

(Up there on top is the NFB of Colorado Logo followed by “Live the life you want.”)

Blind Coloradoan Blog January 7, 2019

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Here is what you need to know.

**Why Do They Call it a Retreat?** Each year, in January, the NFBCO Board of Directors along with division and chapter presidents hold a retreat. The retreat's purpose is to review our accomplishments, celebrate these successes, and set priorities for the New Year and beyond. It's definitely a working session. The weekend retreat has proven to be very effective for our affiliate. But I don't know why these weekends are referred to as "retreats". Maybe we should call them our "Weekend Advance". It takes much planning to advance toward first class citizenship. I look forward to reporting the outcome of the upcoming retreat in future blogs.

**Setting Goals and Making Things Happen.** During the Affiliate Leadership Retreat in January of 2018, Secretary Jessica Beecham offered an extremely helpful presentation on setting goals and following through as we begin a new year. It occurs to me that the highlights of this presentation may be worth a quick review. These principals are universal. I find them helpful in my NFBCO work and they are definitely transferable to my personal life outside of my Federation and other professional work. Read and enjoy. Beecham discussed several ways to set goals and to achieve great results. She walked us through several principles to keep in mind. Smarter goals, specific and measurable, meaningful, achievable, relevant, and time bound. Suggestions for reaching goals include: establish bench marks, look at goals regularly, readjust goals when needed, create a detailed action plan, dedicate specific time to NFBCO, work to create effective time management skills, take care of most difficult tasks early, break things down in to small attainable steps and don't forget to celebrate accomplishments.

**NFB-NEWSLINE: Ring in 2019, Alexa Skill Training.** Here is an exciting note from Scott White, Director, NFB Newsline.Now, you can listen to NFB-NEWSLINE without lifting a finger. In late November, the NFB-NEWSLINE Amazon Alexa skill was released. You can ask Alexa to read the paper, navigate through the paper with ease, and much more with a simple command set and we can show you how. Whether you are a long time Amazon Echo user or Alexa just came wrapped as a gift under your tree, this is the training for you. Hey Alexa, how can I access this great telephone training that will take place on Tuesday January 15, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. Mountain? Be sure to join us on Tuesday evening for an interactive demonstration conducted by Scott White, Director of NFB-NEWSLINE on how to access the NFB-NEWSLINE service using the Amazon Echo family of products. Time will be provided to get your questions answered on the use of the skill as well as other NFB-NEWSLINE access methods.

Please join us online using the link or conference telephone numbers listed below. <https://zoom.us/j/962454147>

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**Aliens for Dinner**. Are we eating them or are they just coming over?! Parents and teachers of blind kids are always looking for more UEB books. Seedlings Braille Books for Children just added 8 more titles to its [Unified English Braille collection](http://www.seedlings.org/browse.php?cat=12) for independent readers, bringing the total to 148! They are: *The Secret Garden, Ramona the Pest, Ramona the Brave, Helen Keller from Tragedy to Triumph, If You Sailed on the Mayflower in 1620, Who Was Dr. Seuss?, Who Was Albert Einstein?, a*nd *Aliens for Dinner.*

**You Can Touch It?** In 2005, my son, Nijat, who is also blind, and I visited the world-famous Getty Museum in Los Angeles. There is virtually nothing a blind person can touch at the Getty. Being the precocious father and son that we are, we decided to get to know a beautiful sculpture of a nude. Man! Those security guards were on us like paint on canvas! The world-famous Getty may not have anything for blind art enthusiasts, but we have a real treasure right here in Colorado, the MASHBURN/MARSHALL TACTILE GALLERY at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center.The mission of the Mashburn/Marshall Tactile Gallery is to enrich the museum experience of every visitor with special attention to those who are blind, sight-impaired or have special needs. “Tactile Gallery” is a museum term that means a room for touching. This is the only gallery in the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center where you are invited and encouraged to touch the art. The Gallery is always free to enter and explore during normal museum hours.You are encouraged to experience each object in the gallery with as many of your senses as possible: hands, fingers, eyes. Spend as much time as you like. Getting to know a piece of art is like making a new friend — it takes time!

