Fall 2021 Buckeye Bulletin

A publication of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio

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The National Federation of the Blind knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise 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 of Ohio is a 501(c)3 consumer organization comprised of blind and sighted people committed to changing what it means to be blind. Though blindness is still all too often a tragedy to those who face it, we know from our personal experience that with training and opportunity it can be reduced to the level of a physical nuisance. We work to see that blind people receive the services and training to which they are entitled and that parents of blind children receive the advice and support they need to help their youngsters grow up to be happy, productive adults. We believe that first-class citizenship means that people have both rights and responsibilities, and we are determined to see that blind people become first-class citizens of these United States, enjoying their rights and fulfilling their responsibilities. The most serious problems we face have less to do with our lack of vision than with discrimination based on the public’s ignorance and misinformation about blindness. Join us in educating Ohioans about the abilities and aspirations of Ohio’s blind citizens. We are changing what it means to be blind.

The NFB of Ohio has eight local chapters, one for at-large members, and special divisions for diabetics, merchants, students, seniors, guide dog users, and members of communities of faith. This newsletter appears three times a year and is circulated by email, posted on NFB-NEWSLINE®, our digitized newspaper-reading service by phone, and can be read or downloaded from our website, www.nfbohio.org. For information about the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio or to make address changes or be added to the mailing list, call (440) 774-8077 or email barbara.pierce9366@gmail.com. For information about NFB-NEWSLINE, our free digitized newspaper-reading service, call (866) 504-7300. Local NEWSLINE numbers are: 330-247-1241 (Akron), 330-409-1900 (Canton), 513-297-1521 (Cincinnati), 216-453-2090 (Cleveland), 614-448-1673 (Columbus), 937-963-1000 (Dayton), 567-242-5112 (Lima), 567-333-9990 (Mansfield), 740-370-6828 (Portsmouth), 937-717-3900 (Springfield), 419-806-1100 (Toledo), and 330-259-9570 (Youngstown).

Dream Makers Circle

You can help build a future of opportunity for the blind by becoming a member of our Dream Makers Circle. Your legacy gift to the National Federation of the Blind or the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio can be made in the form of a will or living trust or an income-generating gift or by naming us as the beneficiary of a retirement plan, IRA, pension, or a life insurance policy. You can designate a specific amount, a percentage, or list NFB as one of several beneficiaries. For additional information contact Patti Chang at (410) 659-9314, extension 2422 or at pchang@nfb.org.

The National Federation of the Blind uses car donations to improve the education of blind children, distribute free white canes, help veterans, and much more. We have partnered with Vehicles for Charity to process donated vehicles. Please call toll-free (855) 659-9314, and a representative can make arrangements, or you can donate online by visiting [www.nfb.org/vehicledonations](http://www.nfb.org/vehicledonations).

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# **From the President’s Deskby Richard Payne**

I hope this 2021 Fall Newsletter finds all affiliate members in great health and in Federation spirit. This is not the original message I wanted to write in this issue, but it is definitely fitting for the ongoing crisis in the world right now.

As we contend with the ongoing pandemic, leaders can easily fall into the trap of waiting to act for the situation to clarify and downplaying the threat in order to reassure people. It turns out that this instinct means failure during a crisis. We have recently made several decisions that enabled our membership to stay connected, which in my opinion is part of what we should be doing.

The speed and scope of the coronavirus crisis pose extraordinary challenges for leaders in today’s vital institutions, especially when we depend on our ability to have personal contact with others. It is surely easy to understand why so many people have missed opportunities for decisive action and honest communication. But it is a mistake to think that failure of leadership is all we can expect in these grim times.

“Consider Adam Silver, the commissioner of the National Basketball Association (NBA), who—way back on March 11, 2020—took the then-surprising step of suspending the professional basketball league for the season. Silver’s decision was one of the earliest high-profile responses to the virus outside China. He delivered it at a time of great uncertainty; coincidentally, March 11 was the day that the World Health Organization formally designated the coronavirus a pandemic.”

In the same spirit the NFB-O board of directors also made a very difficult decision to go virtual with our upcoming events. Some of us would have attended the in-person Columbus Seminar and state convention, but we have a great responsibility to the entire membership. I have received several emails and calls that blame me for this decision. Nevertheless, I was elected to lead the affiliate, so I accept the responsibility and the criticism for this decision.

I am also concerned about attendance for the convention. If you recall, we have had a large turn-out for the last few conventions even after the national and state conventions moved to the Zoom platform. it is easy for us to assume that the membership is just sitting around, waiting for the virus to be over. But we say all the time that the blind community is just part of society, so we have to deal with the crisis just like others.

We can hope that the old norm will return; however, currently that is not the case. So to do the business of the Federation and continue to build the membership will require a monumental effort from all of us. So let’s get to work on our legislative bills, community engagement, policy advocacy, and celebrating the 75th birthday of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio. Let’s go build the Federation!

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# **THE DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION 2021BY SUZANNE TURNER**

Editor’s note: Suzanne Turner is vice president of the NFB of Ohio. She also chairs the convention planning committee. After investing months of planning for an in-person convention this November, she has accepted the covid handwriting on the wall and changed gears to organize a virtual convention. This is what she says:

Happy birthday, National Federation of the Blind of Ohio. You are 75 in this year of 2021. We honor and celebrate your outstanding accomplishments, innovation, and advocacy. Through your members’ active participation you have continued to keep our pledge by fighting for equality, opportunity, and security for the blind. Without you blind Ohioans would not have the opportunity to witness confident blind people living the lives they want, so we salute you and invite anyone who has interest or concerns for the blind to come and help us celebrate your birthday. More details are below.

You are cordially invited to a birthday party at the Ohio annual state convention. The theme this year is “back to the basics and engaging the future.” the location and time of this grand event is anywhere and everywhere on November 5 and 6, 2021. We will shine bright like a diamond because it is Ohio’s 75th anniversary.

Considering the ongoing impact and wide-ranging effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 state convention will be held virtually. Registration is now open and free. Go to nfbohio.org to register now.

