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**TAP TRACKS**

**The Newsletter of the National Federation of the Blind of Kansas**

**Autumn / Winter 2017**

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**Associate Editors**

Please submit materials for the Spring / Summer 2018 issue of TAP TRACKS by February 15th 2018 to:

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**From the President’s Desk**

* Tom Page

Since our last communication there has been much activity in the NFB of KS. Our members made a great showing at both our Washington Seminar in February and our National Convention in July. In addition, our student division made a trip to Colorado in March to participate in a regional meeting of blind students. We hosted 5 students in July for our second Kansas BELL Academy. Whether young, old, a student, a worker, a parent, or a friend or family of a blind person we have had something to offer.

We have continued to advocate in the areas of:

* Access to education
* Access to rehabilitation
* Access to print news resources
* Worker empowerment
* Parental rights

I am happy to report that our efforts to engage with Wichita State University have resulted in some very positive changes. There is much more work to be done in this area. Emily Schlenker, the brave student who has worked to craft a settlement with Wichita State will speak at our upcoming convention. [read on for more on the convention ed.]

In the early part of the summer I was approached by a blind man who was experiencing discrimination from Butler Community College of El Dorado, KS. After working with the gentleman Mr. Russel Mead of Arkansas City and the college we were able to get the discriminatory policy in question removed and replaced by a reasonable new policy statement. Further, Butler Community College released a statement affirming their commitment to diversity and inclusion. There will be more on this at the convention as well.

We have continued to monitor the situation in Overland Park, KS (Blue Valley Schools) where a young student and her parent have struggled to provide Braille class materials. This school district should be ashamed. They have spent (so far) over $130,000 to fight against the Petro family. Although they are in minimal compliance with the federal code it seems that they have violated the pertinent Kansas laws and the family is currently engaged in legal action. We have voted to support the family’s efforts to provide Braille for their Daughter and we will continue to do all we can to assist.

We have been working with various state government advisory bodies to improve access to residential rehabilitation programs. We now have members serving on the State Independent Living Council, the Statewide Rehabilitation Council, and Kansas Advisory Committee to Services to the Blind as well as various sub-committees. We are dedicated to creating policies that result in opportunities equitable to our neighboring states for blind individuals to pursue blindness rehabilitation.

As always, we have done our best to fill the gaps for our membership and all blind Kansans. We have intervened in several cases in which young blind persons were being blocked from residential rehab and in all of those cases we have prevailed. We conducted our second BELL Academy to help address the woeful lack of Braille instruction for our youth. We have sponsored opportunities for our senior leaders to attend special immersion training designed for those seeking to live independently after retirement.

In closing, the past year within the NFB of KS has been a joyful and event filled one. We send our love to those in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and Nevada as we give thanks for our warmth and safety. Please attend your local chapter meetings or at large and board conference calls. We need your voice and experience to continue our movement! I hope to be able to meet and speak with all of you in Lawrence in November.

**Convention Announcement**

* Tom Page

I am pleased to announce that the 2017 convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Kansas will take place at the Hilton Double Tree hotel in Lawrence KS on November 10-12. I look forward to the family reunion, celebration of our successes, and strategy for the future. This convention marks our 48th annual gathering since the organization of the NFB of KS in 1969.

Some of this year’s highlights will be:

* Fellowship and fun at our hospitality room on Friday and happy hour on Saturday.
* Blind Seniors Division Luncheon
* Banquet address by National Representative Carla McQuillan
* Informative speakers on topics of interest to blind Kansans
* National and State reports
* Annual Business meeting
* Great live band on Saturday night

We plan to focus on topics including: education of blind children, skills training for blind people of all ages, and our ongoing advocacy work and partnerships. I hope to get to meet and spend time with each and every one of you in Lawrence this November! Read on for information on the Hotel and Carla McQuillan’s bio.

Hotel Information:

Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Lawrence

200 McDonald Drive, Lawrence, KS, 66044,

855-479-0732

Room Rates: $99 for singles or doubles per night.

Make sure to inform the hotel that you are with the NFB of KS group!

Meet our 2017 National Representative **Carla McQuillan**

Executive Director of Main Street Montessori Association

Carla was born and raised in Southern California in the early 60's, the youngest of 4 children. In the summer before fifth grade, Carla lost a great deal of vision but did not notice it until she started school in the fall and was unable to read the chalkboard from the front row. A few years earlier, her older brother had been diagnosed with a rare genetic eye condition called Stargardt's disease, which resulted in the loss of central vision. It was soon confirmed that Carla had the same condition. She was diagnosed legally blind in 1971.

