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**TAP TRACKS**

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

 **Autumn/Winter 2025**

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Associate Editors

Please submit materials for the Spring/Summer 2026

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From the President

-- Tom Page

Greetings Kansas federationists and friends! I hope that this edition of Tap Tracks finds you and yours happy and healthy. Since our last edition this spring much has happened. Our affiliate joined with over 3000 other participants in celebration at our national convention in New Orleans. The convention was action packed. Our members enjoyed many informational sessions, the exhibit hall, tech demonstrations, and the food and fun of the city. Our national president presented a great banquet speech. If you weren’t able to hear it live here is a link

[Creativity, Persistence, and Hope: Reclaiming Our Stories through the Organized Blind Movement | National Federation of the Blind (nfb.org)](https://nfb.org/resources/speeches-and-reports/banquet-speeches/creativity-persistence-and-hope-reclaiming-our):

Returning home, the Kansas affiliate has not been resting. Our chapters have held outings to restaurants, hosted bowling events and continued our advocacy work at the city, county, and state level. Shortly before the convention we learned that Dan Decker (the director of Kansas Rehabilitation Services) and the head of the Business Enterprise Program had left the agency. Communications from our members in the vending community highlighted that the changes were at least partially due to two recent settlements secured with the help of the National Association of Blind Merchants.

This marks the fourth time in as many years that the agency leadership has had to settle with the vendors over corrupt actions taken by the agency. Postings for the two vacated positions has occurred and hiring should be forthcoming. We will be as actively involved in this process as possible. I hope that with our strong advocacy the agency can overcome its many years of mismanagement and resulting lack of effectiveness. Our members who serve on the vendors committee and the Kansas Advisory Committee on Services to the blind will work hard to make sure our voice is heard in Topeka regarding these hires. Together we can make the positive change this agency has been in desperate need of.

As fall approaches, our convention planning committee has revved up their planning efforts. We will meet in downtown Wichita from October 31st through November 2nd. We will gather for fellowship, education, and fun. The convention is the supreme authority of the affiliate and as such we will hold elections and consider resolutions that will in part determine our agenda for the coming year. If you have interest in running for a state office or have an idea for a resolution please contact 1st Vice President Rob Tabor (rob.tabor@sbcglobal.net). More information on the convention is in this newsletter. Please consult our web page for registration information. The agenda will also appear there.

<http://www.nfbks.org>

For your convenience a registration form is attached at the end of this newsletter. I hope to meet everyone at the convention and am excited to announce that Ben Dallin of Wisconsin will represent Mark Riccobono at our 2025 convention. For more about Ben read on….

ZIP A DEE DOO DAH Zip A DEE YAE MY OH MY WHAT a WONDERFUL DAY!

--Donna Wood

Yes! It is almost state convention time. The 57th annual National Federation of the Blind of Kansas state convention will be held October 31-November 2, 2025 at Drury Plaza Hotel Broadview 400 W. Douglas Ave. Wichita, KS 67202. To make your room reservations call, 800-325-0720 and give them the group number 10058484. The deadline for room reservations is September 29, 2025. So make your reservations soon! Room rates are $137 a night. This does include breakfasts and hospitality on Friday.

We will enjoy a lunch on Saturday, of salad and lasagna. Lunch is being sponsored by NanoPac. The banquet meal will be salad, basal cream chicken and beef tips with creamy mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables, dinner roll and creme brulee. A vegetarian, vegan or gluten free meals are alternative options.

The cost of attending the 2025 state convention will be, $10 registration or $15 at the door. Banquet $35. The deadline for meal reservations is October 21, 2025. To register for the NFBKS state convention please go to nfbks.org go to the state convention registration link and fill out the registration form or tap the link at the bottom of this article. You can make your payment by going to PayPal at treasurer@nfbks.org and go to the Friends and Family button and indicate in notes what your payment is for. For those who are not able to register on-line there will be a registration form in this newsletter.

