

SPRING 2017

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 2017

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

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

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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, 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. It is published 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*. *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.

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PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

Greetings to all!

Spring has sprung and with it exciting news from the New Jersey Affiliate. We're pleased to announce the establishment of two new committees: the Spanish Committee and the Sports and Recreation Committee. Information pertaining to the goals, purposes and objectives of these committees was forwarded to all on the NFBNJ distribution list. Both committees will be meeting by conference call. The call in number is 712-432-0180, and the code is 460994. Chair of the Spanish Committee is Rosa Santiago: 201-892-6946 or email rosa.santiago901@gmail.com. Chair of the Sports and Recreation Committee is Linda Melendez: 732-421-7063 or email lindamelendez220@gmail.com. For additional information, please visit the state website at www.nfbnj.org/announcing-new-committees.

I'm proud to announce that Veronica Gaspa, president of the New Jersey Association of Blind Students, has accepted an assignment as a paid intern at the National Federation of the Blind's headquarters in Baltimore this summer. Congratulations, Vee!

The National Federation of the Blind's national convention will be held in Orlando, July 10 through the 15th. Please visit the national website at www.nfb.org for additional and updated information. Shortly, we will be notified – and hopefully with good news – regarding those who applied for a national scholarship and for those who applied for the Kenneth Jernigan First Timers assistance.

Spring is the season of growth, and let's continue to grow as individuals and as an organization. This issue of *The Sounding Board* is filled with stories of our members' growth and sharing of the Federation spirit. From the work on our Resolutions to the BELL Program, to developing an appreciation of art, our rights and our work on Capitol Hill, I'm sure you will be inspired by them all.

Let's continue to provide the gift of the Federation to others. Let's encourage the discouraged. Let's bring hope, love and determination to transform dreams into reality to live the life we want!

With best wishes,
Joe Ruffalo, President

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:
INDEPENDENCE: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
By Katherine Gabry

We use that word “independence” a lot: Independence: Believe and Achieve! Independence Market. *Independence and the Necessity for Diplomacy*. What does “independence” really mean? How is life different *without* independence? I recently found out.

While recuperating from ankle surgery, and as a resident of a rehab center, it didn't take long for me to realize that most of my freedoms were gone. I had lost all my privacy. I was awakened at 5 a.m. for bloodwork and at 4 a.m. because aides were bringing me water (um, yeah, I'm always thirsty at 4 a.m.). I had limited choices as to what I wanted to eat, and no choices about when. Therapy was scheduled at the whim of the therapists. I couldn't get outside to the patio because the door wasn't accessible for my wheelchair, and my pet peeve was that people would move my belongings without telling me. Where was my shampoo? How 'bout my dirty laundry? *Why is my water pitcher way over there?*

One morning I awoke to find that my wheelchair had been moved from my bedside to across the room. I was helpless to get out of bed by myself and was going to have to press the call bell and wait 15 or 20 minutes – or more – for help, and I really needed to use the bathroom. They had made me helpless, and this is when I realized that I had lost my independence. I refuse to succumb to learned helplessness, and as I lay there, in bed, feeling like a giant slug, incredibly insignificant, alone, disempowered and frustrated, tears sprang to my eyes.

Granted, I hope to be spending only a few months with limited independence. Many people who are blind and DeafBlind have lived without freedom and under others' control and influence for most of their lives.

How do we go about changing this? Through the Federation, I've met friends and role models who have inspired me to believe that I have it within myself to make anything possible – any career, any sport, any accommodation, any *thing*. We really do learn best from each other. While something may not work exactly the same way for me as it does for you, because of you, my creativity is now flowing. I'll pick a few more brains, and I'll find a way. While I blaze my new trail, I have the support of thousands of cheerleaders who genuinely want me to succeed.

Institutional living, like the rehab center, is a tough challenge. All I could do was advocate for myself and admonish those who continually tried to take advantage of me. By the time I left, most of the regular staff knew I'd chew them out if they didn't toe my line.

And there, my friends, is where we all must begin: Believing in ourselves and believing that we deserve to be treated with respect and dignity ... that old adage “Yeah! I'm worth it!” and not accepting, **ever**, any less. I encourage each of you to extend a patient and kind hand, or word, email or conversation to let someone know that yes, you believe in them, for this is the first step to freedom and the gift of independence.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE 2016 NFBNJ STATE CONVENTION

**By Mary Jo Partyka, Co-editor of *The Sounding Board*,
and Ryan Stevens, Chair of the Resolutions Committee**

During this past year's convention, two resolutions which are of great importance to the blind of New Jersey were passed. Below is a summary of each resolution. Please visit www.nfbnj.org to read the entire text of the resolutions.

Resolution 2016-01 concerns protecting the civil rights of New Jersey's blind parents to have and raise their children independently. The view that blind parents are unfit to raise children has prevailed in the courts even as we move into the 21st century. Blind parents have been perceived by the courts, hospital staffs, child protection agencies and others as incapable of caring adequately for their children's needs. These long-held attitudes make it almost impossible for blind people to participate as equal members of society with all rights and privileges associated therein. To date, New Jersey has no laws to protect the rights of blind citizens to become parents and raise their children without being fearful of discriminatory treatment or unnecessary inquiries of fitness, solely based on their blindness. In this resolution, we call upon the New Jersey legislature to enact laws and establish procedural safeguards to protect the rights of blind people to be parents and prohibit discriminatory presumptions of manifest unfitness. Being a parent is a right which is protected under the Constitution of the United States of America by the First, Ninth and Fourteenth Amendments. We also urge the courts and officials of child protection agencies to determine what is in the best interest of the child based on the same criteria used for sighted parents.

Editor's Note: *In conjunction with this resolution, NFBNJ is beginning to craft legislation based on a model parental rights bill sent by our national organization. We will also be getting our members involved in advocating for this legislation once it is submitted to the New Jersey Legislature.*

Resolution 2016-02 concerns New Jersey's paratransit program Access Link's refusal to use text messaging to communicate with its DeafBlind riders. Considering that those who are DeafBlind must use both nonvisual and non-auditory technology to communicate with others, text messaging, in conjunction with other technology which they can buy and use, can give them the information they need. Although Access Link drivers can blow the horn and make the announcement to alert hearing riders that their vehicle has arrived, this does not work for the DeafBlind. Likewise, these riders cannot hear the ringing of a telephone letting them know if their rides will be late or if their vehicle is outside waiting for them. This lack of information can result in "no-shows"

which can lead to a possible suspension if it happens three times in a given month. Although Access Link claims that it doesn't have the capability or authority to use text messaging, New Jersey Transit uses it on a regular basis to communicate with its non-disabled riders to inform them of traffic delays. Access Link's failure to use readily available technology to aid its DeafBlind riders is a violation of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Last year, the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey sent New Jersey Transit a resolution addressing this issue, yet we have received no response. Therefore, we are once again demanding that Access Link implement text messaging to communicate with its DeafBlind riders as soon as this technology can be put in place.

EDUCATING SCHOOL CHILDREN ABOUT BLINDNESS

By Debbie Bloomer and Rick Fox

Editor's Note: *Debbie Bloomer and Rick Fox are longtime Federation members, active in local, state and national programs, and are a happily married couple.*

What happens when you're blind and you have a neighbor who's an administrator at an elementary school? You probably guessed it: He asked us to do a workshop about Braille, Seeing Eye dogs and general information about blindness. We contacted the NFB Independence Market, and they sent us Braille alphabet cards and Courtesy Rules of Blindness handouts. Rick has a working dog from the Seeing Eye so we contacted them as well. They sent us several copies of a graphic novel entitled *The Story of Bonnie: A Seeing Eye Dog*. We also brought our Perkins Braille and paper.

That day we worked with kindergarteners, first and second graders. We included games and activities to keep the children engaged. For example, the kindergarteners moved their fingers across the Braille alphabet card while they sang the A, B, C song with Rick. The first and second graders decoded the Braille phrase on the bottom of the alphabet card. We included time for discussion and questions, during which we found out that some students and staff members have relatives or friends who are blind.

The conclusion that we drew from this experience is that participating in blindness awareness programs can be both educational and fun. Also, NFB's "can do" philosophy is a universal one that participants can apply to their own circumstances.