Because of her remaining peripheral vision, Carla did not "look blind", so she was not taught Braille or any other alternative techniques of blindness. She had very little experience with blind people. The only blind person she knew was her brother, and he was forever using his blindness as an excuse for standing on the sidelines. Carla knew that this was not the life she wanted and was determined to do everything in her power to convince the world that she was not blind.

After high school Carla went to Humboldt State University in Northern California. There she met her husband Lucas. They were married in the summer of 1981 and moved to San Diego for Lucas's master's degree program. Though Carla had not completed her bachelor's degree, she was more than happy to put her college career on hold and work to support the couple. Her one year of college had not been very successful. Without the ability to read Braille and eyesight too poor to read print, Carla, who had been an A student in high school, saw her grades drop.

She got a job as a Montessori Preschool teacher in San Diego while Lucas completed his master's degree. Their daughter Alison was born in 1983. In 1985 the family moved to Illinois. Lucas enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of Illinois, and Carla decided to complete her bachelor's degree. With Lucas' encouragement, Carla asked for accessible textbooks and decided to learn Braille. The staff at the university’s disabled student's services office told her how difficult Braille would be to learn and how inefficient it would be. Discouraged and defeated, Carla wondered if there was any hope for her future. Fortunately, she learned of a scholarship program through the National Federation of the Blind. She won a scholarship from the organization’s Illinois affiliate in 1988. The state convention changed her life. Her negative attitudes about blindness and about her own potential to be a successful professional were replaced by confidence and self-assurance that remain a hallmark of her character today.

After both graduating with High Distinction from the University of Illinois in 1988, the McQuillan’s completed their family with the birth of their son Duncan. They moved to Oregon to be near Carla's family. Carla started her own Montessori preschool, which later expanded to include 3 schools and a Montessori Teacher Certification Program. Carla served as President of the National Federation of the Blind of Oregon from 1992 until 2006, when her business responsibilities became too demanding. She also served on the NFB's national board of directors from 1998 until resigning from that position as well in 2006. She was re-elected president of the Oregon affiliate in 2012 and still serves in that capacity. She is the director of NFB Camp, the program that offers child care during the annual convention of the National Federation of the Blind. Carla was again elected to the national board of directors in 2016.

"I had such horrible misconceptions about blindness for most of my childhood and early adult life," Carla says. "I thought I knew what blindness meant, and I didn't want any part of it. The National Federation of the Blind taught me that blindness was only as limiting as I allowed it to be. My friends and colleagues in the movement have been more than ideal role models; they have saved me from a life of regret and underachievement."

**Scholarship Announcement**

* Tom Page

Thanks to the efforts of the Johnson County Chapter and the genericity of the Schlitz estate we are able to continue this important program this year. If you have any questions please contact me using the above information or contact our Scholarship Committee Chairperson Tom Anderson at: 303-842-9661.

The National Federation of the Blind of Kansas will award up to two scholarships in the amount of $1,500 Dollars and one $2,500 scholarship! If you are a legally blind high school senior, or if you are a blind student participating in a post-secondary undergraduate or graduate academic or vocational or technical training program, the National Federation of the Blind of Kansas invites you to apply for one of our scholarships.

Applications will be accepted from out of state students who will be attending school in Kansas and from Kansas students who will be attending in or out of state schools.

Applicants must have a 2.5 overall GPA.  If you receive one of these scholarships, the NFB KS will pay for you to attend our state convention in Lawrence KS November 10-12 2017.  At the convention you will be assigned a mentor, someone to acquaint you with the work and philosophy of the organization and to be a resource person for you as you continue your academic pursuits.

Your receipt of a scholarship is contingent on:

* Legal blindness
* Academic merit
* Ability to attend our convention in Lawrence KS on November 10-12 2017.

For complete details and requirements please review the application form which can be found on nfbks.org.  You may also contact me at topage@swbell.net or 316-734-4839.  You may also go to our web site [www.nfbks.org](http://www.nfbks.org/) for more information on the scholarship program and to meet past scholarship recipients.

Your completed application and all supporting materials must be received no later than October 31st, 2017 at the address listed on the application form.

If you know of a blind student please pass along this information to them.

BELL 2017 Report

* Tom Anderson

The Braille Enrichment Literacy and Learning Academy took place at the Envision Rehabilitation Center from July 24 through August 4, 2017.

We had five students who participated in the program. Most of these students had an additional disability in addition to blindness.

Kate Mendez, a public-school teacher from New York City was the lead teacher. Nicole Taylor, Dianne Hemphill and Tom Anderson served as volunteers during the first week. Sharon Luka, Nicole Taylor and Tom Anderson were volunteers during the second week.

