**The Federationist in Connecticut**

**“The Blind Speaking for Themselves”**

**Kathryn Webster, Editor Fall/Winter 2014**



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The National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut 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.

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**Save the Date!**

**2015 NFB of CT State Convention**

**November 6, 7 & 8, 2015**

**Holiday Inn, New London**

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**IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT FUTURE ISSUES**

**OF THE *FEDERATIONIST IN CONNECTICUT*!**

Did you know that the *Federationist in CT* is not only available on cassette or in large print format?

That you can also receive email notifications?

That you can also find it on the CT Information Channel of NFB-Newsline?

That it will be on our website, www.nfbct.org?

The NFB of CT is interested in updating our records for our *Federationist in CT* readers. **If you wish to continue to receive the *Federationist in CT* after this issue, you must contact our community outreach office by January 31, 2015.** You can contact us by mail at 477 Connecticut Boulevard, Suite 217, East Hartford, CT 06108; by phone at 860-289-1971; or by email at info@nfbct.org. Please indicate your name, address, phone number, email address, and whether you wish to receive a large print copy, a cassette copy, an email notification, or if you will be reading the Federationist in CT on our website or NFB-Newsline. **You need not be in touch with us if you no longer wish to receive a copy. If we do not hear from you, you will stop receiving the *Federationist in CT* after this issue.**

**The Secret Recipe: shhh, don’t tell**

**Neiman-Marcus $250 Chocolate Chip Cookies Recipe**

Total time: 36 mins.

Prep time: 30 mins.

Cook time: 6 mins.

Yields: 96 cookies

Ingredients:

2 cups of butter

4 cups of flour

2 teaspoons of baking soda

2 cups of sugar

5 cups of blended oatmeal

24 ounces of chocolate chips

2 cups packed of brown sugar

1 teaspoon of salt

1 8-ounce grated Hershey bar

4 large eggs

2 teaspoons of baking powder

2 teaspoons of vanilla

3 cups of chopped nuts, your choice

Directions:

1. Measure oatmeal and blend in a blender to a fine powder.
2. Cream the butter and both sugars.
3. Add eggs and vanilla.
4. Mix together with flour, oatmeal, salt, baking powder and soda.
5. Add chocolate chips, grated Hershey Bar and nuts.
6. Roll into 1 inch balls and place 2-inches apart on a cookie sheet.
7. Bake for 10 minutes at 375° or until golden.

**But I Wasn’t from Mansfield**

**By Justin Salisbury,**

**President, Connecticut Association of Blind Students**

After moving to Willington in the third grade, I took a brief break from sports, but I started playing soccer in the fifth grade. On opening day, I remember warming up with my team. We, the players, began to discuss our plans for the game and the opponent of the day. As the team from Somers arrived in the parking lot and proceeded toward the field, my teammates began the hostile comments in low tones, generally asserting envy at the wealth and prosperity of the town of Somers. The belief was clear that the kids from Somers unfairly possessed advantages that we did not. As the season and then the years wore on, I learned that this attitude was widespread in Willington. Granted, we did not have the college degrees and affluence of many of the towns around us, especially Tolland and Mansfield, but the idea that we were less deserving of a place at the metaphorical table was what particularly held our people back. There were a lot of ways that I didn’t fit in socially in Willington, and it either led to or stemmed from my resistance to this mentality. I knew that we, the students of Willington, belonged.

Many great leaders in the National Federation of the Blind have honored Dr. Marc Maurer for the fact that he knows he belongs. We say that Dr. tenBroek gave us purpose, Dr. Jernigan gave us courage, and Dr. Maurer brought us respect. Knowing in the depths of our hearts that we deserve that respect is necessary to achieve it.

I had adopted many of the ideas that the students from Tolland and Mansfield were inherently more prosperous and likely to succeed, but I also made up my mind that I deserved a place somewhere among them and that the only way to claim my place was to embrace them and do what they were doing. Most of the students from Willington attended a regional high school located in Mansfield on the University of Connecticut campus. That was where I learned what a university was. When we were picking our classes, our middle school teachers made recommendations for us, and I was one of the few who was encouraged to enroll in all honors-level courses. I did not think much of it. When we arrived in those classes in high school, I realized that it was not uncommon for students from Mansfield to be enrolled entirely in honors coursework. There was a broadly-held belief that they were the best prepared for the most advanced coursework, and, in a lot of ways, they were. What made the critical difference, I believe, were the expectations of the students and communities around them.