Come one and all and join us as we celebrate on a virtual platform this year. We will expand our circle of participation, connecting blind Americans, not only across the state, but anywhere and everywhere for what we expect will be the largest gathering of blind people in the history of Ohio.

All events will be held on the Zoom Platform and in the Eastern Standard Time Zone.

**Zoom Meeting Connection Information**

One meeting link will be used for the Board Meeting, General Sessions, and the Banquet. Closed Captioning will be available in these sessions.

Here are helpful commands:

Phone command to mute and unmute: \*6

Phone command to raise and lower hand for speaking: \*9

PC shortcut to mute and unmute: Alt A, Mac command: command shift A

PC shortcut to raise and lower hand: Alt Y, Mac command: option Y

**Zoom Meeting Etiquette**

Keep in mind that, when joining convention, you will be placed on mute. If you wish to speak and are not on the agenda, you may raise your hand. A host will get to you as soon as possible; do not unmute yourself until you are prompted to do so. If you are on the agenda, the host will unmute you as we approach your presentation. Stay on mute if you are not a presenter. If on video, please do not eat or move about in any way that could be a distraction to others watching. We recommend that you not activate your video unless you are speaking.

About the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio: The NFB-O is a 501 (c)3 not for profit organization and a founding affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind. We are proud to be an integral part of the oldest and largest organization of the blind in the United States. We are a diverse group of people dedicated to changing what it means to be blind. Our members work tirelessly to break down the legal, social, and personal barriers to living the lives we want.

The mission of the National Federation of the Blind is to achieve widespread emotional acceptance and intellectual understanding that the real problem of blindness is not the loss of eyesight but the misconceptions and lack of information which exist. We do this by bringing blind people together to share successes, to support each other in times of failure, and to create imaginative solutions.

Those who pre-register for the Ohio convention by October 27, 2021, will be eligible for door prizes. Door prizes will be drawn during pre-convention festivities, general sessions, and the banquet. Registration is required, and you must be present to win. When your name is called, please virtually raise your hand or email ohioprize@gmail.com within two minutes, which is the designated window of time to claim your prize. Also, if you would like to donate a door prize, please alert Ohio’s door prize facilitator, Annette Lutz, at president.capital.nfboh@gmail.com.

Resolutions: All resolutions must be submitted to the Resolutions Committee chair, Barbara Pierce, no later than October 24. Resolutions will be considered at the general session on Saturday, November 6, 2021.

If you plan to vote in the election or on issues brought to the Convention, you must opt in to vote by registering your name, the phone number you will use, your chapter or division, and an email address at the NFB of Ohio website, nfbohio.org. You will receive an email acknowledgement. This means that you can call in to vote. You must opt in to vote by October 24. I reiterate that this is a separate procedure from registering for the convention, which you must have already done before going to the website to opt in.

The Ohio affiliate is pleased to have Everette Bacon as our national representative for 2021. We extend a warm welcome to Everette, who is a national leader in the National Federation of the Blind.

Everette Bacon was born in Huntington Beach, California. At the age of five he was diagnosed with cone-rod dystrophy, a condition which had run in his family on his mother’s side for thirteen generations, causing rapid-onset blindness primarily in female family members. Despite the diagnosis Everette’s family took the advice of teachers and medical experts, believing (or, more accurately, hoping) that, since Everette was male and his vision was not deteriorating rapidly like that of other family members, he was unlikely to go blind. As a result Everette did not learn Braille or other alternative techniques during his school years. Looking back, Everette says, his mother and other family members wish that they had encouraged him to learn Braille and other blindness skills.

When Everette was about eighteen, his entire family moved to Texas. Everette pursued a degree in church music at Dallas Baptist University. He jokes that he was pushed toward music because “you know, blind people sing.” His first job was teaching a seventh grade choir, but he found teaching not to his liking. Searching for other employment in order to earn money to help his wife through medical school, Everette ultimately accepted a management position with Blockbuster Video in 1997. He was very successful in this position, winning several awards and steady promotions. By 2004 he was managing ten stores in the Houston area.

Everette’s eye condition began to worsen, but instead of giving up, he adapted by using alternative techniques. “I started carrying a cane, mainly for identification, but I was using it when I felt I needed it.” “I was never embarrassed or ashamed about becoming blind because I grew up around blind people, adapting was something you just became accustomed to doing.” However, when he asked for reasonable accommodations from his employer, instead of granting these accommodations, Blockbuster terminated his employment despite his outstanding record. The company even went so far as to describe Everette’s conduct as “fraudulent,” implying that he had deceived the company about his capabilities, even though he had previously been praised and awarded for his work.

This experience traumatized Everette and his family. His wife, mother, and other family members sent angry emails to everyone they could; urging readers to avoid shopping at Blockbuster based on discrimination against the blind. One of these emails found its way to Scott LaBarre, the president of the National Federation of the Blind of Colorado and a successful disability rights attorney. Scott took Everette’s case, and ultimately Everette received a settlement from Blockbuster. More important, though, he learned about the National Federation of the Blind and the many battles the organization has fought in the effort to advance and protect the civil rights of blind people. “I had heard of the Federation and been told that they were militant,” Everette says, “but my experience taught me the importance of our advocacy.” There are so many reasons to be proud of who we are as blind people, and the Federation has paved the way for our climb to the top of the mountain of civil rights!

In 2004 Everette and his wife, Dr. Angela Peters, moved to Salt Lake City, Utah. Everette became involved in the Utah affiliate of the NFB and developed what he describes as life-changing relationships with dedicated Federationists like Nick Schmitroth, Karl Smith, and Deja Powell. These friends helped Everette improve his blindness skills and grow in the movement. Everette was also looking for new employment opportunities in Utah and heard about a job opening as a Blindness Skills Teacher at the Utah Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Everette remembers speaking with Ray Martin about the fact that he knew nothing about teaching blind people; Martin told him that being blind was the most important qualification. The agency supported Everette in his pursuit of a master’s degree in rehabilitation. He went from teaching technology to supervising the technology staff and now serves as the agency’s field services coordinator, overseeing all of the agency’s technology and employment services, supervising a staff of nine.

