members aspires to be a role model for the Deaf-Blind population in general. We may be the only Deaf-Blind people that others are exposed to, and as such, we carry ourselves as proud, capable and confident. We change others' pre-conceived notions of Deaf-Blindness by doing, by living and by being active in our communities. We recognize that New Jersey is a leader in Deaf-Blindness through programs that support independence, such as SSP services and the iCanConnect communications technology program, and, now the NFBNJ's Deaf-Blind Division.

Come out and join us! In addition to those who live with a combined loss of sight and hearing, we welcome those who wish to be a part of the division through the use of their area of expertise, such as sign language interpreters, interveners and SSPs. United we stand for the next generation!

## MEET OUR STATE BOARD MEMBERS

**Editor's Note:** *We will be introducing State Board members in each of the next three issues, leading up to the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NFBNJ in 2016. The first of these introductions is Alice Eaddy. Alice enjoys downloading and reading eBooks and the various apps associated with the Cumberland County Library and other local libraries in her area. In March, Alice completed a course called Gmail and Google Basics offered by the library's technology department. Alice also enjoys modeling in the Looking Good without Looking fashion shows at our state conventions, cooking, going to local theaters and dining out with friends.*

### **ALICE EADDY**

My goal has always been to establish equality, opportunity and academic acceptance for all people with disabilities. I am a Deaf-Blind guide dog user and the mother of two grown children. I earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education and sociology from Rowan University.

Since I was introduced to the NFB in 2007, my involvement has grown, and my current roles include: president of the Deaf-Blind Division, vice president/secretary of the Glasstown Chapter, secretary of the Guide Dog Division, secretary of the Diabetes Division, vice president of the Technology Division, and a member of the At-Large Chapter and the Senior Division. In addition, I work tirelessly with the NFB's Deaf-Blind Division as a New Jersey representative to improve the quality of life for Deaf-Blind people across the country.

In my community, I was appointed by the Cumberland County Board of Chosen Freeholders as a full member of the Transportation Advisory Council and as an alternate member of the Disability Awareness Council. I also serve on the Advisory Council of Support Service Providers of New Jersey (SSPNJ) and as a SSP trainer for SSPNJ.

I worked by example and by leadership in both New York and New Jersey advocating for the needs of the disabled. As a camp counselor, I planned recreational activities to foster the attainment of social and outdoor skills. While an active Head Start teacher, I spoke at Cumberland County Community College about the capabilities of the Deaf-Blind as viable students first, not as defined by their hearing or vision. I've also been a long-time community resource for information on accessing community services, and I've supported an organization called Resources for Independent Living (RIL) in advertising their independent living center and future events.

I am inspired, I am empowered, and I am eager to absorb all things written and or verbalized within my midst. I hale from the land of little sleep because I am always meticulously and enthusiastically laboring to complete all of my many tasks for the NFBNJ and the national office.

**REBECCA BRYANT**

**Editor's Note:** *Rebecca, an active wife, mother and grandmother, is also president of the Northern Chapter, secretary of the Senior Division, and a member of the Technology, Diabetes and Braille divisions. She enjoys traveling and teaching Braille, and she's an avid reader.*

Eleven years ago, I was a very active person and the owner of a day care center. But then my world changed. I lost my sight overnight, which devastated me to the point where I did not want to live. I thought my life was completely over. I attended the Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center, where I learned that I could still live my life as a blind person, just in a different way. I was not totally convinced of this until I attended an NFBNJ State Convention in 2005. I never thought that there were so many blind people in New Jersey. I remember speaking with so many visually impaired people from all walks of life. After leaving that convention, I was so excited! I left with skates on and began learning everything I could about the NFB. I've been on the move ever since.

Today, I am the president of the Northern Chapter with a growing membership, and at the 2013 State Convention I became a State Board member.

I teach Braille as a volunteer. I love it when I meet someone who is newly blind or has not heard of or joined the NFBNJ. When I meet someone like this, the wheels in my head start turning, and I become a spokesperson for the organization. By the time we finish our conversation, they are just as excited as I am. I get excited just sharing my experiences about the organization and making sure that they, too, understand, what it means to "change what it means to be blind."

**ANTHONY LANZILOTTI**

**Editor's Note:** *Anthony is president of the South Jersey Shore Chapter, assistant legislative chairperson of the State Affiliate, and the NFBNJ Vehicle Donation chairperson. He's also a member of the Technology Division and the Resolutions Committee and a student at Atlantic Cape Community College.*

I became a member of the Garden State Chapter in 2009, but wasn't able to attend meetings on a regular basis, and since there wasn't a chapter in Atlantic County at that time, I started attending the At Large Chapter meetings. Once the South Jersey Shore Chapter began, I became actively involved, and I realized that I wanted to become a leader in this extraordinary organization. With this in mind, I recently attended leadership training at the Jernigan Institute in Baltimore.

In addition to my activities in the Federation, I am also a student majoring in criminal justice at Atlantic Cape Community College. My professional goals include attending law

school to pursue a Juris Doctorate, and well as building a corporation from the ground up. Sadly, Atlantic Cape Community College has chosen to ignore its legal obligation under Title 2 of the Americans with Disabilities Act by failing to provide accessible textbooks and course materials in a timely fashion, and also by imposing a ridiculous requirement which mandates that I be accompanied by an aide while on campus. The NFB has stood behind me 100 percent by organizing a demonstration in front of campus and by funding a lawsuit.

On a personal note, I enjoy a wide variety of interests. I am a sports fan, a car buff and enjoy most types of music. I also love technology.

I have learned much through my involvement in the Federation. For example, I've learned patience, persistence and perseverance. I've also learned that if a person doesn't challenge himself, then "low expectations will create obstacles." Finally, I've learned that if each of us pledges to participate actively in the efforts of the NFB, we can all truly live the lives we want.

### **RESIGNATION OF VINCENT AND MICHELE CHANEY**

Vincent and Michele Chaney, members of the NFBNJ's Central Chapter since 2006, have resigned from all duties and responsibilities due to personal and health issues. During their years of service, the Chaney's established the Diabetic, Guide Dog and Technology divisions of the NFBNJ.

Vincent held the positions of president of the Guide Dog and Diabetes divisions. He also served as vice president of the Technology Division, and as a member of the Resolutions Committee. In addition, Vincent served as webmaster of the affiliate website. Michele held the positions of president of the Technology Division and vice president of the Diabetes Division. Michele was a member of our State Board and served as chairperson of the vendor room at several state conventions. She also served on the board of the Senior Division.

Vincent, through his leadership and willingness to travel to Trenton, was instrumental (along with the members of the Guide Dog Division and the NFBNJ) in bringing Dusty's Law to the attention of state legislators through a resolution to pass a bill making it a criminal offense for dogs to attack service animals or handlers who are traveling together as a team. The bill was passed through both committees and when presented to New Jersey's State Assembly and Senate, the bill was passed with a vote of 134 yes and no one voting no.

Vincent and Michele: Thanks for your support, time and effort in changing what it means to be blind in New Jersey. Keep strong! Keep well! Keep making a difference!



## A FEAST OF OPPORTUNITIES

By Brian Mackey

***From the Editor:** Brian Mackey serves as secretary of the NFBNJ and the At Large Chapter, and a board member of the Garden State Chapter. Brian is the founder and owner of Mackey Enterprises LLC, a company that provides data entry and basic bookkeeping services. In this article he describes the highlights of his experience at convention.*

I went to the 2014 NFB National Convention eager to learn all that I could from the workshops and general sessions. First, I attended the JAWS screenreader workshop, which was filled to capacity. One new feature I was thrilled to see was improved navigation of Office 2013, a program I currently use. I also discovered that JAWS 16 will include semi-automatic forms settings that will allow easier navigation of websites with edit fields. When the workshop leaders asked for ideas to improve JAWS, I suggested adding a ResearchIt feature to look up movies playing at AMC theaters. With this feature, a JAWS user could easily look up the show times for the movie of his/her choice.

Next I went to the HumanWare workshop. I love my old Victor Reader Stream, which is a portable device for recording notes and listening to audio files of several kinds. The newest version is very impressive and exciting, with many amazing added features. Users can now download books from BARD and Bookshare, NFB Newline publications, and podcasts directly onto the Stream without a connection to a computer. With the new WiFi connection, it is also possible to listen to Internet radio stations on the Stream. I can't wait to get my own new Victor Reader Stream!

Although I am self-employed, I'm still on the hunt for a job, so it was imperative that I attend the Job Fair. I stopped at each booth and talked with the representatives about possible job openings. I made an exciting stop at the Jernigan Institute booth, where I talked with Anil Lewis. Although he was seeking someone to do web design, we discussed my goal of finding a data entry or basic bookkeeping position. Anil asked me to forward my résumé to him, and he will check to see if there might be a potential job at the National Center. I'm keeping my fingers crossed. Working at the National Center, among the NFB leaders, would be awesome!