As time progressed, I knew with increasing certainty that I could compete with my Mansfield counterparts. It was hard to not compare myself to the Mansfield students who had completed the college calculus sequence in middle school, but I knew that wouldn't do me any good. They had encountered and benefited from opportunities that I had not. I had to keep my focus on being the best I could be and, if I were to compete, competing with the students taking the same courses as I was. I knew that if I got into the same classes, it meant that I belonged there, too.

When it came to the special opportunities to serve on healthy nutrition advisory councils or student congress, Willington did not have a strong showing. I'm the only one I can remember from Willington in student congress. I knew that these were the kinds of things that successful people did, so I wanted to do them, too.

When new students would transfer into our high school, I would usually hear their amazement that, after months of knowing me, I could have possibly been from Willington. Surely, I must have been from Mansfield, but I wasn't from Mansfield.

I knew I deserved a place at the table in the classroom, but I didn’t know that I deserved a place at the table in the lunch room. Academically, I knew I belonged, but, socially, I did not. This is a pretty common experience in the teenage years, but, as the National Federation of the Blind has taught me, personal relationships matter significantly at all ages. When I didn’t know that I deserved a seat at the table, I didn’t approach those opportunities to connect with the cool kids on a personal level. We could have helped each other become more successful in a number of ways, but I was uncomfortable participating in that environment. I know now that the only real credential for acceptance was knowing one belonged.

I come from inferiority complex. I have succeeded when I have forgotten it and I have stumbled when I have listened to it. If we can all try our best to follow Dr. Maurer’s lead and know we belong, it will do nothing but help us. This has been my experience, and I expect it to hold true for us all. In high school, opportunities came to me when I knew I belonged, but I wasn’t from Mansfield.

**Eight Weeks of Growth: Independence Thereafter**

**By Mois Kwak**

About a week after my high school graduation, I left my family behind to attend the Colorado Center for the Blind (CCB) summer program for two months. As my plane took off from Los Angeles toward Denver, I felt fear and excitement all around me. I was nervous since I didn't know exactly what I was getting myself into, but I was excited thinking about adventures ahead of me.

To briefly explain the structure of the program, the students participate in five core classes: Braille, travel, technology, home management, and philosophy on blindness. The day usually began around 7:30 AM and ended around 3:30 PM. Outside of classes, a group of two or three students was assigned into an apartment with a counselor. Times spent in the apartment were not formal instructional time, but it served as a crucial learning environment since students have to prepare each meal and keep the apartments well-maintained.

Going into the program, I had some clear goals for myself. I wanted to improve my travel skills and home management skills. Most importantly, however, I wanted to enjoy each opportunity throughout the program. The eight weeks I spent were what I hoped for and much more.

In the home management class, as well as time spent with my counselor and apartment mates, I was able to cook many different recipes using different kitchen equipment. Cooking was something I always have been wanting to do but was not able to learn how to do safely and independently. Learning non-visual techniques in order to use gas stoves, ovens, and knives safely made me feel more comfortable in the kitchen. Cooking burgers on the stove and baking chicken for my apartment mates were enjoyable challenges. Even mistakes such as burning a pan of bacon and turning on the garbage disposal while there was a spoon inside were something to laugh about and learn from.

Travel classes were equally engaging and challenging. The first few weeks were spent reviewing cane techniques and learning different ways to research and plan routes. We were able to apply these skills when we traveled to the National Federation of the Blind National Convention in Orlando. After the convention, each student began planning his or her grad route. I was given an address I had never heard of. I only knew that it was located in the downtown Denver area. I had to research and plan my route, independently travel there, and return to the Center with a business card from the given address. It seemed to be the most nerve-wrecking trip I had to undertake. Even though I got lost once or twice and got on a wrong bus while completing the trip, I was successfully able to bring a business card from what turned out to be the Cheesecake Factory.