THE 2017 WASHINGTON SEMINAR ISSUES

By Ryan Stevens, Legislative Coordinator

Hello yet again, my fellow New Jersey Federationists. During the last week of January, NFB held another successful Washington Seminar in our nation's capital. Members from around the country, including 13 from our own affiliate, went to Capitol Hill to talk about the most pressing issues concerning the blind with our Congressional representatives. This time, we addressed four issues, two of which were carried over from last year. Here is a brief rundown of each topic.

The first issue from last year concerns Accessible Instructional Material in Higher Education, or AIM-HE, legislation. Much of the material used by university and college faculty to teach their courses is available to students only electronically or online, and a good portion of these tools is not accessible to blind and print disabled students. While the Americans with Disabilities Act and other laws mandate full accessibility in the classroom, there are no guidelines for institutions of higher education and manufacturers of these materials to follow to ensure compliance. AIM-HE would establish these guidelines for users and creators of such software. It would also give legal protections to those who follow the guidelines. The current bill in the House of Representatives is HR 1772, sponsored by Congressman Phil Roe of Tennessee. There is no companion bill in the Senate at this time.

The other topic from 2016 which we again presented on the Hill is the Marrakesh Treaty. This treaty, if ratified by a two-thirds vote in the Senate, would greatly expand access to books and other printed material to blind and print disabled people throughout the world. It would allow a person from one country to get a book in non-visual format from another country rather than waiting for his or her home country to create its own non-visual version. It also makes it easier to acquire material in multiple languages. With this treaty pending in a new Congressional term, we are making an even stronger push to get ratification.

One of the new legislative issues we are pursuing is the Access Technology Affordability Act. Access technology enables blind people to participate in today's connected world and to perform tasks that they were once unable to accomplish themselves. Today, the blind most often acquire this technology through their state blindness agency or through their employer as a reasonable accommodation. The problem with going through the state agency is the long time it takes to receive the equipment. The drawback of receiving it from an employer is that such requests can make the company wary of hiring blind people because of the expense. Unfortunately, the cost of access technology also prevents most blind people from purchasing it themselves. The Access Technology Affordability Act would help to alleviate this burden

by providing a tax credit to the blind person when he or she purchases equipment. There is already a similar tax credit for businesses as an incentive to hire blind people. The individual tax credit would take some of the burden from the state agencies and employers and allow blind people to acquire equipment more quickly and to be more active at work, in school and in the community. The current House bill is HR 1734 and is sponsored by David Young of Iowa. The companion Senate bill is S 732, sponsored by John Boozman of Arkansas.

Our final item this year is a request for an appropriation to the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) for refreshable Braille displays. This appropriation will save money and lead to the proliferation of critically needed Braille material for blind Americans. Blind Americans rely on NLS to distribute Braille materials across the nation. Currently these are hardcopy offerings, but new, low-cost displays (known as refreshable Braille displays) can produce electronic Braille, saving money and paper, and providing a small device where formerly multiple and large volumes were required for just one book. A one-time appropriation of \$5 million would allow NLS to purchase 10,000 of these refreshable displays and provide them to patrons. Blind readers could then load books in electronic format onto these displays. This would allow more people to read Braille on a regular basis and save NLS \$10 million a year in embossing, storage and shipment costs for hardcopy Braille books. Recently, we have learned that this is more likely to occur in fiscal year 2019, rather than the upcoming fiscal year. Because of this, we are focusing our efforts on preserving the funding to the state libraries for the blind under the Library Services Technology Act.

For more details and the full fact sheets for each of these issues, go to <https://nfb.org/washington-seminar>.

As I have pointed out in the past, while going to DC and addressing these important issues directly with our elected officials is certainly important, it is only the beginning of our legislative agenda. Also, there will be other concerns that will arise during the year. We cannot ignore any of these until next January. All of us need to make an effort to help all blind Americans live the lives we want.

To contact your member in the House of Representatives or the US Senators from New Jersey, call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121. To find your House member, you can either contact your local public library or go to www.house.gov and enter your zip code.

THE PAC PLAN

By Brian Mackey

Greetings to my fellow Federationists throughout the New Jersey Affiliate! This is your friendly neighborhood PAC Plan chairman, and this is my update on how we're 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 (\$0.17 a day). It's important because it helps fund the programs and activities that are so vital to the success of blind people. It helps with providing free literature, free white canes, free slates and styluses, educational and outreach programs, assistance with fighting legal battles, free web hosting to state affiliates through nfbnet.org, and much more.

In terms of our ranking among the states, as of February 2017, we are in 25th place, with a monthly contribution of \$581. This amount comes from the generosity of 40 individuals and chapters. 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 \$17 behind Pennsylvania, and we trail North Carolina by a mere \$54. If we pass North Carolina, it would put us over \$650 a month and solidly in the Top 23.

Thanks to modern technology, signing up on PAC is significantly easier than it has ever been. Since 2015, you can create or increase your PAC contributions by using an online contribution form. Donations can be taken from either a checking account or a credit/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 to NFB's National Center, to the attention of their accounting department.

Making these regular tax-deductible contributions, and encouraging your friends, family, fellow Federationists, neighbors, etc. 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!

Can we raise our expectations on our PAC contributions by going over \$750 a month? We will find out after the national convention.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT THE BALLPARK**By Joe Ruffalo and Mary Jo Partyka**

Are you looking forward to the summer? Would you like to share one day during this season of nice weather with friends and family and people you may not have seen for a long time? Do you like live baseball?

If you can answer yes to any of these questions, you may be interested in attending a Trenton Thunder baseball game, the Double A affiliate of the New York Yankees, on Sunday, June 11. The first pitch is scheduled for 1 p.m.; however, prior to the first pitch, pre-game ceremonies will honor NFBNJ Capitol Chapter member, Don Wardlow. Don broadcasted baseball, football and basketball on WGLS, the college radio station at Rowan University in Glassboro. From 1991-2002, Don became the first blind radio broadcaster in pro baseball. There is now a second who may not have been hired without the work Don did earlier on.

Finally Don has written a baseball blog and is working on his autobiography, targeting blind readers and hoping they enjoy his story.

Don will throw out the first pitch. In addition, all members of the NFBNJ will have the opportunity to line up on the first base line to cheer Don as he delivers the ceremonial first pitch. Upon completion of the game, all children under 12 will run the bases.

The Capitol Chapter is sponsoring this event. Tickets are \$11 per person.

The action on the field should be interesting. In addition to seeing the game, you can buy souvenirs at the Thunder Store, eat good food, including chicken and roast beef sandwiches for those of us who are watching our weight, and have a good time.

The stadium is located at Arm and Hammer Park, and the address is 1 Thunder Road, Trenton, New Jersey. The location is Access Link accessible and the cross street is Lamberton Street.

Please note that we will not be receiving the tickets until May 22; however, we are taking orders and payment for tickets now. If you have any questions about the procedures which must be followed, please contact Mary Jo Partyka at 609-888-5459 or by email at choirnfb@gmail.com. Please send all ticket orders and money to John Lipton whose address is 2 Forman Drive, Hamilton Township, NJ 08690. Make checks payable to NFBNJ Capital Chapter and put the word "baseball" in the memo field of the check. Since the tickets will be mailed to you, please include your address and the names of the people in your party who will be attending. Tickets will not be sent if payment is not received.

We hope you will consider joining us on June 11.

RAISING EXPECTATIONS AWARD
Presented at the 2016 NFBNJ State Convention
By Carol Castellano

This is a very special award to me and I'm so happy to present it.

The recipient of this special award is someone we all know and love. This person has worked on behalf of the blind of New Jersey and of the entire nation for over two decades, not only tirelessly, but with impressive dedication, great energy, an inspiring attitude and contagious enthusiasm. In fact, our honoree has more energy, commitment and enthusiasm than perhaps anybody I have ever met. He raises the spirits of everyone with whom he comes into contact. Every person in this room has been a beneficiary of his generosity and effort.

The number of people he has helped is uncountable. He unfailingly responds to those in need, and he empowers them with support and information, enabling them to find solutions to the challenges in their lives. He really loves people. This is evident in all his interactions with others.