One night, Mikayla Gephart, a fellow member of NFBNJ, encouraged me to attend the Unified English Braille (UEB) workshop, where I learned about this new Braille code. Some of the new symbols will make Braille writing and reading much easier than it is with Grade 2 contracted Braille. Now I definitely want to learn the rest of the UEB literary code. Thank you, Mikayla!

After three days of amazing workshops, with my brain overflowing with new information, it was time for the general sessions. When we all gathered together in one

room, it was truly mind-blowing. It filled me with pride to know I am a member of the NFB! This year we witnessed the passing of the torch with the election of a new NFB president. We watched a video tribute to Dr. Marc Maurer, praising his numerous accomplishments during his term as the NFB's longest-serving national president. I was amazed by all that Dr. Maurer has achieved for the NFB. The banquet concluded with Dr. Maurer and our new NFB president, Mark Riccobono, putting their hands on the gavel and bringing the 2014 convention to an end together. That was so cool!

**FROM OUR ARCHIVES**  
**INDEPENDENCE: BELIEVE AND ACHIEVE**  
**By John Reiff**

**Editor's Note:** *One of the newer features of The Sounding Board is to reprint articles from our archives which had an impact when originally written and whose message remains applicable today. This article is reprinted from our Fall/Winter 2000 edition. John Reiff is the manager of CBVI's Freehold Service Center, which serves New Jersey's seven central counties, and the article below reflects his impression of the 1999 NFB National Convention.*

I am writing this about two weeks after returning from the NFB National Convention in Atlanta, a good time for reflection. I am grateful to our executive director, Jamie Hilton, for the opportunity to attend. It was my first national convention of any kind. Blind people were everywhere. Excitement, enthusiasm and energy invigorated the lobbies, restaurants, meeting rooms and convention hall of the Marriot Marquis, not to mention the surrounding streets and businesses.

I was a proud member of the New Jersey delegation, which ranked ninth in overall attendance among the 50 states. I enjoyed the good-natured banter between New Jersey's president, Joe Ruffalo, and New York's president, Carl Jacobsen, on the subject of the Devils and Yankees. It was a thrill to listen to the rousing presentation by our own Ever Lee Hairston, a personal reflection that underscored the possibilities for achievement with courage and persistent effort. I was in awe of the blind mountain climber who spoke to us and who had summited some of the world's tallest peaks and will next year attempt Mount Everest. More power to him.

Power, it seems to me, is what it is all about. Power in the hands of blind people to change, for the individual and society at large, what it means to be blind. If I believe I can, and act accordingly, therein lies my strength, or as we say in New Jersey, Independence: Believe and Achieve!



## COOKING? WITHOUT LOOKING? AS A PROFESSIONAL CHEF? WHY NOT?

By Annemarie Cooke

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Annemarie is a long-time member of the NFB and belongs to the At Large Chapter and the Technology Division. When not cooking, she enjoys traveling, staying in touch with friends around the US, keeping up with reading through NFB Newslines and going to the gym. Anyone interested in Promise Culinary School should contact Annemarie at her office: 732-545-9002, ext. 121 or [Annemarie.cooke@elijahspromise.org](mailto:Annemarie.cooke@elijahspromise.org)*

If we've ever hugged hello at an NFB event, well, you'd likely think that I'm someone who appreciates good food. However, as a kid, I defied my mom's attempts to try vegetables and new dishes. All that changed as an adult; I transformed into a foodie. I even wrote restaurant reviews for *The Home News* back in my newspaper days.

At the end of 2008, after a long working life, I found myself laid off. I pondered my next step back into employment. What did I love to do besides travel? Food ... cooking ... I knew I was a competent home cook but the idea of cooking professionally fascinated me. And would I be able to do it as someone with no central vision due to juvenile macular degeneration?

Promise Culinary School immediately came to mind. Located at 211 Livingston Avenue in New Brunswick, it was less than two miles from my home. Elijah's Promise operates the school, and I had volunteered there for years, as well as at a community kitchen and several other programs in the New Brunswick area. I knew the school was amazingly open, accommodating and accepting of whomever signs on as a student.

Still unsure of how my vision would affect life as a culinary student, I obtained permission to "shadow" a visually impaired student from South Jersey. The day's lesson was on creating sandwiches, which I found completely non-threatening. As I helped run the dishwasher at the end of class, I chatted with another student who also had worked at *The Home News* years after I did. "I am reinventing myself as a chef and maybe a cookbook author," she told me. "Hey," I thought, inspired, "I could do public relations and marketing for restaurants..."

Just like in a movie, my thoughts faded into a dream-like sequence where I would one day work in the food world, perhaps not directly in a kitchen, but with food. I was sold! This would be my new future. After a long conversation with Kim Taylor, my wonderful counselor from the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, we were all set. The agency would cover my tuition and get me a digital player for the 1,200-page textbook, which I was able to obtain in audio from Learning Ally.

The module where I entered Promise Culinary School was The Bakeshop: Introduction to Baking and Pastry. What a blast! Teaming with classmates after our

lecture, we prepared recipes from our textbook and from various handouts from our teachers.

Using my fingernail to count a notch for each ounce on a balance scale, I learned to weigh dry ingredients. I took written tests and quizzes by having them read aloud to me. I was able to purchase a dependable talking thermometer from the NFB Independence Store, and I learned to rely on my own reading of a recipe after a disastrous experience baking bread with a sighted partner. This person read the amount of salt we were to add; I didn't check the amount in my audio book, and our bread was inedible because we added three *tablespoons* of salt rather than three *teaspoons*! This was a quick lesson in the importance of cross-checking my ingredients.

Doing nightly homework, which included reading chapters from the textbook and answering questions at the end, was often tiring, but I loved learning more about cooking on a professional level. Friends and family members for whom I prepared dinners also seemed to enjoy the benefit of my culinary education.

Each student at Promise Culinary must complete an 80-hour externship in a professional kitchen as a requirement for graduation. I was lucky enough to get a placement at one of New Jersey's top restaurants. The executive chef required near-silence in the kitchen, which sometimes complicated my need to get close and ask questions since I could see little of what was happening at the various kitchen stations. I also realized my body was not happy when standing for long periods and doing tasks requiring repetitive fine motor skills.

What would come next? At graduation, I received an award for the top academic average in my class of 12. Instead of cooking for a living, I became a job developer for CBVI under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which funded many part-time temporary state and county government positions.

After a couple of years, once again I was reminded that the universe is a good and kind place that helps each of us find what we were meant to do. My position at CBVI ended, and Promise Culinary School needed a job developer to help students write resumes, receive tutoring, and learn a life skills curriculum as part of their five months in the school. I was lucky enough to receive an AmeriCorps appointment to Promise Culinary, using everything I had learned in the culinary and baking areas as well as in life in general.

A career in a professional kitchen is best left to those younger than me. But, thanks to the support, accommodation and acceptance by the wonderful staff at Promise Culinary, I love my part-time term of AmeriCorps of service. Our school continues to graduate an occasional blind or visually impaired student among our classes. The hardest part is convincing sighted chefs to give them a chance.

**READ ACROSS AMERICA WELCOMES BEATRICE OLIVETI**

**Editor's Note:** *This story about Beatrice Oliveti is reprinted and summarized from an article entitled "She Sees with Her Fingers" written by Al Sullivan for the Hudson County Reporter. Please visit <https://hudsonreporter.com> to read the entire article. Al Sullivan may be reached at [asullivan@hudsonreporter.com](mailto:asullivan@hudsonreporter.com). Bea, secretary of the Northeast Chapter, is a secretary in the West New York Building Department, where she answers phone calls from English- and Spanish-speaking callers and translates as necessary, runs errands and schedules the inspectors. She's currently working on a political re-election campaign for Mayor Roque. In this capacity, she handles and makes calls for the campaign, and canvasses to encourage the vote for Mayor Roque.*

"Reading Braille is easy to learn if you try hard enough," stated West New York Mayor Felix Roque while discussing volunteer Beatrice Oliveti's experience reading to the kindergartners at Albio Sires School. Oliveti had come to the school on March 31, 2015 to join Mayor Roque as part of the Read Across America program in West New York. Mayor Roque has been part of the reading program since he took office four years ago, but for Oliveti, this was relatively new.