Home management and travel classes were what I put the most effort into, but Braille class, technology class, experiences, and people I met gave me memories to cherish. Helping a friend improve her Braille reading and writing, rock climbing, and participating in a photography project are just a few of them. Even a year later, I remember many moments from the last summer and can laugh and smile thinking about them.

Eight weeks seem both long and short. Regardless of how it may seem, the eight weeks I spent as a student at the CCB summer program were packed with experiences that made me grow into a more confident person. As a college sophomore, I believe there is a fair way for me to go to become a truly strong and independent adult, but I am grateful for the summer I had at the CCB. It is a root on which I can continue to grow.

**The story of ADAPT and Right to Ride**

**By Alan Chase**

Wade Blank was hired in 1973 by a nursing home called Heritage House. They wanted him to start a youth wing at their nursing home. Sixty young people with disabilities lived at the nursing home. Every day they would go to a sheltered workshop and count fish hooks all day. It was called a work activities program, but it was not like a real job at all. They barely got paid. The youth that lived at the nursing home would ask for things that most nursing homes wouldn’t let them have. Wade was in charge and he said yes. ”Can we have pets?” “Yes!” “Can we have coed rooms?” “Yes!” “Can we have rock ‘n roll bands?” “Yes!” Pretty soon Heritage House didn’t look like a nursing home. The residents were happy, but the nursing home owners were pissed. The last straw came when Wade asked if some of the residents could live in their own apartments and aides could clock in at the nursing home and then provide services at the apartments. The nursing home did not like that idea at all. They got rid of the pets, televisions, stereos and coed rooms, and fired Wade. The nursing home went back to being a sad, boring place and the residents went back to being miserable. Wade felt that he had recruited most of the youth to live at the nursing home. He decided to help them move out. Wade and the former nursing home residents formed a community and together they liberated more people from nursing homes. “We’re free!” Once the youth moved out they were excited they didn’t have to follow the nursing home’s stupid rules anymore. Now, they could do things that most young adults like to do, such as listen to loud music, eat unhealthy food and stay up really late. However, soon they realized there were still a lot of things they couldn’t do. Denver, where they lived, didn’t have accessible transportation. The buses did not have wheelchair lifts. Even though they were free from the nursing homes, they were still trapped at their apartments. They asked Denver Public Transportation to make buses accessible but they said no. “Will you put lifts on buses?” “No way!” They decided to start a group called American Disabled for Accessible Transportation or ADAPT. They used a technique Wade learned from the African American civil rights struggle called nonviolent direct action. Famous activists like Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi have used nonviolent direct action. It’s a good way to make the public pay attention to an injustice that is happening. As Dr. King wrote in “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it cannot be ignored.” Nonviolent direct action creates a confrontation between the group seeking change and the target. A sit-in is a well-known kind of nonviolent direct action. That is where people occupy a business or government office preventing it from fully functioning in order to bring to light an injustice that the business or office is creating. ADAPT used nonviolent direct action by using their wheelchairs to block the Denver buses. They forced Denver public transportation and the public to pay attention to how unfair it was that not all people could ride buses that were supposed to be for everyone. They soon realized that wheelchair users were really good at nonviolent direct actions. Since wheelchairs are heavy and take up a lot of space, they could get in the way really easily and since the police officers and security guards had never seen disabled people doing anything like that, they didn’t know what to do. They couldn’t arrest them because their wheelchairs couldn’t even fit in their police cars. ADAPT kept protesting and blocking buses until finally a victory! Denver public transportation started getting buses that had wheelchair lifts. After their success in Denver, ADAPT decided to take their issue to the national level. Even though they could ride the buses in Denver, they couldn’t go to other places. Next, they decided to take on Greyhound. ADAPT worked for years to make Greyhound buses accessible by blocking buses. ADAPT grew as more disabled people across the country joined the cause. Finally, they had success with Greyhound, too, and Greyhound started adding lifts on their buses. When the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed, it said that all public transportation and public places had to be accessible. A lot of places took a long time to become accessible, but thanks to all the work ADAPT had done, a lot of bus systems were already accessible. ADAPT is still going strong today. Now they are fighting for attendant care so people have a choice to live in their own homes, instead of nursing homes.

