**Granite State Connection**

Spring, 2022

Editor, Sheryl Dutton

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**NFB Pledge**

I pledge to participate actively in the effort of the National Federation of the Blind to achieve equality opportunity, and security of the blind; to support the policies and programs of the Federation: and to abide by its constitution.

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**President’s Corner:**

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It’s Spring, my favorite time of year! Time to think about getting out and planting gardens and getting out and going places. It’s ice out on the lakes and we can soon begin to enjoy our great outdoors. Get those barbeques out of the shed and get new propane and charcoal. Enjoy the season. And Happy Easter, too!

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**National News:**

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Dan Parker, a Blind Man, Breaks Driving Speed Record at Spaceport America

Truth or Consequences, New Mexico (April 5, 2022): Dan Parker, a blind racecar driver, achieved the GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS® title for the “Fastest Speed for a Car Driven Blindfolded” on Thursday, March 31. Parker set a new speed record of 211.043 miles per hour on the runway at Spaceport America in his custom-built Corvette, which included an innovative audio guidance system designed to his specifications. The previous record was held by Mike Newman of the United Kingdom, who achieved a speed of 200.51 miles per hour in 2014. Parker went blind as the result of a racing accident that took place ten years before, on March 31, 2012, and graduated from the Louisiana Center for the Blind seven years ago on March 31 as well. The record attempt was made as part of the acceleration of the National Federation of the Blind’s Blind Driver Challenge™ — an initiative that aims to call attention to the importance of breaking barriers in mobility and to demonstrate the incredible achievements of blind people. It was sponsored by San Francisco-based zero emission self-driving company Cruise and certified by Guinness World Records official Michael Empric.

The effort built on the inaugural Blind Driver Challenge event that took place on January 29, 2011, when Mark Riccobono, now President of the National Federation of the Blind, independently operated a modified Ford Escape hybrid on the Daytona International Speedway Road Course. Mr. Riccobono navigated the course’s turns and steered the car around dynamic obstacles by following haptic prompts generated by input from the vehicle’s GPS, cameras, and LIDAR sensors.

“Our Daytona Blind Driver Challenge demonstration changed the perceptions of blindness held by society, including the perceptions that we ourselves held as blind people,” said Mark Riccobono, President of the National Federation of the Blind. “It further demonstrated to the world that the expertise of the blind is critical to the development of nonvisual vehicle interfaces. NFB member Dan Parker has now raised the expectations of blind people even higher by independently driving a vehicle faster than any blind person has done before, proving that the combination of accessible technology and our own capacity allows blind people to safely operate motor vehicles even at high speed. This demonstration reinforces our determination to work with Cruise and other partners to make cars that can be operated independently by blind people on America’s roadways a reality. Transportation is a critical barrier faced by blind people across the nation and we seek the increased availability of all transportation options in order to successfully live the lives we want.”

“With the help of my Federation family, my outstanding pit crew, and our partners at Cruise, I am proud to bring the GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS title for fastest speed for a car driven blindfolded to America,” said Dan Parker. “We have not only demonstrated that a blind person can operate a vehicle safely, but that we can do it at over two hundred miles per hour. We hope this success inspires blind people and shows the world the potential of modern technology like self-driving cars to help the blind break barriers in everyday mobility and beyond.”

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The 2022 National Convention will be held July 5 through July 10, 2022 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Details are still forthcoming on the website, but President Riccobono provided the following in the January Presidential Release:

“…I recognize that 7 months from today we will be in New Orleans getting ready to kick off our 2022 national convention. And I recognize that the coronavirus is still with us and we have variants to worry about, but I am very optimistic that we are going to work out the details to have a robust in-person convention in New Orleans this summer. And we are planning to be in New Orleans from Tuesday, July 5, to Sunday, July 10. And I encourage you to start making your reservations and plans to be at our 2022 convention in person.

So, I want to give you some of the convention details, recognizing that we still have many months to go and things to figure out, but you want to get your hotel room soon so that you can start making your plans to be in New Orleans for the convention.

Our headquarters hotel for our 2022 convention will be the New Orleans Marriott at 555 Canal Street. You can reserve your room by calling 800-654-3990.