"Miss B reads with her fingers," Mayor Roque told the room full of kids, who sat on a carpet in front of both Oliveti and Roque in anticipation of hearing them recite a classic story by Dr. Seuss. While Roque read from the published edition of Dr. Seuss's "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish," Oliveti read from an edition she had borrowed from the Library for the Blind in Trenton for the occasion. Dr. Seuss is a challenge even for those whose eyesight is not impaired, filled with puns and made-up words. Oliveti kept up with Roque as the two took turns reading, with Roque holding up pages of his book for the kids to look at.

Roque has been encouraging Oliveti to get out into the community. "When I became mayor, I found her in a small office in Town Hall," he said. "I tried to get her to get out into the community."

Oliveti is hardly helpless. Blind since birth, she lives in an apartment of her own and has been an employee of the West New York municipal government since 2002, first in the Department of Public Works, and now as a secretary/receptionist for the town's Planning Department.

"My mother lives in the same building," she said, noting that what she wants most is to be accepted as a competent person. "The reason I like Mayor Roque so much is because he looks past my blindness and can see what I am capable of as a person."

She said Roque is the third mayor she has worked for, and someone who has responded to her extremely positively. "He recognizes what I am capable of," she said.

## BELL MEETS NEW FRIENDS AT RUTGERS

By Barbara Shalit

**Editor's Note:** *This year's Braille Enrichment Learning and Literacy (BELL) program will run July 13-24 at the Puerto Rican Association for Human Development Center in Perth Amboy. To enroll your child, to volunteer and/or to request information, contact Mary Jo Partyka or Jerilyn Higgins.*

About 60 polite and eager faces met us in the multi-purpose room of the Rutgers Livingston Student Center in Piscataway on the rainy evening of November 13, 2014. The Rutgers sorority, Delta Phi Omega, had invited NFBNJ to conduct a presentation about our inaugural 2014 BELL (Braille Enrichment Learning and Literacy) program. As explained by the sorority's service chair, Leena Agrawal, included in the sorority's mission is a dedication to children's education and to literacy—a perfect match for BELL's goals.

Following quickly on the heels of the State Convention the previous weekend, we were all in "BELL mood" and ready to go. Our cast of characters included the following: Joe Ruffalo, president, NFBNJ; Holly Miller, president, POBC-NJ; Hank Miller, Holly's 14-year-old son; Barbara Shalit, BELL 2014 teacher; Amy Albin, high school sophomore, Morristown High School, and BELL volunteer; Ryan Abbott, 7-year-old BELL 2014 participant; Lana Abbott, Ryan's mom; and Jim Ruffalo, Joe's son and general helper.

Joe Ruffalo started things off, familiarizing the audience with the goals of the National Federation of the Blind's "Live the Life You Want" philosophy, while generally putting everyone at ease as only Joe can. Barbara Shalit followed. She spoke about the need for Braille literacy in securing future employment, and she stressed that even children with low vision, who can often read print for short periods of time, can benefit enormously from learning Braille, contrary to popular understanding. Holly Miller spoke next. She explained the purpose behind the parent group, POBC, and she talked about the components of the BELL program. She also provided a bit of history, relating how difficult it had been to secure Braille instruction for her son, Hank, resulting in a court case with a favorable outcome, as we all know. Kudos to NFB and the Miller family!

Adults addressing college undergrads is fine, but the real highlights of the evening were the NFBNJ young people: Hank Miller, Amy Albin and Ryan Abbott. (Ryan's mom, Lana, was particularly eloquent speaking at Ryan's side, about how the BELL program had affected not only Ryan, but her entire family. Even Ryan's older sister, Emily, spoke about Braille and the BELL program.) Most of the audience, if hazarding a guess is permissible, had probably never met or heard any visually impaired or blind people speak to an audience. To watch and listen to the articulate blind high school student, Amy Albin, about her journey captivated them. To see Hank Miller walk confidently up

to the podium and speak about his experience was an eye opener (no pun intended). Lowering their eyes to our youngest (and shortest) speaker, Ryan Abbott, elicited lots of “ooo’s” because he is so adorable and forthcoming.

Following all these first-person, podium speeches, we broke up into groups, defined by three tables around the room, and the audience members circulated among them. The literature table, manned by Joe and Hank, offered a variety of publications from NFB, including Kernel books and several handouts. Joe engaged all the students, answering questions and providing his refreshing perspective. Hank demonstrated how idevices work for blind people; he also demonstrated how a cane works; several folks donned sleep shades to test drive canes. Another table, with Ryan and Lana Abbott at the helm, featured a demonstration of the Perkins Braillewriter, a Braille Twister board, the journal Ryan kept at last summer’s BELL program, and various Braille-related games such as ping pong balls in a half-dozen egg box for constructing Braille letters. A third table displayed specialized print catalogues, a Braille atlas of New Jersey, a Twin-Vision book, and more. At this same table, Amy Albin demonstrated her Braille note-taker and explained to some very interested and impressed college undergrads the process of downloading books. Others came up to ask Barbara about graduate programs in the field. One young man told us he had volunteered at the Fairfield Red Cross, once noted for producing and duplicating thousands of Braille textbooks for decades.

The atmosphere of the event was filled with enthusiasm, general good feeling, and a high level of interest among the college students. The sorority had placed cookies next to a donation box for the BELL program, but consciousness-raising was more the purpose of the event than money-raising. We had a great time spreading the word of NFB and the BELL program. We want to thank everyone who made this event possible, from the Delta Phi Omega organizers to the BELL and NFBNJ volunteers.

### **BRL OFFERS LARGE COLLECTION OF PRINT/BRAILLE BOOKS**

The Beulah Reimer Legacy (BRL)’s mission is to promote Braille literacy and reading opportunities by placing Braille in the hands of eager readers. BRL offers one of the largest collections of print/Braille children's picture books and continues to grow. Our website contains over 1,000 titles of the most popular children's picture books. We have classic fairy tales, seasonal books, holiday books and tactile books. Visit our website and stock up on old favorites as well as some new ones. Don't forget our book of the month. Each month, BRL features one of our great books for five dollars.

BRL ships its materials free of charge. Please allow two weeks for delivery within the United States. To see what BRL has in store for you, call 515-282-0049 or e-mail [endertona@wildblue.net](mailto:endertona@wildblue.net), or check out our website at [www.beulahreimerlegacy.com](http://www.beulahreimerlegacy.com).

## BRAILLE: MY GIVE-AND-TAKE RELATIONSHIP

By Amy Albin, Age 15

**Editor's Note:** *In the last two issues of The Sounding Board we featured powerful articles written by Amy Albin, a sophomore at Morristown High School. Her current article, below, was so inspiring that it was chosen as the Fine Work Award winning entry for the junior category in the North American/Caribbean Region Onkyo Braille Essay Contest.*

A woman and I were seated in a small office at my preschool. She was instructing me to perform the monotonous task of studying lines on a paper and telling her whether they were going “up and down” or “left to right.” It seemed pointless at the time; I could not have been more mistaken.

The teacher soon informed me that each of those vertical lines formed a letter l, and each horizontal line was a c. I was starting to read Braille. I was not aware of it at the time, but in about five years, I would be able to read enjoyable children's novels. Now, over 11 years from that first day, I use Braille to acquire knowledge from school materials, leisure books and the Internet. In addition, my literacy enables me to share this knowledge with people all over. The best part is that Braille empowers me to gather and distribute this wealth of information independently.

First of all, Braille allows me to prosper from the exemplary education I receive at school. Throughout my schooling, I have relied almost exclusively on Braille. While I am given auditory material on occasion, Braille is by far my primary literacy medium for education. My assignments and lessons, be they on paper or electronic, are typically available in Braille. I perform well in school, routinely earning As and A-pluses. Beyond the grades, I have learned so much in school regarding history, math, science and much more. This accumulated knowledge has helped me to form a concept of the world in which I live. I consider myself truly blessed to have been taught Braille and encouraged to use it to foster a comprehensive, commendable school education.

Second, Braille has allowed me to read entertaining, informative books of all sorts. I started out reading simple stories with mind-numbing sentences on the order of, “The cat sat on the mat,” “Nan ran into the van,” et cetera. By third grade, however, I could enjoy realistic fiction such as the Junie B. Jones series by Barbara Park. These were great novels because I could delve into the intriguing life of a relatable character while continuing to improve my reading skills. They gradually progressed to their current level, where I am reading books suitable for adults. Nearly three years ago, I wanted a book on psychology. Available on Bookshare.org was a textbook designed for high school psychology students. I was entering seventh grade; I could handle it. I read the book in electronic Braille on my BrailleNote. Eagerly I read and enjoyed all the sections that



interested me, learning about human psychology throughout the life span, memory, dreams, emotions, personality, hypnosis and all other psychology basics. If I could only listen to that book instead of reading it in Braille, I can guarantee I would not have learned nearly as much – the way words are spelled, for example. From realistic fiction to nonfiction, Braille opened the door for me to the world of literature.