Our recipient began his service to the blind when he attended his first chapter meeting in 1988. He became president of the affiliate in 1993 and was elected to the national board in 2001. As you have figured out by now, our honoree is none other than our president JOE RUFFALO!

Joe is always there for us — and we are ALMOST always there for him. He does call a lot with jobs. Jobs and jokes — whew.

Joe is like a brother to me. We talk things over. We make agenda plans together for NFB and POBC. We've never had a POBC conference without Joe being there to welcome everyone, and we've never had a state convention without a good section of the day being devoted to families and kids.

And speaking of families, one of the reasons Joe is able to accomplish all the work he does is that he has the wonderful Judy behind him along with his terrific sons and daughters-in-law. Jimmy and Kelly here tonight, and Joe and Bettina in California.

I am in awe of this man and feel so fortunate to have the opportunity to work with him year after year. He lifts my spirits if I am ever feeling down. I count on his unflagging optimism, his unwavering giving to blind people and their families, his great big inclusive, loving heart.

Here are some words of tribute from a teen whom Joe has mentored. In a letter to him she wrote:

"Joe, I am so grateful to know you. You are so loyal, so true and so dedicated. You have passion, enthusiasm and you are such an inspiration. I admire your positive attitude and the internal strength you use in such a selfless manner to benefit others.

You are a hero in so many ways. I don't just mean being on the battlefield. You bring hope and faith. It is people like you who make a difference and who serve to remind that there is good in the world." She adds, "I never knew you served our country. And I now will wear my JROTC uniform with even more pride and honor, for you, and for the many others who are sacrificing all they can, every day, for people they may never get to know personally. I hope, that one day, perhaps, I will get to hear your story. I think you are already one of the greatest individuals I know." Signed, Natasha.

My own life has been incredibly enriched by having Joe as a colleague and friend. I know I speak for many here when I say that there are few times in my life that I feel more connected and valued and loved than when I'm with Joe and our Federation family. So it is with great pleasure that I now get to let Joe know how much we all value and love *him* by presenting this award.

And as Joe makes his way to the podium, I will read the words of the certificate:

The National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey

Presents the

RAISING EXPECTATIONS AWARD

to Our President

Joe Ruffalo

In Recognition of Invaluable Contributions

to the Quality of Life of the Blind of NJ and the Nation

Your contribution is measured not in steps, but in miles;

Not by individual experiences,

but by the impact you have had on the lives of the blind.

Whenever we have asked, you have answered.

We call you our colleague with respect.

We call you our friend with love.

Together, with love, hope, and determination we transform dreams into reality.

November 12, 2016

From the grateful members of the NFBNJ

Joe's Response

(Applause as Joe and his family approached the podium.)

I'm almost at a loss for words. This award you have given me and my family tonight is your award. We do this together, because we are who we are. If we can change one life, then all this is well worth it.

Carol, you are my sister, too, and those are very kind, thoughtful words. My feelings for everyone in this room are the same. You inspire me. At times, I may aggravate you (laughter). (I'm grateful to) people such as Tom Ferry. I asked him to be Treasurer. He said he was pretty busy, and he'd have to think about it. When he called back, he said, "Joe, since you do all you do, I can at least be Treasurer for at least a year until you find someone." I think he was Treasurer for 12 years. Kathy Gabry. I said, "Kathy, we're in a bind. John Cucco, Carol's son, is going off to college. Can you edit this magazine that we call The Sounding Board? I'll find someone else soon." That was 11, 12, I don't know how many years ago. But through your dedication Kathy, Tom, Carol and yours, too, it makes me want to continue to serve you, as your leader, as long as you want, as long as I have the spark to do it. My spark is in my heart for everyone in this room. Thank you for this honor this evening. I will continue to raise expectations to live the life we want. I believe in you. Thank you.

VERONICA GASPA TO SERVE AS NFB SUMMER INTERN

By Joe Ruffalo & Katherine Gabry

Congratulations to Veronica "Vee" Gaspa, President of the New Jersey Association of Blind Students, who has been selected to serve as a summer intern at the National Federation of the Blind in Baltimore. Vee will serve as an intern from May 29 through August 4, 2017. During this time, Vee will have the opportunity to participate in the following activities: NFB history and philosophy seminars, promoting the NFB brand and messaging, affiliate engagement and membership-building activities, advocacy initiatives and policy development, national convention planning and execution, and other projects identified by the President of the National Federation of the Blind.

Vee, who originally hails from Virginia, where she once was Secretary/Treasurer for the Virginia Association of Blind Students, is a sophomore at Seton Hall University majoring in English and Theater. She says that she loves "dogs, rock n' roll and food." Of her work with the New Jersey Association of Blind Students, Vee says, "I did not realize how much of a challenge, privilege and developmental experience it would be. This division has provided me with self-reflection as an individual (and as a) leader, but most of all as a mentor to fellow blind students."

Congratulations, Vee!

BELLS READY TO RING FOR A 4TH SUMMER!

By Mary Jo Partyka

The National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey will sponsor its fourth BELL (Braille Enrichment for Literacy & Learning) Academy to be held weekdays, July 17 - 28, 2017, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., daily. The program will be held at the Puerto Rican Association for Human Development, Inc. in Perth Amboy.

The BELL Academy provides instruction in Braille and daily living skills to children ages 4 through 12 who have lacked the opportunity and sufficient exposure to these important areas. In addition, the children form new friendships with other visually impaired/blind children and adults, go on field trips, and interact with sighted children who attend the PRAHD's own summer program.

Our goal is to enable the children to live the lives they want through upbeat and positive attitudes, skills and experiences provided by the BELL Academy. This year, the children will be taught by a certified Braille transcriber with 13 years of experience. They will also have access to blind adults who serve as mentors and facilitators of our program.

To review and/or complete an application for the BELL Academy, please visit <https://nfb.org/bell-student-application-form>. You can also read the affiliate-specific *Frequently Asked Questions* brochure for New Jersey at <https://nfb.org/bellacademy-fags-affiliate/nj>. For more information, please contact Mary Jo Partyka, our state BELL coordinator, at choirnfb@gmail.com or by phone at 609-888-5459.

YOU CAN HELP SPONSOR THIS SUMMER'S BELL ACADEMY

From Ice Cream to T-Shirts, Braille Paper to Pizza

We're pleased to announce the following sponsorship opportunities available for the BELL Academy this summer:

\$200 T-shirts for all participants	\$30 Mid-week pizza party
\$200 Supplies for arts and crafts	\$30 Braille paper
\$150 Christmas in July party with Santa	\$20 Dark lined paper
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3. InTact Sketch Pad, \$125 <http://www.easytactilegraphics.com>
4. InTact Sketch Pad electric eraser, \$150
5. Extra InTact Sketch Pad paper: 100 sheets for \$24

Your check should be made payable to NFBNJ and sent to Joe Ruffalo, NFBNJ President, 254 Spruce Street, Bloomfield, NJ 07003. In the memo, please write "BELL." Sponsorship in any amount is appreciated. Thank you for your interest and support in driving the BELL Academy vehicle along the road to literacy and learning for blind children.

BOOK REVIEW: BILL IRWIN'S *BLIND COURAGE*

By Katherine Gabry

Editor's Note: *Blind Courage*, by Bill Irwin, is available on Bookshare in both audio and Braille formats. It's also available on Amazon and Kindle.

I was recently telling a friend about a DeafBlind guy I know who, over four years, hiked the Appalachian Trail, completing it in 2014. My friend mentioned Bill Irwin, the first blind person to hike the trail, and suggested that I might enjoy his book. That night, I went on Amazon and bought a signed copy of the book – signed not only by Bill, but also signed by his Seeing Eye dog, Orient.

Bill and Orient – The Orient Express – completed the 2,167.9 mile trek from Georgia to Maine on November 21, 1990. I've hiked parts of the AT in Pennsylvania and Maine, and let me tell you: Some of those mountains in Maine are treacherous!