Our overflow hotel is the Sheraton New Orleans, which is at 500 Canal Street. As you might guess, it's right across the street, immediately across the street from the Marriott. We will be using both of these hotels, and while the Sheraton is the overflow, you should know that the Sheraton will be hosting the exhibit hall for the convention. So, if you're an exhibitor and want to be very close to the exhibit hall, you may prefer to stay in the Sheraton. Obviously, the Marriott is where the main meetings and suites are, but the Sheraton has its own charm to it. It does have the Starbucks as well; in case you're interested. So, you can check out both properties. They're great properties, and we're glad to be there.

You can reserve a room at the Marriott -- excuse me. At the Sheraton by calling this number. 855-516-1090 to reserve a room at the Sheraton.

At both hotels, singles and doubles are $109 a night. Triples and quads are $119 a night. The combined sales and tourism tax rate is 16.2%, and there is a hotel occupancy fee of $3 per night. That's a city-wide fee, I believe. So, the hotels will take a deposit of the first night's room rate and taxes and fees. So, it will be roughly $130 for the deposit.

Probably been a while since folks have thought about reserving rooms at the convention, so you can find information in the January Braille Monitor about the hotel and the reservation information and the prices and how the deposits work and that sort of thing.

We are planning to have a convention in person. And we recognize that there are going to be a lot of questions about what our protocols are going to be and what procedures we're going to use. And obviously we're not going to talk about that on this release because we're going to continue to build those plans as we see how things go forward.

I can tell that you currently in New Orleans, a number of venues, especially entertainment venues where there's live music, require proof of vaccination. So, I would encourage, continue to encourage Federation members to get vaccinated against the coronavirus. We most certainly will require masking in and amongst the convention activities regardless of whether that's a requirement of the city at the time. I'm quite certain that we will require that in convention meetings. There undoubtedly will be other COVID protocols we will use. We will provide information about that in the convention registration process, and obviously as we get closer to the convention, there may be additional details to add to that. But I would encourage you to come be part of the convention if you're able to do so. We know a lot more than we did 2 years ago about how to live in and amongst the virus. We have a vaccine and a booster. We're all used to wearing masks. And I know that many of you are eager to be out engaging in building the Federation and in and amongst the convention.

Registration opened on March 1 for in-person attendees.

The registration fee, online registration, so before the convention, will be $25. And the banquet will be $70. You'll note that these prices are the same as they were in 2019. If you register or buy banquet tickets at the convention, of course the cost is more and you have to wait in line. So, I would encourage you to register in advance of the convention online.

We will have a virtual component to the convention. It will feel similar to conventions of 2019 and before when we stream certain parts of the convention. We're still putting our virtual experience together. But we know for certain that there is nothing that compares to being in and amongst the convention crowd. Obviously, we want people to feel safe and to feel welcome, but if you don't feel comfortable coming to the convention, we will make the core elements of the convention experience available through streaming as we have in the past. Those details are still coming together, and I would love your suggestions about what that should look like.”

When information regarding registration and access for remote attendance become available, that information will be sent out via the listservs and emails to the members in the state.

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**News and Notes from Up North by Richard Chabot:**

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Our thoughts and prayers are with our Chapter President Linda Vaillancourt and her family as she continues with her cancer treatments. Although it is in God’s hands, we are with her every step of the way. Your family needs you and our Chapter needs you, so hang in there Linda!

In addition, now that Spring may be here, we’re still hoping to do a Road Toll here in Berlin in May. I’ll keep you all posted.

Finally, we’re looking to conduct a membership drive to bring more people into our Chapter. I’ll let you all know how this goes as well.

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**Spotlight:**

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The Spotlight this month is on Rick Fox, who spoke at the March 29th meeting of the Lakes Region Chapter.

Blind from birth, Rick was born and raised in Ocean, NJ, and earned his B.A. from Brown University. He spent 23 years at IBM, with positions in sales, programming, and helpdesk support. He spent the next 14 years at De Witt & Associates, a company that taught technology skills to people with disabilities. He was an instructor, director of sales and marketing, and, finally, VP, field operations. In 2014, he served as the NJ Statewide Training Coordinator for the National Deafblind Equipment Distribution Program (ICanConnect). For 8 years, He served as Senior Instructor at the Computer Center for Visually Impaired People at Baruch College in New York City. He currently runs an assistive technology consulting and training firm called B&F Teaching & Technology.

Rick has been an NFB member since he joined the Providence, RI chapter in 1973, attending his first national convention in Chicago in 1974. He was president of the CT affiliate from 1993-1996. He’s currently president, Northern Chapter, NFBNJ.