**Excerpt**

**By Alan Chase**

**Act 1Setting:** A blind person at his home. Suddenly, a magical fairy appears.

**Fairy:** Hello ladies and gentlemen, and boys and girls. **Fairy:** You're in for quite a treat today, my fine audience. Today we weave a tale of struggle and hardship, of heroism and saintliness, of determination and…**Joseph:** Who are you?**Narrator:** Ah! It appears we've been joined by our noble hero!**Joseph:** Why are you in my house?**Fairy:** This man may seem like a simple disabled person, but he is in fact a hero! A saint! An idealist exemplar to us all! This man...this man...uh...this uh...**Joseph:** Joseph, my name is Joseph.**Fairy**: Oh, yes, quite right. This man, Jeremy, is a shining inspiration to us all!**Joseph:** It's Joseph...**Fairy:** Sure, whatever you say, John.**Joseph:** No, it’s *Joseph*. Can you please tell me why you're in my house?**Fairy:** Because you, sir, are an inspirational hero! And every hero needs his own fairy to watch over him!  
**Joseph**: Really? Wait. What? What did I do to deserve to be called a hero?**Fairy:** Well, I understand you're blind.**Joseph:** Yeah?**Fairy**: Then you're a hero!**Joseph:** Wait, how does that work?**Fairy:** I don't understand the question.**Joseph:** Whatever, I need to go to work so if you'd please leave I'd -**Fairy:** Wait, hold on one second there Jimbo.**Joseph:** Joseph.**Fairy:** I‘m sure. Could you say that again?**Joseph:** Oh, if you'd please leave I'd…

**Fairy:** No, no, before that.**Joseph:** I was saying I had to go to work.**Fairy:** My God! You truly are amazing! Like a comic book hero! We should call you “The Incredible Blind Going To Work Man!”**Joseph:** I’m no superhero. I don’t even have a superpower.**Fairy:** But you do! You’re blind, but you still have to go to work!**Joseph:** Worst. Superpower. Ever.**Fairy:** Say what you will, but you’re still a superhero.**Joseph:** You’re unmovable on this, aren’t you?**Fairy:** Yes.**Joseph:** Well, I need to exercise my single, lame superpower now and go to work.**Narrator:** Inspirational, isn’t he audience?