Finally, Braille has given me a vast stream of knowledge that takes the form of the World Wide Web. If I want to know the title or artist(s) of a song, I simply use my BrailleNote to type the lyrics into Google. I love to read articles found online from places such as Yahoo Voices, the *Huffington Post* and *Psychology Today*. In addition, I have access to cnn.com, so I can keep up with the most important events currently happening in the world.

I use Braille not only to acquire information about the world but also to spread critical knowledge to the people around me. This essay is a perfect example. Perhaps the most significant way I have used the Internet was to prepare a research paper advocating Braille literacy in the United States. I read multiple NFB articles including the Federation's 2009 report, "The Braille Literacy Crisis in America," which stated that a mere 10 percent of the nation's blind children are taught Braille. In addition, I found a study conducted by Edward C. Bell, PhD, and Natalia M. Mino. This study associated Braille literacy with higher employment rates among blind people. I wrote a paper longer than six pages demanding that Braille be taught to all blind students who need it throughout the United States. Therefore, the Internet and Braille have not only provided me with knowledge; they have also helped me distribute that knowledge to the world.

As I have been writing this essay in Braille, I have been thinking to myself, "I am so lucky I can read and write." Having written a research paper of more than six pages on the subject, I am fully aware that many blind people are deprived of Braille literacy. As previously mentioned, the NFB report called "The Braille Literacy Crisis in America" stated that only 10 percent of blind children in the nation are being taught Braille. I am extremely fortunate to be among that 10 percent. I in particular have used Braille not only to gather knowledge from school material, additional books and the Internet, but I have also distributed information via Braille to the people of this world. However, far too many blind people lack the opportunity and instruction required to live up to their full potentials. People like myself therefore have the obligation of educating the public that Braille instruction and the opportunity to use it are indispensable to those both totally blind and with a functionally significant lack of vision. I greatly hope that there will be a time when all capable blind people have a vast world of knowledge literally at their fingertips.

**NEWS FROM THE NJ STATE LIBRARY - TALKING BOOK & BRAILLE CENTER****By Adam Szczepaniak, Director**

TBBC is transitioning to the digital age at a remarkable rate! Because of the accessibility features from Apple on iPads, iPhones and the iPad Touch, TBBC has had more than 725 devices registered in New Jersey to download books and magazines from the National Library Service's (NLS) BARD database. This is a tremendous leap forward, as this app was released just 16 months ago. While I can't get statistics by device, I can tell you that over 30,000 items have been downloaded from October 2014 through January 2015. In the prior federal reporting year, TBBC patrons and staff downloaded over 100,000 items.

The android app, developed at the same time as Apple's, has not been as successful. NLS recently reported that the app delivered by the contractor was not satisfactory. NLS has had to rebuild the app over the last year and is now ready to field test it.

A reason to consider downloading books from BARD is that BARD contains 60 percent more titles than TBBC receives on digital cartridges from NLS. The numbers change daily but TBBC has over 16,000 titles on cartridges in the library while BARD is closing in on 40,000 titles available. One of the reasons for the difference in the number of books comes from the fact that NLS is digitalizing older titles from its audiocassette collection and adding them only to BARD. Another is while NLS annually records about 2,000 titles, they have also signed agreements with commercial publishers to add approximately 1,000 new titles each year. The publishers include Hachette Audio, Random House/Penguin, Scholastic, Westin Woods and soon Harper Collins.

There is also a collection of specially-acquired digital audio books in languages other than English. They are obtained from agencies serving persons with print disabilities in other nations, as well as commercial vendors abroad. Currently books are available in Spanish, French, German, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Chinese.

A final source for new books comes from other regional libraries like TBBC. Regional libraries have recorded 570 titles that are now available in BARD. TBBC has added several titles and hopes soon to have approximately 20 titles available nationally for downloading.

A related project at TBBC has been to train the staff at various public libraries across the state to download books and magazines for TBBC patrons. This project began in late 2013 and is open to any public library that joins TBBC as a registered institutional account. Keep this in mind if you need help on nights and weekends.

Finally, a date to mark on your calendar is Saturday, October 10, 2015. TBBC will again be partnering with The Grounds for Sculpture for our Fall Festival at the Grounds. Details on the day's events will be announced in the months to come.



## EMPOWER YOURSELF AND OTHERS WITH 1TOUCH™ SELF-DEFENSE TRAINING

By Maurie Hill

**Editor's Note:** *Maurie Hill writes for Ai Squared's Zoomed In blog, maker of ZoomText and Window-Eyes software. She recently attended the 1Touch™ Self-Defense Training described in the article below, as did NFBNJ members Jerilyn Higgins, Patricia Ebel, Michael Halm, Tony Santiago and Steve Rutch. The 1Touch program will conduct a workshop at the State Convention in Manahawkin this November. For more information on upcoming workshops, please contact Patricia Ebel at 201-583-0949 or patriciaebel0302@comcast.net.*

Last summer, I met Jim Pilkington while visiting the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in Denver. I observed Jim, an Assistive Technology Specialist, as he gave his client tips on using her computer and cell phone without sight. The facility has a full kitchen where she could practice safe cooking techniques, but the class where Jim could really sense a client's renewal of control and self-esteem was in the 1Touch Self-Defense class he taught. A bit emotional, like a proud parent, he recounted the story about Margie.

Margie was in one of the first groups of students to receive the 1Touch training and had been studying the system for about seven months. She was very enthusiastic and often helped the newer participants practice their techniques. In 2012, Margie was traveling on a city bus, with her laptop computer and other items in a rolling bag at her feet.

Margie has Retinitis Pigmentosa, with a very small field of usable vision, but she noticed a man sitting across the aisle from her. He seemed to be paying too much attention to her and her computer bag. Because of his apparent interest, Margie kept an eye on him. Because she was wearing dark glasses and carrying a white cane, she probably appeared to be an easy target for theft.

As the bus pulled up to a stop, the man grabbed Margie's bag and headed for the door. When she felt her bag being carried away, she caught his wrist and used an arm lock technique to force him to the floor. She then yelled to the bus driver to alert the police. The bus driver hit the panic button, which summoned the police, and Margie kept the perpetrator pinned to the floor while another passenger held the man's legs.

Within a few minutes, two police cars had arrived, and the man was taken away. He was charged with attempted theft. All the time he was on the floor, Margie reports that he was yelling and threatening her, but she kept her cool and controlled the situation without any injury to herself or the bad guy.

Later, Margie was informed by the police that the perpetrator had multiple previous arrests for theft and assault.

Margie is in her early 50s, is under 5 feet tall, and weighs less than 100 pounds. I mention this to emphasize that size and strength need not be decisive factors when using the 1Touch techniques properly.

1Touch Self-Defense was specifically adapted to be taught and learned by those with visual challenges, as described in the 2012 article *1Touch: New Self-Defense Program Trains Blind Instructors*.

Like Margie, since giving up my car keys, I find myself navigating through interesting places and situations. My daughter knows all too well the route of unlit streets we walk just to go to the movies while others park their cars in the lighted parking lot near the door. I always wondered what both of us would do if ever confronted by an unsavory character like Margie did.

This feeling of uncomfortableness, at best, is one obstacle I'd like to overcome in 2015. My quest to find 1Touch Self-Defense training led me to Miranda Brown, U.S. Secretary for the 1Touch project. She received certification to teach and now conducts 8-week classes that meet once a week in her hometown in Iowa. Iowa is too far from here, so she suggested I attend the 2.5 day intense 1Touch Self-Defense instructor certification training in March in Secaucus, New Jersey. That way, I could not only learn it myself, but teach it to my daughter, and perhaps all her friends too!

What's cool about the 1Touch system is that it is so adaptable, Miranda said. But when a student with cerebral palsy and no feeling on one side signed up for her class, she wasn't sure what to do. Miranda called Steve Nichols, founder of the 1Touch Project, who walked her through some adaptations over the phone, and they worked! Miranda has also heard success stories from other trainers who had students in wheelchairs, were both deaf and blind, or were challenged in other ways. An 85-year-old woman who was blind was pretty tickled when she skillfully brought her instructor to the ground. Miranda, blind herself, further commented, "I never saw myself being a teacher, but I love this."

The 1Touch project website, where you can find upcoming events, instructors and training opportunities, is currently being updated, but until it's ready, you can contact Miranda Brown to inquire about trainers in your area or becoming certified in 1Touch Self-Defense. They have a goal of providing a dozen certification courses in the U.S. in 2015. Check out the 1Touch Self-Defense Facebook page for the latest announcements.