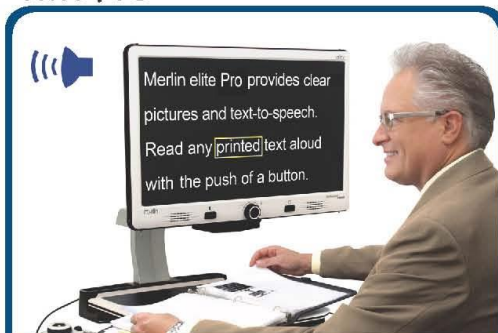
Many folks report that hiking the AT is a life-changing experience, and Bill was one of them. Before the AT, Bill describes his life as "broken relationships, wounded pride and a loss of independence" that left him depressed and fueled his addiction to alcohol. While his son was undergoing treatment for a cocaine addiction, Bill finally was able to admit his own addictions. He made changes in his life, and he decided to hike the AT. In the book, Bill's new-found faith is evident and guides him through the solitude, the pain, the hardships and the weather along the trail.

Some of my favorite parts of this book are Bill's prose about the woods, the trail, the peace and his personal challenges. I can relate to his religious experiences, as there's no place I feel more connected to the beauty, power and grace of the universe than in the vast, peaceful expanse of the woods. If you've ever searched for meaning or change in your life, you will appreciate Bill's journey.

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MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'s LEGACY STILL APPLICABLE TODAY

By Natasha Ishaq

Editor's Note: *Natasha Ishaq is a sophomore at Franklin Lakes High School in Somerset. She's a cadet in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps and belongs to Amnesty International. She participates in the Employment, Development, Guidance and Engagement (EDGE) program, plays piano, sings, writes, and enjoys science and astronomy.*

Martin Luther King Jr. has been honored in American history for his role in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. The choices he made and the consequences he faced were unimaginable. Who can honestly say that they would fight so hard for something, especially if it meant going to jail, being starved or being beaten? It's a lot easier said than done, and Dr. King was one of the people who took that chance, as did the children who fought alongside him and who marched through the streets of Alabama for the Children's March. Did you know that when they went to jail they were singing? Children can have this undying hope because they don't seem to see the world in such a cruel way as adults may. Dr. King made sure that that kind of hope and faith did not subside with age. Justice for all is claimed in this country, but hypocrisy is hypocrisy. Throughout history we have seen various groups of people being denied that justice because of their race, disability, religion, gender, etc. Without a gun in hand, Martin Luther King Jr. went on to fight for justice to make our country one where we can be who we want to be and who we are meant to be.

With everything going on in the world today, it is common for many Americans and many inhabitants of the planet to be afraid, to be fearful and scared of the unknown and of the unspoken. Let's not forget about the fundamental principles of humanity or the fundamental principles of acceptance on which this country was built. This country was made by immigrants. This country was made by the underdogs, and look how far we have come. No matter what happens, your job is to stay true to who you are and carry the legacy of so many who gave their lives for not just their generation but for future generations as well. President Obama said, "(We) are not a collection of individuals or a collection of red states and blue states. We are, and always will be, the United States of America." It is a horror to think that somebody would turn against their own brothers and sisters – their own families – because of the idea that everybody is supposed to look the same or be the same. It's diversity that makes our country the country that it is, and that makes the world worth living in. This is our home; this is our place in the universe. Let's preserve it and fight for not only ourselves, but for each other and for the children of the future. Every voice is worth listening to. All of the voices are what makes the world turn. Those historical figures did not just fight for their voices to be heard, but for the voices of millions.

SIRI & THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED: CALL ME, APPLE!

By Brian Mackey

Editor's Note: *Brian, the proud owner of Mackey Enterprises, LLC, is the NFBNJ's treasurer and webmaster. To view the following and other posts on his site's blog, Blind With Vision, please visit www.mackeyenterprisesllc.com/bwv-blog.*

When Apple first introduced the voice assistant Siri with the iPhone 4S in 2011, many people I know were thrilled, to say the least. Siri, with its ability to translate voice commands, has the potential to make life so much easier for visually impaired individuals. Using voice commands to look up phone numbers and make phone calls is just the tip of the iceberg. In surveying my colleagues in the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey's Technology Division, I heard countless other use cases, including creating appointments with reminders, setting wake-up alarms, sending text messages, getting directions, checking the weather, getting word spellings and definitions, and even performing basic math. In short, Siri assists those of us who can't see by allowing us to use our voices to get things done just by asking. The wonders of modern technology never cease to amaze me.

Many individuals use Siri on their iDevices, but know only a handful of commands. I discovered a complete listing of Siri commands compiled by applevis.com, a website for blind and low vision users of Apple products, including Mac computers, the iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch, Apple TV and Apple Watch. You will find Siri commands for all kinds of inquiries. Here are some of the categories:

- Making phone calls (including 911 & the fire department)
- Managing phone conversations and voicemails
- Using Apple's FaceTime
- Finding contacts
- Reading, sending and replying to messages
- Scheduling meetings & conference calls
- Checking calendars
- Receiving reminders
- Making notes
- Posting to Facebook & Twitter
- Using maps & getting directions
- Finding local businesses and restaurants
- Playing music
- Listening to podcasts
- Making mathematical calculations
- Searching the Web
- Looking up photos and videos
- Managing iDevice settings
- Taking dictation
- Getting the latest news, sports, weather, entertainment and stock market information
- And the list goes on!

Despite the wonder of this amazing technology, from my perspective, there are definitely areas for improvement. For example, those of us with speech impairments get frustrated with Siri. You know you said a word clearly enough, but Siri doesn't interpret it correctly. Sometimes my "g" sounds like a "d" so Siri might have trouble that way even when I am speaking clearly. After several repetitions, I usually give up and enter my inquiry manually. I have read that researchers are working on technology that better recognizes unusual voices or speech patterns, so hopefully one day Siri will be able to learn *how* a particular individual speaks. This would make a big difference to those with speech impairments or people who speak with a hard-to-understand accent and allow us to use Siri more.

No doubt, the next iteration of Siri will bring even more improvements that address some of the existing deficiencies. In the meantime, perhaps Apple developers would like to talk to some of us "real users" with disabilities? We see and *hear* things from a different perspective and can definitely offer some opinions and useful feedback. Call me, Apple!



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MY EXPERIENCE IN SWIMMING CLASS

By Hamlet Diaz

Editor's note: *Hamlet graduated from Union City High School and the Leadership, Education, Advocacy and Determination (LEAD) Program. He lives in the Dominican Republic. Here, he describes his experiences in learning how to swim.*

When I was young, my parents wanted me to learn how to swim. They decided to register me for a swimming class. The class was on Saturdays. Although I attended for a couple of Saturdays, I didn't last too long in the class.

The problem was that the instructor wanted me to put my head under water. I couldn't do it. The feeling of putting my head under water was horrible. I couldn't breathe, and the fact that I had to take my feet off the ground was even scarier! You cannot do lots of swimming without putting your head under water.

One time one of the instructors was really upset with me. She picked me up and threw me into the deep end of the pool. It was horrible! My parents finally realized how scared I was of swimming, and they took me out of the class.

Years later, I finally put my head under water; however, I still didn't know how to swim. In order to float, I used a floating device. Thank God that years later, all of this changed when in 2015, my dad once again asked me if I wanted to take swimming class. I said yes. This time, the class was on Saturdays and Sundays, and I took the class for a month. On the very first day, I learned how to float under water. I was so impressed and happy with myself! And then I learned two ways to swim under water. First, I learned to "doggie paddle," moving my arms and legs up and down under the water. I move my arms and legs one after the other. Second, I can use the freestyle method. This method requires that I move my arms backward and forward, one after the other without stopping. Yes, I actually learned how to swim!

Swimming is a great sport. No matter if you are visually impaired or have any other disability, you can learn to swim. Try to find a pool that is not too deep so that you can keep your feet on the ground and have more confidence. Finally, don't give up on learning the techniques. It takes time and patience. Give it a try and see if you end up liking it.

ALICE EADDY FEATURED IN ICANCONNECT NATIONAL PROFILES

Alice Eaddy is president of the NFB's Deaf-Blind Division and president and secretary of the organization's New Jersey affiliate. The FCC operates the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program, which provides communications technology for DeafBlind people who qualify for the program. You can read Alice's story at <http://www.icanconnect.org/news/icanconnect-helps-national-leader-deaf-blind-community-mentor-others>

FROM OUR ARCHIVES: THE POWER OF BEING PLUGGED IN
By Gerald Moreno

This article appeared in the Braille Monitor in July 1997; it's still relevant today.