Everette began advocating for Utah’s blind residents with an effort to encourage a prominent local cinema chain to incorporate audio description technology into its theaters so that blind people who wanted to experience movies with audio description could do so. An avid movie fan with an extensive collection dating from his Blockbuster days, he believes that audio description can enable blind people to connect more easily with their sighted peers when discussing entertainment. “One of the most valuable lessons I have learned from the NFB is the understanding that blending into society is an important skill. Being able to relate to our sighted colleagues about movies, television, politics, and sports are excellent paths to opportunities that help change common misconceptions about blindness.”

In 2012 Everette was elected president of the [National Federation of the Blind of Utah](https://nfb.org/about-us/state-affiliates/utah). He is proud of the affiliate’s successful advocacy for a state mini-508 law requiring accessibility of new state websites and procurement of accessible electronic and information technology, subject to fines when agencies fail to comply. His advocacy for accessibility made him an outstanding candidate to serve as the Federation’s representative on the Disability Advisory Committee to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). He was nominated for appointment to this committee by President Riccobono and duly appointed to serve by the FCC in 2015. Everette is also chair of the Utah Library Advisory Board. He also sits on the Utah Assistive Technology Council and the Library of Congress’ National Library Service for the Blind’s Audio Equipment Advisory Committee (Western Region). He was unanimously elected to the Board of Directors of the National Federation of the Blind at the organization’s 2015 convention. He and Angela and their two dogs live in Salt Lake City, but Everette still roots for his beloved Dallas Cowboys.

Convention Highlights and Activities:

**Rookie Roundup:** Wednesday, November 3 at 6:30

**Exhibit Seminar:** Thursday, November 4, at 3:00 pm
Lab Computers, Inc, Ohio Dept. of Insurance, Vispero, Vanda Pharmaceuticals, and more: these and more vendors will be on hand to demonstrate their high-tech and low-tech products for blind and visually impaired users.

**Happy Hour:** Thursday, November 4 at 7:00 pm
Music, BYOB, Door Prizes, and More

Here are a few convention opportunities:

* Network with blind people from all parts of the country.
* Encourage blind people to expand their knowledge of resources.
* Attend workshops designed to promote leadership, membership-building, and successful employment strategies and attitudes.
* Attend the banquet and cheer three blind students as they receive scholarships.
* Visit the **Hospitality Room**, which will be open virtually to mix and mingle Friday, November 5, from 9:00 to 10:15 am and on Saturday, November 6, from 12:00 noon to 1:45 P.M.
* Enter a drawing when you register online to win one hundred dollars by donating ten dollars or more to assist with the work of the Ohio affiliate. Each ten dollars donated will add your name that many times into the pot.

The gavel will fall on Friday, November 5, promptly at 2:00 pm for the opening ceremonies and general session. We will have a series of speakers covering a wide range of topics, including a report from our Ohio president, a welcome to Columbus by the Capital Chapter, our national representative, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), and educational and inspirational presentations. Annette Lutz will have exciting door prizes as well.

Friday evening will see a flurry of activities. The At-Large Chapter, the Ohio Community Service Committee, the Ohio Association of Blind Students, and the Ohio Association of Blind Merchants will hold their annual business meetings that evening. The Nominations and Resolutions Committee meetings will also take place.

Saturday morning, November 6, we will begin with a breakfast meeting of the Diabetes Action Network (DAN) and its business meeting at 7:30 a.m. If you are interested in becoming a member of this division, you should strongly consider attending.

The gavel falls again promptly at 9:00 am to continue general sessions. We will break at 12 noon for lunch. The NFB of Ohio Senior Division and the Ohio Association of Guide Dog Users (OAGDU) will conduct their annual business meetings. The afternoon includes workshops on promoting leadership, membership building, and successful employment strategies. Therefore, this year we are offering an exciting opportunity for businesses, nonprofits, and employers to attend the ability seminar that will offer awareness of the tools and techniques that members of the blind community use to interact in formal and informal settings; to provide descriptions of how blind people perform professional tasks in paid or volunteer work; and Explain the vital role that a positive philosophy and attitudes about blindness play in the development of capable successful blind individuals. Finally, chapters and divisions will also have the opportunity to conduct fundraisers during the afternoon as well.

Saturday night’s banquet will surely be the highlight of the convention. This is an opportunity for fellowship and for all of us to share a meal. Our keynote speaker for the evening will be our national representative Everette Bacon. We will also have our Gavel Awards ceremony to celebrate chapter and division accomplishments from the past year. The finale of the banquet will be the announcement of the 2021 scholarship winners and the annual Money for the Movement fundraiser that supports Ohio’s programs and services. Be sure to order or prepare your convention banquet meal before you come into the Zoom Room. Don’t worry, the night is not over–plans are in the works for an exciting after-banquet activity.

Finally, our Convention Planning Committee is committed to making your convention experience memorable and enjoyable. Therefore our goal is to bring you the most up-to-date information on the convention. So please feel free to contact the committee chair, Suzanne Turner, with any questions, concerns, or requests for accommodations at SMTurner.234@gmail.com. Anette Lutz , president, along with the Capital Chapter will be ready to greet you bright and early at 8:30 am on Friday morning, November 5, 2021. Please notify Anette Lutz of any donated door prizes. You can email her at president.capital.nfboh@gmail.com. Eric Duffy and the tech team will ensure that all technological issues are addressed. Consult the convention agenda on how to connect to all meetings and how to contact the team.

The Ohio President, Richard Payne, along with our affiliate Board of Directors, will be on hand to welcome you. We are excited and looking forward to seeing you at the 2021 75th annual virtual Ohio convention. Together, with love, hope, and determination, the members of the National Federation of the Blind transform dreams into reality. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back.