## **The PAC Plan and Its New Sign-Up Method**

### **By Ryan Stevens**

Greetings once again to my fellow Federationists throughout the New Jersey Affiliate! This is your friendly neighborhood PAC Plan chairman, and this is my latest update on how we are doing with our contributions to this very important program.

As most of you know, "PAC" stands for "Pre-Authorized Contribution," and the plan is the easiest way for NFB members to make regular donations to our organization. It's easy because it's a one-time process to sign up, and it's easy on the wallet because you can contribute as little as \$5 a month. It's important because it helps fund the programs and activities that are so vital to the success of blind people.

In terms of our ranking among the states, as of February 2015, we are in 26<sup>th</sup> place, with a monthly contribution of \$482.50. This amount comes from the generosity of 31 individuals and chapters. Also, the affiliate raised its monthly donation at our 2014 State Convention. I wish to thank those who help the Garden State make such a fine showing; however, we can definitely do more to climb the ladder. We are only \$22 behind Indiana, and we trail Massachusetts by a mere \$31.50. Passing them would put us over \$500 a month and solidly in the Top 25.

Thanks to modern technology, signing up on PAC is significantly easier than it has ever been. There is now an online contribution form and you can have your donation taken from either a checking account or a debit card. To get to the online form, go to <https://nfb.org/make-gift> and then click on the "Pre-Authorized Contribution (PAC)" link. You can choose to start a monthly contribution or increase an existing one, select your payment method, and fill in the corresponding information right there. You can then print out the form, sign it and send it into NFB's National Center.

Making these regular tax-deductible contributions, and encouraging your friends, family and fellow Federationists to join as well, would show how important the National Federation of the Blind is to you, and would demonstrate how proud an affiliate New Jersey is, so as the song says, please...get on the PAC Plan. Sign up today!

## A CBVI UPDATE

By Daniel B. Frye, Executive Director, New Jersey CBVI

The following represents the last two columns that I have written for the *Commission Edition*, the internal staff publication of the New Jersey CBVI. In reviewing these, it seemed appropriate, by way of update, to share the same content with the members of the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey via its own publication. After reading these two columns, you will conclude, I trust, that a sense of reform momentum is in the air at CBVI, momentum that will, in the long run, benefit blind and vision-impaired residents of the state. Should you have questions or comments about what we are doing at CBVI, please feel free to contact my office; alternatively, communicate with your president, Joe Ruffalo, or Carol Castellano, both of whom have been instrumental in helping CBVI develop its new direction.

### April 2015

Knowing that providing high-quality blindness education to blind and vision-impaired students is critical to shaping well-adjusted, successfully employed blind and vision-impaired adults, I have convened an Education Reform Taskforce (ERT) to review comprehensively our education administrative code, agency-specific policies and informal practices. The ERT consists of members of our executive management team; the education coordinator; a service center manager; an education supervisor; two teachers of the vision impaired (TVIs); our technology services specialist supervisor; a representative from The College of New Jersey's Center for Sensory and Complex Disabilities; and several valued external stakeholders who have a vested interest in promoting excellent blindness education in the state.

This diverse and representative group met for its first day-long session on March 18, 2015, and began the process of building a positive group dynamic and reviewing significant volumes of data that may reflect on the type of blindness education that we are presently delivering. The ERT will gather again in mid-May to continue this data-driven and policy-heavy process. Current estimates are that the ERT will complete its charge by the end of the calendar year.

Once the ERT has finished its ambitious task, it anticipates being able to deliver a collaboratively authored version of our Education Administrative Code, in time for its renewal in March 2016; a revised Education Policy Manual to be used by CBVI staff; and a set of education-related policy recommendations to be adopted at the Commission. The hope is that the ERT will operate on a consensus model of decision making; if we fall short of this goal, though, final decisions about CBVI blindness education policy will rest

with my office. I am optimistic that this intensive exercise will yield positive and transformative benefits for blindness education in New Jersey.

While many aspects of this deliberative process are yet to be discovered and agreed upon, I can assure you that my commitment is to promote a system of blindness education that places strong and unequivocal value on the importance of mastering fundamental blindness skills as early as possible. Consistent with this principle, I have determined, as a matter of immediate policy, that any consumer of our blindness education services whose parents or responsible guardians ask that their child receive instruction in Braille, shall receive such instruction gladly and without question. Our Commission's collective professional staff have an abundant knowledge of this important communications code, and we will happily share it with all comers.

I am looking forward to presiding over a transparent process, and I will begin this campaign of sharing when I meet with our education supervisors in late April and our entire TVI staff in mid-May to discuss CBVI blindness education policy. Finally, I want to emphasize that my decision to convene the ERT is not by any means an indictment of our existing policies or practices. Instead, this effort is merely a part of my effort to lead and lift CBVI's blindness education service provision to maximum heights of performance. I look forward to your enthusiastic support and help in achieving this aim.

### **March 2015:**

In this month's column, I want to begin to disclose some of the changes that will be coming to the CBVI service delivery model as a result of our strategic planning process. The risk associated with gradually circulating news about potential reforms to our agency's design before all the work is complete is that some confusion may result, but I also want to keep you informed and engaged as we move along a pathway of improvement and change. Consequently, I will not be able to provide you with all of the details associated with what is emerging, because these concepts have not all been resolved or completely developed, but I have concluded that it is best to keep you as updated as possible. Given these qualifications, here is what I can relay thus far.

Consistent with the effort to increase uniformity and efficiency in our primary programs, and in accordance with promoting a state-wide organization that is characterized less by discipline, departmental and regional differences, we are going to move to a "teaming" approach in our model of service delivery. I am hoping that this shift will result in all of our consumers being able to experience better and broader support from the Commission.

So what do I mean by a "teaming" approach? We will be developing a state-wide Welcome and Evaluation team. This group will consist of representatives of our agency who will conduct a consistent set of initial information gathering to determine eligibility

for all of our programs and who will be equipped to identify the most immediate and appropriate needs of each entering consumer. Initial requests for services will be able to be taken over the phone or in person at each of our service centers. Once a determination has been made as to each consumer's service needs, the Welcome and Evaluation team will refer the consumer to an appropriate service delivery team.

We will have two primary service delivery teams: a Children, Youth and Transition (CYT) team and a General Adult Services (GAS) team. Each team will consist of a vocational rehabilitation counselor, rehabilitation teacher, orientation and mobility instructor, technology services specialist and an eye-health nurse; the CYT teams will, in addition to each of these positions, also have a teacher of the vision-impaired (TVI) assigned to them. Drivers assigned to specific blind professionals will join the team on which their partnering blind professional serves. Either the vocational rehabilitation counselor or TVI will likely serve as the anchoring coordinator or team lead for each service delivery team, but some flexibility may exist on CYT and GAS teams as to which position will act as team lead, given the particular consumer being served. In short, while it is likely that service delivery staff will be assigned to a specific CYT or GAS team, the anchoring, the team lead may change depending on the specific priority service needs of an individual consumer.

Given such a structure, every consumer will theoretically have access to the full range of services that are offered at the Commission without having to go through a new assessment and eligibility determination to qualify for our Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living or Education programs. Instead, each consumer will have, as a matter of course, a staff person from all of our disciplines assigned to their individual cases. In all likelihood, consumers would not meet with the entire team at once, but the anchoring team lead would be able to facilitate whatever services may be needed for the particular consumer, drawing from the specific expert on the team that may be required. This should save needing to worry about cases being concurrent, and it should, in time, remove procedures relating to processing internal referrals among programs. Questions still have to be worked out about specific lines of supervision and other logistics, but the foregoing represents a sense of where we are headed and the structure that we will be using.

Finally, by way of other miscellaneous detail, we will probably be retaining a state-wide Deaf-Blind Unit, and details will have to be ironed out as to how these consumers will be served. Other support staff in each of our local service centers who are not involved in direct, front-line service delivery to our consumers will be assigned to the Unaffiliated Support Services (USS) team in each service center, and these teams will support the work of the various service delivery teams.



In closing, I want to emphasize again that I am sharing ideas with you as they are being generated and designed. This can sometimes prove a messy and seemingly unorganized approach. Please, then, receive this as a preliminary description of what we are anticipating in terms of changes to our service delivery model. When all items have been agreed and firmed up, you will receive an official memorandum outlining the new approaches. I am hopeful that we can have some pilot testing of these new approaches by the beginning of our state fiscal year, with a full introduction of the new model by October. These time frames, though, are current estimates, and I am more invested in doing this well than I am in doing this quickly. So stay tuned, and look forward with enthusiasm to the ride and to the advantages that will accrue to all of our consumers when the new structures are ultimately in place.

