

FALL 2016

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
Fall 2016

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

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To subscribe via Newsline: Jane Degenshein 973-736-5785 or Jdegen16@comcast.net

JACOBUS TENBROEK LEGACY SOCIETY

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

Mission Statement

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

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

The National Federation of the Blind Pledge

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

The Sounding Board

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

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



You are cordially invited to the
National Federation of the Blind of NJ's 8th Annual

After the Holidays Party

Saturday, January 7, 2017

1 pm to 5 pm

Knights of Columbus Hall

94 Bridge Street, Belleville, NJ

Access Link accessible Cross Street: Belleville Avenue

\$23 per adult; \$13 for children 6- 12 years; free for children younger than 6

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

All payment must be received no later than December 31, 2016.

Make check payable to NFBNJ and mail to:

Joe Ruffalo, NFBNJ President

254 Spruce Street

Bloomfield, NJ 07003

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

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

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

MISTLETOE MAGIC MENU

Holiday Tossed Garden Salad with Vinaigrette Dressing

Chicken Savoy, Eggplant Rollatini, Meatballs, Pasta with Vodka Sauce

Assorted Cold Cuts and Potato Salad

Chicken Fingers

Rolls and Butter

Homemade Holiday Desserts

Coffee, Tea and Assorted Soft Drinks

Cash bar will be available

Please join us in celebrating the holiday season!

We look forward to seeing all of our members, family and friends!

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PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

Greetings Fellow Federationists!

On May 1, 1976, the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey was established. Over the past 40 years, we've worked to raise expectations and to live the life we want. Our affiliate has grown to eight chapters, nine divisions, and numerous committees, programs and projects. We have also witnessed the growth of our members as, together, we've strived to master the skills and techniques, and to develop the positive attitudes necessary to achieve our goals. We have the time, we have the talent, we have the desire, and we need the opportunity to demonstrate that blindness does not hold us back.

The history of the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey will be celebrated during our State Convention, *Raising Expectations*, this November. We will also share our philosophy and highlight our goals for the next 40 years. Here are some notes regarding the State Convention:

- The dates are Thursday, November 10 through Sunday, November 13.
- Hotel rooms are going fast! Please make your room reservation directly with the Holiday Inn, 151 Route 72 East, Manahawkin, by calling 609-481-6100; use code NFB. The room rate is \$89 per night, plus tax, and includes breakfast for each registered person in the room.
- The pre-registration form has been forwarded to all on our distribution list. It can also be found on our website – www.nfbnj.org – and on Newsline.
- The convention will be streamed, and information on how to access the streaming will be distributed to our mailing list and will be posted on our website.
- Additional information pertaining to our affiliate and the State Convention can also be found on the website.
- See you in Manahawkin!

A Request to Our Crafters

Crafters, please take special note: During the State Convention, we would like to demonstrate another way that we are *Raising Expectations*. The Board of the NFBNJ is asking you, our crafters, to consider the following:

- Providing a homemade piece of your art or craft for display at the State Convention. This could be, for example, ceramics, pottery, paintings,

professional photographs, wood making, knitting, leather works – whatever your craft is.

- Providing a description of the piece in both Braille and print, hopefully on the same page.
- Considering donating the piece so that it can be used as an auction item.
- Please address any questions to Joe Ruffalo at nfbnj1@verizon.net or call 973-743 -0075.

Upcoming Important Dates

October: Meet The Blind Month, various activities sponsored by our chapters

October 29: Taste of Technology, Montclair State University, sponsored by the DeafBlind Community Access Network of New Jersey and Sprint

November 1: National scholarship applications available

November 10 – 13: NFBNJ's 40th State Convention, *Raising Expectations*

December: Numerous holiday events sponsored by our chapters

January 7, 2017: After the Holidays party (see the flyer in this issue)

January: Annual Washington Seminar

We hope that you find this issue of *The Sounding Board* inspiring and motivating. You'll read about the importance of continuing to educate ourselves so that we all can continue to educate the public on the truth about blindness, and the hopes and determination that can transform our dreams into reality. You'll also read about our two national scholarship winners, the lives of Tom Ferry and Tara Carty, the determination to think "outside the box," and the efforts to challenge ourselves to define a goal and to conquer our fears. Our new website is also highlighted. Special thanks to Brian Mackey, webmaster, and the committee that provided feedback during the reconstruction. We encourage you to share this issue with your friends, family, teachers, professionals in the social services fields and everyone you know who is interested in furthering our mission.

In closing, I want to thank all who provide their time, effort and interest in changing what it means to be blind. Thank you for all the good work you have done, are doing and continue to do to live the life you want. *Let's Go And Build The Federation!*

With best wishes,
Joe Ruffalo, President

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:**ROAD TRIP SERVES AS REMINDER THAT EDUCATING THE PUBLIC NEVER ENDS****By Katherine Gabry**

My son and I have always taken road trips. My fondness for this regular summer activity stems from my childhood, when my parents would pack us all into the pink Rambler station wagon and take off for parts unknown - quite literally, since my father never made reservations. Good thing we could pitch the tent almost anywhere.

I started the road trip tradition with my son Jon when he was about 7, and I have a nostalgic spot in my heart for all the time we've spent together in the car over the past 20 years. This year, we drove 3,343 miles and through 10 states. We took in the International DeafBlind Expo in Orlando, as well as a beach vacation on the Gulf Coast, and spent time with a friend, who, like my son, is DeafBlind.

Our first destination on this mega road trip was our friend's place in Atlanta. Heading south from New Jersey, we made a pit stop on Route 95, north of Richmond. Inside the facility, I spotted a woman waving her arms and calling, "Ma'am! Ma'am! Here! This way!"

When I realized she was talking to *me*, Jon and I headed her way. Jon was using his white cane and had a light touch on my arm. As we got closer to her, she opened a locked door to a spanking bright and sparkling clean restroom. As any traveler can relate, I was close to nirvana, but Jon understood what she was getting at immediately and signed, "I'll use the men's restroom."

"She just unlocked it for us, and it's CLEAN!" I signed back.

He sighed, gave a little hesitation, and then grudgingly went through the door. She continued to hold it open.

"Go on in," the woman said to me.

Huh?

"He knows how to use the bathroom himself," I said, probably more than a little bit defensively.

Obviously doubting the capabilities of my son, she said, "You can help him."

And with that, once again, I realized we were in a position to educate well-meaning members of the hearing and sighted community: YES, someone who is DeafBlind is able to take care of his personal needs by himself.

I understand that people who are not exposed to different abilities don't get it, and I realize that I have a responsibility to educate them. Over 27 years, I've accepted this role, but for some reason, on this trip, the evidence for more education – much more than I, alone, can provide – was screaming out to me almost everywhere:

- At every hotel, the staff immediately assumed we needed wheelchair accessibility. True, we were using sign language, but no one was using a wheelchair.
- My son and our friend were trying on clothes in a department store when a salesperson asked if I wanted to go into the dressing room with them and help.
- Restaurant staff consistently asked *me* if Jon or our friend wanted a drink refill or dessert.
- At the pool, folks typically commented, “Oh, he can swim?” Yes, Jon learned at age 2, and is like a fish in water.
- I lost count of the number of rest areas where I would show Jon where both the men’s and ladies’ restrooms were, we’d make a plan on where to meet when finished, and someone would approach me and ask if Jon needed help. Sometimes this was just creepy, and if I saw the person follow him, I’d forego my own needs and stand, waiting for him, outside the men’s room.
- More countless times, people would comment on how handsome our friend’s service dog is. “Hold on a sec, and I’ll tell him,” I’d say, and then they’d be astonished that we could communicate using sign language. When my friend would respond by speaking with his voice, they would typically smile in amazement, remark *Wow!* and then I would facilitate a very pleasant conversation.
- A group of us were out to dinner one night, and when my friend asked why he wasn’t charged for his dessert, the waitress replied that the dessert came with the meal; hmm only HIS meal. And on the last night of our travels, Jon could have gotten a free meal, if not for my asking the waitress to accurately list what we ordered.