Rick currently lives in Bloomfield, NJ with his wife, Debbie, and his Seeing Eye dog, Flash. He enjoys hiking, reading, and playing cabaret piano.

Rick provided the following list of the training services he can provide:

NFBNH Chapter Meeting Services List

A. One-on-one Access Technology training remotely via online platforms like: JAWS Tandem, Zoom, Teams, or speaker phone to blind or vision-impaired consumers. Training in the following areas:

a. Basic, intermediate or advanced JAWS, ZoomText, Fusion, NVDA, Narrator, and Narrator/Windows Magnifier.

b. Windows concepts using JAWS, ZoomText, Fusion, NVDA, Narrator, and Narrator/Windows Magnifier.

c. Meeting apps, including Google Meet, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams.

d. Microsoft Office products paired with the assistive technology programs mentioned above, including Word, Excel, Outlook and PowerPoint.

e. Surfing the Web with the above-mentioned access technologies, using Chrome, Firefox and Edge

f. FS Reader to read JAWS training material and other DAISY books with JAWS and Fusion.

g. The Google suite of apps, including Gmail, Calendar, Docs, Sheets and Slides with ChromeVox, JAWS, ZoomText, Fusion and NVDA.

h. Cloud storage, including Dropbox, iCloud and OneDrive.

i. ChromeBook with ChromeVox.

j. iPad and iPhone with VoiceOver or VoiceOver/ Zoom by Apple.

k. Native iOS apps, such as Phone, Mail and Safari.

l. Applications for productivity, travel or independent living, including but not limited to NFB Newsline, BARD Mobile, GoodMaps Outdoors, and Seeing AI, with iPhone and iPad.

m. Basic Android

n. Pairing and using a Braille display with JAWS, NVDA, Fusion, ChromeBook, iPad and iPhone

o. Victor Reader Stream.

p. Provide reference notes, if necessary.

To apply for these services, it is recommended that you contact Scott Vittner at the New Hampshire Department of Education: Services for Blind and Visually Impaired. 603-271-3537.

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**Celebrity Spotlight:**

By: Cameron Polom – ABC15News

Posted at 6:00 PM, Feb 10, 2022 and last updated 8:02 PM, Feb 11, 2022

PHOENIX — Jorge Castro, Kaiya Armstrong, and Adam Frackiewicz all have three important things in common. Each have a yearning for adventure, massive ambition, and live their lives visually impaired.

“Pushing my own boundaries, it gives me confidence,” said Adam, born with retinopathy prematurity.

“You got to be fearless as well,” seconded Jorge, who was born with congenital glaucoma.

“In my family, I’m described as the adrenaline junkie,” said Kaiya, who began losing her sight as a teen.

This fall, one of them could be co-piloting a plane from Phoenix to Washington, D.C. as part of The Foundation for Blind Children’s “Flight for Sight” event. It’s the latest in a long line of “challenges” officials with the FBC believe encourages their students to push their limits.

In 2009, we had team Kili set four world records for youngest blind climber, first blind United States veteran, first climber with albinism, and largest blind group to summit the tallest mountain in Africa, Mt. Kilimanjaro,” said Spencer Churchill with the FBC, a non-profit organization providing education, tools and services that enable all persons with vision loss to achieve greater independence.

Spencer is a longtime employee and has been there alongside his students during a number of challenges that at first glance seemed impossible for someone with a visual impairment — from kayaking and hiking the Grand Canyon, to swimming San Francisco Bay from Alcatraz.

Their mission with Flight for Sight is to take the mentality of "anything’s possible," to new heights. Currently the FBC has identified 20 students with their program eager to make the trip. However, only one will be chosen.

“The student will be trained to fly in the left seat as the pilot in charge,” said Spencer.

Over the next few months, the student chosen will go through extensive ground and air flight training; eventually leading to the ability to take off, fly the plane for thousands of miles, and land. An expert pilot will also be by their side just in case.

“To be able to pilot a plane from here to Washington, D.C., to be able to prove to the world that there really isn’t a limit, that’s unbelievable,” said Kaiya.

For all three, the thought of it is almost too good to be true.

“It would feel like I just hit it big in the lotto or something,” said Jorge.

“Knowing I have a chance of doing this, it’d be a dream come true,” Adam agreed.

In a few short months, that dream could be a reality. If all goes to plan, takeoff for Washington, D.C. is currently set for October.