Museum hours:
Tues- Sat 10 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Sunday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Closed Mondays

Museum location: 30 West Dale Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80903.

**What? Another Departure?** It seems that in every Blind Coloradoan in recent weeks we have had to write about another staff departure from the Business Enterprise Program. This time, it is Jody McHazlett. Jody has served the program in several capacities. For more than a decade, she has often been our MVP. Her knowledge of procurement and contracting has served the program extremely well over the past several years. Jody is moving to the Colorado Department of Transportation. Jody is kind, opinionated, and extremely knowledgeable. She will be greatly missed.

**This is About Bird Box**. Yes, the Netflix Original, Bird Box. I have not seen it. I don’t intend to see it. First, I think Sandra Bullock is an overrated, slightly better than average actress. But I guess that is neither here nor there. What follows is my commentary without having seen it. I understand the premise. And, I am told by my blind buddies that it is tolerable, not quite offensive. And I have even read some good reviews from our community. However, as you likely know, the program has spawned imitators. People are wearing blindfolds for short periods of time and crossing streets or doing other daily activities simulating blindness. This commentary is not written out of outrage, disgust, hurt, or anger. This is so, even though I do find the practice insulting and outrageous. However, I am a believer in freedom of speech and freedom of artistic expression even when I find it insulting and degrading. But, so many in our society, in special interest groups, and in the media react to every perceived insult with outrage. Therefore, the outrage loses its effectiveness. Certainly, there are times when outrage is a necessary response. So, all I want to say is the practice of using a blindfold to simulate blindness for short periods of time can be dangerous. We know that significant time spent under blindfold can be extremely beneficial. Being blindfolded for a very short period of time to simulate blindness tends to offer the sighted a skewed, extremely negative impression of what it is like to be blind. They have had no training in the skills of blindness. They have developed no strategies to compensate for lack of sight. (They probably count steps.) Although, blindness can be reduced to a little more than an inconvenience it does take some management. It takes a bit of planning and thought. It is ridiculous to think that you can don a blindfold and stumble across the street without having some sense of how to listen to traffic patterns. What is an echo cue? How deep is the curb?

On occasion, I have been told by my sighted buddies, “you do that so well. I almost forget you are blind.” (Notice the almost!) They mean that as a compliment, so I choose to accept it as offered. But the observation indicates that to them blindness is my most prevalent characteristic not my personality, baldness, energy, humor, writing, cooking, age, gender, politics, or love of music.

**World Braille Day.** On Friday, January 4, many people around the world, including here in Colorado, celebrated World Braille Day. January 4, 2019 Louis Braille would have been 110 years old. December 17, 2018, the United Nations voted to designate January 4 as World Braille Day. Mark Riccobono, President [National Federation of the Blind](https://www.facebook.com/NationalFederationoftheBlind/), said, “From the time of its invention nearly two hundred years ago, Braille has represented independence, literacy, and opportunity for blind people. Though its adoption was slow at first, it is now used around the world in most written languages. I personally benefit from using Braille every day and am grateful that I had the opportunity to learn it. The National Federation of the Blind knows that Braille is the key to success for blind people across the globe, and we commend the United Nations for recognizing this fact by designating January 4 – Louis Braille’s birthday – as World Braille Day.”

That is what President Riccobono said. Here is what Marci Carpenter says. Marci is the president of our [Washington affiliate](https://www.facebook.com/waoftheblind/). Before moving back to Washington, Marci served as the long-time president of our Boulder chapter. She was also the first treasurer of our Colorado Center for the Blind. I thought the following Facebook post from her was one of the best pieces I saw about Louis Braille’s birthday, World Braille Day. “My [#WorldBrailleDay](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/worldbrailleday?source=feed_text&epa=HASHTAG&__xts__%5B0%5D=68.ARDZ4zhxcvyBWNq22Lo77DvT0J3gXzJt2RVUfRg9zfnvej9GN0eUDzkuYTFR4yHFW7CQGzILtqNbuyGZYjaCjktn7ztbTH6fKfyXmGbXAfxy0dKrz-sjWfxnSLbwCVJAnjV207Xn_9ao5ML54HoIH04olljtJb1KQMvmgAlshvCpBmnND75mn8NiS6Fz65N4Vi3Sj1ZMROQW&__tn__=%2ANK-R) story: Like many blind people with some vision I didn’t learn braille as a child. As I was finishing high school my parents and I realized I would need braille in order to succeed in college. I took time off after high school to go to a blindness training center. I learned braille and many other valuable non-visual skills. I took all my college notes in braille with a board slate and stylus (no laptops then). It became a source of pride that I wrote fast enough and took enough notes to wear out a stylus at least once a year! I have read braille books for pleasure, read books to children, written and read constitutions and resolutions at meetings, kept a Braille appointment calendar, written and read recipes, as well as notes for talks I have given. I have taught braille to blind college students and Blind seniors. I would not be where I am today if I had not learned to use this valuable literacy tool.