From the Editor: *Those of us who have been members of the NFB for many years sometimes take for granted all the benefits we receive from the organization every day. It's fairly easy for those who read Federation material but remain aloof from contact with members to dismiss as propaganda the enthusiastic stories of those who have recently discovered what a difference the NFB has made in their lives. Gerald Moreno presented the following speech during the Job Opportunities for the Blind Seminar at the 1997 convention of the NFBNJ on April 18. It is a salutary reminder to us all of how important it is that we share the gift of the Federation with every blind person willing to listen.*

I wanted to use the hair dryer last week. My daughter likes to keep it in her room, and I always have to look for it. She claims that I do not have enough hair to use a dryer. Annoyed by the search, I grabbed the plug and plugged it in. It didn't work. I had a perfectly good hair dryer, and it didn't work.

Then I realized that I had plugged in the wrong cord. When I plugged in the right one, it worked. It wasn't that the hair dryer wouldn't or couldn't work; it should have worked, but it didn't because I had grabbed the wrong plug. The same can be said for the about 70 percent of blind people in this nation who are unemployed. There are perfectly employable blind people out there who, for whatever reason, are not plugged in and not working. Others are working below their potential.

I would like to share my experiences with you about the power of being plugged in – how, why, where. I entered Rutgers in 1968. In late 1969 I had to stop driving because my eyesight had deteriorated. At that point I went through what many blind people go through. Many weeks and many tests later I was declared legally blind. Until this time I was not aware that there was a National Federation of the Blind.

I registered with the library in Trenton, Recording for the Blind (RFB) in Princeton and the New Jersey Commission for the Blind. At that time the Commission paid for my tuition and books, and gave me spending money. Still I didn't hear about the NFB.

I graduated in 1972 with a B.A. in economics. Thus I began my job search. No one was interested. I felt alone in a world full of people. It was sort of like being a plug that couldn't find the receptacle where the power was.

In November 1973, I was shopping in the W.T. Grants Department Store and had stopped to ask questions of one of the employees. I related my story to him: No job and my wife four months pregnant. Little did I know that he was the store manager. He told me to file an application for a job, and I was hired on the spot. He gave me a chance.

Although I was working, this job did not pay enough. I continued to search and finally found a job as a social worker for the Essex County Division of Welfare.

It was early 1974, and I still hadn't heard of the NFB.

In late 1974, there was a change in managers at my office. A gentleman by the name of William Waldman became the assistant field office supervisor. Mr. Waldman asked me to take oversight of the Work Registration Project. The fact that I was legally blind didn't enter into the equation.

Over the next five years I had contact with the New Jersey Commission for the Blind as I developed various needs. I also had contact with other agencies and groups, but I didn't learn about the NFB yet. One thing that I should have done was remain active with the Talking Book Library in Trenton. During my interview I inquired about receiving Talking Books again. After I reapplied, I was put on their mailing list.

The library's spring newsletter arrived in March of 1994. After being introduced to the technology available and seeing how it would increase my job performance, I was anxious to call a telephone number listed in the newsletter for more information about computers and adaptive technology. The telephone number belonged to David DeNotaris. I called David, and the rest is history. Not only did he talk to me about his computer, he introduced me to an organization that could benefit me. He introduced me to the National Federation of the Blind. Finally I heard! Because I had contact with fellow blind users of adaptive technology, I was better informed. When my employer was about to purchase my adaptive equipment, I found out that they had made some changes, and the substitutions were not compatible. I believe they were acting in good faith, but they didn't have the expertise to assemble a suitable package for me.

By that time I had been in contact with a member of the NFB by the name of Bob Kanish. He explained his system to me, and I wanted a similar one. Just before the altered package was purchased, I was able to intercept the order and have it modified. This technological catastrophe was averted because I was plugged in. A potential problem was converted into an advantage because I had contact with those who knew.

Due to a rather lengthy process (both the Commission's and my employer's) of testing, evaluations, questionnaires and more, the adaptive equipment arrived in January of 1995. Should it have taken so long? No, but I did get the equipment. We should probably work on shortening the period between the first evaluation and the arrival of any assistance such as training or adaptive equipment.

Think about what would have happened if I hadn't been networking. That is why it is important to be plugged in. You can find out that someone before you has already invented the wheel so that you don't have to reinvent it.

When I met David in April, he asked me to go on a bus ride to the National Center in Baltimore the next month. That is where I attended my first NFB chapter meeting.

I also purchased my first cane that day. I often wonder when I would have gotten around to buying one if I had not taken that trip.

It is very important to remain plugged in. Think of a rechargeable battery. As long as it remains connected to the power source, it is energized. The power in the battery would enable you to listen to a radio or tape this talk. If the batteries were run down, you would be powerless to do what you wanted to do.

Just as a battery needs to be charged, so do you. The blind job seeker needs to know how or where to look for a job. Not only the job seeker, but every blind person should take advantage of what is available. As I said earlier, the right equipment was purchased for me because I was plugged in.

You remain plugged in by attending local NFB chapter meetings and conventions and by getting on mailing lists such as Job Opportunities for the Blind, the *Braille Monitor* and other worthwhile publications. Developing new relationships and networking with those who have walked the path you are about to walk can help guarantee that you will not succumb to the same pitfalls that others have.

My life has decisively changed since my introduction to the NFB. New friends, experiences, opportunities and challenges have come my way. The question some might ask is, "How different would things be if you weren't plugged in?" The truth is that I am plugged in, so I don't have to wonder. What I do ponder is, what is next for me?

Recently I read an article by Carol Castellano in the *Braille Monitor* entitled "Possibilities." (By the way, this appears in the newest Kernel Book, entitled *Beginnings and Blueprints*.) In the article, Carol recounts conversations that she had with her daughter Serena concerning her future. The article reminded me of some conversations that I had with my daughter concerning future possibilities. I said that I was considering going on to further my education. The other possibility was to change careers in a few years. My choices are limited only by my imagination. The possibilities are countless. However, if you aren't plugged in, you will never be aware of the multitude of choices before you. Why limit yourself?

Life has enough restrictions of its own. Don't add to them. Become plugged in and informed of the menu of choices in front of you. Place your order and enjoy. You are a peculiar type of hair dryer. You can decide to plug yourself in or not. Plug yourself in and get hot – on fire for success. The choice is yours.

I chose to be plugged in over three years ago. Being plugged in has revealed to me things that I wouldn't have known otherwise. This is my third state convention, and I am looking forward to my third national. If you have never attended a National Convention, by all means make an effort and meet us in New Orleans. You will assuredly feel the power of being plugged in.

WHEN DEAFBLIND PEOPLE FLY ALONE

By S. M. Stoffel

Editor's Note: *Scott Stoffel is a retired systems engineer and freelance writer living in the Philadelphia area. He's also the creator of the Tactile Carnival. Here he offers his insights on air travel regarding DeafBlind individuals.*

Recently, my DeafBlind friend was rudely informed by American Airlines that she was not allowed to fly by herself. She had been flying the exact same route for years without any complaints from what used to be US Airways. Why did a change in airline ownership cause this sudden bias against a DeafBlind passenger? Similar incidents have occurred with other DeafBlind flying American and other airlines. This situation is not new to the DeafBlind community.

What can we do about this injustice? The first step in solving any problem is to understand the problem itself. Do you know why some airlines have kicked (or tried to) DeafBlind passengers off flights? Here's the reason American Airlines gave:

It's crucial for the flight crew on an aircraft to be able to communicate with all passengers when an emergency occurs. Flight personnel are not required by law to know American Sign Language (ASL), nor are they required to have an interpreter on board (no, the ADA does not apply). So if a passenger can't hear spoken words and can't see visual cues, the passenger is at risk of not understanding and following instructions during an emergency. This failure of the passenger to respond correctly may also endanger other passengers in a crisis.

That is what the airline says. And how do they address this issue? Sometimes, they just ignore it and hope nothing bad will happen during a flight. Sometimes, they deny DeafBlind people the right to fly alone. In the latter case, a DeafBlind passenger would be allowed to fly only if a hearing and/or sighted person accompanied them. However, neither of these responses is what the airlines *should* be doing.