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**Canine Corner (From Jody Ianuzzi)**

Many people with guide dogs have had difficulty with Uber and Lyft. Many times, drivers will deny a person with a guide dog because they don’t want a dog in their car. One alternative to this might be contacting Go Jannuzzi Grandparent. This service is intended for seniors and others who need a more personal experience when scheduling a ride. The drivers are more knowledgeable on assisting people and might be more willing to transport someone with a dog. They can also assist with delivering restaurant and grocery orders. Another advantage to this service is that you call on the phone and get direct personal attention rather than trying to schedule the ride on an app on a smart phone. There is a monthly membership fee of $9.99 plus a small fee for the assistance on the call. This might be worth it if you travel a lot and you want to travel without a hassle. If you go to their website gogograndparent.com you can learn more and even put in your address to see what services are available in your area. You can also call their toll-free number at 855 464-6872. I think this is a great service! Give it a try.

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**Calendar of Events:**

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**Calendar of Events (Future In Sight tech workshops and fun classes):**

This information was provided by Stephanie Hurd and can also be found on the **Future In Sight Events Page at** [**https://futureinsight.org/events**](https://futureinsight.org/events)**.**

**Make sure you check this page often for changes or updates.**

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Hi,

Here are the brand new fresh off the press technology workshops for June, which will all be held on Zoom. Please let me know what you’d like to sign up for by emailing me as soon as possible. Feel free to share, as they are open to anyone who is blind or visually impaired in NH and beyond.

The new tech workshops are listed first. Then as a refresher, I included the remaining activities and fitness options below that.

\*\*\*Again, please sign up by emailing me as soon as you can. Thanks.

To sign up please email Stephanie Hurd at shurd@futureinsight.org

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**Tech workshops**

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**Smart Speakers and Smart Home Technology**

April 20 @ 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm EDT

Technology Workshop for the Older Blind Program

REMOTE

This workshop will share information on how current smart home technologies can benefit the blind and low vision community. This will include the use of smart speakers and voice assistants (i.e., Alexa) for tasks around the home (maintain a calendar, stay up to date on news, set timers, etc.) and will address how these systems can promote Aging in Place. This is a small group workshop ensuring an immersive experience for each participant.

To register, please email services@futureinsight.org.

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**Find My Stuff! Never lose your keys, cane, or other items again.**

May 4 @ 10:30 am - 12:30 pm EDT

REMOTE

This workshop will compare AirTags, Tile, and SmartTag. What are they? What types of items can I tag? How do they work? The competition is real between these convenient Bluetooth trackers. We’ll break things down, so you can always “find your stuff”.

To register, please visit:  <https://form.jotform.com/220627170269152>

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**Using Wearables for Increased Independence**

May 18 @ 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm EDT

Technology Workshop for the Older Blind Program

REMOTE

Several wearables will be reviewed including smartwatches (Apple and Android) which allow access to all tasks that can be performed with a smartphone. These tasks include the use of AIRA and OrCam for safe navigation, identifying objects providing assistance with reading materials, and the use of wireless earbuds to allow for safely obtaining information. This is a small group workshop ensuring an immersive experience for each participant.

To register, please email services@futureinsight.org.

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**Making Connection – Devices that connect to your smart phone-for iOS and Android users**

May 25 @ 10:30 am - 12:30 pm EDT

REMOTE

This workshop will discuss how numerous devices can be connected to an iPhone or Android. Everything from Bluetooth speakers, portable keyboards, and Fitbits to scales, tiles, portable photo printers, and so much more. Just what can you connect to your device? You’ll be amazed!

To register, please visit: https://form.jotform.com/220626965200148

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**Mobile Banking**

June 1 @ 10:30 am - 12:30 pm EDT

REMOTE

We’ll walk through a couple of the more well-known banks such as TD Bank and Citizens to demonstrate and orient participants to the mobile banking experience and just how accessible they function. Some tasks we will cover specific to mobile banking include, using the camera of the device to deposit a check, real-time balances, transferring funds from one account to another and more! Take control over your own finances thanks to accessible mobile banking.

To register, please visit: https://form.jotform.com/220627171867157

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**Upgrading to Windows 11 - Have you taken the plunge?**

June 8 @ 10:30 am - 12:30 pm EDT

REMOTE

This workshop will navigate what’s new with Windows 11: the appearance, accessibility, and settings.

The look and layout appear slightly different, but the content remains familiar. Join us as we walk through these changes.