### **CBVI'S EDGE PROGRAM FOR TRANSITION-AGE STUDENTS**

**Submitted by Pam Gaston**

The New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired recently awarded the contract to administer its new Employment, Development, Guidance and Engagement (EDGE) program to the Family Resource Network. The new EDGE program will be CBVI's primary, year-round transition program for youth, ages 14-21. We anticipate that EDGE will offer consumers an opportunity for blindness skill development, mentoring, and part-time internships and employment, all of which will enable participants to enter their post-secondary careers ready to engage, flourish and succeed.

It will take several months for the Family Resource Network to get the EDGE program fully up and running, but we are hoping to have a big celebration to launch the EDGE program in the late spring or early summer. We expect to begin making referrals to the Family Resource Center for the EDGE program by May of this year.

## MEET THE 2014 STATE CONVENTION EXHIBITORS

### Compiled By Mary Jo Partyka

An air of excitement permeates the air as we come to State Convention each year. In addition to meeting new people, attending workshops and hearing speakers discuss pertinent issues, our attendees always look forward to visiting the exhibit room to look at and purchase new technology and discover new services. If you have attended our conventions, you will recognize some exhibitors because they come every year; others have more recently joined our ranks. Below is a list of exhibitors who provided us with a description of their companies. Feel free to contact them for further information.

**Braille Depot LLC** [www.brailledepot.com](http://www.brailledepot.com) 107 Trimble Avenue, Clifton, NJ 07011  
Nick Johnson, Senior Account Manager

The Braille Depot services Braille and low-vision devices, Braille printers and video magnifiers.

**EASY LLC** [Easytactilegraphics.com](http://Easytactilegraphics.com)  
Al Maneki

From an early age, sighted children are encouraged to draw anything from scribbles to shapes to sine waves that they use in math class. Unfortunately, children who are blind/VI have not had the opportunity or encouragement to express themselves in these media. Now, with the introduction of inTACT products, these children can interact with tactile drawings in educational settings. This is especially applicable for students studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects.

As engineers in this company, we understand how important it is for children who are blind/VI to be able to communicate graphically and to create and understand drawings, diagrams and figures. To build this skill set, students need to have access to interactive curricula that not only reinforces their learning, but also allows them to practice and use graphical communication. EASY is working with Pearson, the largest educational publisher in the world, to make accessible graphics workbooks for blind and visually impaired students. Our goal is to bring unprecedented access to interactive learning materials for blind students and revolutionize learning opportunities for these students.

**Educational Testing Service (ETS)** [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org)  
Ruth C. Loew, Assistant Director, Office of Disability Policy

The nonprofit ETS advances quality and equity in education for people worldwide by creating assessments based on rigorous research. ETS develops, administers and scores more than 50 million tests annually including the TEOFL<sup>®</sup>, and TOEIC<sup>®</sup>, the GRE<sup>®</sup> General and Subject Tests, and the Praxis Series<sup>™</sup> assessments in more than 180 countries at more than



9,000 locations around the world. We also conduct educational, research, analysis and policy studies, and develop a variety of customized services and products for teacher certification, English language learning, and Primary, Secondary and Post-secondary education. It is part of the ETS mission to measure knowledge and skills, promote learning and educational performance, and support education and professional development.

This includes individuals with disabilities. ETS strives to make its assessments accessible to those with disabilities, including blindness and visual impairments. Information about how to request accommodations on ETS tests, as well as other relevant information is readily available at <http://www.ets.org/disabilities>.

**Eye Assist LLC**     [www.eyeeassist.org](http://www.eyeeassist.org)     **845-201-8113**

Paul Hansen, President, e-mail [EyeAssist@optonline.net](mailto:EyeAssist@optonline.net)

Are you on Medicaid or do you receive Medicaid benefits through a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO)? Do you need adaptive technology to remain independent? Allen N. Blumenthal, a durable medical equipment provider, and Paul Hansen, from Eye Assist, are well known within the NFBNJ community. Adaptive technology devices are available to those who qualify through New Jersey State Medicaid and most Medicaid HMOs. Products such as portable magnifiers and desktop-styled CCTVs allow people who are blind/VI to maintain an independent lifestyle.

Eye Assist also partners with ABiSee, the premier developer of products that convert printed material into audible speech. These products range from stand-alone readers to devices that use the USB connection on PC laptops and MacBooks. ABiSee's newest device – the Eye-Pal Ace Plus – is the pinnacle in achievements. This unique portable unit allows for text-to-speech recognition, WiFi connectivity to send and receive audible e-mails, access to NFB Newslines, and a calendar to audibly schedule appointments.

**Guiding Eyes for the Blind**     [Guidingeyes.org](http://Guidingeyes.org)     **914-245-4024**

Barbara Gunther, Administrative Assistant

Guiding Eyes is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit which provides guide dogs to people with vision loss, as well as service dogs to children with autism. The organization is passionate about connecting exceptional dogs with individuals and families for greater independence. Since its inception in 1954, Guiding Eyes has grown to be one of the foremost guide dog schools in the world, known for its accredited training programs and lifetime commitment to its graduating teams. Guiding Eyes is dependent upon contributions to fulfill its mission and provides all services free of charge. The organization's headquarters and training center is located in Yorktown Heights, and its breeding station is in Patterson, NY.

**iCanConnect/NJ** [www.icanconnect.org](http://www.icanconnect.org) 609-771-2711

Carly Fredericks, e-mail [iCanConnectNJ@gmail.com](mailto:iCanConnectNJ@gmail.com)

Modern technology allows most people to communicate through phones and computers, but for people who have a combined vision and hearing loss, special equipment may be necessary to make a phone call, send an e-mail, text, or access the Internet. The **iCanConnect** program ensures that individuals who have a combined hearing and vision loss, as defined by The Helen Keller National Center Act, and who meet income criteria, can access telephone, advanced communications and information services. The program provides communications equipment, installation, training and support to qualified individuals. **iCanConnect** was mandated by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 and established by the Federal Communications Commission. In NJ, the Center for Sensory & Complex Disabilities at The College of New Jersey and the NJ CBVI have formed a collaborative partnership to implement this program.

**Kevin's Consulting** [www.kevinsconsulting.com](http://www.kevinsconsulting.com) 973-590-8976

Kevin Sisco, e-mail [kevinsisco61784@gmail.com](mailto:kevinsisco61784@gmail.com)

My goal is to improve the lives of blind people by providing them with new ways to access technology. Although my main focus is on virus and spyware removal, I also research methods to make the lives of blind people easier by providing products that will be useful to them. One such example is Talking Braille, which aims to reinforce the learning of Braille by naming the letters as the keys are pressed. This software can be a self-teaching tool and a tool that teaches teachers how to teach Braille.

**New Jersey Foundation for the Blind** [www.njffb.org](http://www.njffb.org)

Kris Marino, Director

Linda Groszew, Program Manager, 973-627-0055, ext 312, e-mail [lgroszew@njffb.org](mailto:lgroszew@njffb.org)

For 72 years, the New Jersey Foundation for the Blind (known to many as Diamond Spring Lodge), has provided programs that enable blind adults to live independent, productive lives and to grow socially. Individuals who wish to stay physically active may choose to participate in weekly Better Health and Wellness classes which offer a wide variety of choices at the Denville location. At any given time, multiple activities are planned, including low-impact aerobics, line-dancing, peer support, Braille, bingo, horticultural therapy, drumming circle, healthy cooking, and art and pottery studios. Satellite locations in Montclair, Ridgewood and Sparta offer fewer choices but enjoy strong participation. Our fastest-growing weekly program is the iPhone and iPad training presented by a team of instructors who include blind, visually impaired and sighted teachers. Free technology demonstrations are offered during the year. Every month

NJFFB holds a one-day essential low-vision program. We've helped many people with recent vision loss or deteriorating eye conditions (accompanied by a family member or friend) by offering personalized guidance on issues concerning orientation and mobility, kitchen management and communication, as well as by explaining and providing information on all New Jersey resources available to them. All programs require advanced registration. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit supported by program fees, contributions and grants. For information and schedules, please contact us.

**NJ State Library and Talking Book Center** [www.njstatelib.org/tbbc](http://www.njstatelib.org/tbbc) **800-792-8322**

Mary Kearns Kaplan

The New Jersey State Library Talking Book and Braille Center is a public library that serves New Jersey residents of all ages who have difficulty reading standard print or who struggle with holding a book or turning the pages of a book because of a physical impairment, reading disability or a vision challenge. All of our services are cost free. Our books and players are delivered to the home, and everything ships back and forth postage free as "Free Reading Matter for the Blind or Handicapped." Our products and services include: accessible digital Talking Book players, audiobooks and audio magazines in print, Braille or digital formats, downloadable materials from the Braille and Audio Download (BARD) site, the BARD mobile app for the iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch, and news-reading services including Audiovision and NFB Newline, which is sponsored by the NJCBVI. TBBC provides these services as part of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, a division of the U.S. Library of Congress.