Obviously, ignoring a potential problem is never a good idea. If an emergency situation does arise, and the flight crew can't communicate sufficiently with a DeafBlind passenger, things could go terribly wrong.

On the other hand, denying an intelligent adult the right to travel without a babysitter is unfair. It's certainly not a simple matter to find a travel companion to go with you every time you fly. It's also unnecessary.

What should the airlines be doing, then? Consider the following:

- Airlines should make it clear in their passenger guidelines that the flight crew must be able to communicate information and instructions to all passengers during an emergency. It must also be stated plainly that the flight crew is not required by law to know ASL or have an interpreter on board during a flight.
- The guidelines should encourage DeafBlind (and any other travelers who can't understand spoken instructions) to prepare a simple and quick communication

system that the flight crew can use during an emergency, such as cue cards or a paper describing some tactile cues.

- The guidelines should include a list of statements that the flight crew may need to communicate to a passenger during an emergency, so that the passenger can prepare a cue system that covers all of those important statements.
- Personnel encountering a DeafBlind passenger attempting to board a flight should not deny access on the spot. They should attempt to work out an emergency communication system, if the passenger does not already have one ready.

What should you, as a DeafBlind passenger, do to prepare for flying alone? Here are some things to know and do:

- When told you can't fly alone, don't cite the ADA. The ADA doesn't cover flying. The law you should be familiar with is the Air Carrier Accessibility Act (ACAA).
- Prepare a simple and quick communication system that someone who doesn't know ASL or Braille can use to tell you things during an emergency on the aircraft. Slow systems, such as Print On Palm, may not be quick enough in a crisis. Make some cue cards or a list of tactile cues that allow the flight crew to quickly tell you things like "Emergency! Stay in your seat," or "Emergency! Go to the nearest exit," and so on. Cue cards should have the emergency statements printed in text and Braille. Tactile cues described on a paper you give the flight crew could be things like "Draw an X on my shoulder with your finger to say *emergency*." Remember that speed is important, so make your cues simple.
- Always request that the flight safety guide be available in Braille or large print for you. You must make this request several days before the flight, because they generally don't keep such materials on hand.
- If you have a way to access text, such as an iPhone with Braille, a Braille machine with a regular keyboard or a dry-erase board, bring it with you on the flight and explain how the flight crew can use it to communicate more complex information to you, such as sending you a phone text to tell you that the plane had to land at a different airport due to bad weather.
- Be sure to identify yourself as a DeafBlind person at every step of the process—booking the flight, requesting disability services, getting your boarding pass, etc. This is an important step in order to get the law behind you.
- If you are prepared for emergencies, but the airline still wants to deny you access to your flight, demand to speak with a Conflict Resolution Officer. It is your legal right to do this, and just doing it shows them you know the law. When the officer comes, request to fill out a formal complaint form and explain the situation.

Airlines and DeafBlind travelers need to work together to improve flight accessibility, safety and convenience. Never forget: We're people, too.

BUILDING BACKGROUND FOR TACTILE GRAPHICS AND TACTILE ART

By Barbara Shalit, M.Ed., TVI

Editor's Note: *This article is available in Spanish at www.nfbnj.org.*

It's never too early to start making art, drawing and building — all while developing the sense of touch and the understanding of tactile representation. The world needs more (blind and visually impaired) artists. Blind folks need more experience reading tactile illustrations. One day, your child will be reading a tactile subway map to get to work, and the background you provide now will build toward that goal of independence.

*“Tactual learning ... necessitates a lot more touching than we are typically used to. Tactual learning requires that information be gained by exploration of one aspect of an object at a time, and piecing it together to make the whole. It requires immediate proximity and multiple opportunities to explore. ...adults have to intentionally set up opportunities for tactile interaction (starting) in infancy by increasing movement, interaction, stimulation and access to interesting and motivating people and objects.” — www.tsbvi.edu.
Article by Jeri Cleveland and Debra Sewell.*

You'd be surprised to learn what's available to help your children on their way to playing with tactile illustration/art, and you'll be happy at the payoff, both for their self-expression and esteem as well as for their (future) understanding of tactile instructional materials like maps, math illustrations and biology book drawings. For example, there are people from the Smithsonian and NASA who want to communicate with your children about astronomy and space. Your child will need to learn how to read their tactile drawings to deepen their understanding of the cosmos.

Building background is critical. Make opportunities to expose your child to real things from walking in the woods (bark, acorns, leaves), touring the neighborhood (fire hydrant, mailbox, fences), shopping while handling as much as possible—all with descriptive narration on your part. Even when the art expression is intended to be abstract and not representative, this is still a jumping off point. Actual, physical experiences with the world build real knowledge, not just vague concepts.

How Does a Blind Child Draw and Make Art?

- **Poke holes in paper:** lines, curves, shapes. Have your child trace your hand or you trace his/her hand. A hand is definitely a familiar object and your child will learn to relate his/her hand to the poked outline in the paper.

- **Use crayons on paper on a screen board:** Make your own or buy one for \$14.95 at braillebookstore.com, item #1292, phone number 1-800-987-1231. Draw freehand or draw within stencils.
- **Puff Paint.**
- **Fingerpainting.** (Some people add sand to the paint for more texture.)
- **Draw/scribble with the Perkins Braille Writer:** random dots, straight lines (dots 1 and 4 or 2 and 5 or 3 and 6 repeated all across a page; dashed lines (put spaces after each two or three pairs of straight lines); curved line by pushing this sequence of keys: 3, 2, 1, 4, 5, 6 over and over.
- **Doodler Pens** that don't heat up (around \$100).
- **The Sewell Kit** (available free from CBVI).
- A more sophisticated and versatile version of the Sewell Kit has been developed by EASY Tactile Graphics. It also has the potential to digitize the drawings and send them to an embosser. It costs \$125; you can buy the eraser for about \$150. <http://www.easytactilegraphics.com/product/intact-sketchpad>.
- **SensationalBooks.com's "Blackboard"** for \$49.95 is a small-scale rubberized board used with a ballpoint pen and regular printer paper and/or various textured papers. There's a mini version for \$29.95. You can see a video of it at the website.
- **Make collages** with materials like items from nature, fabrics, things from around the house. These can be abstract creations or they can be representative (paper plate, fake food, plastic fork, a piece of bark, an acorn, a leaf). Also rice, beans, screws, washers, buttons.
- **Play with pipe cleaners and WikkiStix.**
- **"Quick Draw" paper** reacts to lines painted with a wet brush. Those wet lines will rise above the surface. CBVI used to have this paper and may still stock it. APH sells it. (aph.org)
- **Puff Paint.**
- **Clay/Playdough:** Make clay snakes and press them onto paper (or wood? cardboard?) in various shapes or squiggles. Flatten out a chunk of clay (show your child a rolling pin for this purpose) and draw into it (incised lines) with a not-too-sharp point or maybe a fork. Impress different textures into the flattened clay: poke holes, press your cheese grater or one of the sides of your box grater into the flattened clay for various textures. This sensitizes your child to distinguishing among textures commonly used in commercial tactile illustrations.
- **Play Doh Fun Factory**
- Can we sculpt? Why not?

- Can we make art with **Legos**? Why not?
- Can we **color**? Freehand is fine, and there are lots of raised-line coloring books available with iconic images like a butterfly or pumpkin. One source is <http://www.tactilevisiongraphics.com>.

Does It Have to Look Like the Real Thing? It just has to mean something to your child.

Is It Okay to Use Color? Why not? Go for it. Make braille labels for the crayons or start with just three colors and place them in a specific location; have fun with it: “Sit on your yellow crayon. Keep the red crayon behind your ear....” There’s lots of thinking out there (Internet) on how to imbue color with meaning by association with known/experienced real things: “Our dog Rex is black.” “Some people use red to show they’re angry.” “Roses are red.” “The sun is yellow.” “Daddy’s beard is brown.” “Grass is green except when there’s not enough water.” “I like your blue denim jeans with your white shirt.”

Finally.... The more tactile experiences your child has, the more he or she learns how valuable - and dependable - touch can be for self-expression, exploring the world, and tactile art appreciation, as well as academics. This practical skill will provide access to information, build confidence and encourage self-expression.