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# **NFBO Scholarship Class 2021by Jordy Stringer**

Editor’s note: Jordy Stringer chairs the affiliate Scholarship Committee. Below he introduces this year’s scholarship class, This is what he says:

This year the NFB-O Scholarship Committee was comprised of Suzanne Turner, Cassandra Jones, and Jordy Stringer. It was our pleasure and honor to be able to interact with such a great number of scholars. We believe in all of them, And it is our great pleasure to introduce all of you to three students who have not allowed the pandemic and all of its limitations to determine how high they fly. These are very deserving students, and we want you to embrace them and share the love of the National Federation of the Blind.

First is Camryn Gatuso. Camryn attends Stark State, her current major is sociology, and she is also considering early childhood studies. Camryn writes in her essay: “What makes me stand out from the crowd is that I am always willing to listen to everybody else's advice. I am also very modest and have a strong level of empathy, especially for people who are less fortunate than I am, are facing challenges in life, or need somebody to talk to. I believe that everyone deserves to be heard and understood.”

Next is Marieke Michelle Davis. In the fall Marieke will attend the Columbus College of Art and Design. She has earned her way on to the dean's list at the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts. She has also been awarded the Herberger IDEA Showcase Audience Choice Award for her creation of print and audio versions of the graphic series, "Ember Black" (2016

Marieke reflects: “As someone whose high school vocational rehab counselor once declared that, since I am visually impaired, I could never become an artist, I know the value of encouragement, inclusion, and empowerment. I hope that, someday, I may make a difference in our enjoyment of art and our understanding of one another’s needs, capabilities, and potential.”

Finally we introduce Jackson Schwoebel. Jackson will be attending Cleveland State University this fall and will double major in communications and English. He has many interests, including advocating for the rights of the blind; he attended his first Washington Seminar in 2016. Jackson also aspires to be a cane travel instructor. Schwoebel has worked for the Colorado Center for the Blind's Summer youth program and has also been honored as a member of his school's dean's list.

Jackson says: “When I first lost the little sight I had, I did not know what to do. My family did not know what to do either. For a while we looked around for other organizations and people that I could meet so that my family and I could meet other blind individuals. This was the moment when I met the National Federation of the Blind. Since meeting the National Federation of the Blind, my whole outlook on blindness has changed. I know that blindness is not the characteristic that defines me and that I can do anything with the right skills and training.”

We were able to select only three finalists, and we have many more applications than awards to give. Any applicant who did not make this list should strongly consider applying during the next application period. You all are amazingly accomplished, and you should take pride in that. We will look forward to welcoming the three finalists at our up-coming state convention, and we look forward to seeing all of you as well.

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# **Legislative Updateby Eric Duffy**

Editor’s note: Eric Duffy chairs the NFB of Ohio’s Legislative Committee. Covid forced us to cancel our Columbus Seminar in September, but the work goes on. Having missed our chance to visit in person all the Ohio legislative offices, we are even more challenged to contact our representatives and senators to discuss our legislative program. This is what Eric has to say about our bills:

From time to time I hear people say you put out a lot of information about legislation. The truth is that we probably don’t put out enough. I think the legislative work that we do is some of the most important work that faces us. We can and do work to change attitudes about blindness, and that’s important. But it is also important that we change laws and policy. The two really go hand in hand. To my mind they are equally important.

Here is the fact sheet we have developed this year for our parental rights legislation:

**A BILL PROTECTING PARENTAL RIGHTS FOR THE DISABLED**

The blind and all disabled Ohioans need your help to end discrimination now. Support HB352, Reps. Crawley and Ray in the House SB202 Sens. Antonio and Hackett in the Senate

**Summary**:

Disabled people continue to face unfair, preconceived, and unnecessary societal biases and antiquated attitudes about their ability to parent children successfully. They face these biases and preconceived attitudes in family and dependency law proceedings, where custody and visitation are at stake, and in public and private adoption, guardianship, and foster care proceedings. Because of these biases and attitudes, children of disabled parents are being removed from their parents’ care unnecessarily or are being restricted from enjoying meaningful time with their parents. Children are being denied the opportunity to enjoy the experience of living in loving homes with disabled parents or disabled care providers. Newborns have been ripped away from their parents before leaving the hospital because a social worker assumes that a blind person cannot care for an infant. Blind parents have been denied custody of children in divorce cases because the sighted spouse claims that the blind parent obviously cannot keep the child safe despite the fact that blind people around the state and throughout the nation successfully care for their children every day. The Legislature must establish procedural safeguards that require adherence to the Americans with Disabilities Act and respect for the due process and equal protection rights of blind and disabled parents or prospective blind and disabled parents in child welfare, foster care, family law, and adoption.

**Protections and Prohibitions:**

1. A parent’s disability shall not serve as a basis for denial or restriction of visitation or custody in family or dependency law cases when the visitation or custody is determined to be otherwise in the best interests of the child.
2. A prospective parent’s disability shall not serve as a basis for denial of his or her participation in public or private adoption when the adoption is determined to be otherwise in the best interests of the child.
3. An individual’s disability shall not serve as a basis for denial of foster care or guardianship when the appointment is determined to be otherwise in the best interests of the child.
4. Where a parent or prospective parent’s disability is alleged to have a detrimental impact on a child, the party raising the allegation bears the burden of proving by clear and convincing evidence that the disability-connected behavior endangers or will likely endanger the health, safety, or welfare of the child.
5. If this burden is met, the disabled parent or prospective parent shall have the opportunity to demonstrate how the implementation of supportive parenting services can alleviate any concerns that have been raised. The court may require that such supportive parenting services be put in place, with an opportunity within a reasonable period of time to review the need for continuation of such services.
6. If a court determines that a disabled parent’s right to custody, visitation, foster care, guardianship, or adoption should be denied or limited in any manner, the court shall make specific written findings stating the basis for such a determination and why the provision of supportive parenting services is not a reasonable accommodation to prevent such denial or limitation.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO**: Call for swift action to move HB352 and SB202 through their respective chambers and to passage. Vote for the legislation in committee if appropriate and give it your full support when it reaches the floor.