As described by these vignettes, so much educating still needs to be done. With that goal in mind, I’d like to invite you to join me in making October – Blindness Awareness Month – the perfect time for us collectively to make the effort to enlighten the larger community about the capabilities of blind and DeafBlind persons. Certainly there’s humor in my stories, but there’s also an opportunity at every encounter. Without a doubt, people who are blind or DeafBlind need to take the lead in this educational effort, but I also believe that, as family members, friends, co-workers, interpreters and SSPs (support service providers for DeafBlind), there’s a place for us, as well. Perhaps it’s communication facilitation, stepping in with an understanding explanation, or just patience and a genuine, open smile, and the realization that the general public may have never before met a person who is blind or DeafBlind, and the concepts of pride and independence just blow their minds. I hope that you’ll take me up on my invitation. The road may be long and slow, but if each of us makes the choice to speak up, I’m confident of a positive outcome. We will change perceptions and expectations.

**PLEASE CONSIDER THIS AS WE CELEBRATE
BLINDNESS AWARENESS MONTH & DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT MONTH
Submitted by Pam Gaston**

Throughout history, people with disabilities have been abandoned at birth, banished from society, used as court jesters, drowned and burned during The Inquisition, gassed in Nazi Germany, and still continue to be segregated, institutionalized, tortured, abused, exploited, euthanized and murdered all around the world.

Now, here in the United States of America, people with disabilities are taking their rightful place as fully contributing citizens. The danger is that we will respond with remediation and benevolence, rather than equity and respect. And so, we offer you:

A CREDO FOR SUPPORT

By Norman Kunc and Emma VanderKliff

Do not see my disability as the problem.

Recognize that my disability is an attribute.

Do not see my disability as a deficit.

It is you who see me as helpless or as invalid.

Do not try to fix me because I am not broken. I don't need your pity.

With equal opportunities, I can make my contribution to the community in my own way.

Do not help me, even if it does make you feel good.

Ask me if I need your help. Let me show you how you can best assist me.

Do not admire me. A desire to live a full life does not warrant adoration.

Respect me, for respect presumes equity.

Do not think of me as a charity case.

Be my ally against those who exploit me by collecting money for their own gratification.

Do not tell, correct and lead. Listen, support and follow.

Do Not work on me. Work with me.

Do not see me as your client. I am your fellow citizen.

See me as your neighbor. Remember, none of us can be completely self-sufficient.

Do not try to change me, you have no right.

Help me learn what I want and need to know.

Do not hide your uncertainty behind “professional” distance.

Be a person who listens, and does not take my struggle away from me by trying to make it all better.

Do not use theories and strategies on me.

Be with me. And when we struggle with each other, let that give rise to self-reflection.

Do not try to control me. I have a right to my power as a person.

What you call non-compliance or manipulation may actually be the only way I can exert some control over my life.

Do not speak for me. I have a voice.

Be still and listen. Like you, I have the right to express my thoughts, issues and my individuality

Do not teach or expect me to be obedient, submissive and polite.

I need to feel entitled to say No if I am to protect myself.

Do not try to be my friend. I deserve more than that.

Get to know me. We may become friends.

Do not try to modify my behavior to suit your needs. I am different, not deviant.

What you define as odd may be my attempt to live a full and productive life in the only way I can.

LOWVIZ NAVIGATION APP TO BE AVAILABLE AT STATE CONVENTION

The National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey is pleased to announce that we will be featuring LowViz Guide, a new indoor navigation app for the blind and low vision community, at our State Convention. The app was developed in 2015 as a free community service by Macular Degeneration Support. Since then, it's been provided at more than a dozen state and national conventions. The app is available for use on the iPad and iPhone.

At the State Convention, LowViz will provide step-by-step user instructions in large print, audio and Braille, and a representative will be on site to offer personal support in using the app. For more information about LowViz Guide, including an audio-visual demonstration, testimonials and media broadcasts, go to <http://www.mdsupport.org/audioguide>.

NATIONAL CONVENTION REFLECTIONS FROM NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS DEANNA GRECO & LAURA ETORI

DEANNA GRECO just started her freshman year at *The Catholic University of America*. She is a biology premedical student. Here is her story:

Imagine a place where there are 2,500 people using white canes and guide dogs, a place where the sighted person in the room is in the minority. A place where you feel accepted, loved and supported. I found this place at the National Federation of the Blind's National Convention. I was fortunate enough to be one of the NFB's 2016 Scholarship Winners.

My past year has been similar to that of other students who are in the process of transitioning from high school to college. By January 2016, I was exhausted from writing countless college application essays, going to college interviews and working on maintaining my grade point average (4.5 GPA). Just like everyone else, I realized that college would be expensive, and therefore, I decided to apply for scholarships. While looking online, I came across the NFB's scholarship program. From the time I was diagnosed with cone rod dystrophy at age 8, my mother always encouraged me to join the NFB. We attended a few meetings with the New Jersey chapter, but I never had the desire to be an active member. I didn't think that I needed the NFB. I honestly did not consider myself a part of the blind community. However, I decided that since I liked a challenge, I would apply for the NFB scholarship.

In early May, I received a call from one of the scholarship committee members informing me that I was a scholarship finalist. During this conversation, I learned that I would be required to go to the NFB National Convention, and this filled me with both excitement and nervousness.

I wasn't anxious about meeting new people; I enjoy that. However, I never traveled out of state. The idea of getting on a plane and finding transportation to the hotel intimidated me. However, there are some things in life you have to do, and I knew that independent travel was one of those things. When I stepped into the hotel lobby, I became filled with a sense of accomplishment and relief. As I stood there, taking it all in, I heard the tap tap tap of hundreds of white canes. At first, this was extremely overwhelming. Yet, when I returned home a week later, it was strange not hearing all those canes. Looking back, I know that winning the scholarship was a blessing in disguise because it led me to this outstanding group of people.

Convention was a blast! From the moment I entered the hotel, to the second I left, I was participating in exhilarating activities. Regardless of whether I was at General Session or out to lunch with one of my mentors, I was having a delightful time. I knew that successful blind people existed, but I never witnessed such a large

gathering of blind people in my life. The members of the NFB are determined, intelligent and, most importantly, compassionate. Before convention, I was unaware of the inequality that the blind community faces in all aspects of life. The fact that people are getting paid less simply because they are blind, or having their children taken away because close-minded individuals say, "How could blind people raise children?" is absurd. These issues need to be eradicated, and there is no doubt in my mind that the NFB will do exactly that.

This fall, I will be starting at The Catholic University of America as a biology premedical student. Having low vision, I know that I will encounter hurdles caused by my lack of vision in laboratory settings. Prior to convention, I did not know any blind people employed in the science fields that I could turn to when I face sight-related difficulties. This changed when I attended the Science and Engineering Division meeting at the National Convention. At this gathering, I met several blind people involved in fields such as chemistry and biology. I gained priceless knowledge about the accommodations that could help me achieve success at Catholic University. I also formed friendships that will last a lifetime. I do not use the word friendship lightly. There is a reason I did not use the word "networking." The reason is that the people I met at convention are not business contacts, but rather they are family members that I know will always have my back.