The national rep. for this year’s state convention will be Ben Dallin, affiliate President of Wisconsin. To learn more about Ben Dallin be sure and keep reading, his bio follows this article.

Come and join us at this year’s NFBKS state convention and we will all have a ZIP A DEE DOO DAH TIME!

The Bio of Ben Dallin

Ben Dallin's story is one of resilience, adventure, determination, and a deep commitment to community and advocacy. Born in Anchorage, Alaska, on September 9, 1988, Ben's early life unfolded in McGrath, a small, remote town two hundred and fifty miles northwest of Anchorage. His parents, Phyllis and Norvil, both schoolteachers, instilled in Ben a sense of curiosity and tenacity, qualities that would serve him well in navigating life as a blind person.

Diagnosed with Leber's congenital amaurosis (LCA) at just three months old, Ben's blindness was identified by a family member who noticed he wasn't responding to visual cues. Despite the challenges of growing up in a town not connected to Alaska's road system, Ben's parents sought out resources and support. However, such resources were limited, and much of Ben's early education in blindness techniques, such as learning Braille, fell to aides who were often learning just ahead of him. Despite these obstacles, Ben recalls the dedication of his community, which included family friends who were deeply invested in his success.

Ben's early schooling was filled with adaptations. He learned Braille at a young age, though his education in the skill wasn't comprehensive. He regrets not being encouraged to read with his left hand, a gap he worked to fill later in life. Despite this, Ben's enthusiasm for reading flourished, aided by his parent’s belief that he should do as much as possible alongside his peers.

Ben's middle school years were spent immersed in the rugged outdoor activities Alaska is known for—dog sledding, fishing, and hunting—opportunities that fostered a sense of independence and adventure. However, his family's move to Spring Creek, Nevada, before his high school years marked the beginning of significant transitions.

In Nevada, Ben attended a school much larger than what he was accustomed to. He anticipated greater resources but quickly realized he would need to advocate for himself. The absence of timely Braille materials and knowledgeable support highlighted systemic challenges, yet his parents teaching backgrounds helped bridge many gaps. Ben excelled in extracurricular activities, especially Quiz Bowl, where his team captured the state championship three times, and he served as captain in his senior year. His pursuits weren't limited to academics. He participated in band, all-state and honor choirs, and drama. While challenging, he found his high school years quite delightful.

Ben's first year at Brigham Young University (BYU) was a dramatic change. He expected that this large university would understand blindness but was told it had been a long time since it had had a totally blind student. Ben lacked any substantial contact with other blind people, had limited travel skills, and found far less success in his first year than he had hoped. Unaware of many resources available to blind students, Ben struggled but began to find direction when he attended his first National Federation of the Blind event.

The turning point came when Ron Gardner, then president of the Utah affiliate, invited Ben to the Washington Seminar. Witnessing blind people confidently traveling, advocating, and contributing to legislative efforts inspired Ben profoundly and helped him gain confidence in his own abilities. This experience solidified his connection to the Federation and led him to attend the Louisiana Center for the Blind (LCB) for further training.

At LCB, Ben honed his travel and daily living skills, gaining the confidence to take on the world as a blind person. The thing he gained the most from his travel experience was understanding that, whether it looks glamorous or not, he can get where he wants to go when he wants to go there, and he is not limited to route travel that requires special training any time he goes into a new environment.

Following his training, Ben worked in various capacities, from teaching Braille and technology at training centers to roles in government and private organizations. He embraced challenges, such as moving to El Paso, Texas, for a job with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, where he quickly rose through the ranks. Later, he transitioned to a remote position with the Department of Education, conducting quality assurance and mentoring staff. These experiences broadened his skill set and prepared him for leadership roles.

Although the message the Federation sends is predominantly positive, Ben's life experience means he is well-equipped to deal with the more difficult sides of being blind. It is difficult to be on a Federation high while surrounded by people who believe in blindness, only to go back out into the world and find that your church isn't ready for you to be a missionary, and when those plans fall through and you make a decision to return to school, you find that it is the same old slog in dealing with the lack of accessible hardware, software, and digital information. Experiencing the depression that many of us have familiarity with is not something we would invite, but it does mean that empathy is more than a word in knowing and caring about blind people.