To register, please visit: <https://form.jotform.com/220627400686151>

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**Computing with a Refreshable Braille Display**

June 15 @ 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm EDT

Technology Workshop for the Older Blind Program

REMOTE

The focus of this workshop will be on comparing and contrasting a few devices, how to pair with a smartphone, access books, organize documents, perform calculations, and more. This is a small group workshop ensuring an immersive experience for each participant.

To register, please email services@futureinsight.org.

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A Zoom link for each activity will be emailed a couple of days before each one. These are open to those who are blind and visually impaired from anywhere, so feel free to share. All are welcome.

Thanks so much,

Stephanie Hurd

Assistive Technology/Activities Specialist

Future In Sight

shurd@futureinsight.org

603-545-4345

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**Fun Classes**

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**DIY Wind Chime Workshop**

May 3 @ 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm EDT, ONLINE

Join in this workshop as we assemble and paint a Wind Chime Kit. Enjoy the beautiful sounds of the terra cotta pots with the chimes. Please purchase the kit from the link below. If an alternative kit is purchased, I may not be able to assist in the assembly.

Purchase the kit here: https://www.amazon.com/gp/aw/d/B000J3ZVMK?psc=1&ref=ppx\_pop\_mob\_b\_asin\_title

Be sure to register by April 29th to receive the zoom link. Register here: https://form.jotform.com/220875788546170

Questions? Please email Stephanie Hurd at shurd@futureinsight.org.

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**Spring Flowers**

May 17 @ 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm EDT, ONLINE

April showers bring May flowers. Join Kaila as we make spring flowers in a paper jar. Your kit will include everything needed to make 3 bright colored flowers, materials to make a 3D jar to put your paper flowers in as well as embellishments to bring it all together. Participants will need to provide their own glue and scissors. This cute craft will be sure to bring some spring into your home.

Cost: $12.00

Register here: https://form.jotform.com/220875134007147

Questions? Please email Stephanie Hurd at [shurd@futureinsight.org](mailto:shurd@futureinsight.org).

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**Calendar of Events (NFB national and affiliate):**

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**National Federation of the Blind of New Hampshire, Monadnock Chapter Monthly Meeting**

Dates:

Saturday, April 9, 2022

Saturday, May 14, 2022

Saturday, June 11, 2022

Time 10:30 AM

Location: Anywhere and Everywhere, virtual

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://zoom.us/j/7337352246](https://zoom.us/j/93669651975)

Meeting ID: 733 735 2246

One tap mobile

+16468769923,,7337352246# US (New York)

+13017158592,,7337352246# US (Washington DC)

+13126266799,,7337352246# US (Chicago)

Reminder Zoom information will be provided to chapter members

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**National Federation of the Blind of New Hampshire, Lakes Region Chapter Monthly Meeting**

Dates:

Saturday, April 16, 2022

Saturday, May 21, 2022

Saturday, June 18, 2022

Time 10:30 AM

Location: Anywhere and Everywhere, virtual

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://zoom.us/j/7337352246](https://zoom.us/j/93669651975)

Meeting ID: 733 735 2246

One tap mobile

+16468769923,,7337352246# US (New York)

+13017158592,,7337352246# US (Washington DC)

+13126266799,,7337352246# US (Chicago)

Reminder Zoom information will be sent out.

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**National Federation of the Blind of New Hampshire, Great Northwoods Chapter Monthly Meeting**

Dates:

Wednesday, April 13, 2022

Wednesday, May 11, 2022.

Wednesday, June 8, 2022

Time 12:30 – 2:00 PM

Unless otherwise notified.

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**National Federation of the Blind**

**Dates to Keep in Mind:**

July 5-10: National Convention, New Orleans

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**Tech Tips:**

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What's New in iOS 15 Accessibility for Blind and DeafBlind Users

Submitted by Scott Davert on Sunday, September 19, 2021.

Member of the AppleVis Editorial Team

Introduction

Another Autumn means another release of iOS. Just like releases of iOS dating back to 2009, this release brings a lot of new features and functions for blind and DeafBlind users. Major changes in iOS 15 include a new Focus Mode, several enhancements with FaceTime, the ability to use Siri for certain tasks while offline, and much more. Many blogs will be highlighting these enhancements to iOS, so I will not discuss them in great detail here. This article covers accessibility features impacting individuals who are blind or DeafBlind.