For more information contact:

Eric Duffy, Legislative Director National Federation of the Blind of Ohio
614-377-9877
peduffy63@gmail.com

That is the information we will soon distribute to members of the Ohio General Assembly. What can you do to help? Call your state senator and representative and ask them to support this legislation. Write testimony in support of the legislation. We must protect the rights of blind and disabled parents. Can we really talk about that too much? I don’t think so.

Representative Richard Brown has reintroduced our accessible prescription labeling legislation. It will require Ohio pharmacies to provide accessible prescription labels on request. All too often blind and low vision patients fail to follow the dosing or other instructions for taking medication, simply because they can’t read the label. When this legislation has passed, it could actually save lives. What’s more important than that? Again, I don’t think we can talk about it too much. Let’s get this legislation passed now, and we will change what it means to be blind in Ohio.

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# **Editor’s Musingsby Barbara Pierce**

At the end of August the affiliate conducted leadership seminars to help chapter and division presidents do a better job of constructing their annual reports of what their groups had accomplished during the past year. The Ohio affiliate constitution stipulates that every chapter and division shall submit a report to the president summarizing their groups’ activities for the past year.

At least as far back as the early seventies we have conducted what we call the Gavel Award contest. We invite competing chapters and divisions to answer the questions in the contest form. Through the years this form has evolved until today it provides a pretty clear opportunity for participating groups to provide an accurate idea of their activities and accomplishments. We who led the seminar were surprised to discover how much of the information we were presenting seemed to be news to the participants. For that reason I have decided to use this column to summarize this information so that people who need to know it can refer to a document to help them in future.

We began by describing the three awards that Ohio presents when suitable candidates are nominated. The first is the Alfonso Smith Award presented to the blind person who has made significant contributions to the blind of Ohio. It is named for an early president of the affiliate who also served briefly on the National Federation of the blind Board of Directors, then known as the National Executive Board. The second award is the Ruth Garwood Award, named for the sighted sister of Ivan Garwood, the deaf blind treasurer of the affiliate for eleven years. It is presented to a sighted person, not necessarily a member of the NFB, who has done outstanding work of some kind to assist blind people across Ohio. Legislators and public figures of other kinds have won this award as well as sighted NFB members who have assisted blind people across the state. The final award is the Knall Garwood Award for long and loyal service to the affiliate. It is named after John Knall, a longtime second vice president and secretary of the affiliate and Ivan Garwood, mentioned above.

Now we come to the Gavel Award application. The first page contains a number of questions that help us to assess how much the chapter or division is growing and how active it is. After that there are eight questions all but one of which require a list of short answers. We want to know how the group promotes the goals, activities, and philosophy of the Federation; how its members work in the community and how they use the skills of blindness to demonstrate their independence; and how the group advocates for blind people in the community. We want to know whether and how the group has interacted with and supported other chapters and divisions, the state affiliate, and the national organization. We ask how much money the group has raised in the past year and how much assistance they have had from non-members in their fundraising. We also ask how much the group has contributed to the state affiliate and the national organization. These questions help us to understand how healthy and outward-looking the group is.

This year we have added a new question to assess how involved the chapter or division has been in the legislative activities of the Federation at both the state and national levels.

Finally we ask the group to tell us how it has grown in its efforts to become more active and constructive as a working unit of the NFB.

We sincerely urge every chapter and division to complete the Gavel Award report. It is an exercise designed to help the group evaluate its participation in the NFB. The deadline for submitting applications this year is October 1. Send them to Annette Lutz, chair of the Awards Committee.

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# **What Are Service Dogs?by Marianne Denning**

Editor’s note: Marianne Denning is a member of the NFB-O Board of Directors. She works hard on guide dog issues. Here is the first of several articles she is writing to help us understand guide dogs and the rights of their handlers:

I have been a guide dog handler for more than thirty years, and I have seen many changes in terminology and treatment of service animals. I am also the vice president of the Ohio Association of Guide Dog Users. We are here to help anyone who has been denied services in Ohio because of a guide dog. We will hold our annual meeting at the virtual state convention, and all are welcome.

In the 1990s, when I trained with my first dog, the only service dogs I was aware of were those for people who were blind, people with hearing impairments, and people with physical disabilities. Since that time there has been an explosion of service dogs and emotional support animals. The terminology and treatment of different types of animals has become very confusing to most people. In this article I will attempt to bring some order to the chaos.

According to the 2010 revision to the ADA and service animals, a service animal is any size dog that has been trained to perform specific tasks related to a person’s disability. They are not required to be certified or go through a professional training program. They are not required to wear a vest or other identification that indicates they are service dogs. They cannot be an emotional support or comfort animal because emotional support or comfort is not a specific task related to a person’s disability.

Some examples of service dogs include helping a person with a physical disability retrieve items, reminding a person with depression when to take medication, or licking the hand of a person with PTSD to alert them to an oncoming panic attack. Service dogs are generally allowed to go into places where pets can’t go. Examples include restaurants, shops, hospitals, and hotels. The ADA also applies to certain types of housing, including private and public university housing, public housing that is run by state, county, and city governments, and emergency shelters. The Fair Housing Act under Housing and Urban Development (HUD) may have different requirements.

The Air Carrier Access Act and not the ADA protects the rights of people with disabilities in air travel. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for administering the ADA in employment discrimination.

Under the ADA a person can ask two questions if he or she is not sure if the dog is a service dog. These questions are: Is the dog a service dog required because of a disability? What work or task has the dog been trained to perform? A person cannot ask for any documentation to prove that the dog is registered, licensed, or certified as a service animal. The questioner also cannot demand the handler to demonstrate the task the dog has been trained to perform or describe the nature of his or her disability. The handler can be asked to remove the dog when the dog is not housebroken or is out of control. No one can deny access because the service dog is a certain breed.

This only covers the civil rights of the person with a disability, and the ADA does not have any criminal penalties.

All 50 states have laws that authorize criminal prosecution when businesses or governmental agencies deny access or service of a person with a disability with a service dog. If I am denied service, I can contact the local law enforcement agency to help resolve the issue.

I have talked about service animals in this article. In the next **Buckeye Bulletin** I will talk about emotional support or comfort animals. If you have questions or want more information, please contact me at marianne@denningweb.com or by phone at (513) 607-6053.