Before I knew it, it was the last night of convention. I was sitting at the banquet surrounded by my new family. Between listening to President Riccobono's compelling speech and laughing with the members of the New Jersey affiliate at my table, the four-hour banquet flew by. As the night came to a close, it was time for the scholarship ceremony. All of the scholarship winners received a beautiful print/braille plaque, a certificate for a KNFB Reader App, and a \$1,000 grant from Dr. Kurzweil. We also received a ChromeBook and \$1,000 from Google, and a certificate for an accessible science tool known as Talking Lab Quest from Independence Science. In addition to the generous awards listed above, each winner received varying scholarship awards. I received a \$3,000 scholarship. I sincerely appreciate every award that I received that night. Yet, I would not be doing any justice to myself or the NFB if I did not share which award is closest to my heart. The special award that I cherish is my Federation family. So regardless of whether you are a blind individual looking for blind friends or a sighted parent searching for information on how to get the necessary accommodations for your blind child, join the NFB. I assure you that the National Federation of the Blind will embrace you with open arms, you will not be disappointed, nor will you ever feel alone.

LAURA ETORI is attending Rutgers University and pursuing degrees in both actuarial science and finance. Here is her story:

I love swimming, cooking and baking. I love my family; they are my biggest fans. I love being happy and most of all, I love the Lord and I am grateful to Him for everything in my life.

I am a Kenyan currently living and studying in New Jersey. I lost my sight four years ago due to a secondary effect of idiopathic intracranial hypertension.

I came to New Jersey for school. On the day of my arrival, someone stepped on my white cane and broke it. Soon after, at my aunt's house, my cousin and I immediately investigated where to get a white cane. The first thing that popped up was "get a free white cane from the NFB." Well, who doesn't like free things, so I ordered one. My cane arrived soon, and I was back in business. A week later I received voicemail from NFBNJ Northeast Chapter member Alwin Glasgow asking how I liked the cane. In a later call, he told me all about NFB. Having read about NFB years ago, I always wondered if such an organization could be real. Alwin told me that, if needed, he would help me the best he could. We continued to correspond, and this past March I attended my first Northeast Chapter meeting. Then I applied for the scholarship, beating the deadline by a few days, and soon found myself in Florida for the convention.

From the age of 12, I have always wanted to become an actuary, leading people to ask whether I loved math. Well, it's not about loving math; it's about having passion for what I love and for what I want to become. And, yes I love math. It's all about commitment and having a vision.

Then I had a familiar feeling, like the one I had when I lost my sight, the same feeling I had when I left Kenya, and the same feeling I got when I realized I was a national scholarship finalist: Uncertainty, along with determination that there is something I am meant to do. On July 6, the convention was over, and all I could remember was the last night's ringing speech by President Riccobono about fear. The voice in my head told me, "Fear will hold you back." So I thought of the many things I had feared and how much I feared uncertainty, which was ironic since my life was filled with uncertainties. Four years ago I had not planned to be in Florida at that day and time; I certainly had never thought I would ever be blind. But now that life had developed that way, it surely was the best thing to ever happen to me.

Walking into the convention resort proved a big eye-opener. Where in the world would I ever have had the chance to be welcomed by the noise of a swarm of bees. Oh boy! Was I in for a surprise. It wasn't actually bees, but rather the noise of thousands of white canes rolling or tapping the tiled floor of the hotel. I felt a bit

flustered. This was my first time I had been around so many blind and visually impaired people, and I had mixed feelings.

As for orientation to the hotel, let's just say that experience is the best teacher. I read and re-read the text description of the hotel and nothing stuck in my mind. I eventually learned my way around. I met so many people from different walks of life and with different stories. The other scholarship finalists were so impressive. They were happy and classy people. They had done and were doing really amazing things. I was most grateful for my mentors. From Sharon Maneki I learned that one must have a plan of action: "You cannot just be flowing with what everyone is doing; have your own goals and have a plan of action." Ever Lee Hairston taught me how to be a believer: "If you decide to do or get something, believe in yourself and go for it." John Halverson counseled that with time we accrue experience and get good at what we do; we only have to persist and be consistent. Cassie McKinney taught me the virtue of humility. At the Imagination Fund table, I watched her listen to and assist every single person who came to her, even if they just wanted to talk. She was happy and graceful throughout. Cindy Bennett taught me to always be at the top of my game: "Be your best and be the best. Know what you need to know and know even a little bit more and never fear to look good and fabulous; just be humble about it and keep it real." Finally, Brian Miller taught me it's never bad to know something extra. It's good to be a diversified person and to improve yourself with different kinds of knowledge and to stay happy.

I thought about all these things and pondered how to use these insights to encourage change in people's lives. Honestly, I felt a bit panicky, but I remembered that fear will stop me. I decided to rethink the concept of bravery. I realized it meant accepting people's differences and individual challenges. Historically, I had felt like I did not want to experience anything different and that I had experienced enough. Now I realized I needed to grow in order to effect change and to have an impact on people's lives. I do not know how I will help others; I guess that is one of my many challenges to figure out as I determine what I am really good at and how best to help others develop their own positive changes.

Now, each time I meet someone and am asked, "How did you find convention?" I talk about the importance of continuing to learn, because I believe that was the whole point of my attending the NFB 2016 convention. I hope we can all embrace change and let ourselves feel the shifting and evolving of our mindsets and lives.

BELLS RING FOR THE THIRD TIME

By Mary Jo Partyka

New Jersey's BELL (Braille Enrichment through Literacy and Learning) program was held July 11 - July 22, 2016 once again at the Puerto Rican Association for Human Development (PRAHD) in Perth Amboy. The following six students attended this year's program: Ethan Rieger (aged 9, grade 4, Toms River), Ryan Abbott (aged 8, grade 3, Piscataway), Ghedalia Goldman (aged 7, grade 3, Teaneck), Schmucl Bodek (aged 9, grade 4, Monsey, NY), Nate Stephens (aged 7, grade 1, Ridgewood) and Aaditya Walavalkar (aged 8, grade 3, Edison).

The person who spent the greatest amount of time planning before and during this year's program was Barbara Shalit (a teacher of the visually impaired formerly employed by the New Jersey Commission for the Blind), who managed the scheduling and planning of lessons for each child, organized and ordered needed materials and supplies, set up field trips, maintained ongoing communications with the children's parents and teachers of the visually impaired, supervised the performance of the volunteers, and held the program together. Other members of the BELL team included: Joe Ruffalo, president of the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey; Jerilyn Higgins, instructor of activities of daily living; Holly Miller, a member of Parents of Blind Children-NJ; and Mary Jo Partyka, coordinator of the BELL program and president of the New Jersey Association to Promote Braille.

As part of his employment experience with the EDGE (Employment, Development, Guidance and Engagement) program, high school student Hank Miller supervised the children in the gym and built a runner where they could practice walking correctly with their canes. Hank also assisted the children in using the Cosmo E-Braille and kept them in line.

A unique feature of the BELL program is the inclusion of blind and sighted volunteers who serve as mentors and role models for the students. The volunteers in this year's program included: Peggy Kane, Barbara Grames, Linda Melendez, Rosa Santiago, Christina Brino, Rebecca Bryant, Andrew Chin, Hannah Canuto and Quoc Anh Tren.

The major goals of BELL are to teach the students Braille and daily living skills such as cutting, spreading and pouring liquids. In addition, the children experienced some new things this year. As a group and with each child contributing at least one sentence, we dictated a story about a little girl who wouldn't use her long white cane. An adult Brailled the story, a blind child read it back, and this led to a discussion about cane use, along with insights about how the children regarded canes.