One of the joys and curses of getting a new release from Apple is that they do not actively document the changes in accessibility with their products. This is good for me because it gives me the chance to share new features with my readers, but it is also a challenge. While I have worked extensively with iOS 15 since the first beta release in June, there will inevitably be things that I have missed. This is also part of the fun; whenever I discover a new feature, it's almost like solving a puzzle or getting an early birthday present. Prior to upgrading, I strongly encourage people to check out AppleVis' list of bugs present and resolved in iOS 15. If you are reading this article after subsequent versions of iOS 15 have been released, it is possible that some of the bugs present in the initial release of iOS 15 will have been resolved; you can always check The AppleVis Bug Tracker for the most up-to-date list of active iOS and iPadOS bugs. With that said, here are the changes Detective Davert found while investigating accessibility with iOS 15:

An Important Note About Older iPhone Models

There is good and bad news concerning older iPhone models. The good news is that if you were able to install iOS 14 on your device, iOS 15 will also work on your device. I installed iOS 15 on an iPod touch 7, and found that it worked quite smoothly. There was no noticeable difference in the amount of time apps took to load, no degradation in the speed at which I could type, and there were indeed some new functions. However, there are certain features which will not be supported on devices that are older than the iPhone XS; this is due to the fact that the older devices run slower processors which cannot use some of the new enhancements. For a list of features announced at WWDC which will not be available on older devices, check out this article from iPhone Hacks. Note that the iPhone SE 2020 and iPhone XR do both support all of the upgraded functionality in iOS 15.

Some General Changes in iOS 15

This section is intended to give the reader a few mainstream enhancements which I felt were the most significant in terms of accessibility itself. It is not a comprehensive list; there are already many such lists available online.

Siri

As briefly noted above, it is now possible to have Siri perform certain tasks without utilizing the internet. This allows the user to, for example, have Siri enable accessibility features without having to be on a connection to the internet. It also means that certain tasks can be completed much more quickly. Opening apps, setting timers, toggling features, and several other options are available. Using Siri while offline does not require you to change any setting; it is part of the upgrade.

Follow-up is now more useable with Siri. For example, if you are browsing a contact and say "message them," it will open a text that you can dictate to the user onscreen. Siri has also gained new supported languages, including Danish, Finish, Swedish, and Norwegian.

Picture This Text

One of the new functions in iOS 15 is called Live Text. Available on the iPhone XS and later, Live Text allows you to read text from photos and with the Camera app. Similar to the Short Text option in Seeing AI, Live Text uses AI to identify text. Unlike Seeing AI, though, Live Text in iOS 15 does not require an internet connection to work. However, Seeing AI will run on devices older than the XS and of course has other capabilities besides text recognition. Both services are free.

After launching the Camera app, if text is detected in the view finder, VoiceOver will announce "text detected." If you find the "Detect Text" button and double-tap it, you will be presented with the text that was found. Like taking any sort of photo with a portable camera, it is important to do this with a steady hand. Like Seeing AI and any other app which performs OCR, it can be quite challenging for a braille-only user who needs to have both a steady hand and the ability to read braille one-handed. The information that text has been detected is conveyed with the alert messages function, so this could also present challenges for slower braille readers. For example, if the text goes out of focus before the "Detect Text" button is activated, the button will disappear and you will need to focus on the text and try again.

If text has been detected, activating the option to read the text will present it in a way which is easily readable by VoiceOver and braille. Selecting the "Detect Text" button also puts a stop to the camera attempting to recognize other things in your environment.

next to the detected text, there will be a series of buttons which enable the user to take action on the text. Select All, Copy, and Look Up are all options on basic text. If the text detected includes a phone number or email address, this text becomes a link, and the user can activate it to carry out the default iOS option for that type of content. I recently scanned a few business cards from a convention I went to in 2019, and was able to get the printed contact information on each card. The same set of options are available in the Photos app, so if you have a photo with text, you can also take advantage of Live Text.

Don't Leave Meeeeeee!!!

Within the Find My app, there are now options to notify you when you have been separated from your AirTag. If, for example, I had attached an AirTag to my wallet, and my wallet falls out of my pocket, I would be notified that I had left it behind. Once I am notified, I then have all of the options associated with Find My, which will allow me to hopefully get the lost item back.

