

**TAP TRACKS**

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

**Autumn / Winter 2018**

**Tom Page, Nicole Taylor, and**

**Donna Wood,**

**Associate Editors**

Please submit materials for the Spring / Summer 2019 issue of TAP TRACKS by February 15th 2019 to:

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**From the President**

-- Tom Page

Greetings Kansas federationists. I hope this newsletter finds you happy and healthy I am excited to share with you the activities of our affiliate and invite you to our upcoming convention. Read on for more information on the convention and a bio of our National Representative Anil Lewis. You will find the registration form attached as the last page of this mailing. The NFB of Kansas has been on the move this year. We have engaged in some new activities as well as repeating many.

As in the past we have been proud to support delegations for our Washington Seminar and National Convention. Our Washington delegation was strong and met with interest from Kansas House and Senate members on our issues. In particular Rep. Kevin Yoder agreed not to support H.R. 620. This bill (if enacted) would effectively gut the individual's ability to file lawsuits against places of public accomodation who have chosen not to follow the reccomenndations of the ADA. Mr. Yoder was the only member of the Kansas congressional delegation to vote against this terrible legislation and we commend him for stepping out on this issue.

We had almost 20 Kansans in attendance at our National convention in Orlando. We attended seminars, general sessions, had fun, and celebrated our NFB family. If you were unable to attend this year please put July 7-12 2019 on your calendar for the coming convention which will take place in fabulous Las Vegas Nevada at the Mandolay Bay resort.

Our advocacy work continues. We have continued to engage with committees which advise Kansas Rehabilitation Services and have had some success in reccomending policy changes that when implemented will provie access to important rehabilitation services that have been difficult for many Kansans. Specifically we are seeking to reverse policies which require Vocational Rehabilitation clients to pay for housing during a rehabilitation program an seeking change in the amount of dorm fees that a blind college stuent being supported by VR would be required to pay. These reccomendations are passing through the various bodies that must approve themm in orer for them to become policy. I hope that at our state convention I will be able to report that they are in place.

I and chapter presidents continue to get calls and emails from blind Kansans who are having trouble getting rehabilitation services and we continue to refer these individuals to the Disability rights center of Kansas. Most of these cases are resolved quickly by the DRCK and the use of this resource has allowed our leadership to concentrate on system wide policy change and concentrate pressure on VR management.

We were proud to support a blind couple from Wichita in their struggle for custody of their teenage child. I am happy to report that the court agreed with our attorney and the Johnson’s custody was restored.

We continue to work with school districts, Kansas board of regents institutions, and agencies serving the blind to provide the services and supports that blind Kansan’s need in an appropriate time and manner.

Our partnership with the Envision organization continues to grow. We have enjoyed a year of newspaper access via NFB-Newsline due to Envisions generous sponsorship of the program. In addition I am proud to report that Envision has hired 3 new blind persons in management positions within the last year and there are plans underway to bring about a training center which will allow Envision’s factory employees as well as blind persons not employed by Envision to gain work place training geared to produce mainstream employment placements. When put together with the actions of the Envision management over the last couple of years I feel that these signal actions are the beginnings of cultural change within the institution long championed by our federation. We will devote some time at convention to hear from the Envision management about the current state of affairs and future evolution.

I look forward to being with all of you in Wichita in November. Please feel free to contact me at any time at 316-734-4839 or [topage@swbell.net](mailto:topage@swbell.net) if you have need. It has been a pleasure serving as president for the last 2 years and I look forward to the future work we will engage in together.

**Convention Announcement**

**-** Tom Page

I am pleased to announce that the 2018 convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Kansas will take place at the Hotel at Old Town in Wichita, KS on November 2-4. I look forward to the family reunion, celebration of our successes, and strategy for the future. This is an extra special convention as it marks our 50th 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 welcoming reception on Friday and happy hour on Saturday.

• Banquet address by National Representative Anil Lewis

• 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 Wichita this November! Read on for information on the Hotel and Anil Lewis’s bio.

**Hotel Information**:

Hotel Old Town

830 E. 1st St. Wichita, KS 67202,

(316) 267-4800

Room Rates: $109 (includes breakfast) for singles or doubles per night.