The BELL team also wanted to provide exposure to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) concepts. To support this goal, we asked a retired science professor to speak to the children about electricity. He provided a home-made circuit board for each child and taught them about the conduction of electricity through a variety of materials, such as wood and metal. We also engaged the services of an organization called Bricks4Kidz, which teaches STEM concepts by providing the children with LEGO® blocks so that they can build a variety of models. The children built models of a windmill, a paper crinkler and a tornado, and were greatly interested in the science behind windmills and tornados. The facilitator, who had never worked with blind children before, seemed very comfortable with the children, and it was an enjoyable experience for everyone.

The BELL students met with some of the students from PRAHD's summer program and introduced them to the Braille writer and showed them how it works. Each BELL student wrote the name of a PRAHD student on an index card, which they could take home and show their families.

As you can see from this article, the BELL program is a great resource for the children. As a team, we were able to see the children grow from the beginning to the end of the program, and they also learned to work with each other. However, it takes time, resources, commitment and money to make this program work. The BELL team is extremely grateful for the contributions we received from friends, families, and members of our chapters and divisions within the New Jersey affiliate. We would also like to express special thanks to Ava's Voice (www.avasvoice.org) for their generous donation. Ava's Voice provides financial assistance and support to families affected by hearing and/or vision loss, works to advance the understanding of hearing and vision loss by funding research, and provides resources to educate the public about hearing and vision loss. Thanks also go to the Chester, Bloomfield and West Orange Lions clubs, and to Mrs. Perez for their donations. Without this generosity, BELL would not be possible, and the children would be the ones who miss out on some valuable learning.

We would like to thank our teacher, Barbara Shalit, who has worked with us and taught the students for the past three years. We couldn't have done this program without her. Although she is stepping down from her role as teacher, she will continue to be a resource to our new teacher, Barbara Games, who will lead the program next year. Mrs. Games works for the Morris Plains Board of Education and has worked with a blind student for 14 years; she is also a certified Braille transcriber. We welcome her to our team.

For more information about the BELL program, please visit our website at www.nfbnj.org or the national BELL website at www.nfb.org/bell-academy.

WINNING ISN'T EVERYTHING

By Staci Mannella

Editor's Note: *New Jersey native Staci Mannella is a sophomore at Dartmouth College and planning a career as a large-animal veterinarian. She is also a Paralympic skier and an accomplished equestrian; she rides for Dartmouth's equestrian team. Staci is visually impaired. In this article, she reveals her perspective on being a Paralympic athlete.*

With the Olympics coming to a close, it's hard for me not to think about how the athletes are feeling now that it's time to come home. I recently read an article (*The Dark Side of Going for Gold* at theatlantic.com) that talks about life for athletes and the challenges they face in building a new identity once the games are over.

Immediately following my return to school after competing in the 2014 Sochi Paralympic Games, I vividly remember one of my high school teachers talking with me about my experiences and asking me how I felt about "having peaked before leaving high school." I know she didn't mean any harm, but to be honest, at the time, this comment was kind of a slap in the face. I had just been accepted at Dartmouth, and I was ready for the next chapter of my life to be just as exciting as the last one.

Prepping for the Olympic or Paralympic games is a long, uphill battle, and it's incredibly easy to become hyper focused. Once the games are over, it's understandable that many athletes find it challenging to create an identity for themselves that doesn't center on their athletic careers. Luckily for me, starting school at Dartmouth just months after competing in my first Paralympics forced me to build my identity around things other than skiing. In some ways this realization was actually a little refreshing. For the first time in my life, I wasn't just the skier who always seemed to miss school. My peers got to know me because of the classes I was taking, the extracurricular activities I was involved in, and probably because I'm the only legally blind student at Dartmouth.

Shortly after coming to Dartmouth, I decided I wanted to continue competing. This decision forced me to reestablish myself as an elite athlete while still carefully balancing my life as a full-time Dartmouth student. I often feel like I'm living two completely separate lives, and I find myself having to choose between one and the other. I chose to come to Dartmouth because I felt as though the D-plan – where students can take off from school at various points throughout the year – would be a great opportunity to allow me to commit 100% to skiing over the winter and 100% to school the rest of the time. Every athlete knows that there is always more work to be done, and unfortunately every Ivy League pre-med student also knows the same. When is it appropriate to spend the extra hour in the gym instead of studying for my

organic chemistry final? It is impossible to prioritize one of my two completely separate lives over the other.

Like any athlete, the ultimate goal is to be the best in the world. Every day I try to do everything I possibly can to make that a realistic goal. However, I also know that I cannot ski race forever. Sometimes I find it disappointing that I can't fully commit to my ski career like most of the athletes I am competing against, and I have to remind myself of the bigger picture. It's easy to get caught up in that one big moment and blame yourself for things that might have gone differently.

For me, my first Paralympics made me realize that skiing is so much more than the medals I win. In athletics, competition tends to be presented as a single destination. It is very easy to forget that what's truly important are the obstacles that lead up to that destination, and how those experiences play a role in shaping an athlete's character. Skiing has shaped my character in ways that are reflected in all aspects of my life. I have learned to be independent, manage my time well, forgive myself when I fall short of my own expectations, and, above all, strive to be better than I was yesterday.

It is so important for athletes to enjoy their moment and to take in everything that competing at an elite level has to offer. However, it is arguably more important for athletes to understand that those moments are fleeting. Win or lose, medals are forgotten, but acting honorably at times when it would be easy to get caught in the hyper-competitive nature that every world class athlete shares is what really separates respectable athletes from respectable people.

Every athlete is a person first. There are core character traits that come along with being an elite athlete, and those traits are evident in all aspects of an athlete's life, even after they are done competing. Character is a culmination of all of someone's life experiences both on and off the playing field. When I compete in the next Paralympics in 2018, I will not be the exact same "me" who competed in the 2014 Paralympic Games, but I will be the best "me" that I can be in that given moment. And as for peaking, I'm usually pretty comfortable hurling myself downhill, but for some reason I kind of feel like it's only up from here.

NFBNJ WEBSITE DEMOLITION & RECONSTRUCTION

By Brian Mackey

Editor's Note: *Brian is an active member of the NFBNJ, serving as treasurer and webmaster for the state affiliate, secretary/treasurer for the At Large Chapter, secretary of the Garden State Chapter, and chair of New Jersey's Pre-Authorized Contribution (PAC) Plan, among others. Brian is the owner of Mackey Enterprises, LLC which assists individuals and businesses in data entry and bookkeeping projects. In his spare time, Brian enjoys working out at the gym and playing golf.*

You Want Me to Do What? After learning that our current webmaster, Kevin Sisco, would be stepping down, Joe Ruffalo asked me to revamp the NFBNJ website and serve as the new affiliate webmaster. A Website Review Committee was assembled: Jane Degenshein, Linda DeBerardinis, Mary Fernandez, Ryan Stevens, Rick Fox, Carol Castellano, Kathy Gabry and our five affiliate board officers.

Research and Cleaning Up The first challenge was finding a web host. David Andrews, from the NFB Webmasters Committee, revealed that the web server NFBNet.org would be able to host the affiliate website for **FREE**, and that this server supported the publishing program I planned to use. With Kevin's backup files, I removed outdated information, made corrections and added lots of new material.

Trial Runs and Revisions Revisions flew back and forth as the Website Review Committee did their work. After I made the first set of revisions, I asked for more review, and oh! Wait! Joe had new material for additional pages! Write, resubmit and wait for feedback. Our original transition date of May 2 was moved to June, and the official switch to NFBNet occurred on June 13. WOO HOO!