**SSPNJ** [ssp.nj.tcnj@gmail.com](mailto:ssp.nj.tcnj@gmail.com) **609-771-2768**

Kathy Gabry

SSPNJ provides services that enhance independence for New Jersey residents who have a combined vision and hearing loss. Our philosophy is that all people are created equal and human relationships thrive when the community is accessible to all. Funding for SSPNJ is provided by the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

SSPs are professionally trained to provide visual and environmental information, human guide services, and access to communication so that a person who cannot see or hear can get information and be empowered to make his own informed decisions.

Adults (over the age of 18 and out of the K-12 school system) who have a combined vision and hearing loss can apply for SSPNJ services if they are: eligible for vocational rehabilitation services from NJCBVI; working, looking for work or preparing for work; a NJ resident living in the community; and capable of directing and managing an SSP.

**S.W. Unlimited** swunlimited.com 732-290-1677

Sherlock Washington, e-mail [Sherlock@swunlimited.com](mailto:Sherlock@swunlimited.com)

S.W. Unlimited LLC has been in existence for 20 years assisting and training blind/VI people to use adaptive equipment to enhance their daily living skills. We are versed in the use of all the equipment and software that we sell and have the expertise to determine what who help to make life a little easier. We offer a one-stop shopping experience during which we assess each client's needs. Clients are provided with the following while in training: software and equipment, individualized training, technical support, and continued telephone assistance long after they master their adaptive equipment. Since 2009, our company has also provided training on idevices with Voiceover. With Voiceover, a blind person can navigate these devices as well as a sighted person. idevices are remarkable in that they can be used as a telephone for talking and texting, a computer for e-mailing and Internet surfing, a scanner, a camera, a radio, a book reader, a money reader and a navigation system. We also provide training for software including but not limited to: Guide, JAWS, Magic, Zoomtext, Open Book and Kurzweil, as well as training on all low-vision products including CCTVs, hand-held video magnifiers, and Daisy players such as the Victor Reader Stream and the Pocket Plectalk. We also offer office supplies, office furniture, rental computers, computer parts, components and peripherals. Our most important function is to ensure that our clients are comfortable and proficient in using their new adaptive equipment.

**The Seeing Eye** [www.seeingeye.org](http://www.seeingeye.org)

Michele Barlack

Since 1929, The Seeing Eye has partnered with people who are blind by assisting them in enhancing their independence, dignity and self-confidence through the use of Seeing Eye dogs. Nearly 16,500 partnerships between people and their specially bred and trained dogs have brought a new level of mobility, safety and self-sufficiency to men and women throughout the United States and Canada. The Seeing Eye is the oldest existing guide dog school in the world and continues its role as a pioneer in the guide dog movement. The Seeing Eye has played an integral part in shaping public policy, as well as guaranteeing access and accommodation to people who use service animals. From developing a computer information system that calculates the suitability of every dog in the colony, to become a breeder, to funding cutting-edge research in DNA-sequencing and identifying genetic markers for degenerative eye disease, The Seeing Eye is a research leader in canine genetics, breeding, disease control and behavior. The organization is a founding member of the Council of U.S. Guide Dog Schools and a fully accredited member of the International Guide Dog Federation.

## TECH TIPS & INFORMATION

### NEW WEBSITE TO HELP IPHONE AND IPAD USERS

By Steve Iannoccone

**Editor's Note:** *Steve Iannoccone, who is legally blind, has been working for the federal government for the past 30 years as the lead person for a group of 60 staff members who provide desktop support, server support and application development for approximately 5000 employees. After taking a course on IOS technology at the New Jersey Foundation for the Blind, he created this specific website where blind people can learn how to use these devices by completing the lessons pertaining to each skill.*

[Voiceover-Easy.net](http://www.VoiceOver-Easy.net), <http://www.VoiceOver-Easy.net>, was developed in order to provide a detailed, step-by-step tutorial for blind and visually impaired users of the voiceover assistive technology found in iPhones and iPads. The site offers the course material free to those who wish to use it for self-study, or instructors who might wish to use it as the basis for classroom led instruction. No previous knowledge of, or experience with, iPhones, iPads or Voiceover is necessary. There are no pictures, diagrams or ads on this site. All lessons have been developed using text only.

Because verbal precision is a necessity for blind and many low vision people, [VoiceOver-Easy.net](http://www.VoiceOver-Easy.net) builds a clear and precise vocabulary of Voiceover gestures and screen elements from the ground up. While it is recommended to view at least the first two units in order, links to a glossary of terms are available throughout the units, so it is possible for an advanced user to focus on the units of particular interest to them. At the end of each lesson there are questions/exercises to help determine if the reader grasped the key concepts in the lesson. These questions can also be used by students and instructors to determine if the student can skip a particular lesson or unit.

#### ***Additional Technology Tidbits follow ...***

**AppleVis Unlimited** - AppleVis.com, a website developed for blind and low-vision users of Apple products including the iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch and the Mac, has transformed its newsletter into a new monthly series called AppleVis Unlimited. Each month's issue will contain a summary of new apps which have been determined accessible to blind and low-vision users. Readers can download apps directly from the newsletters and listen to podcasts showing how these apps work. If you would like to subscribe to this website, please visit [applevis.com](http://applevis.com) for more information

**Assistive Technology Fund** – The Association of Blind Citizens operates the Assistive Technology Fund. The Assistive Technology Fund provides funds to cover 50% of the retail price of adaptive devices or software. The ABC board of directors believes that this program will allow blind and visually impaired individuals access to technology products that will have a significant impact on improving employment opportunities, increase the level of independence and enhance their overall quality of life.

The products covered by this program must retail for a minimum of \$200 with a maximum retail price of \$6,000. Persons eligible to apply must be willing to verify family income of less than \$50,000 and cash assets of less than \$20,000.

Applicants must be legally blind and a resident of the United States to qualify for this program. Applications must be submitted by June 30th and December 31st for each grant period. Applicants will be notified if their request for a grant is approved. Applicants may submit one request per calendar year. All applications must be submitted via e-mail. You will be notified by ABC within 45 days after the application deadline. The grantee will have 30 days after notification to purchase the product. If the purchase cannot be made within 30 days ABC reserves the right to withdraw the award and assign it to another applicant. All decisions are final.

The request form is available at [http://www.blindcitizens.org/assistive\\_tech.htm](http://www.blindcitizens.org/assistive_tech.htm). Requests are accepted by e-mail only. – *Received by e-mail from Jane Degenshein*

**New NFB App Available: NFB Connect** is an easy way to stay connected with the NFB if you have an iPhone, iPad or other iOS device. Find it in the Apple App Store or download it directly at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/nfb-connect/id968434124>. With NFB Connect, you can quickly and easily read the latest news about the NFB, find information about upcoming events, access the *Braille Monitor* and other publications, listen to presidential releases, find the NFB in your community, learn about ways to support the National Federation of the Blind, and more! Don't forget to use the Feedback button to let us know how you're using it and to suggest new features. Please send your interest in an android app or any additional feedback to [mobileapp@nfb.org](mailto:mobileapp@nfb.org).

**Learn Braille input** in IOS8:

<http://help.apple.com/iphone/8/en.lproj/iph10366cc30.html>



**DID YOU KNOW ...**

**Many Children’s Television Programs Now Accessible for Students with Visual or Hearing Disabilities** - The U.S. Department of Education has made dozens of children’s television programs available online for students who are blind, visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing. The shows include closed captioning and video descriptions and can be viewed for free through the Department’s Accessible Television Portal project. Available shows include “Magic School Bus” and “Bill Nye the Science Guy.” This project is part of the Described and Captioned Media Program. - *Submitted by Pam Gaston*

**Healing Arts Initiative’s *Describe!* Program makes Broadway and off-Broadway shows accessible** – *Describe!* is an audio description service offered by Healing Arts Initiative (HAI) that makes Broadway and off-Broadway shows accessible to the blind and visually impaired. Tickets are offered at a discounted price, seating is in the orchestra section, and the descriptive service is free. Before the show, trained describers paint a mental picture of the scenery, costumes, characters and the theater itself. Once the program begins, the description includes the live action in between the dialogue, providing details without taking away from the show. For more information, contact 212-284-4100 or [outreach@hainyc.org](mailto:outreach@hainyc.org). – *Submitted by Lisa Charon*

**Social Security** has recently updated their publications. Check them out at <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/> Join the millions and discover your benefits! Open a *my* Social Security account.