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

**Anil Lewis**

**Counselor, Advocate, and Father**



Anil Lewis was born in 1964 in Atlanta, Georgia. He is the third of four children. Both his older brother and older sister became legally blind at an early age from retinitis pigmentosa. Lewis was originally labeled educably mentally retarded but eventually became the first member of his family to attend a four-year college. He has excelled academically, received many awards, participated as a leader in many extracurricular activities, and received several college scholarships. Although he was finally diagnosed at age nine with retinitis pigmentosa, his vision was fairly unaffected until age twenty-five.

As a sighted man he fairly easily found respectable employment with wages high above the minimum wage. Then, in 1989, while pursuing his bachelors of business administration in computer information systems at Georgia State University, he became blind from retinitis pigmentosa. "All of a sudden, doors that had been open to me slammed shut." At that point, although he had always considered himself socially aware, he became personally acquainted with actual social injustice and discrimination. "I am ashamed that only personal experience brought this awakening and decision to take action. But I am proud that I did take action and remain committed today to making a difference in the lives of others."

Lewis received blindness skills training while completing his course requirements for his BBA at GSU. He quickly learned the alternative skills of blindness, including Braille, activities of daily living, assistive technology, and use of the white cane, and capitalized on them to graduate from Georgia State with his BBA in 1993. "It was a struggle to regain the life that blindness had appeared to take from me. Almost everyone who had once respected me now pitied me, but I was determined not to be redefined by my blindness." Armed with these new skills and this new determination, he quickly became committed to ensuring that others in similar situations could get appropriate training and unlimited opportunities.

Lewis got a job as a Braille and assistive technology instructor. Within a year he was given the greater responsibility of job development/placement specialist, helping clients develop employment skills and get jobs. "I had no experience helping anyone other than myself get a job. I certainly did not have expertise in job placement for blind people." It was during this time that he first became aware of the National Federation of the Blind. A friend referred him to the NFB when he had questions about Social Security work incentives and needed information about tools and strategies to help blind people obtain employment. As a result, he attended his first NFB convention in Chicago, Illinois, in 1992 and became aware of the empowering philosophy and tremendous resource of the National Federation of the Blind. The technical assistance materials produced by the NFB's Job Opportunities for the Blind (JOB) program and the NFB's Social Security technical assistance information provided resources enabling him to motivate, educate, and encourage other blind people to achieve successful gainful employment. "My success as a job placement specialist was a direct result of my ability to infuse NFB philosophy into the clients I worked with." Lewis went on to develop and manage a job placement program for people with disabilities as the manager of the Disability Employment Initiative with Randstad Staffing, one of the largest employment staffing companies in the world, during the Atlanta Olympic and Paralympic Games in 1996. He is currently employed by the law offices of Martin and Jones as the Georgia Client Assistance Program (CAP) counselor/advocate, advocating for people with disabilities every day.

He became president of the Atlanta Metropolitan Chapter of the NFB of Georgia in 2000 and was elected president of the NFB of Georgia in 2002. In that year he also received the Kenneth Jernigan Memorial Scholarship, the NFB's most prestigious award presented to a blind student, which he used to obtain his master's degree in public administration with emphasis in policy analysis and program evaluation from GSU in 2003. In that year he was also elected as a member of the National Federation of the Blind board of directors. He received an Outstanding Alumnus award from GSU and was also a 2003 GSU Torch Bearer of Peace Award recipient.

Lewis has dedicated his leadership skills to the development and growth of disability rights organizations that promote independence and improved quality of life. He was appointed by the governor as a board member and is the current president of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) of Georgia, an organization promoting independent living for those with severe disabilities. He also serves as chairman of the board of directors of the Disability Law and Policy Center (DLPC) of Georgia, which uses a variety of methods to influence and enforce disability policy. All of these organizations recognize that people with disabilities are integral, necessary members of society and reflect the world's normal diversity. Further, each works to ensure that the policies and programs developed for people with disabilities are created and implemented by people with disabilities. By helping to develop and strengthen such institutions to serve as a cornerstone in protecting the rights of people with disabilities, he hopes to secure the commitment and support of others. He also hopes to reduce the barriers disabled people face by encouraging the implementation of public policy securing the rights and promoting the responsible participation of people with disabilities as productive citizens.

