**Braille Monitor                                             January 2015**

**The Kenneth Jernigan Convention Scholarship Fund**

**by Allen Harris**

**From the Editor: Allen Harris is the chairman of the Kenneth Jernigan Fund Committee and was one of the people who came up with the idea of honoring our former president and longtime leader by establishing a program to promote attendance at the national convention, where so much inspiration and learning occur. Here is Allen’s announcement about the 2015 Kenneth Jernigan Convention Scholarship Fund Program:**

Have you always wanted to attend an NFB annual convention but have not done so because of the lack of funds? The Kenneth Jernigan Convention Scholarship Fund invites you to make an application for a scholarship grant. Perhaps this July you too can be in the Rosen Centre Hotel in Orlando, Florida, enjoying the many pleasures and learning opportunities at the largest and most important yearly convention of blind people in the world.

The three biggest ticket items you need to cover when attending an NFB national convention are the roundtrip transportation, the hotel room for a week, and the food (which tends to be higher priced than at home). We attempt to award additional funds to families, but, whether a family or an individual is granted a scholarship, this fund can only help; it won’t pay all the costs. Last year most of the sixty grants were in the range of $400 to $500 per individual.

We recommend that you find an NFB member as your personal convention mentor, someone who has been to many national conventions and is able to share money-saving tips with you and tips on navigating the extensive agenda in the big hotel. Your mentor will help you get the most out of the amazing experience that is convention week.

**Who is eligible?**

Active NFB members, blind or sighted, who have not yet attended an NFB national convention because of lack of funding are eligible to apply.

**How do I apply for funding assistance?**

1. You write a letter giving your contact information, and your local NFB information, your specific amount requested, and then explain why this is a good investment for the NFB. The points to cover are listed below.
2. You contact your state president in person or by phone to request his or her help in obtaining funding. Be sure to tell the president when to expect your request letter by email, and mention the deadline.
3. You (or a friend) send your letter by email to your state president. He or she must add a president’s recommendation and then email both letters directly to the Kenneth Jernigan Convention Scholarship Fund Committee. Your president must forward the two letters no later than April 15, 2015.

**Your letter to Chairperson Allen Harris must cover these points:**

* Your full name, and all your telephone numbers and label them—cell phone, home, office, other person (if any).
* Your mailing address and, if you have one, your email address.
* Your state affiliate and state president; your chapter and chapter president, if you attend a chapter.
* Your personal convention mentor and provide that person’s phone number.
* Your specific request:

Explain how much money you need from this fund to make this trip possible for you. We suggest you consult with other members to make a rough budget for yourself.

The body of your letter should answer these questions:

How do you currently participate in the Federation? Why do you want to attend a national convention? What would you receive; what can you share or give? You can include in your letter to the committee any special circumstances you hope they will take into consideration.

**When will I be notified that I am a winner?**

If you are chosen to receive this scholarship, you will receive a letter with convention details which should answer most of your questions. The committee makes every effort to notify scholarship winners by May 15, but you must do several things before that to be prepared to attend if you are chosen.

1. Make your own hotel reservation. If something prevents you from attending, you can cancel the reservation. (Yes, you may arrange for roommates of your own to reduce the cost.)
2. Register online for the entire convention, including the banquet, by May 31.
3. Find someone in your chapter or affiliate who has been to many conventions and can answer your questions as a friend and advisor.
4. If you do not hear from the committee by May 15, then you did not win a grant this year.

**How will I receive my convention scholarship?**

At convention you will be given a debit card or credit card loaded with the amount of your award. The times and locations to pick up your card will be listed in the letter we sent you. The committee is not able to provide funds before the convention, so work with your chapter and state affiliate to assist you by obtaining an agreement to advance funds if you win a scholarship and to pay your treasury back after you receive

your debit or credit card.  
              
**What if I have more questions?** For additional information email the chairman, Allen Harris, at <[kjscholarships@nfb.org](mailto:kjscholarships@nfb.org)> or call his Baltimore, Maryland, office at (410) 659-9314, extension 2415.

Above all, please use this opportunity to attend your first convention on the national level and join several thousand active Federationists in the most important meeting of the blind in the world. We hope to see you in Orlando.