Of the five children, three of them were quite young. Dallas, a feisty and adorable four-year old, Fayette, a bright and charming five-year old, and Andy, a good-natured six-year-old boy, learned much while in training. Dallas and Andy had limited knowledge of Braille while Fayette knew how to read and write in Uncontracted Braille. These children learned more about Braille, learned how to travel with white canes and learned to explore their environments.

Dianne Hemphill encouraged Andy to use a bouncy ride on the playground. He then proceeded to the slide. During the first week, the children went on a field trip to a public park, thoroughly enjoying the playground.

On the second week of BELL, we had two additional students; Vicka, age 11 and Lena, age 13. Lena, who has light perception, diligently used her sleep shades. She also has a working knowledge of Contracted Braille but needs additional work with punctuation marks. She desires to be a disc jockey when she grows up and with help of Tom Page and Sharon Luka, she recorded a rap song about the Bell Academy and Braille.

Since the other children in the BELL program were too young to be able to participate in a ‘professional’ recording of music, they visited the Wichita Art Museum and took a tour of the sculpture garden.

Another highlight of the BELL academy was the musical teachings of Sharon Luka. The children loved getting to learn fun songs accompanied with an eclectic mix of musical instruments.

Many games were used to impart knowledge to the students. Games consisted of “Braille fishing”, and tactile comparisons for the younger students.

*Photo Description: Tom Anderson and Andy exploring the giant textured foot of a sculpture in the Sculpture Garden at the Wichita Art Museum*.

*Photo Description: Sharon Luka and Lena make banana bread under their learning shades*.

**Johnson County Chapter Report**

* Susan L. Stanzel

This is a report of our chapter activities since last fall.

Almost everyone in our chapter attended the fall state convention. Attendees were Susie Stanzel, Randy Phifer, Tom Anderson, Pila Mahoney, Ashley Neybert, and Margaret and Raymond Peed. We just happened to have a space in the van and we were able to bring Ginny Callahan who transplanted herself to Colorado after attending the Colorado Center.

The Kansas affiliate started a Senior Division. Susie Stanzel is the vice president. Tom Anderson is the secretary. Randy Phifer also joined the division.

We had our annual Christmas party at the Stanzel home. We had around 25 people and a good time was had by all.

On a sad note, Pila Mahoney fell in early January and broke her femur. She was in the hospital for 20 days and spent about three months in rehab. The doctor has told her it will actually take nine months to a year for her to be fully recovered.

Two new couples came to our February meeting. It is nice to see the chapter having guests.

Tom Anderson and I attended the national convention. Kansas had record 22 attendees. I have never seen us need more chairs than our row. The most surprising thing happened at the convention. Ken Ruda who lives about a half mile from me was joining us in Florida.

Our chapter is growing. Our new members are Kathy and Kerm Kerchhof and Ken Ruda.

The most wonderful thing happened in July. Randy Phifer, who has been on kidney dialysis for a number of years received a donated kidney. He is doing very well. The kidney is from a younger person so he hopes it will last for the rest of his life.

Ashley Neybert has now graduated from the Colorado Center for the Blind (CCB). It took about a year and a half to get Kansas services to agree. Ashley, like so many others, decided to stay in Colorado.

She has now started graduate school at the Northern Colorado University majoring in chemistry. We all wish you a great experience.

Tom Anderson as you have read was the Kansas Coordinator for our second annual BELL Academy. He also is a member of the State Independent Living Council of Kansas. The council has elected him as their new secretary. His position as a member of this council was appointed by the Governor.

I received a new right hip on April 20th. I have finished all my therapy and now it is all up to me. Martha Kelly has also undergone surgery to receive a new right hip She is recovering well and working through the PT now. Please keep her in your thoughts and prayers..

The chapter is going to participate with the Kansas City chapter in the walk for independence at Lose Park. It will be on September 9th. This is our fund raiser for the year. A picnic will follow

**Jayhawk Chapter Report**

* **Rob Tabor**

**The Jayhawk Chapter has 12 members in good standing and meets at the Lawrence Public Library from 1:00pm to 3:00pm on the third Saturday of each month. The Lawrence Public Library is located at 707 Vermont Street in downtown Lawrence.**

**We held our annual election of officers at our October 2016 meeting. Our officers for the 2016-17 Federation year are:**

**President, Rob Tabor; Vice president, Renee Morgan; secretary, Jim Secor, and treasurer, Brendy Latare.**

**As we go to press, we are contemplating various fundraising endeavors including a screen reader-accessible NCAA Men’s basketball tournament pool and a trivia tournament.**

**We will be appearing at a Lawrence City Commission meeting in October to receive a proclamation signed by Mayor Leslie Soden proclaiming October as “Meet the Blind Month”. On the 24th of October the chapter will host a public screening of ‘Do you Dream in Color’ at the Lawrence public library (707 Vermont St.) from 6:30-9:00 PM The chapter will hold annual elections at our October 21st meeting..**

**For more information about the Jayhawk Chapter, you may contact rob Tabor by phone at 785-865-99t59 or by email at Rob dot Tabor at SBCGlobal dot net.**

**South Central Chapter Report**

* Nicole Taylor and Emily Schlenker

Greetings from Wichita! The South-Central Chapter has been on the go and is up to great things. We have some exciting announcements. We would like to introduce our newest members: Taverly, daughter of Sabrina Nickell who made her entrance into the world last November and Isaac, son of Richard and Arianna Traverzo who joined us shortly after convention last summer.