Ben's involvement with the Federation deepened over the years. After moving to Wisconsin and marrying Chelsea, an equally dedicated Federationist, Ben quickly became the legislative director for the affiliate. He was elected as the affiliate's treasurer, and after proving successful at that, it was clear to leadership and membership alike that he had plenty of energy and talent. By 2022, he was elected president of the Wisconsin affiliate, and in 2024, he joined the National Board of Directors. His passion for Braille, technology, and legislative advocacy remain cornerstones of his contributions, and he takes pride in mentoring new members and promoting a welcoming Federation culture.

Ben Dallin's leadership is characterized by humility, empathy, and a drive to uplift others. He strives to bring his adventurous spirit to leadership and encourage and help others to pursue challenges and new opportunities. He focuses on helping people recognize their potential, breaking down barriers, and fostering connections. Whether through legislative efforts, mentoring, or simply welcoming new members, Ben's impact is felt across the Federation.

His story is a testament to the power of community and the importance of self-advocacy. His journey reflects the Federation's mission to transform dreams into reality, and his leadership exemplifies the spirit of giving back and paving the way forward for others. As Ben continues to lead and inspire, he remains grounded in his core belief: "The work we do is essential—not just for the blind of today but for future generations who deserve a world without barriers.

My New Orleans Experience

--Lauren Bush

Hello, my name is Lauren Bush and I am a part of the south-central chapter. I was very grateful to receive a stipend from our state and our chapter to go to this year's national convention in New Orleans. I was nervous about getting from the airport to the hotel but I figured it out. And once getting into the hotel, it took a long time to check in, since there was a long line.

After locating my room and unpacking, I explored the lobby and I figured out that at the Marriott it was one big circle, which had several restaurants and a pantry where you could get snacks and drinks.

After a little while I went and met up with two of our other members, Bruce Roberds and Christy Roberts. We then walked to the pier, and got on the Creole Queen and listen to some jazz music while taking a boat tour.

Well, after enjoying myself, it was time to get ready for the first day of convention. The first day wasn't too busy just a few sessions that interested me, and in the evening Christy and I tried a swing dance class, which was interesting.

On Wednesday, I got the first taste of the exhibit hall. I was really nervous to cross Canal Street but lots of other people were crossing when I did, and it wasn't as scary as I thought it would be. As usual the exhibit hall was really busy. It is always kind of overwhelming when you first go in there. I was able to locate several tables within the exhibit hall, including the Microsoft table the Google table, the Meta glasses table, my friends: Blind Girl Magic, Envision and many more tables. It is exciting to see and learn about different things in the blind community.

After a lunch of shrimp Po boys, I went to resolutions to learn about all the resolutions that would be recommended for the 2025 year.

On Thursday it started off with the board meeting where I learned about the national scholarship winners. Friday was the first day of General Session. The first day of general session is always so exciting.

Saturday and Sunday were filled with more great sessions. The banquet was on Sunday. Everyone dressed up and looked their best. New Orleans, Louisiana (NOLA) was amazing. This was my first time there and I was so grateful to Bruce, Christy and Roshunda for letting me explore NOLA with them.

I had a wonderful time, learning at the convention as well as having a good time with good friends and amazing food!

NFB Convention Notes 2025 New Orleans Louisiana

--Christy Roberts

The first activity I took part in was something I've always wanted to do, but was very out of my comfort zone, and that was the swing dancing lesson. It was so nice to be able to do something like that and not be judged for my rhythm, or lack thereof. I am a single person but was able to talk a couple of friends from my chapter in to joining me. What a fun experience!

Another thing that stood out for me was President Riccobono's message during general session. You could hear the passion in his voice and the pride in the organization that helped the young ladies with their parenting dilemmas. The fact that he got choked up really shows his care for what he does.