Some Resources:

artbeyondsight.com

perkinselearning.org/strategies. Search on “art.”

“Creative Arts Adaptations for Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired,” by Carmen Willings at www.teachingvisuallyimpaired.com

In nytimes.com see the article “THE YEAR IN IDEAS; Even Blind People Can Draw” by Daniel Zalewski, Dec. 15, 2002

“Living in Three Dimensions” by Deborah Kent. *Braille Monitor* June 2016.

“Before a blind child can read a map. First steps in tactile graphics,” by Boguslaw Marek at icevi.org (a bit long, and a bit pre-3-D printers, but makes some excellent points.)

CONVERSATION WITH DEAFBLIND ARTIST JON GABRY

By Barbara Shalit

Editor’s Note: *Jon is a junior majoring in fine art at New Jersey City University. He was an NFBNJ state scholarship winner in 2016.*

Q: When did you first realize that art could help you to express yourself?

A: I was 14 and in high school. I had a terrific art teacher who really encouraged me

to explore drawing, painting, clay and sculpture. Having good, open-minded (art) teachers is very important.

Q: What are some of your favorite art materials?

A: I use tactile and non-tactile materials: oil paint, charcoal, pencil, along with collage tactile materials like leather, wood, metal, things from nature; sometimes I put sand into paint to add texture.

Q: What advice do you have for parents of young blind children to encourage their appreciation for and sensitivity to tactile experiences?

A: I think parents need to bring tactile experiences to their children through direct contact with everything from walks in the woods to exploring every corner of their bedrooms and even stairs. If a child touches a cactus plant and feels the sharp spikes and it hurts a little bit, it is still an important learning experience. The more experiences, the more the children will come to depend on touch for understanding the world, for communication and for self-expression.

Q: Can you provide an example of fully exploring something in nature?

A: If you think about a tree, you need to feel the roots, the bark, the branches, the leaves; you can even climb a tree. Take home bits of the tree and paste them into a book: bark, acorn, leaf, a small fallen twig. Sighted parents are so visual, they forget how to thoroughly examine the parts of something they can take in in one glance.

Q: How about another example?

A: Let's think about a flower. I enjoy the process of fully exploring a flower until I can appreciate all its parts. Then, I can make a work of art about the flower, showing the details of what I feel when I tactually explore a flower.

Q: What would you say is the main difference between illustration and art?

A: Illustration is a tool for teaching; it's receptive, whereas art is self-expression. Examples of illustration include maps, geometry drawings, charts and graphs. We need to learn how to understand these illustrations. Art is expressive, personal, pro-active and fun.

Q: You are 27 years old now. Do you foresee more art in your future?

A: Absolutely. I will always enjoy expressing myself through art. Professionally, I would like to share art with others as an art therapist. I want to open people's minds so that people become creative and express themselves.

COMPUTERS FOR THE BLIND EXPANDS SERVICE

Computers for the Blind (CFTB) is a company devoted to providing computers for the blind and visually impaired. According to director Dave Jeppson, "We believe that technology opens new worlds and creates opportunity for greater personal freedom."

Because CFTB is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, the company is offering low prices on computers and software. The desktop computers are available for \$110 and laptops are available for \$160. A licensed copy of MAGIC, which retails for \$395, is now included with the purchase of a desktop or laptop. The computers also include accessibility software, JAWS for Windows demo version screen reader, NVDA (Non Visual Desktop Access) screen reader and other features.

Additionally, CFTB received a substantial grant from the Reading Resource Fund Community Foundations of Texas to provide approximately 7,000 computers to people who are on SSDI and/or SSI as well as families of children with visual impairments. Consumers who are on SSI or SSDI can receive a computer package with a desktop computer, a flat screen monitor and peripherals for \$50 or a laptop with the same software for \$70. An award letter from SSI or SSDI is required. Parents of a child with a vision impairment may receive a desktop computer, a flat screen monitor and peripherals for \$50 or a laptop computer with the same software for \$70. A letter of recommendation from the student's Teacher of the Visually Impaired is required. The letter must indicate that the child needs a computer and can benefit from having it, but that obtaining a computer at their regular cost of \$110 would create a financial burden for the family.

A program called Talking Typing Teacher is also available for part of this grant from Marvelsoft for a fee of \$10. This program is highly recommended for computer users.

The company has discovered that a child who can press the spacebar may be able to use the computer with the proper training, special software and USB connections.

All computers have a 2-year warranty. Purchase orders are not accepted. CFTB does not recommend and rarely approves a laptop computer for people who use the Magic screen reader because the screen is not large enough.

CFTB accepts credit cards and will accept payments through PayPal. For additional information, contact the Customer Service Department at Computers for the Blind by calling 214-340-6328. Please leave only one message and our staff will return your call within two days of receipt. You can also visit our website at computersfortheblind.net.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF THE GARDEN STATE CHAPTER**By Ryan Stevens, Garden State Chapter President**

Greetings from the Garden State Chapter, based in Cherry Hill! We're honored to be asked to provide recipes for the Spring 2017 issue of *The Sounding Board*. Our members are proud to share their favorite offerings for your future endeavors in the kitchen. All of us in the chapter hope you try them and enjoy them.

CHILI**Submitted by Brian Mackey**

Editor's Note: *Brian Mackey lives in Medford and is the Garden State Chapter secretary, as well as the New Jersey Affiliate treasurer. This chili recipe, which he learned at the Louisiana Center for the Blind, serves 4 - 6 people.*

Ingredients

1 lb. ground beef	1 package of chili mix (any kind)
½ onion, diced	Water, amount as noted on chili mix package
1 can of diced tomatoes	1 can baked beans
Shredded cheddar or Mexican cheese	

Directions

1. Brown ground beef with diced onions until done.
2. Drain off excess grease and rinse with hot water if necessary.
3. Drain tomatoes and save liquid as part of water amount in the chili mix.
4. Add tomatoes, chili mix and water, and cook down for about 5 minutes.
5. Add beans and continue to cook until beans are warm.
6. Sprinkle each individual serving with cheese. Serve with crackers or cornbread.

PASTA PRIMAVERA WITH SHRIMP**Submitted by Liz Morgan**

Editor's Note: *Liz Morgan is from Vineland. She is the youngest member of the chapter, having joined us when she was still a student in the LEAD Program. She learned to make the pasta dish when she attended the Joseph Kohn Training Center.*

Ingredients

12 oz. package of fettuccine	1-1/2 cups whipping cream
5 tbsp. butter	¼ to ½ teaspoons of salt
½ cup finely chopped onion	Dash of pepper
2 to 3 garlic cloves, minced	2 to 3 cups of grated parmesan cheese
1-1/2 lbs. cooked large shrimp	5 cups broccoli flowerets, cooked

Directions

1. Cook fettuccine in water to desired doneness according to package directions.
2. In a large skillet, melt 3 tablespoons of the butter and sauté onions and garlic until tender.
3. Add shrimp, sauté for 2 to 3 minutes or until thoroughly heated.
4. Remove shrimp from skillet and keep warm.
5. Add 2 tablespoons of butter and the cream and heat until butter melts.
6. Stir in salt, parmesan cheese and pepper
7. In large sauce pan, combine fettuccine, broccoli and cream.
8. Place fettuccine mixture on warm serving platter, and spoon shrimp over top.

EASY BAKED SALMON GOOD ENOUGH FOR GUESTS

Submitted by Annemarie Cook

Editor's Note: *Annemarie Cook lives in Southampton and was elected to the chapter board this past August. She has been with NFB since 1992. She is a 2009 graduate of Promise Culinary School in New Brunswick and welcomes e-mails about cooking as a blind person. This recipe makes one serving per salmon steak.*

Ingredients

One 5 to 6 ounce fresh salmon
steak/filet, bones removed at the
market, wild is best

1 to 3 teaspoons of spicy brown
mustard (or other type of prepared
mustard if you prefer)
1 tablespoon of Panko Bread Crumbs
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. Keep salmon wrapped as it was when it came from the store. Let it come to room temperature. It should not be warm or ice cold; room temp will help ensure that the fish will cook evenly.
2. Preheat oven to 425°F. Coat cooking surfaces of baking dish or sheet with vegetable spray.
3. Open salmon package on a clean surface. Sprinkle each steak with a pinch of salt and pepper; put about a teaspoon to tablespoon of your prepared mustard on each steak. Then, using your clean fingers, spread on all four surfaces of the fish.
4. Wash your hands with soap and water and dry. Shake Panko crumbs into the cupped palm of one hand and then coat the salmon steaks using the other hand. Arrange the breaded salmon steaks in the prepared baking pan; don't let the salmon pieces touch each other. Bake for 20-25 minutes.