Our goal was to have the website up prior to the national convention, but that deadline caused us to temporarily limit the content to our highest priority pages: Home, Chapters & Divisions, Projects & Programs, State Convention, *The Sounding Board* and our newly created BELL Academy page. Miraculously, our NFBNJ website was ready for action a couple of days before the 2016 National Convention.

Yay, Success! This was definitely a team effort. Thank you to all the Website Review Committee members. Their eyes and reviews caught the things I missed. Thank you to all the affiliate members for their compliments on our new website.

I hope you will enjoy the new website design (www.nfbnj.org). Remember that this is YOUR website – please contribute! Visit and review it. Inform either Joe Ruffalo at nfbnj1@verizon.net or me at bmackey88@gmail.com of possible additions or changes. We want to add pictures and videos of our members in action. We want our website visitors to see that we are living the life we want.

RUNNER REFUSES TO BE HELD BACK BY BLINDNESS

By Bob Both

Editor's Note: *Linda is a member of the Central Jersey and At Large Chapters, as well as the Senior and Technology Divisions. This article is reprinted with permission from [examiner.com](http://www.examiner.com). The original article – <http://www.examiner.com/article/runner-refuses-to-be-held-back-by-blindness> – was published March 20, 2016.*



Linda Melendez of Keyport, NJ may not win any races, she may not be the fastest runner, but she is a true winner. Linda, you see, is legally blind, and she does not let that disability slow her down. Linda started running about a year ago. Linda lost 125 pounds from November 2013 to February 2014. She was committed to not gaining back any of her lost weight, so she decided to get active. Linda signed up for a Beginner's Running Class at RunCollege and was immediately hooked on running as a way to maintain her fitness and her weight.

After the six-week class, she did her home town Keyport 5K and did the race in 34 minutes. She continued to run and now has her sights set on the Asbury Park Half Marathon on April 16, 2016. She is again training with a group of runners under the tutelage of coaches at RunCollege to include Karen Charles of Wall Township and Tyler King of Howell. She is well on her way already having completed a 10-mile training run. According to Linda, "Since losing all this weight and keeping it off, I have become a participant in my life instead of a spectator." She made a bucket list for 2016 which included running three half marathons in 2016. She has the ultimate goal of running a full 26.2 mile marathon in the near future.

Running is a challenge, but she still loves it. Being legally blind and an asthmatic presents obstacles which many of us don't even think of. Linda, when she was younger, had bleeding in the eyes which caused her to lose central detailed vision. It's a form of macular degeneration. One of the challenges she faces is not being able to tell what is directly in front of her. For example, curbs, cracks, obstacles and the things we take for granted are major challenges. She does not know when to turn left or right until she is almost on top of the turn. Sometimes she has sheer panic because she is moving faster than what her limited vision can process. As an asthmatic, the first half-mile of every run can be challenging until she can get her breathing rhythm.

Linda refuses to be held back by her blindness. She says she “wants to live the life I want and not let my limited vision decide what life I should live.” Her motivation is to remind herself how she feels at the end of each run. She feels accomplished and empowered. Her inspiration for running is her son. He was her motivation to lose 125 pounds and continues to be her motivation and inspiration in life. Linda started the journey and her new lifestyle after the death of her mom while she was in the deepest darkest place she could ever possibly be. The running has helped her tremendously in overcoming that darkness.

Linda makes time to get outside and run at least three times a week and in bad weather runs on a treadmill at a local health club. She prefers running outdoors. She enjoys company on the run and manages to make her way to local group runs by getting a ride from friends or taking public transportation. She regularly takes the train to Asbury Park for group runs there.

According to Linda, “I would be going from being morbidly obese to being a marathon runner in all smiles.” Good luck to Linda in running her first half marathon in Asbury Park on April, 16, 2016. Look for her out there. She can be easily spotted generally wearing a bright neon yellow vest.

GREENDROP DONATION LOCATION ADDED IN SPRINGFIELD

By Samantha Kresz, Community Marketing Coordinator, GreenDrop

In addition to free home pickup service, GreenDrop donors in the Garden State now have the option of donating their gently used clothing and household goods at three safe, drive-up donation centers, the newest being in Springfield. When you’re ready to donate, call GreenDrop for a home pickup or bring your items to one of these locations where an attendant will unload your car and provide a tax receipt from the NFB:

Cherry Hill: 1060 Maple Ave. Cherry Hill, NJ 08002

Metuchen: 359 Amboy Ave. Metuchen, NJ 08840

Springfield: 831 South Springfield Ave. Springfield, NJ 07081

GreenDrop is pleased to help turn your donations into cash resources to support the NFB’s extraordinary initiatives that shatter the misconceptions about blindness. GreenDrop handles all the logistics so your donation experience is fast and easy. All you have to do is label your bags and boxes with “NFB” (for the National Federation of the Blind) and the organization will receive credit for your donations!

To locate a site near you or to schedule a home pickup call 1-888-944-DROP or visit www.gogreendrop.com. The website lists all the accepted and unaccepted items.

LOCAL AUTHOR & NFB MEMBER GIVES HALF BOOK PROCEEDS TO NFB**By Ed Lataro**

Editor's Note: *Ed is a member of the Central Jersey Chapter of the NFB where he has volunteered for the LEAD and BELL programs, often serving as a driver, set-up person and mobility guide. He was employed as a vocational rehabilitation counselor at the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. In addition to this book, Ed has written several plays which have been produced in New York City.*

I've written a fantasy eBook titled *In the Guise of a Child*. The book puts you on a cosmic roller coaster where Roger Sanders travels back in time to save his soul mate's life. His plan is complicated when he becomes trapped in the body of a 7-year-old. If he doesn't rescue his soul mate in 90 days, he will lose any hope of becoming an adult again. Half of the money raised from the sale of the book will go to the NFB. The book is available on barnesandnobles.com, amazon.com and kobo.com.

BOOK REVIEW: BLIND AMBITION, BY EVER LEE HAIRSTON**By Katherine Gabry**

I ran into former New Jersey resident Ever Lee Hairston at the NFB of Alabama's State Convention last spring, and she mentioned her new book *Blind Ambition – One Woman's Journey to Greatness Despite Her Blindness*. Whenever I've heard Ever Lee speak, I been moved by her abilities as a witty wordsmith, as well as her sincerity, strength of character and clever sense of humor. I couldn't wait to read her book, and I wasn't disappointed. As I sat on the beach reading it this summer, I laughed, cried, examined my own tenets and even relived some of my own heartbreaks.

Born on a plantation in North Carolina where her parents were sharecroppers, Ever Lee was one of seven children, two of whom had Retinitis Pigmentosa. She was an active and involved youngster, curious about the bigger world beyond the plantation where she grew up. In the 1960s, she joined the civil rights movement, standing behind Martin Luther King Jr and experiencing life lessons that surely influenced her character, integrity, ambitions and faith in herself.

Throughout her life, despite hard times, disappointments and bad luck, Ever Lee never gave up. Her story is not about the limits of being blind, but rather the celebration of believing in yourself, keeping your goals in mind and following your dreams. Read the book and you'll understand why this woman is an inspiration to all.

Blind Ambition is available at amazon.com in paperback and Kindle.