I would be remiss also, if I didn't mention the fire alarms going off during general session and how the hotel staff were able to keep us notified about the situation and how our leaders were able to keep everyone calm. Luckily, it didn't become a problem but there was the potential for mass confusion and hysteria.

The convention was a very positive experience for me and I am looking forward to next year in Austin, Texas.

JAYHAWK CHAPTER UPDATE

--Rob Tabor

For most of 2025, the Jayhawk chapter held its monthly meetings at Acapulco Mexican Grill in West Lawrence. We may be changing our meeting venue, but this is not yet decided. As of this writing we are planning to hold our September meeting at Free State Brewing Company in downtown Lawrence. We are also moving our meeting date back to the second Monday of the month to accommodate changing work schedules for some members.

Our customary summer social luncheon was held on Saturday, June 14 at La Tropicana Mexican restaurant in North Lawrence. A good time and delicious authentic Mexican cuisine was enjoyed by all.

Preparations are under way for Blind Equality Achievement Month (BEAM) events, which include a mayoral proclamation planned for the Lawrence city commission meeting on Tuesday, October 7, and a trivia night fundraiser with the date, time and location to be determined as of this writing.

For more information about the Jayhawk chapter, you may contact chapter president Susan Tabor by email at souljourner@sbcglobal.net or by phone at (785) 865-9949.

Senior's Division Report

--Diane Hemphill

Hello to all seniors and future seniors seeking to maximize your daily living experiences with vision loss. This group of aging individuals with blindness and significant vision loss would like to encourage you to connect with us for tips on how we manage our lives with vision loss and how we strive to live as independently as possible.

Each of us have been where you are, wondering how to accomplish the most ordinary daily living activities. There are some training options out there and we know where they are and who might help you the most, but few offer more ideas and encouragement than those of us living our lives every day with limited or no vision.

One area that people overlook as unimportant is that of feeling a part of a group that really "gets it." We realize that we are all in different places in our striving for a good life with limited or no vision. Perhaps, we can help you move forward and see the possibilities. In this group we want to encourage you to do the best you can for as long as you can, and realize the importance of both group think and group encouragement. The issue of despair and loneliness is an ever growing concern among many seniors and we might be able to help you as we continue to help ourselves in a positive way.

The National Federation of the Blind has been actively moving the perspectives of negativity towards a more positive reality of our abilities and capabilities since 1940 in an organized manner. We have a long history of self-determining our futures in every aspect of life.

The Senior's Division encourages you to reach out to us if you are ready to live a more hopeful and active life. Our monthly Zoom meetings are just the tips of the proverbial ice berg of addressing life's new challenges. Let us know if you are interested in getting to know us. We look forward to getting to know you.

Our monthly Zoom meeting occurs at 7 PM on the fourth Tuesday of most months. Contact Dianne Hemphill at diannehemphill@cox.net for more information.

North-Central Fall Round-up

--Sharon Luka and Donna Wood

The North-Central chapter meeting is held the third Wednesday of the month at 2:30 PM Salina Senior Center 245 N. 9th Salina, KS 67401.

The chapter officers are: President; Shauna Zepeda, Vice-President; Austin Meyer, secretary; Sharon Luka, Treasurer; Tom Basgall. For information call President Shauna Zepeda at (785) 304-6326.

On March 1, 2025 Anna Hindman, a founding member of the North-Central chapter, passed away. Anna served as Vice-President of the chapter for several years until her health became so compromised, she could no longer serve. She continued to attend meetings as long as her health permitted her too. She will be missed.

In the March meeting Nancy Bolden of Assistive Tech. of Kansas presented on services. In April the chapter members made plans for a fund raiser at Applebee’s restaurant. May 13th a very successful fund raiser was had at Applebee’s restaurant in Salina. A whopping $625.77 was raised. Later in May members of the chapter attended the Senior Fair.