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# **Good-Bye, Bobbyby Eric Duffy**

Editor’s note: Eric Duffy is secretary of the NFB of Ohio. Here is a touching story that helps to explain who Eric is and why he is a leader of the Federation:

It is hard to believe that I have been an active member of the National Federation of the Blind for a little more than thirty-six years. During most of that time I have been a proud member of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio. Over the years many of you have heard much of my story. You know much about my years while growing up as a blind child. Therefore I will not rehash many of the details. Suffice it to say that my family was very over-protective. That was certainly true of my parents. What I didn’t always appreciate at the time was that it was done out of love. If that was one form of love, my oldest brother Bobby showed me another form of love.

He was determined that he was going to show me that I did not need to be babied and over-protected. I was pretty young when my family took a trip to Washington, D.C. I was probably five or six years old at best. We took an elevator to the top of the Washington Monument. Bobby said that he was going to walk to the bottom. I said that I wanted to go with him. At that time I wanted to go where he went and do what he did. He said I couldn’t go with him. Of course I protested. I’m sure my protest came with some tears. He tried to explain how long the walk would be. I didn’t care. I didn’t have shoes on, and my feet were really going to hurt by the time we got to the bottom of the Monument. I didn’t care. Finally, he said no matter how much you cry, I’m not going to carry you. I didn’t believe him. I don’t have any idea how far down we were before I began asking him to carry me. He said no! I still didn’t believe him. I am sure I didn’t wait very long before turning on the tears. Despite the tears my next plea to be carried was met with a “Hell no! I told you I wasn’t going to carry you, and I’m not going to do it.”

I have no earthly idea of how long this particular bonding experience lasted, and that’s probably a good thing. What I do know, however, is that I had blisters on my feet by the time it was over. The cool water that my feet were soaked in felt great. For at least a few minutes, I had no desire to do whatever Bobby was going to do next. I also was not the only one who was unhappy with him. I remember him telling my parents, I told him I wasn’t going to carry him, and I didn’t. He will learn that, if he wants to do something, he will have to stay with it no matter how hard it gets.”

He took me hunting, but I won’t tell that story here. We went on motorcycle rides. I liked speed and adventure, but I won’t spend time talking about the times he put the pedal to the metal as they say, or how many times when at least two of the wheels on his car were not in contact with the road.

He lived in California most of his life. He is fourteen years older than I am. So he wasn’t around as much as I wanted him to be. But, when he was around, he insisted that I was going to learn to do things for myself. I fixed my own plate at meal time. I did many other things my mom wouldn’t normally let me do at home. She would very often say, “He’s going to make a mess.”

Bobby said, “Then he’ll learn to clean it up.”

“He might get hurt,” she would say.

“He might, but he might not. Either way he has to learn.”

When he was visiting, he insisted that I had to do the physical therapy he knew I should be doing. He was not going to take no for an answer. I could not completely straighten my left arm. He once handed my mom a fifty dollar bill. He told her to give it to me when I could completely straighten my arm. Back then, that was a good little bit of money. I never got that fifty, but it wasn’t because I didn’t try. He told me I could do it, and I believed I could.

He told me about blind people he met over the years and the kinds of things they were doing. Although I don’t remember much of that now, at the time I got the message. What I understood was that blind people were working and participating in everyday life independently and that I should expect to do the same. Although I had my doubts about what I might be able to do, he gave me hope. When I resisted the things he wanted me to do, he gave me a healthy dose of tough love.

Sometimes I didn’t want to do the things that he wanted me to do because I knew everything would go back to normal when he went back home. A few days before he was ready to leave, he would start singing “California, here I come; right back where I started from.” He never said good-bye when he left. He always said so long. When I asked him why that was, he said good-bye seemed too final, like we would never see each other again. In the spring of this year I told Bobby “Good-bye. We will not see each other again.” But the lessons he taught and the love he gave will always be with me. His love (especially the tough love) helped make me the person I am today. He planted the seeds of Federationism in me long before I ever heard of the National Federation of the Blind.

For much of my life I have known that I could never repay my brother for what he did for me. I often wondered if he knew how much he really did to help me build the strength, courage, and understanding of blindness that I needed to get through life. Three years ago I visited him and his family in Colorado. I explained to him very directly how much his love and support have meant to me throughout my life. I thanked him for all of that. When I left, we hugged and said I love you to each other. We did not say so long or good-bye. But I knew then that it really was good-bye for Bobby and me. I’m glad I got to see him one last time. I’m glad I got to thank him.

Who is the Bobby in your life? Who has helped you to become a stronger person? Who has helped you overcome many of the misconceptions and stereotypes about blindness? Who has told you, “You can,” when you believed you couldn’t? Thank him or her if it’s not too late. Good-bye, Bobby. Rest in peace. I will always love you, and I will always remember.

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# **Supplies 4 Scholarsby Patricia McPherson**

Editor’s note: Pat McPherson is treasurer of the Greater Akron Chapter. Here is her report on a heart-warming project that the chapter conducted this summer:

The NFB of Ohio--Greater Akron Chapter chose to do a project for community outreach called Supplies 4 Scholars. This project was started in mid June to donate school supplies to nine students with varying degrees of blindness.

All of the students received scented markers, no-roll crayons, tactile coloring books, erasers, pencil grips, pencils, pencil sharpeners, pencil pouches or boxes, paper (braille, bold lined, raised line, or wide ruled), highlighters, books (braille, large print, or braille with large print), tactile and braille rulers, no-spill water bottles, tissues, hand sanitizer, signature guides, and backpacks with a laptop sleeve. Some students requested special items like bold black 1 mm pencils, scented colored pencils, black bold 1 mm erasable pens, index cards, braille erasers, a Braille math geometry set, black bold markers, talking calculators, and pocket folders or 3-ring binders.

We held an event at Meadow View Park in Summit County on August 15 with lunch first: pizza, popcorn, cookies, and beverages. The highlight was presenting backpacks filled with supplies to the kids. Laughs and giggles could be heard all over the pavilion while they were checking out the loot in their backpacks. Various students reported that their favorite items were tactile or braille games or one of the supplies.