**Act 2Setting:** At a courthouse.**Fairy:** Now, we join him as he arrives at his place of work.**Joseph:** Holy crap, how did you get here? How did you get here before me?**Fairy:** As your fairy, I can do almost anything I want.**Joseph:** What? How do you mean?**Fairy:** Nothing.**Joseph:** So, you’re all powerful?**Fairy:** Indeed, but we digress. The important thing is the job you have here, Johnson!**Joseph:** Joseph**Fairy:** Yes, yes I’m sure. So, what can you tell us about your job here? Are you the courthouse janitor or something?**Joseph:** No, I’m a lawyer.**Fairy:** My god! That would mean that you’ve gone to college, extensively!**Joseph:** Well, yeah.**Fairy:** And here you are stubbornly claiming to be less than the inspirational hero that you truly are. Seriously, I’ve seen headlines in newspapers about this sort of thing. **Joseph:** Not really. I’m hardly the only lawyer around.**Fairy:** Yeah, unfortunately.**Joseph:** What was that?!**Fairy:** Nothing at all, Joe.**Joseph:** It’s Joseph and I need to get to court before the judge holds me in contempt. **Act 3Setting:** In a crowded courtroom. **Bailiff:** All rise! This court is now in session. The Honorable Judge Jones presiding. **Judge:** Thank you, bailiff. Folks, we are here today in the matter of Day versus Night. Mr. Day is the owner of Daytime Creamery and Mr. Night was an employee at Daytime Creamery, but was terminated after he lost his vision in a horrific traffic accident. **Attorney:** Your honor, I’d like to call Mr. Night to the stand, please. **Attorney:**  Mr. Night, I’d imagine that a profession such as working in a creamery would bring certain challenges to a disabled person.**Mr. Night:** Well, I get lots of Brailled versions of books and in today’s day and age, I also have a computerized voice to read things to me. To be honest, if the correct accommodations are given to make things accessible, almost any disabled person should be able to do anything. **Attorney:** I see. What was your job at the creamery, Mr. Night?**Mr. Night:** I was the accountant. I crunched all the numbers and made sure our revenue exceeded our expenses. **Attorney:**  So, what you are saying is that a blind person can be an accountant simply by having Braille books and a talking computer?**Mr. Night:** Yes. Everything is computerized these days so the technology allows me to access all the records electronically. **Attorney:** What about paper receipts and invoices? How can you process those?**Mr. Night:** Well, I have a scanner that I can scan the receipt or invoice into my computer and it will read it to me. **Attorney:** I see. What if your computer breaks? How can you do your job then?**Joseph:** Objection your honor. A broken computer would hinder the work productivity of any employee. **Judge:** Sustained. Mr. Night, you may step down. **Joseph:**  Your honor, I’d like to call Mr. Day to the stand. **Joseph:** Mr. Day, why did you terminate my client?**Mr. Day:** Well, I’m in business to make money and after his accident Mr. Night never called to say that he wasn’t coming to work. I heard through the grapevine that he was in the hospital, but that’s no excuse. My staff handbook clearly says employees must call me if they aren’t coming to work. **Joseph:** How do you expect my client to call you if he is in the hospital unresponsive?**Mr. Day:** They have phones there, I’m sure. And, as I was saying, I’m in business to make money. I need my accountant to be competent to give me figures I can read. I can’t read Braille. Those dots mean nothing to me. **Joseph:** So, you don’t think Mr. Night is competent any longer because he’s now blind?**Mr. Day:** Exactly! Now you understand what I’ve been trying to say. How can someone be competent if they can’t read? Plus, I don’t trust all those gizmos and gadgets. I want to keep my records on paper. I don’t want my profits eaten up by buying computers, fixing them when they break, and updating them. **Joseph:** No more questions, your honor. **Fairy:** Nice job, Jim! You showed him.**Judge:** Silence! Court is in recess. Be back in an hour.**Act 4Setting:** At the courthouse cafeteria. **Fairy:** Wow! Jack, that was a heroic feat of strength back there in the courtroom. **Joseph:** It’s Joseph and it wasn’t anything special. I do it all the time. In fact, there are many disabled people who have done truly great things and had no need to be put up on a pedestal. **Fairy:** I should really chat with that judge. He is quite a character. I should probably ask him what is it like to be the friend of a disabled person? I was thinking that we could use his testimony in some sappy documentary or maybe use it in a lesson plan in schools to teach kids about people who are disabled.**Joseph:** Maybe, but you never actually asked me about what it was like to be disabled.**Fairy:** I’m sorry, I couldn’t understand a word you just said there, you were mumbling.**Joseph:** Instead of interviewing my friend the judge, wouldn’t it be nice to have a lesson plan of some sort that would teach people about the disabled from the point of view of the disabled themselves? Now, that might help put people in the proper perspective.**Narrator:** You really need to stop mumbling.**Joseph:** Oh, look at the time. It’s almost time to be back in court. I better hurry.