FRUIT COBBLER**Submitted by Ann Marie Harris**

Editor's Note: Anne Marie Harris lives in Pitman. She joined the chapter three years ago and serves as the chairperson of our Nominating Committee. This recipe comes from her husband Tim's great aunt. Tim is also a member of the chapter.

Ingredients

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|--------------------------------|---|
| 1 cup of sugar | 1 cup of milk, whole or 2% |
| 1 stick of margarine or butter | 1 cup self-rising flour (no substitute) |
| 1 can of fruit pie filling | |

Directions

1. Press margarine into 9x9 glass baking dish, covering bottom.
2. Empty pie filling into baking dish; use the back of a spoon to spread butter on top.
3. In small mixing bowl mix milk, sugar & flour until smooth (texture will be like pancake batter).
4. Pour mixture over pie filling in baking dish.
5. Place baking dish on cookie sheet in center of top rack.
6. Bake 35 minutes or until golden brown on top.
7. Let cool at least 30 minutes before cutting. Serve with Cool Whip or vanilla ice cream.

BANANA CREAM PIE**This family recipe is submitted by Liz Morgan****Ingredients**

- 2 medium ripe bananas, sliced
- 1 6-ounce ready-to-use reduced fat graham cracker crumb crust
- 2-1/2 cups of cold fat-free milk
- 2 4-serving pkgs. of JELL-O vanilla fat-free, sugar-free instant pudding
- 1 pkg. of JELL-O fat-free, sugar-free banana cream pudding
- 2 cups of thawed Cool Whip fat-free whipped topping, divided

Directions

1. Place half of the banana slices on bottom of pie crust. Set the other half aside.
2. Pour milk into large bowl. Add the dry pudding mixes. Beat with wire whisk for 2 minutes or until well blended and thick. Gently stir in 1 cup of the Cool Whip.
4. Spoon one half of the pudding mixture into the crust.
5. Top with remaining banana slices and cover with the remaining pudding mixture.
6. Refrigerate for at least 3 hours or until set and thickened.
7. Serve topped with the remaining 1 cup of whipped cream.

NFBNJ CONTACT INFORMATION

National Federation of the Blind National Center

President Mark Riccobono 410-659-9314 officeofthepresident@nfb.org

NFB State Affiliate

President Joseph Ruffalo 973-743-0075 nfbnj1@verizon.net
1st Vice President Mary Jo Partyka 609-888-5459 choirnfb@gmail.com
Secretary Alice Eaddy 856-765-0601 nfbnj.secretary@aol.com
Treasurer Brian Mackey 609-953-6988 bmackey88@gmail.com
Board Members Rebecca Bryant 973-732-6559 rirvin14@optonline.net
 Linda DeBerardinis 856-735-5559 ljdeber3@comcast.net
 Jane Degenshein 973-736-5785 jdegen16@comcast.net
 Dan Facchini 201-906-8655 danfb@verizon.net
 Mary Fernandez 732-857-7004 trillian551@gmail.com
 Linda Melendez 732-421-7063 lindamelendez220@gmail.com

NFBNJ Chapters – Meeting dates, times & available at www.nfbnj.org

At Large Joe Ruffalo 973-743-0075 Nfbnj1@verizon.net
Capital Mary Jo Partyka 609-888-5459 choirnfb@gmail.com
Central Jersey Mac Biggers 801-916-9753 macbiggers@yahoo.com
Garden State Ryan Stevens 856-240-1497 RYSteve@comcast.net
Northeast Dan Facchini 201-906-8655 danfb@verizon.net
Northern Rebecca Bryant 973-732-6559 rirvin14@optonline.net
South Jersey Shore Anthony Lanzilotti 609-361-3038 Tti777@gmail.com

NFBNJ Divisions

Blind Students Vee Gaspa 434-989-1868 Veronica.gaspa@student.shu.edu
Braille Division Mary Jo Partyka 609-888-5459 choirnfb@gmail.com
Deaf-Blind Division Alice Eaddy 856-765-0601 Cheiro_alice@aol.com
Diabetes Action Network Rebecca Bryant 973-732-6559 Rirvin14@optonline.net
Guide Dog Users Dan Facchini 201-906-8655 danfb@verizon.net
Parents of Blind Children Carol Castellano 973-377-0976 blindchildren@verizon.net
Senior Blind Jane Degenshein 973-736-5785 Jdegen16@comcast.net
Technology Jane Degenshein 973-736-5785 Jdegen16@comcast.net

Programs, Projects & Committees

<i>Adopt Adaptive Equipment</i>	Joe Ruffalo	973-743-0075	Nfbnj1@verizon.net
<i>BELL Academy</i>	Mary Jo Partyka	609-888-5459	choirnfb@gmail.com
<i>Blind Children's Resource Center</i>	Carol Castellano	973-377-0976	blindchildren@verizon.net
<i>Blind Merchants/ Entrepreneurs</i>	Dan Facchini	201-906-8655	danfb@verizon.net
<i>Braille Mentoring</i>	Mary Jo Partyka	609-888-5459	choirnfb@gmail.com
<i>GreenDrop</i>	Linda DeBerardinis	856-735-5559	Ljdeber3@comcast.net
<i>HAVA Liaison</i>	Rebecca Bryant	973-732-6559	Rirvin14@optonline.net
	Anthony Lanzilotti	609-361-3038	Tti777@gmail.com
<i>KNFB Reader Liaison</i>	Rick Fox	973-743-6107	Richardfox1@comcast.net
<i>Legislative Coordinator</i>	Ryan Stevens	856-240-1497	RYSteve@comcast.net
	Anthony Lanzilotti	609-361-3038	Tti777@gmail.com
<i>Liability Insurance</i>	Phil Harrison	609-545-8575	pbharrison39@comcast.net
<i>Marketing Consultant</i>	Amo Musharraf	732-821-1691	Amo.musharraf@outlook.com
<i>Membership Engagement</i>	Rick Fox	973-743-6107	Richardfox1@comcast.net
<i>NFB-NEWSLINE®</i>	Jane Degenshein	973-736-5785	Jdegen16@comcast.net
<i>PAC Plan Coordinator</i>	Brian Mackey	609-953-6988	Bmackey88@gmail.com
<i>Parliamentarian</i>	Ryan Stevens	856-240-1497	RYSteve@comcast.net
<i>Public Relations/Press Corp</i>	Alice Eaddy	856-765-0601	Cheiro_alice@aol.com
<i>Resolutions Committee</i>	Ryan Stevens	856-240-1497	RYSteve@comcast.net
<i>Scholarship Committee</i>	Mary Fernandez	732-857-7004	trillian551@gmail.com
<i>Social Media Coordinator</i>	Alice Eaddy	856-765-0601	Cheiro_alice@aol.com
<i>Sounding Board</i>	Kathy Gabry	201-998-9427	Specialk38@aol.com
	Mary Jo Partyka	609-888-5459	choirnfb@gmail.com
	Barbara Shalit	201-213-2885	barbart@tullensound.com
<i>Spanish Committee</i>	Rosa Santiago	201-892-6946	rosa.santiago901@gmail.com
<i>Sports & Recreation</i>	Linda Melendez	732-421-7063	lindamelendez220@gmail.com
<i>Vehicle Donation Program</i>	Andrew Rees	732-659-6002	amrees567@gmail.com
<i>Webmaster</i>	Brian Mackey	609-953-6988	Bmackey88@gmail.com
<i>White Cane Committee</i>	Jane Degenshein	973-736-5785	Jdegen16@comcast.net
	Brian Mackey	609-953-6988	Bmackey88@gmail.com

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CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB AT

www.nfbnj.org www.blindchildren.org

To receive *The Sounding Board* and other information via e-mail,
please contact Alice Eaddy at nfbnj.secretary@aol.com