They were able to design their own bookmarks with various tactile or raised stickers. One game the kids played had them identify eight different See 3-D objects, and they were able to select an item to take home with them. There were also prizes for participation in the game. They seemed to enjoy the games, and we enjoyed watching them.

Thank you to chapter and affiliate members and friends who donated various supplies, lunch items, prizes, or games. A big thank you to Rolling Thunder OH CH 2 for donating a check for this heart-warming project.

We received many thanks, hugs, and comments of appreciation from the students and their families. It was a fun day enjoyed by all. It was such a success; we will continue to do this project.

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# **Meet the Versa Slateby Barbara Pierce**

My husband Bob gave me my birthday gift early this year. I had mentioned that I would like it, and he immediately ordered it from AT Guys. When it came a few days later, he asked me if I would like it immediately, so that is why I do not have to wait till November to use this remarkable little gadget.

It is not electronic. It is made of plastic, though the stylus has a magnet buried in it so that it sticks to the body of the Versa Slate. It is light blue plastic, and it measures 7.5 inches by 3 inches and about ¾ of an inch thick. It contains four twenty-cell lines. The top face feels like a standard slate. You write Braille just as you would using a slate and stylus, right to left and top to bottom. As you press the stylus into a cell to form a letter, you can feel the dot forming on the bottom face of the slate. As I say, you can write up to eighty characters. When you turn the slate over, you find four lines of very crisp Braille. The point of the stylus has pushed a pin up to form each dot.

When you wish to erase the Braille, you use four buttons ranged above the top line of cells and four buttons ranged across the line below the fourth line of cells. Each button controls half of two rows of cells. If you press a dot in error, you can use a finger nail to push the dot back in from the Braille side of the slate.

There are dots every five cells between rows one and two and between rows three and four. This makes it easy to find your place along each line of cells. Using a standard slate with paper, I find my place on the last line written by gently moving the stylus point around each cell until I find the last one written in. I cannot do this on the Versa Slate because the stylus point is not touching smooth paper in the positions where you have not pressed down to form a dot, but it is easy to feel where the Braille stops on the bottom of the Versa Slate.

The disadvantage of the Versa Slate is that you have to transfer the information to paper or computer before you can clear the dots. On the other hand, you can grab the Versa Slate, not worrying about fitting paper into the slate. It is very portable and convenient.

The Versa Slate was invented by a Korean, and it sells for $100. That is a bit stiff to equip my house and purse with the three or four Versa Slates that I think I could use. But this is a very slick little gadget, and it produces beautiful Braille. Anyone who writes Braille by hand will love it.

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# **THE CONSTITUTION OFTHE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF OHIO**

Adopted November 6, 1987
Amended November 7, 1998
Amended November 3, 2013

Editor’s note: In a recent leadership seminar the request was made to publish the current Ohio constitution so that members can keep it for their records. Here it is:

ARTICLE I. NAME

 The name of this organization is The Ohio Council of the Blind Inc. It shall do business under the trade name of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

 The purpose of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio is to serve as a vehicle for collective action for the blind of the state; to function as a mechanism through which the blind and interested sighted people can come together in local and statewide meetings to plan and carry out programs to improve the quality of life for the blind; to provide a means of collective action for parents of blind children; to promote the vocational, cultural, and social advancement of the blind; to achieve the integration of the blind into society on a basis of equality with the sighted; to take other action which will improve the overall condition and standard of living of the blind; to act as the Ohio affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind; and to support the National Federation of the Blind financially to the greatest extent possible.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

Section A. Admission to Membership

 At least a majority of the members of this organization must be blind. All members in good standing of local chapters or of divisions are automatically members of this organization with the right to vote, serve on committees, and speak on the floor.

Section B. Expulsion

 Any member, local chapter, or division may after an opportunity is presented for a hearing be expelled for violation of this Constitution or for conduct unbecoming to a member of the Federation by a majority of the members present and voting at any regular business session of this organization, or by a two thirds vote of the board of directors. If the action is to be taken by the board, there must be good cause, and a good faith effort must have been made to try to resolve the problem by discussion and negotiation.

 The state Convention may reinstate any person, chapter, or division that has been expelled unless such expulsion has been confirmed by the National Convention or by the board of directors of the National Federation of the Blind, in which event the person, chapter, or division may not be reinstated except by the National Convention or by the national board. Any person who believes that he or she or the chapter or division of which he or she is a member has been unjustly expelled from this organization may appeal to the board of directors of the National Federation of the Blind, which may in its discretion consider the matter and make a binding decision.

ARTICLE IV. LOCAL CHAPTERS AND DIVISIONS

Section A. Admission of Local Chapters and Divisions

 Any organized group desiring to become a local chapter or division of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio shall apply for affiliation by submitting to the president of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio a copy of its constitution and a list of the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of its members and elected officers. When the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio either in Convention assembled or by action of its board of directors shall have approved the application, it shall issue a charter of affiliation to the local chapter or division. Annually, on or before January 1, each local chapter or division shall provide to the secretary of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio a current list of the names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses when applicable of its members. At the same time the treasurer shall forward to the treasurer of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio the state dues for each member of the group. Upon written request by the president, a detailed financial report for the past year shall be provided within thirty (30 days). Each local chapter or division is charged a flat tax of $10. The financial year of this organization shall be the calendar year. As new members enter the local chapter or division, their names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses when applicable shall be sent without delay to the secretary of the state organization.

Section B. Requirements for Affiliation

 No group shall be accepted as a chapter or division and no group shall remain a chapter or division unless a majority of its voting members are blind, except in the case of the Parents Division. The president, the vice president (or vice presidents), and at least a majority of the group's executive committee or board of directors, except in the case of the Parents Division, must be blind. In the Parents Division sighted members may assume any position of leadership. The president of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio shall be ex officio a member of each local chapter and division.