Lewis volunteers as a teacher and mentor for blind kids, working with promising blind students who, because of limited resources and lack of trained professionals to teach them, are inappropriately encouraged to pursue special education diplomas. He wants blind students to set higher goals for themselves and to receive the training and tools they need to acquire the skills to reach their full potential.

Speaking of his personal life, Anil Lewis says that his proudest accomplishment is his bright, ambitious son Amari, born in 1997. Balancing his many civic responsibilities with his personal life as a father is undoubtedly his greatest challenge. His greatest success, he thinks, has been overcoming the temptation to subside into becoming an unmotivated, self-pitying person with a disability. He thinks his greatest contribution so far has been to encourage other people with disabilities to believe in themselves and to understand that they can make a difference.

Lewis says that lack of awareness of individuals with traits outside society's accepted norms promotes extreme ignorance, which in turn results in unjustified fear, negative stereotypes, and discrimination. In an effort to combat that ignorance, he aggressively recruits, refers, and supports other like-minded people to become active in the National Federation of the Blind and other organizations in the disability rights movement. He hopes to promote social change by fostering the active participation of more people with disabilities in every facet of society, thereby replacing ignorance with understanding, fear with awareness, and negative stereotypes with mutual understanding. In the process he believes that we will eliminate discrimination.

"With a working knowledge of most disability law and policy and extended experience in advocating for the rights of others, I am committed to improving the quality of life for all people with disabilities by working to remove the barriers of ignorance while creating equal opportunities for all. My personal mission is simple: I want to make a difference in the lives of others."

**Washington Seminar**

By Tom Anderson

Four members of the NFB of Kansas attended the 2018 Washington Seminar from January 29 through January 31. Our President, Tom Page and Nicole Taylor came from Wichita, Renae Morgan from Lawrence, and Tom Anderson from the Johnson County Chapter participated in this activity.

We met with staff members from the offices of Senator Pat Roberts, Representative Roger Marshall, Senator Jerry Moran, Representative Lynn Jenkins, and Representative Ron Estes. We also met with Congressman Kevin Yoder and a member of his staff.

Three issues were raised with our Representatives and four with our senators. They are:

The Accessible Instructional Materials in Higher Education Act (AIM HIGH Act) creates voluntary accessibility guidelines for educational technology to stimulate the market, improve Blind students’ access to course materials, and reduce litigation for schools. The bill numbers for the Aim High Act are S2138 introduced by Senator Elizabeth Warren and H.R. 1772 introduced by Congressman Phil Roe.

The Access Technology Affordability Act (ATAA) would provide a refundable tax credit for qualifying access technology purchases, Congress will stimulate individual procurement of access technology and promote affordability of these tools for Blind Americans. The bill numbers are S734 introduced by Senator John Boozman and H.R. 1734 introduced by Representative David Young.

We oppose H.R. 620. The ADA Education and Reform Act because it would undermine the ADA by significantly eroding equal access protections and progress made over nearly three decades.

The Marrakesh treaty will enable the cross-border exchange of accessible format copies, thereby vastly expanding the availability of accessible foreign language literature to Blind and otherwise print disabled Americans.

The fact sheets regarding these issues will appear in a future addition of the Braille Monitor.

Many Federationists went to a place called the Newseum to view a three dimensional display regarding an important battle of the Vietnam war. All in all, the Washington Seminar was a great experience.

**Scholarship Announcement**

Tom Page

Great News! Our scholarship deadline has been extended to the end of September.

Thanks to the efforts of the Johnson County Chapter and the generosity 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; one in the amount of $1,500 and the other for $2,500! 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 Wichita, KS, November 2-4, 2018. 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 Wichita, KS on November 2-4, 2018

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 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 September 30, 2018 at the address listed on the application form.

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

**Put the GOLD back into Your Golden Years!**

**Introduction to Blindness Skills Workshop**

**and**

**50th Annual State Convention of the**

**National Federation of the Blind of Kansas**

November 1st-4th 2018

Hotel at Old Town

830 E. 1st St. N.

Wichita, KS 67202

(the workshop will be at a different location)

Are you interested in learning a few good skills used by other independent blind and low vision people? This short workshop may be just the thing for you!

The National Federation of the Blind of Kansas (NFBK) in partnership with professionals from BLIND Inc., Minneapolis, Minnesota will be providing this valuable workshop. In addition, there will be a separate opportunity to help your significant other learn how to also be more helpful in your adjustment to vision loss.