**Prepaid or contract:**

**What Cell Phone Service is Right For You?**

**By Edward Shaham, President,**

**National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut**

The cell phone market has gotten larger and more convoluted over the years. The expense of cell phone plans has risen, while service has diminished. Prepaid plans give you unmatched flexibility, and offer some of the best rates in the industry. Pay as you go offers a less expensive alternative to traditional contract plans. Due to the advent of more sophisticated mobile technologies, cell phones now cost a small fortune. Monthly charges for traditional cell phone service has skyrocketed. The increased price of smart phones translates to a higher monthly charge to the consumer. This is due to having to offset the cost of owning the phone. For years the big four dominated the cell phone arena. This included AT&T, T-Mobile, Sprint, and Verizon. These big four set the price of cell phone contracts, and they were relatively comparable to each other. The consumer had no choice but to use one of the big four, and live with their outrageous pricing structure. This led the way to a new paradigm in the cell phone industry that does away with the high priced contracts. Pay as you go is a great option for those that do not like long term commitments. Pay as you go, or prepaid cell phone service, allows you to get rid of that expensive two year contract. There is one caveat. You must buy the phone outright. With a traditional plan the cost of the phone is spread out over the two years. This is why traditional plans require you to sign a two year commitment. With pay as you go, this is no longer the case. There are other great benefits to pay as you go. Another advantage of prepaid service is the monthly cost savings. Since you purchased the phone outright, there is no need to pay for it monthly. Meaning, your monthly bill for the service would be less with a pay as you go plan than a traditional contract. This is because you are only paying for the monthly cell phone service, and not for the expensive phone. Most pay as you go plans save an average of 20% monthly. Even though the price is less, and the prepaid service is from a smaller company, that does not mean you need to put up with lackluster service, and blackout coverage areas. Most do not realize that the smaller prepaid cell phone companies are using the big four’s networks. The way it works is that the larger companies sell their unused cell phone minutes to these smaller providers. These smaller providers buy large quantities of minutes for substantial discounts. Those discounts are passed along to the consumer. You get the same exact service, and you are using the same networks as the contract consumers. Since you are using one of the big four’s networks, there is usually no difference in call quality. The biggest differences are cost savings, as well as not needing to commit to the same company for two years. If you no longer want to stay with the provider you are with, you can switch over to another company. The choice of being able to leave a company at any time helps to keep the prepaid service providers at bay. This stops them from significantly raising their already low pricing structure. Prepaid cell phone service can also be more affordable than a contract plan. There are many examples of affordable pay as you go options. Boost Mobile which is a provider owned by Sprint, offers the Monthly Unlimited Select Plan. This gives you unlimited talk and text with 500 MB of data for $40 a month. For $10 more you can upgrade to 2.5 GB of data. Metro PCS, a T-Mobile company, offers similar plans. The big four, Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile, and Sprint all have their own prepaid options. Generally the big four charge $10 more for comparable services from Metro PCS, and Boost Mobile. This is because they will have a broader selection of phones that work on their network. For example, not all carriers will allow you to use your iPhone on their prepaid plans. This is because some of the higher end smart phones use more data bandwidth than the lower end smart phones. Make sure to ask if you can use an IPhone on the plan before you purchase it. There are also options for those that want to stick to their traditional contract plans. Most aren’t aware that you don’t have to go to one of the big four in order to get service through them. Meaning, you can go to an authorized distributor to get a contract phone. Amazon.com and Best Buy offer cell phone service with a contract from either AT&T, Sprint, or Verizon. The advantage of buying from a distributer is savings. For example, a phone from one of the major providers that requires a $200 down payment and a two year contract can be found on amazon.com, or Best Buy for zero down. You would receive the same contractual terms as if you had gone to one of the major providers directly, but without having to put $200 down for the phone. The phone selection isn’t as broad as what the providers carry, but it’s a great alternative for those that want to save money. Always go through an authorized distributer before heading into your neighborhood AT&T or Verizon store. You may end up saving hundreds of dollars. Prepaid plans may be right for you if you already own your phone outright. Those that do not like long term commitments will enjoy the flexibility that pay as you go provides. Keep in mind, if you don’t like a particular prepaid provider, you can take your phone and hard earned money to a different company. This, of course, is impossible to do with a contract plan, unless you are willing to pay massive early termination fees. If you like the traditional contract plans, check out the deals that authorized distributers offer before going to the major providers directly. Fierce competition translates to more diverse options for cell phone users. With more and more prepaid providers fighting for the lucrative mobile phone service market, the future looks extremely bright for pay as you go and traditional contract consumers.

**Coming soon: The Currency Program**

Ms. Sabra Pressman from The Bureau of Engraving and Printing attended the National Federation of the Blind convention in Orlando, Florida. They launched the Pre-Pilot Currency Reader Program, providing currency readers to all qualified blind or low vision participants who were interested in a currency reader. A representative will also be attending the Blinded Veterans Association Conference providing readers to qualified participants. Only attendees of these conventions/conferences can get a reader at this time, during the pre-launch.