REMEMBERING TARA

By Dan Facchini

Editor's Note: *It is with much sadness that we report the untimely death of Tara Carty on July 11, 2016. An NFB national and state scholarship winner, Tara was an active member of the NFBNJ. Tara was an inspiration to all who knew her. She will be missed. The following two articles tell of Tara's many challenges, her indomitable spirit, her life philosophy and her kindness.*

A Note from the Author: *My wife Tara was like any other woman of the world: She loved to go shopping and get her nails done, and she enjoyed going to the malls with her grandmother. Her home was very important to her. She loved to decorate for the holidays, especially Christmas, and one of her favorite things to do was to have friends and family over for holidays, backyard parties and just having a good time. One of Tara's lifelong dreams was to complete college after leaving Boston College in her second semester when she was diagnosed with renal failure as a complication of diabetes. This dream came true when she graduated from Caldwell College in 2013 with a 4.0 GPA. Another of Tara's dreams was to go to Disneyworld as an adult. This dream came true in 2016. We went to the National Convention, and we also went to Disney. Like they always say, "All your dreams come true in Disney." This year's convention will be the most memorable for me because another of Tara's dreams came true. I felt her life was complete, and she was finally happy and at peace.*

My introduction to the NFB dates back about 20 years. That was my first state convention, and it was there and then that I was introduced to a whole new world. I no longer felt I was powerless against this blindness. Ever since that day, the NFB has changed my way of thinking about most everything. I was no longer an angry man with no direction. It led me to a good job, and I again had purpose. I became a member, and then became a chapter president, and now I sit on the board of the NFBNJ. I share with others that being blind doesn't mean we have to stop doing the things we love. We can do anything if we put our minds to it. A blind person can do just fine in a sighted world. Independence and success are ours for the taking.

The biggest change in my life came in November of 2009, at our State Convention. It was there that I met the most amazing young lady, Tara Carty. Tara was a national and state scholarship winner that year. So, on Friday, November 6, 2009, in Clark, New Jersey, at the state dinner, things changed in my life forever. After I heard Tara speak, I just knew I had to meet her and get to know more about her.

Now here was a person who had just recently lost her sight, and had other major health issues due to diabetes, but she still had the most amazing outlook on life. You

could tell whenever Tara spoke that she had the biggest smile on her face, and she was glowing. Between her smile and her attitude, she would just light up the room, and that very night, she lit up my heart as well. I remember going up to her to introduce myself, and I was so nervous. That night we just talked and got to know more about one another, and the more she spoke, the more I fell in love.

For those members throughout the state who thought they knew me and thought I was a little rough around the edges and not the one for Tara because we came from two different sides of the tracks: I want you to know you had nothing to worry about. Tara saw me for who I really was.

Tara was one of the few people I ever met who saw with her heart and not with her eyes. She could talk to a person and listen to them and decide what kind of a person they really were.

In Tara's scholarship application, she wrote that she sees with her heart, and she sees people for their personalities, not for what they look like. Well, it was a good thing for me that she did not judge me by what I looked like!

That year at the State Convention, we had a "Kiss the Frog" fundraiser. It was between Joe Ruffalo and me, and at the last minute Tara took her last 10 dollars and put it on Joe. She said she did not want me kissing anyone else but her. Well truth be told, neither did I!

As two blind people, we were able to teach one another so many things. I can honestly say that Tara made me a better person and taught me how to experience life more fully.

There were so many things we did in the short time we had together, and when I was with her, I was never afraid to do anything. I don't think I could have learned or done more in a lifetime with anyone else. We enjoyed traveling. Of course, we went to NFB National Conventions, and we also went to Saint Croix on a wonderful vacation, and there were so many weekend getaways for when we just wanted to be alone and forget about everything else in the world.

The happiest day of my life was when I took her hand at our fairy tale wedding, and we vowed to spend each and every day together, from that day forward, for as long as we lived.

The reason I'm sharing the story of my life with Tara is because I think sometimes people think of the NFB as a place only for business, and to get things done in the state, or in Washington on behalf of the blind and their issues. That is part of what they do, and thank God for how well they do it, but it isn't the only thing the NFB does.

The NFB is a place where people come as strangers who share a disability, but leave as part of a family that will always be there, offering support and advice. Personally, emotionally, or yes, the practical necessities, too.

So I will leave you with this testimony: I went from being a rough, tough exterior guy, mad at the universe for taking my sight, to a successful businessman in the Blind Merchants Division of the NFB. This enabled me to buy a perfect home for my lovely Tara, support the both of us in a way I could not have done if the NFB wasn't there to guide me, but more than even that, it gave me a home and a family in the organization. These folks were there the day I met my Tara, and they were there holding me up the day I had to say my goodbyes to her.

My life is richer because of Tara, along with the list of friends and fellow Federationists that fill my life. Those people are the greatest gift of all.

A friend shared this quote with me, and I'd like to end with it, since it sort of says what I've been trying to convey about the less discussed side of the NFB: *"The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned."* - Maya Angelou

TARA CARTY

By Ed Sroczyński, Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, NJ CBVI

A Note from the Author: *This morning I learned of the passing of Tara Carty. I began working with Tara in 2006, and I immediately recognize her potential to transform her life. Tara and I spoke recently, and I was moved by not only the strides she had made, but also how her confidence and personality were transformed. I am equally moved by her passing and further inspired to forge on to do the good work for those served by CBVI. I wrote the following success story about Tara which was part of the CBVI Annual Report.*

At age 5, Tara Carty was diagnosed with diabetes which was precipitated by a chicken pox virus that infected her pancreas. Her diabetic condition eventually resulted in total blindness, kidney failure and a below-the-right-knee amputation.

Tara first applied for CBVI services in the fall of 2006. At that time, she lived in a small house in Highland Lakes with her mother and aunt. When the CBVI vocational rehabilitation counselor arrived, there were broken concrete steps, no neighborhood sidewalks and no access to public transportation. These conditions, coupled with medical limitations and limited access to resources, caused Tara to be confined to the house.

When she was asked about her goals, Tara requested adaptive devices for sewing tasks and access to adaptable reading devices. The counselor explored Tara's options for developing a plan for employment. Tara offered, "Maybe, I could work as a greeter at Walmart." The counselor recognized that Tara had more to offer and more choices available for her than she realized. Tara was guided to explore her options and practical steps that would expand her world and enable her to establish a realistic career path.

Shortly after the visit, Tara enrolled in a program where she learned to access the computer with adaptive technology. Her facility with computer skills was immediate, and this became her lifeline to the world. CBVI provided her with a loaner computer and arranged for additional training to build her proficiency with adaptive technology skills.

Tara was encouraged to consider the option of attending college as a step toward establishing her career path. At first glance, this prospect was daunting given the necessity of regular dialysis treatments, moving out of the house to live on campus and separating from her family. After much consideration, Tara applied to Caldwell College in nearby Caldwell.

Prior to beginning college, Tara applied for and was awarded a scholarship offered through the National Federation of the Blind. She traveled to Detroit to attend the National Convention, where she met a number of motivated blind and visually impaired professionals. Tara recalled that the experience served as a wake-up call and solidified her commitment to forge ahead with college studies and establish her career path. Upon her return home, she was awarded an additional scholarship through the NFBNJ affiliate. Tara attended the State Convention where she continued to widen her network of friends and where she met her future husband.

Tara began her first semester at Caldwell College in the fall of 2009. Her adjustment to college life was challenging at first, but her steadfast determination enabled her to make the adjustment fairly quickly. She learned that living on a college campus afforded her access to an additional social network, increased mobility and the opportunity to develop her career path. Tara chose to major in English based on her strong interest in reading and writing. Tara accessed all of the tools and resources at her disposal and diligently pursued her degree. She graduated with a grade point average of 4.0 in the spring of 2013.

Tara currently resides with her husband in Rutherford. She reflects on her journey and extends her heart-felt gratitude to CBVI for assisting her to open up the opportunity to significantly transform her life.