* Most expenses will be covered by the NFBKS
* You must attend both the workshop and state convention (November 1-4, 2018)
* You must be able to do all self-care
* You must be available for a short telephone interview
* Space is limited so enroll as soon as possible

For more information: Please contact Dianne Hemphill, President NFBKS Seniors Division (316)201-1323

For more information about the National Federation or the Blind please visit www.nfb.org

And for the National Federation of the Blind of Kansas visit [www.nfbks.org](http://www.nfbks.org)

**The NFB of Kansas Seniors Division**

By Tom Anderson

Our Seniors Division has been active over the past several months. Dr. Lori Ann Dunn, an audiologist from Salina, Kansas spoke with our members about the signs, associated problems, and solutions related to hearing loss. She also spoke on a later call regarding the maintenance of physical balance. We also addressed our favorite technology on one of our monthly calls. Shelley Coppel the president of the Seniors division in South Carolina spoke about her adjustment to blindness and about the work of the National Seniors Division.

Ellen Foshag spoke at our February meeting about her experience at the Hellen Keller center for Deaf/Blind persons. Dianne McGeorge spoke on the physical and emotional sides of downsizing. At other meetings discussions were held on the philosophy of blindness and travel techniques. Cindy Ray presented on her work in the Stevens Ministry program.

Our division holds its monthly meetings on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 PM using our conference line. Our conference number is (916) 2351420. The PIN number is 879925 followed by pound. Our officers are: Dianne Hemphill, President; Susie Stanzel, Vice-President; and Tom Anderson, Secretary/Treasurer.

**North-Central Chapter**

By Sharon Luka

It is with great excitement that I announce the following:

The NFB of Kansas has given birth to a new, North-Central chapter housed in Salina, KS and will be serving the surrounding counties. We met together on August 25, 2018. Officers were elected. President: Rosa Bonnecarrere, Vice President: Anna Hindman, Secretary: Sharon Luka, and Treasurer: Margaret Finger. We also adopted our constitution.

Our membership is growing. We have moved beyond the telephone wires of the Meadowlark at Large to a constituted chapter with regular in-person meetings. We hope to advance the lives of blind people, give general education, and support efforts for equal opportunity for the blind.

We meet every fourth Saturday of the month at 1:00 p.m. Our meeting venue is the McKenzie Center, 308 West Elm, Salina. All are welcome. Our next meeting will be held on Saturday, September 22, 2018 at 1:00 p.m. Thank you for sharing in our excitement!

**South-Central Chapter**

By Donna Wood

The NFBKS South-Central chapter has made some big changes this year. We have a new meeting place and time. The South-Central chapter meets at 2301 S. Water Wichita, KS at the Envision Manufacturing Plant board room, on the 2nd Wednesday of the month from 4-6 p.m. It is very nice accommodations and since the change attendance to chapter meetings are up. We have several new members and some past members have returned.

The roster of officers for the South-Central chapter for 2018 is as follows; Emily Schlenker, President: Donna Wood, Vice-President: Scott Erickson, Secretary: and Tom Page, Treasurer. If you are interested in attending a meeting and have questions, please contact President Emily Schlenker at (316) 644-4227 or emilyschlenker@cox.net.

The Chapter is working hard on fundraisers. We are looking at edible items to sell and different restaurants that have fundraisers as well as running concessions at the Intrust Bank Arena. We will be holding our first restaurant fundraiser on September 18th at Texas Road House. Please tell your friends and family and come out and enjoy A GREAT STEAK DINNER and GOOD COMPANY!

The following chapter members were able to attend the National Convention in Orlando, Florida in July. Tom Page, Nicole Taylor, Emily Schlenker and Emily’s daughter Sophia.

This year the South-Central Chapter will be hosting the State Convention in Wichita at The Hotel Old Town. As some of you will remember this is the lovely hotel in Wichita’s Old Town area where we held our 2015 State Convention. We hope to see you all in November.

**Jayhawk Chapter**

By Rob Tabor

The Jayhawk chapter now has 13 members and continues to be a very robust working chapter. We continue to meet at the Lawrence public library on the third Saturday of each month except for June, July, November, and December. Please note that our meeting time has changed to 11 AM to 1 PM by vote of our membership.