June was business as usual. The upcoming national convention was discussed. For those not attending in person it was shared how they could access the convention on their different devices. In August Donna Wood, state convention chair presented on the upcoming state convention October 31st-November 2nd, 2025, in Wichita. On August 25, Sharon Luka and Tom Basgall will participate in a public forum on the new city bus routes. The September meeting brings Assistive Tech back for further information on their programs.

North-Central continues to work and be active in their community. They are encouraged by two new potential members. Sharon Luka will be testing out a pair of Meta glasses that are on loan from OCCK, and make a presentation on them in the near future. In the meantime, North-Central members are changing what it means to be blind.

THE FOUNDING FOUNDATION

--Sharon Luka

"How firm a foundation Ye saint of the Lord,

Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!

What more can He say than to you He hath said,

To you who to Jesus for refuge hath fled?"

 (Author: K. Rippon's selection Composer: J.F. Wade's Cantus Diversi)

Anna Irene Hindman was a woman of great faith. She was born May 28th, 1987 in Wichita, Kansas. She was adopted the same day by former NFB members Ruth and Leslie Hindman.

When young, Anna attended school in Salina, Kansas. She enjoyed playing with children in Ruth's Home Day Care.

A fine student, she enjoyed dance school, drawing, piano, reading and singing. She loved collecting Beanie Babies and Hoops and Yoyo cards.

She loved traveling with her parents. We would travel to some of the South-Central NFB meetings, after which we'd shop in Wichita. The family volunteered to transport to and from some state conventions. Until her health deteriorated, Anna hardly missed a chapter meeting or state convention.

In her later years, Anna experienced health effects of Kearns-Sayre Syndrome and its effect on growth, hearing, heart, kidney and muscle systems. Her blindness was caused by Retinitis Pigmentosa.

Anna also attended the Kansas State School for the Blind, and learned cane travel. After her high school graduation in 2005, she attended KSDS Assistance Dog program and trained with Kovu, her service dog.

She studied at K-State Salina and Kansas Wesleyan University and gained her Bachelor's Degree in 2010. As her disease worsened, she worked with her dad who had a computer occupation at home. Les passed away in 2017. Anna lived at home with Ruth until her health failed. She then entered Smokey Hill Center in September, 2024. She passed away February 28, 2025.

As a dedicated NFB member, Anna helped found our At Large Meadowlark chapter in 2013, where she later served as vice president. She was a big part of the brick laying for our North-Central chapter, which began in August, 2018. She also helped to found our student division.

Anna was a woman of great faith. It is with gratitude that we consider her in laying the foundation of our North-Central chapter.

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY!

--Donna Wood

The Blind Christians Group (BCG) continues to grow. We regularly have 10 to 12 attendees at our monthly meetings. We are also joined by NFB members from Nebraska, Colorado and Texas. The Blind Christians Group meets the second Thursday of the month, on zoom, at 7:00 PM. If you are interested in participating in the BCG meetings you will find the zoom link on home-on-the-range or contact Donna Wood at 316-640-0650 and the link can be texted to you.

We open each meeting in prayer. Then a devotional and following the devotional we take prayer requests and praise items. Following the meeting the prayer and praise items are sent out to the attendees.

In May we continued with a devotional on hymns with which we are all familiar. The familiar song for May was Away in The Manger. Which was not written originally to be a Christmas carol.

In June Sharon Luka began leading us in a study of the book,

My Heart Christ's Home, by Robert Boyd Munger. Ephesians 3:16-17

Jesus Christ through the holy Spirit will actually enter a man's heart and settle and make His home.

We did not meet in July. We continued our study in the book My Heart Christ's Home, in August. This study will continue into September. After September we will pick another hymn to learn about its back story and meaning to the Church.

The Blind Christians Group will be praying for our upcoming State Convention.