**TOM AND GAIL FERRY: A TRIBUTE
MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP ESTABLISHED**

By John Ferry

Editor's Note: *With Tom Ferry's passing in March 2016, the Ferry family has established the Tom and Gail Ferry Memorial Scholarship, which will be awarded at the State Convention in November. John is a graduate of the Colorado Center for the Blind. He and his wife Abby reside in Colorado.*

As far back as I can remember, my parents, Gail and Tom Ferry, were involved in the National Federation of the Blind. When I was around 3 years old, they, along with several other families formed Parents of Blind Children – New Jersey. I remember many of the early meetings and workshops. For me, it was a chance to meet other blind children. For them, it was a chance to get educated on all of the different opportunities available to a blind child.

My parents were people who always looked for solutions to seemingly insurmountable things. For example, when I was young, my father wanted to get me up on skis. People had told him that something like that would be impossible. That wasn't good enough for Tom Ferry. It was in 1996, at our first National Convention, that he met several people who were blind and also skied. They explained how it could be done, and the next winter, he and I were out on the slopes learning together.

Along with the five National Conventions we attended, we were also regulars at the New Jersey State Conventions. At these meetings, we became close to many members of the affiliate. Over time, the people we met became more than just acquaintances; they became close personal friends.

In 2005, my dad became the treasurer of the New Jersey affiliate. About nine years later, I asked him why he was still doing it. He replied, "This organization has helped you in so many ways that I feel this is the least I can do."

When my mother passed away in 2013, my father established a scholarship in her name to benefit college students. Now with his passing, this scholarship will become the Tom and Gail Ferry Memorial Scholarship. I can't think of a better tribute to my parents. They were always looking for ways to help people, and now their legacy will continue to live on.

LEARNING TO BE A LEADER FROM LEADERS: NFB LEADERSHIP BUILDING SEMINAR By Brian Mackey

Editor's Note: *Brian is an active member of the NFBNJ, serving as treasurer and webmaster for the state affiliate, secretary/treasurer for the At Large Chapter, secretary of the Garden State Chapter, and chair of New Jersey's Pre-Authorized Contribution (PAC) Plan, among others. Brian is the owner of Mackey Enterprises, LLC which assists individuals and businesses in data entry and bookkeeping projects. In his spare time, Brian enjoys working out at the gym and playing golf.*

What makes a good leader? Look around the NFB; embrace and be inspired by the talents of strong, passionate and dedicated leaders. My leadership idols include Dr. Maurer, Pam Allen, Ever Lee Hairston, Joe Ruffalo, Mark Riccobono, Anil Lewis, Carol Castellano and Linda DeBerardinis. At NFB's 2011 National Convention, Joe Ruffalo mentioned the upcoming Leadership Building Seminar, which spiked my interest. The leadership seminar develops Federation leaders to expand local chapters, recruit new members and promote the Federation philosophy. I didn't hesitate to contact Joe about attending this program.

Along with several eager participants, I arrived in Baltimore on a Friday afternoon, depleted from the stifling hot bus ride. Jason Ewell and Joanne Wilson warmly welcomed us and showed us to our rooms. Dr. Maurer announced dinner and we refreshed our energy with lively conversations and expectations.

On Saturday morning, Dr. Maurer began the seminar and affirmed what it means to be an NFB leader. Leadership, he said, requires oodles of imagination, heaps of goodwill and bunches of hard work, along with an ample amount of good times while successfully completing the job. Hint: if you don't want to do the work and enjoy it, don't take the position! We learned that leadership is the capacity to imagine how things could improve, to inspire others to join the team and to accomplish a task that improves the lives of others. To enhance the lives of others, leaders need to cultivate new approaches, new ways of thinking and new ways to deal with old situations. To enrich our chapters and divisions, we need to encourage new members to join and to get involved in various committees, projects or an office.

After Dr. Maurer's powerful and motivational speech, we broke into groups for an ice-breaker. Together we discovered why we each became a Federationist, why we're members and why we want to become NFB leaders. I'm a Federationist because it encourages and nurtures me to be more self-confident and independent as a blind individual. Within the NFB, I can associate with other blind individuals, share what we've learned and promote blindness awareness. Our groups discussed where to locate other blind people and how to bond with them. Other blind persons

could be found at eye doctors' offices, college disability services offices, churches, senior centers, transportation services (such as buses, trains, planes and taxis), Facebook, Twitter, and through friends' referrals. How can we bond with other blind individuals? We all can easily speak about our different eye conditions, for example. We discussed resources available through the NFB: NEWSLINE, the Independence Market, International Braille and Technology Center, the free white cane program, the NFB and affiliate divisions, mentoring programs, training centers (Louisiana Center for the Blind, Colorado Center for the Blind and Blind Learning In New Dimensions [Blind Inc.] in Minnesota), listservs, Bookshare, Learning Ally, NLS BARD, the NFB website and publications, state and national conventions, word of mouth, Washington Seminar and many others. And that was just the first part of our day!

Later we toured the IBTC and the Independence Market. The IBTC fascinated me with the hundreds of devices available to the blind, many made in the U.S. I checked out Braille embossers, Apple products and the KNFB reader, among others. Onward we went to the Independence Market that supplies a wide variety of merchandise for the blind/visually impaired along with free pamphlets about the NFB.

Our afternoon session focused on how to make phone calls to established and potential NFB members and how to discuss the free white cane program, NEWSLINE, and the digital talking book player. We learned how to handle negative responses. Even though this activity took me out of my comfort zone, I slowly became more confident, more empowered and a stronger Federationist.

After dinner, we took part in some challenges: driving the Blind Driver Challenge interface simulator, using a "real" chain saw to cut wood, and testing our knowledge about NEWSLINE.

Sunday morning, we brainstormed several "what-if" scenarios for possible solutions. Then our leadership training ended, and we headed back home.

What a great experience! I learned that I have inner strength, and with NFB encouragement, I can promote my self-confidence and build my leadership qualities. I learned that a leader is loving, enthusiastic, able, determined, ethical and responsible. Together, we learn, we support, we encourage others, and we promote the fact that blind individuals are capable of full participation in society. As Joe Ruffalo says, "When we all do, it becomes doable. The more we try, the more we succeed. Everything is impossible until you do it. Keep believing. Keep dreaming. Keep learning. Let's work together. Let's make a difference!"

Thank you, Joe and NFB for a great learning experience. I would never have imagined how this experience would shape me into the leader I am today. I am proud to be a leader within NFBNJ at the affiliate, chapter, division, committee and personal levels.

SURF'S UP!

By Amanda Oglesby

Editor's Note: *This article is condensed from the original published by the Asbury Park Press 8/22/16. The article is available in its entirety with video and photos at <http://www.app.com/story/news/local/communitychange/2016/08/22/watch-surfing-blind-vision-rich-life/88452304/>*

ASBURY PARK — Charles Patterson McKenna rested his hand on the arm of Andrew Gioulis as the two walked from the beach in Asbury Park into the frothy surf, on Sunday, August 21. This was 42-year-old McKenna's first time surfing, and he would be doing it blind with the help of Gioulis, a volunteer with Christian Surfers, a Manasquan-based religious missionary organization, along with the Neptune Lions Club, which provided free eye screenings during the event. "I've never surfed before and I'm thrilled for the opportunity today," he said.

McKenna, of Highland Park, has been blind since the age of 5, but this has not stopped him from leading a full life. An attorney, married with a 3-year-old son, McKenna also helps run the EDGE (Employment Development Guidance and Engagement) program for teenagers who have vision loss, preparing them for work through job shadowing, skills building, and learning adaptive technology and independent travel.