We are excited to report that we were invited by the Douglas county clerk Jamie Shew, to participate in a public showcasing of new, state of the art voting kiosks at the Douglas County Fairgrounds on the evening of April 4. The event provided an excellent opportunity for blind and disabled residents of Douglas County to meet directly with representatives of the five vendors who submitted bids to the county for purchase of electronic voting kiosks. Mr. Shew assured us that full accessibility to everyone will be a selection criterion.

In fundraising news, we launched our fourth annual NCAA tournament pool fundraiser. In addition to raising some funds for the chapter, in one year $150 or so, this project is also an excellent way of supporting and promoting an accessible bracket online submission system developed a few years ago by Terrill Thompson, formerly of Lawrence and currently a chief assistive technology officer for the University of Washington.

In addition, we are presently working on fundraising benefit suppers and various restaurants and diners in the Lawrence area. Last but certainly not least, plans are underway for our historic first trivia tournament fundraiser at Conroy’s Pub at 6:00 PM on October 13th in conjunction with national Meet the Blind Month. Timely announcement of the event will be posted on both the Jayhawk chapter and home on the range email distribution lists.

For more information about the activities and programs in the Jayhawk chapter, you are invited to contact chapter president Rob Tabor at 785-865-9959 or by email at rob.tabor@sbcglobal.net

**Johnson County Chapter Report**

By Susan L. Stanzel

Our chapter is growing. Our new members of 2018 include: Kathy and Kerm Kerchhof, Lynn Petro and Paula Muting (parents of blind children), Bethany Bennington with husband Logan Campbell, and Cornessa Cherry.

Tom Anderson attended the Washington seminar on January 29, 2018. Our delegation met with Congressman Kevin Yoder himself. Usually we only get to meet with his staff. He pledged not to support HR 620 and he was as good as his word. Unfortunately, the bill passed.

On February 16, 2018 Tom Anderson and Susie Stanzel went to the Kansas State School for the Blind and helped with the regional Braille Challenge. We both attended the mobility seminar for parents. Tom went to the beginning Braille for parents and I spent the next several hours visiting with parents. Lynn Petro who is Brooke’s mother expressed her gratitude for the $400 given by our chapter to help with the cost of Brailling Brooke’s books. Tom was able to renew his friendship with one of our BELL Academy students.

Tom Anderson is also 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.

As a member of the State Independent Living Council and as the secretary he attended the national convention on February 19, 2018.

The following people were able to attend the National Convention in Orlando, Florida. Susie Stanzel, Tom and Linda Anderson, Bethany Bennington, Logan Campbel, and Ashley Neybert.

The chapter participated in the Walk for Independence with the Kansas City, Missouri chapter in September 2017. Kasey Fisher brought in about $400 and our newest member Ken Ruda took the top honors by raising more than $500. We again will participate on September 22nd of this year.

As you can tell by this report, the Johnson County chapter is thriving.

**NFB of Kansas in Communities of Faith**

By Tom Anderson

Our division has had a variety of speakers over the last few months.

Cheryl Miller, our Vice-President shared an article that is published in their church newsletter. She writes a devotion each month for the church publication.

Dr. Carolyn Peters, Spiritual Counsellor of a Presbyterian Church in Dayton, Ohio told us of her life and ministry.

Rosa Bonnecarrere gave her testimony about how she was converted from a legalistic religion to one where the emphasis is based on grace.

Linda Mentink, secretary of our national division gave her testimony about how she received Jesus as her Lord and savior. She is a founding member of our national division.

Our Kansas division re-elected the officers of the division. The officers are: Tom Anderson, President; Cheryl Miller, Vice-President; Donna Wood, Secretary/treasurer.

The NFBKS in Communities of Faith Division meets the first Thursday of the month by conference call at 7:00 PM. To participate call (916) 235-1420 or toll free (866) 476-8702 and enter the pin 879925

Further Resources:

Much more information about the people and programs of the NFB can be found at:

[www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org) and

[www.nfbks.org](http://www.nfbks.org)

The board of directors of the NFB of Kansas meets monthly via conference call. For more information please join our email listserv: home-on-the-range this can be done via [www.nf.net.org](http://www.nf.net.org) you will find information about our board meetings as well as chapter activities across the state on this email channel.