VoiceOver Changes in iOS 15

Quickly Accessing Even More Settings

Over the years, Apple has come up with new ways of providing quicker access to VoiceOver's functions. With iOS 15, there is a new way to access even more settings. Whether you are suffering from a cluttered VoiceOver Rotor or running out of custom gestures, you now have another option with VoiceOver Quick Settings. You can access the Quick Settings menu by performing a 2-finger quadruple-tap, or pressing VO+v on a hardware keyboard. Note that as of iOS 15.0, there is no braille display equivalent for the VoiceOver Quick Settings command, and no option to add this to a keyboard assignment.

It is not only possible to utilize the settings in this menu, but one can also add, remove, and reorder the items. To do this, head over to Settings > Accessibility > VoiceOver > Quick Settings and view all of the possibilities. You will notice that these items are adjustable like the Rotor and that you can double-tap to go into a submenu to change the setting that way. Many of the options in Quick Settings mirror those available to access from the Rotor, so one can save the rotor for things like navigation if you wish, and use Quick Settings for other needs. Reordering the items in this menu is also easy to use and works the same way you would reorder items in the Rotor.

Grouped Navigation

Grouped Navigation is another new VoiceOver feature in iOS 15; the purpose of this new navigation style is to group certain types of similar screen items together so that your interaction can be more manageable with that group. For example, in the Mail app, the messages list when in an email account is its own group. However, it's important to note that Grouped Navigation is a work-in-progress, as indicated by struggles I have had with this feature. With Mail, for example, having Grouped Navigation enabled allows you to swipe past the "Dictate" button, but will not continue onto the group of messages. Instead, you must hit the touchscreen, and when you do, it will automatically start interacting. You can also move by container to get into the group, but that seems like more trouble than it's worth. The intent is to make this feature work like it does on the Mac, as evidenced by the 2-finger swipe right to begin interacting, and 2-finger swipe left to stop interacting with a group. On a keyboard, VO modifier with Shift Down Arrow will enter a grouping, while VO modifier with Shift Up Arrow will stop interaction. There appears to not be a braille display keyboard equivalent for these actions. At the moment, I am not finding Grouped Navigation to be a feature I will be using. If you find it of use, you can add it to the VoiceOver rotor to toggle off and on, as well as toggle it in Quick Settings or by going to Settings > Accessibility > VoiceOver > Navigation Style.

More Verbosity

Verbosity has again been expanded to include new capabilities. To check out what's new, you can read on, and/or follow along by navigating your way to Settings > Accessibility > VoiceOver > Verbosity.

One of the new items you can adjust is the way in which you are informed of the status of QuickNav. When it is changed from one setting to another, you now have the options to have this info conveyed with speech, a sound, changing the pitch of speech, through braille, or to have it do nothing at all.

From time to time, my flashlight can be turned on by accident. This is frustrating; unless someone is around to let me know that it has been activated, the only ways I typically can find out is if my phone is really warm or my battery takes a quick nose dive in the amount of juice it has left. With iOS 15, under the Verbosity menu, there is now an option to be notified when the flashlight is enabled. When one locks the screen, there will be a speech announcement that says, "Flashlight on." If there was a braille flash message that comes along with the "Screen Locked" message, I did not notice it when testing this functionality. If the flashlight is left on for more than a minute after the screen is locked, a notification will also appear on the Lock Screen from VoiceOver.

In iOS 14, Verbosity allowed users to control whether they are informed about when the Actions rotor is available. A nice addition to this menu is the option to have it sent to the braille display. While it can be a hindrance in the Mail app, since you would need to read "actions available" with each new line of text, it is something which can be of value in different circumstances. This is especially true for apps which take advantage of this rotor option where it may not be obvious until the user checks for it. One other added control is the ability to specify whether numbers are spoken as words or as digits.

Explore the Expanded Descriptions

One of the things sometimes missing from images in iOS 14 and before with text recognition was the ability to explore what is positioned where within an image. This option is now available on any photo. Not only can one expand the description by choosing the rotor option that is now included, but the user can then flick left and right through the detected content, which can give a good overview of what is in the photo. If you encounter an image in another app, this feature is also available. I am finding image descriptions more useful now that the technology has matured. The amount of details available within these images is amazing, and I also like the new ability to explore by swiping or touching the screen. This puts it into a format which does not rely on the VoiceOver alert messages feature, which is more difficult to access, especially for a braille user who may be a slower reader.

Another enhancement that is somewhat related, is the ability for content creators to add image descriptions that can be read by VoiceOver in Markup. This allows creators to generate their own descriptions which can be more accurate than what you may find using the AI-driven options.