Sadly, we also lost some great members in August as the Luke, Jamie, and Jericho Schwinck moved to Washington, D.C. due to a change in job opportunities. Luke will be attending National University to complete his degree that he started at Wichita State University.

Last Winter, several members attended Washington Seminar to meet with various representatives regarding legislation concerning rights for blind people. Those in attendance were: Tom Page, Luke Schwinck, and Andrew Crane.

On the academic front, Emily Schlenker is still having to fight with Wichita State University for accessible materials, but despite the obstacles WSU continues to throw her way, Emily continues to work hard to achieve her degree and live the life she wants! Because of her hard work as a blind chemistry student, Emily was asked to present at the American Chemistry Society National Convention in San Francisco, CA last April. Congratulations Emily!

We also had three state scholarship recipients: Emily, along with Luke Schwinck, and Richard Traverzo all students of WSU. (GO SHOCKERS!) Of the three recipients, Luke went on to receive a National Scholarship at the NFB National Convention in Orlando this year.

In other news, we continue to meet at the Wichita Public Library in the board room on the second Saturday of every month at 1:00. Join us on the 14th of October in the Patio Room at the library for a screening of “Do You Dream in Color” at 1:00. Popcorn will be provided!

**Meadowlark (At Large) Chapter Report**

* Rosa Bonnecarrere and Sharon Luka

Going Strong: The Meadowlark At Large chapter meeting of the NFB of Kansas meets by teleconference phone call the third Friday of each month, at seven pm. Currently, we have six members, with two new prospective persons.

Our meeting agenda includes official Secretary and Treasurer reports, Presidential releases, and a state report from Rob Tabor, First Vice President of the NFB of Kansas.

We also include and “enrichment nugget” in which we discuss alternative ways of independent living.

Sometimes we share new ideas, recipes, and tips for mall orientation.

In our last meeting, we shared ideas on artistic tactile drawing, spurred on by the August presidential release.

Come join us for the fun on the third Friday of the month at seven pm.

Dues are five dollars per year.

Hope to see you there for our next meeting on September 15, 2017

A reminder notice will appear in your email “in baskets,” including the call-in numbers.

**Communities of Faith**

* Tom Anderson

The NFB of Kansas in Communities of Faith has been quite active since February, 2017.

Sarah LaRose, a Hebrew professor at Anderson University in Anderson, Indiana spoke about her faith in God and her challenges in becoming a Hebrew Professor. She, along with others were one of the recipients of the Bollotin awards for making ancient languages accessible for blind seminary students and Bible scholars.

Reverend Peter Heide, pastor of Albany Lutheran Church in Albany, Wisconsin spoke of his work as a blind pastor and his challenges with radically changing visual acuity.

This division played a key role in establishing a Communities of Faith division in Wisconsin.

Cheryl Miller, our Vice-President and a publisher of devotions will share her work with the members at our September meeting.

**October, Meet the Blind Month**

* Rob Tabor

Our national president and leadership team strongly encourages all state affiliates to conduct local screenings of the film “Do You Dream in Color”, a documentary film which won a Jacob Bollotton Award at the 1917 convention and which was made available for a preview screening at convention.

To be sure, a film screening is probably beyond the comfort zone of most if not all of us, as it is not just something we do on a routine daily basis. In light of this understanding, the national communications team has developed an informational packet which will be of great help to any local chapter who wishes to engage this interesting project. The package contains, among other things, a customizable flyer which can be tailored to the particulars of your local film screening event, a set of instructions on how to obtain a copy of the film on DVD, a list of possible venues for hosting your local event, and a starter list of questions to help facilitate a discussion/Q&A session after the public viewing of the film.

I have contacted Jenevieve White at our national offices and requested her to send me a link to a drop box shared folder which holds the “tool kit.” Please feel free to email, call, or text me if you want to be included on the forwarding list for the Dropbox link to the informational packet, which I will promptly redistribute once I have it in hand. So, let’s all make October 2017 an extraordinarily great Meet the Blind Month!