Starting September 2, 2014, NLS patrons or folks who want to become an NLS patron can call 1-888-657-7323 to pre-register to get a currency reader when the national program rolls out in January 2015. Once you register in September, you will be on the list for the first shipment of readers to go out in January, or you can wait and sign up in January when the program is opened up to all blind and low vision folks.

If you have questions prior to September 2, 2014, you can call The Bureau of Engraving and Printing at 844-815-9388.

For any further questions, feel free to reach out to Kathryn Webster and she will gladly connect you with the appropriate contact.

**Blurred Vision, Clear Blindness**

**Kathryn Webster, Sep 25, 2014**

Blindness is not a characteristic that defines you. Though vision loss one is of the many minorities identified in our world, the sighted community believes that they hold a certain superiority over the blind "inferiors." Think about it: are blind people unhappy, less happy than the majority, happy in their own way? You don't know. The struggle lies within the external perceptions of those with sight, as they frown upon the visually impaired population. Whether it be ignorance, lack of knowledge, or inability to empathize, the "20-20" pity those with 20-200, or worse. The uneducated person sees blindness as a misfortune because of the apparent disability intertwined with this single characteristic. Nonetheless, should they have any say in this matter at all? Kraut asserts, "A blind person is cut off from a significant part of the real world, and so is worse off even if his practical aims do not require vision." Interestingly enough, there is no such thing as total blindness. A blind person, though, experiences reality in an alternative fashion as they critique unique strengths and talents that those with sight could never imagine acquiring. Sighted people do not always have a vision. A blind man may even see transparently as he embarks on the journey of life.

Happiness is a combination of flourishing and pure satisfaction, with the former presented first in order to demonstrate its dominance over the latter. The strength gained from those without sight exceeds the amount of both mental and emotional strength from sighted individuals. An objectivist, if blind, would value blindness above vision because of the additional characteristic necessary to overcome the evident inability. In the classroom, a visually impaired high school student must equate, or rise above, those with sight in order to present their abilities in a way that the majority will understand. This, in turn, tackles the flourishing piece of happiness. A blind employer must excel in their career field in order to set the standards for younger generations of blind people. This, again, exemplifies the confidence and perseverance within a blind human being. Although legally blind people are constantly asserting a point of equality and independence, the sole fact that they are blind brings their mental capacity down to a level that is less than the sighted ones. Blindness encourages an individual to out shine others merely because of the negative and misguided perceptions. To flourish as a visually impaired person is to flourish as a sighted human being. The former, though, brings with it a sense of accomplishment and societal approval that the latter may not fully create.

Pure satisfaction is a lifestyle simpler to experience by those without vision. Typically, blind humans take less for granted because they are apparently gifted with a "flaw" to begin with. Sighted people, gifted in other ways, find qualities of themselves that need to be improved or altered constantly. Indeed, the blind man has insecurities, as does every human being, yet they value life in a rather special and genuine manner. Astonishingly enough, Kraut argues, "If a blind and a sighted person have the same positive attitude towards their existence, the latter's life is nonetheless happier, since it is not marred by serious misfortune." How can this be asserted when a blind man does not consider his blindness to be a "serious misfortune?" Instead, other senses and skills are refined in order to make up for one's inability to see. As long as blind individuals acquire the necessary tools to be independent, happiness is found and cherished. Pure satisfaction arises from optimism, contentment, and approval. Why, then, is a sighted person deemed happier if said man expresses a positive attitude that mirrors that of a blind man? He is not happier; so therein lies the controversy. Kraut also considers the hypothetical. "Suppose sight could be restored to a certain blind person, who nonetheless willingly chooses to remain blind." This refusal signifies the pure satisfaction endured by the blind man. Actually, given the mere choice and declining such offer presents the idea that the blind man would rather have other aspects of his life improved rather than his vision. Since the blind man can sing, communicate, exercise, eat, and succeed as is, there is no reason to throw the benefit of visible light at an already happy man.