**CBVI Registry for Announcements and Information** – To sign up to receive e-mail announcements from CBVI, register at <https://cbvi-facts.dhs.state.nj.us/rcid/>

**Independent Transportation Network North Jersey** provides rides to adults with visual impairment and seniors aged 60+ who cannot drive themselves or who choose not to drive. The service is currently available in Bergen County and will soon be expanding into other counties in Northern New Jersey. Members sign up for an annual membership, \$90 each or \$100 for a family, and maintain a pre-paid personal account. Charges are \$1.50 per mile and include a \$2.50 pick-up charge per ride. The cost is typically half that of a taxi service. No money is exchanged during the ride and no gratuities are accepted. Contact 201-398-6885 or [info@itnnorthjersey.org](mailto:info@itnnorthjersey.org) for more info.

**New Jersey Cultural Events** - contact the NJ Cultural Access Network at 973-731-6582 or e-mail them at [info@njtheatrealliance.org](mailto:info@njtheatrealliance.org). You can also visit their website at [njtheatrealliance.org](http://njtheatrealliance.org)

**GreenDrop website** is <http://www.nfbpickup.org/>. You can find a link to schedule a pickup, or you can call 1-888-610-4632 to speak to a representative.

**Vehicle Donation Program website** is [www.nfb.org/vehicledonations](http://www.nfb.org/vehicledonations) or call 1-855-659-9314 for information. In New Jersey, please contact Anthony Lanzilotti, at 267-414-4010 or [tti777@gmail.com](mailto:tti777@gmail.com)

**AmazonSmile** is a website operated by Amazon.com. It lets patrons shop for products and donate to their favorite charitable organization. Amazon.com donates 0.5% of the price of eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the charitable organizations – like the NFBNJ– selected by its customers. Please visit <http://org.amazon.com> for more info.

**A Group in the Planning** - Alexander Scott Kaiser is forming a group of the NFB for those who have cerebral palsy in conjunction with blindness and visual impairments. From problem-solving rehabilitation training issues to civil rights challenges unique to those with cerebral palsy and blindness and visual impairment, this group will provide support from others who understand. Meetings will be held by conference call on the first Sunday of the month at 07:59 p.m. EST. To access the conference, dial 567-704-0447 and use access code 999999#. To join the group, contact Alexander Scott Kaiser at 848-205-0208 or by e-mail at [alexander.scott.kaiser@bluebottle.com](mailto:alexander.scott.kaiser@bluebottle.com). A meeting is being planned for the 2015 Annual NFB National Convention in Orlando.

**Freedom Scientific Releases a 90-day License of JAWS® for Windows** – The 90-day license represents a great opportunity for companies that want to test the accessibility of their Web pages or their applications under development. Agencies can use the 90-day license to test at job sites and start new employees on JAWS immediately. For end users, this provides an option to spread the purchase of a full JAWS license over an extended time period. After purchase, the Activation Code for the 90-day trial license will be provided with instructions for downloading and installing the software from the Freedom Scientific Downloads Web page. Once the 90-day period has expired, the product can be reordered for another 90-day license, or a full license can be purchased for continued use of the installed software. The JAWS 90-day license (SKU: 340624-001) is available for purchase immediately from your local Freedom Scientific representative. For more information, please visit [www.FreedomScientific.com](http://www.FreedomScientific.com) or call Freedom Scientific at **1-727-803-8000**. Pricing in the U.S. for the JAWS 90-day License is \$179.00. Outside the U.S., customers should contact their local JAWS Distributor for pricing and availability.



**Echevarria Travel** offers dedicated travel services for the legally blind traveler. Check out their updated website at [www.echebarriatravel.com](http://www.echebarriatravel.com). To sign up for their e-zine (newsletter), contact [Cheryl@echevarriatravel.com](mailto:Cheryl@echevarriatravel.com). Their main communications e-mail is [cherylandnelson@echevarriatravel.com](mailto:cherylandnelson@echevarriatravel.com).

**Mackey Enterprises LLC is owned and operated by Brian Mackey, secretary of the NFBNJ.** Mackey Enterprises offers its services using Word, Excel and Quickbooks to private individuals and small businesses to assist with their data entry and bookkeeping needs. Projects are undertaken and completed based on a negotiated hourly rate or as a volunteer contribution by the company, if circumstances warrant. To learn more and negotiate a rate, call 609-953-6988, or e-mail [bmackey88@gmail.com](mailto:bmackey88@gmail.com).

### NFBNJ MEMBER RECOGNITION

**Editor's Note:** *Please share your story – or your friend's story – of success! When one person achieves, others are inspired to succeed.*

**Alex Anderson** was elected to the board of the NFB of MA.

**Mark Colasurdo** will be working toward a PhD in biology at Georgia Tech University, and congratulations to Mark and **Shafeka Hashash** on their recent engagement.

**Jon Gabry** was inducted into Phi Theta Kappa national honor society at Bergen Community College.

**Mikayla Gephart** was elected as an honorary student member to the State Affiliate Board.

**Mohammed Hashash** achieved the rank of Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America. He has also been accepted to American University in Washington, D.C.

**Kevin Sisco** is working with Dr. Al Maneki, a vendor at the NFBNJ State Convention, who works for the NFB National Center, on upcoming projects. Kevin is also the webmaster for the NFBNJ website.

**Ben Vercellone** earned his master's degree from Louisiana Tech University and is employed in Missouri as an orientation and mobility instructor. Wedding plans are also forthcoming.

## THREE RECIPES FROM THE KITCHEN OF THE GLASSTOWN CHAPTER

### CAJUN ROASTED PORK LOIN

*This recipe was submitted by Alice Eaddy. Alice is a member of the NFBNJ State Board, president of the Deaf-Blind Division, vice president/secretary of the Glasstown Chapter, secretary of the Guide Dog Users Division, secretary of the Diabetes Division, vice president of the Technology Division, and a member of the At-Large Chapter and the Senior Division.*

#### *Ingredients:*

2 tbsp. butter	Salt and pepper to taste
½ tsp. cayenne pepper	1 tbsp. olive oil
1 tsp. dried oregano	2 carrots cut into ½ inch pieces
½ tsp. black pepper	1 bell pepper, cut into ½ inch pieces
½ tsp. mustard	1 large onion cut into ½ inch pieces
½ tsp. thyme (optional)	3 tbsp. all-purpose flour
2 cloves garlic, minced	½ c. chicken broth
1 (4lb.) pork loin roast	

#### *Directions:*

1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees
2. Melt the butter in a small skillet over medium heat. Stir in the cayenne, oregano, pepper, thyme, mustard, and garlic. Cook for 1 minute. Use a paring knife to make several small incisions in the fat side of the meat. Stuff the slits with the spice mix, and rub the remaining mix over the surface of the meat. Sprinkle the roast with salt and pepper.
3. Heat the olive oil in a roasting pan over medium heat. Put the roast in the pan, and surround with the carrots, red pepper, and onion. Lightly salt and pepper the vegetables. Place roasting pan in preheated oven, and cook for 1 hour and 45 minutes. Increase the oven temperature to 425 degrees, and cook for an additional 15 minutes to brown the meat. Remove roast from pan, and let stand 10 minutes before slicing.
4. Place the roasting pan, with the pan juices, over medium heat. Whisk the flour into the hot drippings, and cook for 3 minutes. Pour in the chicken stock and cook, whisking occasionally, for 6 minutes. Strain sauce, and serve with the sliced pork roast.

## BLUEBERRY POUND CAKE

*The next two recipes were submitted by Lydia Keller. Lydia is the president of the Glasstown Chapter, treasurer of the Technology Division, treasurer of the Diabetes Division and vice president of the Senior Division. Lydia says that this cake is her favorite dessert (her mother's, too!), and that she has had this cake for her birthday every year since she was 13 years old.*

### *Ingredients:*

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 2 cups sugar, or the equivalent amount of Splenda
- 4 eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 3 cups flour, sifted and divided – hold ¼ cup for the blueberries
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 pint or 2 cups blueberries – drain and the coat with the ¼ cup flour

### *Directions:*

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees; if using a dark pan, reduce heat to 325 degrees.
2. Cream butter and sugar.
3. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating until light and fluffy.
4. Add the dry ingredients and the vanilla extract. Mix well.
5. Dredge the blueberries in the ¼ cup flour and fold gently into the batter.
6. Pour into a greased tube pan and bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes.
7. Cake will be done when a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.

## BLUEBERRY JAM

*You can use any fruit or sweetener in this jam recipe.*

1. Mix together 1 cup of cold water and 1 package of gelatin in a sauce pan.
2. Bring to a boil.
3. Add two cups of fresh blueberries and stir.
4. Pour into jars to cool.

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