My braille teacher was a blind woman who had taught math in public schools. She was my first blind female role model. Like me, she had some residual vision. She taught me, as she had learned from the National Federation of the Blind, that it is respectable to be blind and that people like me could be a part of the blind community. Now, unlike when I was a child, there is the [National Organization of Parents of Blind Children - NOPBC](https://www.facebook.com/nopbc/?__tn__=K-R&eid=ARC-00mKyMXichEhfq9JLBxXfpzLH_wf9W6-Mz37rfOTUG1oyPgP7CVYS5f-wYYU1u0GtnNqRvDLHlBs&fref=mentions&__xts__%5B0%5D=68.ARDZ4zhxcvyBWNq22Lo77DvT0J3gXzJt2RVUfRg9zfnvej9GN0eUDzkuYTFR4yHFW7CQGzILtqNbuyGZYjaCjktn7ztbTH6fKfyXmGbXAfxy0dKrz-sjWfxnSLbwCVJAnjV207Xn_9ao5ML54HoIH04olljtJb1KQMvmgAlshvCpBmnND75mn8NiS6Fz65N4Vi3Sj1ZMROQW) to help parents understand the importance of braille literacy and advocate for its teaching. If people have told you that you (or your child) have too much vision to need braille or that braille is obsolete they are wrong. Braille is alive and well and is a vital tool for literacy for all blind people. Learn braille, use braille, celebrate braille! Happy #WorldBrailleDay!”

**Here’s a Note from Our Buddy Eric Weihenmayer.** New Year. New Episodes of the No Barriers Podcast.

The [No Barriers Podcast](https://touchthetop.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=671170a51a825eacd73a2f6c6&id=29e91adb85&e=96456dd521) launched last year, and we have already brought you some pretty epic stories. You've met Mark Wellman, the first paraplegic to climb El Capitan; former Command Sgt. Major Gretchen Evans, who lost her hearing while serving in the military and uses her experience to Elevate others; and Shannon Galpin, an activist, artist, and documentary subject who has dedicated her life to improving human rights around the world.

These folks are each making a No Barriers impact in their own way, and we have fresh stories coming at you to help start 2019 on a high note. [SUBSCRIBE NOW](https://touchthetop.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=671170a51a825eacd73a2f6c6&id=248bcb3374&e=96456dd521) or, if you already love the show, help spread the message by leaving a review - your feedback will boost the podcast. The next episode drops on January 7, so don't wait!

**Washington Seminar Fact Sheets Now Available on NFB Newsline.** We continue to make NFB Newsline your go-to source. With over 450 newspapers and magazines, shopping ads, tv listings, and a national NFB news channel, as well as our ever-changing Colorado channel. To learn details of our 2019 congressional effort please read the fact sheets by pressing 2 from the main phone menu.

**Newly Established; The Colorado DeafBlind Citizens Council.** The National Federation of the Blind has always worked to create understanding and new opportunities for our deafblind colleagues. I was excited to read the following announcement. This was sent to me by Lorinda Riddle, thank you! The DeafBlind Citizens Council was recently established in statute as of June, 2018 and The Colorado Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing & DeafBlind is seeking seven appointees.

If you are interested, have questions or would like to submit an application please contact Cynde Vaughn, Outreach & Consultative Services, DeafBlind Specialist, by phone or email. (303) 358-0348, cynde.vaughn@state.co.us.

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