Total blindness does not exist. This term implies an overwhelming sense of unawareness, uncertainty, and confusion. Total vision, however, can exist within anyone regardless of their visual acuity. Understanding the multifaceted world we reside in while comprehending the diversity, opportunity, and failures can be seen by any human being. A clear vision simply refers to the ability to see a future for oneself. Therefore, blindness is two sided. Either an individual lacks the physical ability to see light, or an individual lacks the mental ability to see tomorrow. When Kraut says, "A philosopher who denies the reality of the physical world has less reason to consider blindness a misfortune," he is wrong. The philosopher is unable to see clearly. An objectivist would agree when I say that a blind man with a transparent vision of himself will flourish if he applies himself. Therefore, this "sighted" blind man is happy, if not happier, than his neighbor who dropped out of high school and instead watches television all day. If blindness is an objective misfortune, then lack of perfect pitch will also be characterized as so. It is not the blindness itself that shields one from succeeding; it is the lack of motivation that comes with inhibiting any flaw. A blind man can meet the standard of happiness and thus convince subjectivists to see the pure satisfaction within. To flourish is to achieve, while loving is living. Financial security tied in with a career one is passionate about characterizes a happy person. Whether sighted or blind, this happiness can be overbearingly obvious.

**It’s Time to Ring the Bells in Connecticut!**

**by Kathryn C. Webster**

This coming August, the National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut is embarking on a journey that will change the lives of blind children statewide. As the State Coordinator of the Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning (BELL) Program, it is my pleasure to announce that we will be hosting an NFB BELL Program in August, 2015.

In 2008, the Maryland affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) hosted a two-week program that focused on enriching the lives of children through Braille. Since the Jernigan Institute decided to adopt the program, the BELL curriculum has reached 26 states as of this year. It is our turn to change the lives of blind children by implementing this two-week summer program into our state! Though I am the coordinator, I cannot do it alone.

The NFB BELL Program is designed to provide intensive Braille instruction to blind and low vision children during the summer months. This program is meant to serve students who are not currently receiving enough Braille instruction in school or who could benefit from Braille enrichment over the summer. The goal of this program is to provide children ages 4-12 with two weeks of intense Braille instruction through fun, hands-on learning activities. The program is designed to run Monday through Friday for six hours a day. In addition to Braille crafts, games, and other engaging projects, children will enjoy field trips to sites related to the NFB BELL curriculum.

The Connecticut NFB BELL Program will take place in August, though the dates are yet to be determined. The program will be held in either Bridgeport or Wethersfield, depending on funding. I ask you now to please consider volunteering, donating, or lending a hand through the planning stages. I am proud to be a part of such a phenomenal program, and hope you will be too!

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any additional questions or concerns. My email address is kathrynwebster.nfb@gmail.com or you may call me at 203-273-8463.

**Braille Rocks!**

**NFB OF CT CHAPTER MEETING INFORMATION**

**Central CT Chapter**

Gary Allen, President; 860-589-2241

Meetings: Plainville Library, 56 Main Street, Plainville

2nd Saturdays at noon

**East of the River Chapter**

Marie Beaulier, President; 860-569-6436

Meetings: St. Elizabeth’s Community Room, 41 Applegate Lane, East Hartford

3rd Saturdays at 10:00 AM

**Greater Hartford Chapter**

Barbara Blejewski, President; 860-721-8601

Meeting place varies, call first

3rd Saturdays at 11:00 AM

**Middletown Chapter**

Terry Woolard, President; 860-346-7526

Meetings: Russell Library, 123 Broad Street, Middletown

3rd Saturdays at noon

**Shoreline Chapter**

Alan Daniels, President; 203-488-7348

Meetings: First Congregational Church, 1009 Main Street, Branford

3rd Saturdays at 10:00 AM

**Southern CT Chapter**

Rich McGaffin, President; 203-937-5441

Meetings: Fowler Memorial Building, 45 New Haven Ave, Milford

2nd Saturdays at 2:00 PM

**Stamford Area Chapter**

John Padilla, President; 203-325-4695

Meetings: Stamford Hospital Medical Library Conference Room, Shelburne & West

Broad, Stamford. 2nd Saturdays at 1:00 PM.

**At-Large Chapter Conference Calls**

Tammy Robbins, President; 860-317-1596

Conference Call Meetings: 3rd Wednesdays at 9:00 PM

Call in: 760-569-9000; access code: 433706; caller responsible for long

distance charges