Section C. Dissolution of Local Chapters and Divisions

 In the event of the dissolution of a local chapter or division, or if (for whatever reason) it ceases to be a part of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio, unless there is mutual agreement between the parties to do otherwise, its assets shall be given to the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio to be held in trust for a reorganized local chapter or division. If no chapter or division is reorganized in the area for a period of two years from the date of dissolution, the assets become the property of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio.

ARTICLE V. OFFICERS AND THEIR DUTIES

Section A. Officers

 There shall be elected at the regular annual convention during each even- numbered year a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. The terms of these officers shall begin at the close of the convention at which they are elected. Officers shall be elected by a majority of the members who are present and voting. There shall be no proxy voting. All of the officers except the treasurer must be blind.

ARTICLE VI. THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

 The board of directors of this organization shall consist of the four (4) constitutional officers and seven (7) additional members. One (1) of the board members shall be elected at the annual convention in even-numbered years, and six (6) shall be elected at the annual convention during odd-numbered years. The seven (7) board members shall be elected in the same manner as that prescribed for the election of officers. The board shall meet not less than twice a year, at the call of the president or on written call signed by any three (3) of the board members. The board shall advise the president and shall have charge of the affairs of the organization between conventions. Six (6) members of the board shall constitute a quorum for transacting business at any meeting. The board may be polled by telephone, email, or mail ballot on any question. All of the board must be blind except that the treasurer and one (1) member of the Parents of Blind Children Division may be elected to the board even if they are sighted.

ARTICLE VII. MEETINGS

Section A. Annual Convention

 This organization shall hold an annual convention, the time and place of which shall be fixed by the board of directors. Forty (40) members in good standing and representation from two thirds of the chapters and divisions must be present to constitute a quorum for transacting business at any annual convention.

Section B. Special Meetings

 The president of this organization may call a special meeting of the body at any time he or she, or a majority of the board of directors, deems such a meeting necessary. At such a special meeting forty (40) members in good standing shall constitute a quorum for transacting business, and representation from two thirds of the chapters and divisions must be present. Written or email notice must have been sent to the presidents of each local chapter and division and to each member of the board of directors at least ten (10) business days before the date of the meeting, and recipients of email notices must be requested to acknowledge receipt of the notice so that alternate methods of notification can be tried. Only business mentioned in the call of a special meeting can be transacted at such a meeting.

ARTICLE VIII. AFFILIATION

 The National Federation of the Blind of Ohio shall be an affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind. A copy of the constitution of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio and of all amendments shall be sent to the president of the National Federation of the Blind without delay.

 The National Federation of the Blind of Ohio shall not merely be a social organization but shall formulate programs and actively work to promote the economic and social betterment of the blind. This organization shall comply with the provisions of the constitution of the National Federation of the Blind and with the provisions of the contract appearing on the back of the charter of affiliation issued to state affiliates by the National Federation of the Blind. Policy decisions (whether made by the National Convention or the National Federation of the Blind's board of directors) are binding upon this organization, and this organization shall participate affirmatively in carrying out such policy decisions.

 As a condition of affiliation, it is agreed by this organization that the National Federation of the Blind (whether by action of the National Convention or the national board) has the power to expel or discipline any individual member and to expel or reorganize this state affiliate or any of its local chapters or divisions. If the action is to be taken by the board, there must be good cause, and a good faith effort must have been made to try to resolve the problem by discussion and negotiation. In the event of reorganization, the assets of the affiliate and its local chapters and divisions belong to the reorganized affiliate, and the former affiliate shall dissolve and cease to exist. The name National Federation of the Blind, Federation of the Blind, or any variant thereof is the property of the National Federation of the Blind; and the organization or any of its local chapters and divisions which cease to be a part of the National Federation of the Blind (for whatever reason) shall forfeit the right to use the name National Federation of the Blind, Federation of the Blind, or any variant thereof.

ARTICLE IX. DUES

 Local chapters and divisions shall pay the state dues of their members annually. No one may vote whose dues have not been paid.

ARTICLE X. DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

 The National Federation of the Blind of Ohio is a not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code, Section 501(c)3. The funds of the organization shall be deposited in a bank to be selected by the treasurer with the approval of the president. The treasurer shall be bonded. All financial obligations of this organization shall be discharged by check, issued on written order of the president and signed by the treasurer.

ARTICLE XI. DISSOLUTION

 In the event of the dissolution of this organization, or if (for whatever reason) it ceases to be an affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind, its assets shall be given to the National Federation of the Blind to be held in trust for a reorganized affiliate in the state. In the event that no affiliate is reorganized in the state for a period of two (2) years from the date this organization ceases to be an affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind, the assets become the property of the National Federation of the Blind.

ARTICLE XII. AMENDMENTS

 This constitution may be amended at any regular meeting of this organization by an affirmative vote of two thirds of the members present and voting, provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing or by email and read at a previous business session and provided that it is in compliance with the charter of affiliation received from the National Federation of the Blind and the policies and constitution of the National Federation of the Blind.

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# **Buckeye Brief**

If you have an idea for a resolution for consideration at this year’s convention, you should do your best to write out your idea and send it to Barbara Pierce before October 24. This will give the Resolutions Committee time to put it in final form and circulate it to committee members before the convention. We will conduct a Resolutions Committee meeting on Friday evening, November 5. Everyone is welcome to sit in on the meeting. If you wish to discuss your resolution idea with a member of the committee, you are welcome to contact Barbara Pierce, Eric Duffy, Todd Elzey, or Debbie Baker during October.

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# **Activities Calendar**

Every Thursday at 7, Community Service happy hour, Ohio Zoom room

October, Blind Equality Achievement Month

October 15, White Cane Awareness Day

October 24, Deadline for opting in to vote at convention

October 24, resolution deadline

November 1, NFB scholarship applications available

November 1, Presidential Release Live

November 5-6, NFB-O annual convention, everywhere and anywhere

December 1, Deadline for expressing interest in the Washington Seminar

January 4, Louis Braille’s birthday and World Braille Day

January 4-11, Braille Literacy Week in Ohio