 2 Corinthians 5:7 We walk by faith not by sight.

The Johnson-Wyandotte County Chapter of Kansas Quarterly Report

--Michael Nava

Hello fellow Federationist,

This is Michael with the Johnson-Wyandotte county chapter and happy to report that during this quarter of the year. We have been very active as a chapter. In March, several members of our chapter participated in a 7-day Caribbean cruise that I arranged for our Sports and Rec special event. We had a total of 12 individuals who signed on for this cruise from various state affiliates. From our local group they were: Don and Jody Mulik, Susie Stanzel and three of her daughters, as well as Amy Wilson and myself, Michael, rounding out those from our Kansas affiliate. It was a very exciting, fun and accessible time for all. Several of us have already signed on for more cruises.

In April, several of our members attended the Missouri state convention that was held in Columbus MO. To show our support and ongoing partnership with our NFB neighbor.

One of our biggest fundraiser events occurred in May, when we participated with the Kansas City Missouri's NFB chapter for the annual "Walk for independence" 5K walk. That is held every year at "Loose Park" in KCMO. We had several of our chapter members participate and raised a good amount of money for both our chapter and state affiliate.

In June we continue to have our popcorn and fudge fundraiser with positive results in bringing in money for our chapter. I personally can say I enjoyed the variety of flavors of popcorn and fudge that we could choose from. It's definitely a fun and tasty fundraiser.

Of course, in July, we had a good number of attendees who participated in the National Federation of the Blind national convention that was held in New Orleans, Louisiana. I would like to say thank you to all who were able to participate both in person as well as virtually. At our last chapter meeting, Susie Stanzel, Anya & Robert Fuller, Jeff Giffen, Amy Wilson, and myself gave our updates about attending the New Orleans convention. Both Don and Jody Mulik also gave us an overview on attending the virtual convention via Zoom. Overall, it was positive and enthusiastic, as well as electrifying. You can only get that at an event of like-minded people within the blind community. And let's not forget the historical and mystical allure of New Orleans. In my opinion, it added to the positive energy as well as the evening activities that occurred at convention.

I would like to remind everybody that our chapter still has the monthly Fridays "Game and Movie Night" events. That are hosted by Don and Jody Mulik. They do this out of the goodness of their hearts in wanting to give everyone the opportunity to have some fun with others. So, I personally would like to say thank you for the hard work and efforts in putting all of the virtual meetings together. I am also happy to report that during this quarter. There is no passing of any members to report at this time. I am happy to pass-on, that Don Mulik is doing well and winning his fight with cancer. He is only having to take one type of chemo medication. And only have to deal with some side effects. But this soon will end and we continue send out our prayers and well wishes to him and his wife Jody.

In closing, I would like say that our chapter membership has been growing. Within this quarter we added four (4) new members to our chapter bringing our current count to 25! So please give a big welcome to; Sandy Carpenter, Jeff and Kathy Giffen and Kimberly Morrow. Our current "new" members to our chapter and Kansas affiliate family. With a few other individuals considering joining us soon.

 Till our next quarterly report. Blessings to all, and I hope that everyone continues to have a safe and productive summer. Talk with you all, in the Fall.

Sports and Recreation update

--Michael Nava

I would like to mention that one of our chapter members; Amy SP Wilson, is a member of an all-female "Beepball" team, called the "Sirens." In March they participated and attended the National Beepball league Tournament that was held in Las Vegas, Nevada. As well as in July, just a week after the NFB National Convention. Yes, after a full week in New Orleans, Amy participated in the National "Beepball" World Series" tournament that was held in St. Louis Missouri. I'm happy to say that the "Sirens held their own and played well against men's and coed teams that have been playing the game for decades. Congratulations to Amy Wilson and the sirens for representing blind girl power, at the national sport level.

I'm also happy to say that Amy has received several requests here locally to try to form a Kansas City Beepball team. I will keep everyone updated on how that endeavor turns out.

I would also like to mention that Sports and Rec will be hosting a nature walk to the local "Veterans Memorial” on October 31st around 12:30PM at our State convention in Wichita, KS.