With McKenna at the front of the surfboard and Gioulis, 36, of Neptune at the back, the two paddled into the waves before turning and catching one white-capped swell toward shore.

Surfing for Vision was the first event of its kind for the Visual Experience Foundation, an organization founded by Michael Benson of Belmar. Benson, 55, born with glaucoma, has undergone many eye surgeries and says he has spent much time memorizing the sights and faces around him for the day he may lose his sight. Grateful for the vision he has retained, his foundation has provided "sight visits" to Niagara Falls, the Grand Canyon, and even a helicopter ride over New York City — all to help people make lasting memories. "I teach people to burn visual memories," Benson said. "That's what we do as a foundation."

Medford resident Brian Mackey, 28, diagnosed at age 12 with a degenerative eye condition that eventually took his sight, hopped onto a surfboard and rode the rough and bouncing waves.

NFBNJ president Joe Ruffalo also tried surfing. "The surf won," said 67-year-old Ruffalo. "It's really a tremendous experience." Though he lost his eyesight, Ruffalo said he never lost his vision for a life full of hope and rich experiences, and he hopes that others who are losing or have lost their sight will embrace the same positive philosophy. "Blindness does not have to hold us back," he said.

TECH TIPS & INFORMATION

Share tips to stay safe on the web – Kevin’s Consulting has started a mailing list for sharing tips and tricks to keep safe when using your computer and for computing in general. Ask questions, help each other out, enjoy a safe environment, and take advantage of some great security tools designed by Kevin himself! Sign up by e-mail kevinsconsulting+subscribe@groups.io or visit <https://groups.io/g/kevinsconsulting>.

AFB Announces Free NVDA Online Tutorial – The American Foundation for the Blind has announced the availability of Learn NVDA, a series of FREE online video tutorials designed to help people who are blind/visually impaired learn to use the computer and/or improve their computer skills. The tutorials include installing and using NVDA (Non Visual Desktop Access), a free screen reader. Each tutorial contains step-by-step instructions with audio. To learn more, go to www.afb.org/learnnvda.

New iOS 10 Tutorial Available – Apple calls the new system software “more personal, more powerful and more playful.” Much has been redesigned, and many enhancements and changes have been made. Go directly to the tutorial: <http://www.thetechjuggernaut.com/2016/09/13/ios-10-is-here-tutorial-and-demo-with-voiceover/>

DID YOU KNOW ...

Art insight – The Museum of Modern Art offers a free program for the blind and partially sighted community. Tours are led by specially trained educators who highlight specific themes, artists and exhibitions through verbal description and touch. For more information, call 212-408-6619 or e-mail accessprograms@moma.org

NASA internships for Summer 2017 – This is for high school students and older: Submit your application by March 1, 2017 to <http://intern.nasa.gov/>. Apply to specific internships to get a mentor. Contact Information: Voice: 301-286-9281, Fax: 301-286-1655, E-mail: kenneth.a.silberman@nasa.gov

NFB Songs Available on CD – The collection of new NFB songs that was released in 2015 as “The Rhythm of the Movement” is available from the NFB Independence Market. Call the Independence Market at 410-659-9314, extension 2216. Many of the older songs can be found on the NFB website at <https://nfb.org/nfb-songs>

Free Federation E-Book Available – Get the new free e-book “Building The Lives We Want: The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary History of the National Federation of the Blind” through this link: <https://nfb.org/pubs/building-the-lives-we-want>. Multiple access options are available for reading.

FROM THE KITCHENS OF YOUR PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

These recipes are reprinted from the March 2003 issue of The Braille Monitor. They are as delicious today as they were then! Enjoy!

RUFF'S PUFFS

Submitted by Joe Ruffalo

Editor's Note: *Joe enjoys baking, and for 10 years, baked for local establishments, friends and family.*

Ingredients – makes 12 large cream puffs

1 cup all-purpose flour	1 box of instant pudding
1 stick butter or margarine	1-1/2 cups milk
4 large eggs	1/2 cup sour cream
1 cup of water	

Directions: In a one-quart saucepan combine one cup water and one stick butter. Place saucepan on low heat, bringing the water and butter to a rolling boil. Turn off heat and add one cup flour, stirring with wooden spoon until the mixture is thick and there are no lumps (approximately three to five minutes). When the batter is perfect, the wooden spoon will stand straight up in it. Place batter in a large mixing bowl. Add four large eggs, one at a time, stirring constantly to insure that the batter remains stiff. When all four eggs have been worked in and you are satisfied with the stiffness of the batter, you are ready to make the Ruff's puff shells.

You may want to grease the cookie sheets you use for baking the puffs if they do not have a nonstick surface or are not already well seasoned. Use a quarter-cup to measure the batter. Be sure to pack the batter into the cup so that you have no air pockets. Smooth the surface of the batter with the reverse side of a butter knife, allowing excess batter to fall back into the mixing bowl. Place the batter on the cookie sheet by sliding the butter knife around the inside of the measuring cup to loosen it. If the resulting puff is not round, shape it with your hands. Leave one to two inches of space around each puff. Place sheet in preheated 375-degree oven for thirty-five to forty minutes or until the smell of the puffs tells you that they are golden brown. Halfway through the cooking process, rotate the cookie sheet 180 degrees to insure even baking. Be very certain that the puffs are done; they will fall when removed from the pans if they are not thoroughly done and a bit crisp to the touch.

When done, gently remove puffs from cookie sheet and allow to cool on a rack or plate. Do not cut puffs until they are room temperature. While puffs are cooling, in a large metal mixing bowl make the cream filling. Use one package vanilla or chocolate

instant pudding. Once the instant pudding is in the mixing bowl, add one and a half cups milk, any kind – whole milk adds a calorie or two but makes the filling noticeably richer. Then add 1/2 cup of sour cream. Using an electric mixer on low speed, mix filling for approximately two minutes, then increase speed to high for about thirty seconds. Allow to stand at room temperature for approximately ten minutes. If you prefer to mix the cream by hand, use an egg beater for about three to five minutes or until the cream thickens.

Use a sharp knife to cut puffs before filling them. I cut puffs horizontally about three-quarters of the way through, approximately in the middle. This should expose a hollow space in the center. If not, pull out enough of the soft center to make your own hollow for filling. Using a tablespoon, begin filling the puffs with the cream and then close them again. Place in the refrigerator and enjoy the cleanup. Double the recipe, and you will double the calories. Enjoy the Ruff's Puffs and watch your waistline grow.

CAPPUCCINO CHEESECAKE
Submitted by Jerilyn Higgins

Editor's Note: *Jerilyn is the Godmother of the Kitchen, where she continues to assist with growing your waistline.*

Ingredients

2 8-ounce packages cream cheese	2 teaspoons vanilla
3 eggs	4 ounces melted chocolate chips
3 cups sour cream	Oreo cookie crumb crust mix
¼ cup coffee	
1-2 cups sugar	

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees
2. With electric mixer, combine sugar and cream cheese
3. Add eggs, one at a time, then add sour cream
4. Dissolve 1 tablespoon of instant coffee in ¼ cup hot water and add to mixture
5. Melt chocolate chips in microwave for 1 minute, add to mixture, beat well
6. Add vanilla
7. Prepare Oreo crumb crust in Springform pan, following package directions
8. Pour the mixture into pan
9. Pour water into a larger pan to make a bath for the cheesecake
10. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes
11. Turn off oven and leave cake in closed oven for one hour
12. Garnish with whipped cream or Cool Whip and chocolate-covered coffee beans

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CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB AT

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