Rotor Settings Become Less Mysterious

Previous to iOS 15, a VoiceOver user trying to adjust certain settings would have to change them to figure out the status of that rotor option—for example, whether a certain feature is on or off. In iOS 15, VoiceOver gives you the information each time you move to specific rotor options such as the speech rate.

Right-to-Left Support

For those who read in languages where one reads from right to left, VoiceOver can now be set to reverse the left-to-right navigation. This setting can be controlled under Quick Settings if the app developer supports this. By default, it is set to "Automatic."

Visual Accommodations

No One Size Fits All

In iOS 13, VoiceOver users were introduced to a feature called Activities, which allowed the user to control how specific apps behaved based on an Activity. Think of an Activity as a group of custom settings; for example, if you preferred that you had one voice reading your email messages and another that read your books for whatever reason, you could set these options accordingly. However, this was a VoiceOver function only. iOS 15 changes that in many ways.

If you head over to Settings > Accessibility > Per-App Settings, you will have the ability to customize many of the visual settings for each app on your device. If you want Invert Colors on for one app, for example, and not for another, this menu will allow you to specify your preference. It is also possible to apply something to all apps, or on the Home screen. Some of the settings you can change include: contrast settings, Smart Invert, Cross-Fade Transitions, and many more.

The other thing the Per-App functionality brings, is the ability to set the text size on a per-app basis via the Control Center. To do this, one must first put the option in the Control Center, which can be found under Settings > Control Center. Then, while in any app, open Control Center and select the Text Size control. You will then be presented with a screen that has a slider to change text size and a toggle that lets you choose between All Apps or only the app you're currently using.

An Independent Magnifier

The Magnifier has been located under the Accessibility settings menu for many releases of iOS, and it has expanded dramatically over the past couple of years while still being able to do things like spot read. in iOS 15, Magnifier has become its own standalone app.

Hearing

Accommodate These Headphones

Headphone Accommodations for supported Beatz and AirPods were introduced in iOS 14. When turned on, if you have a set of supported headphones, you are walked through a form of hearing test which will ask you questions about what you hear. Based on that information, iOS will optimize the sound for your hearing loss. iOS 15 makes this easier by allowing for the importing of a paper or PDF audiogram. You can still use the test discussed above, but this seems much faster and the resulting sound has been reported to be nearly as effective as using the manual method. To access these new Accommodation options, which are in a different menu from iOS 14, head to Settings > Accessibility > Audio/Visual > Headphone Accommodations.

Hanging out in the Background

Also under Settings > Accessibility > Audio/Visual, you will find an option called Background Sounds. These sounds can come in handy to help someone focus, but can also help potentially support people with tinnitus. Not only can you play a background sound, but you can customize how it behaves. You can independently control the volume of the sound, whether the sound continues when media is playing, the volume for media itself, and have the noise stop automatically when your screen is locked. Background Sounds is a nice function, though it would be even nicer if there was a way to quickly start and stop the playback through a control in the Control Center.

The sounds you can choose from include: Balanced Noise, Bright Noise, Dark Noise, Ocean, Rain, and Stream. The recordings are in stereo and are of decent quality.

Other Changes

I Wasn't Done Reading that Braille Flash Message, Thanks for Holding!

As noted above, I appreciate some of the elimination of the use of what iOS refers to as VoiceOver Announcements. Not that the information previously provided through them wasn't useful, because it was, but that particular format caused issues for some braille users who were trying to read a VoiceOver announcement that would disappear too quickly. This was a particular challenge when accessing Rotor options. iOS 15 has done away with delivering Rotor and some other functions this way, which makes them more accessible to slower braille readers.

Switch Control Becomes Auditory

Sound Actions for Switch Control let you control iPhone with simple mouth sounds. This feature allows for much easier access for some users who can't or don't wish to utilize the other options like Switch Controls, a mouse, or other gadgets. However, you can combine this feature with other forms of Switch Control, so I would imagine this will be helpful for many.

New Sounds to Recognize

iOS 15 also adds two new sounds to its Sound Recognition options under the household category. Breaking glass can certainly be handy, not only to help alert you to something being dropped, but can also help you determine whether someone is breaking in. I found that playing sound clips of breaking glass through Youtube was mostly reliable, but just like with the other sounds, it must be far above the threshold of sounds around you. I did not have any false positives with this sound.

The other new sound is kettle. I couldn't get this one to work, but it would be handy to have since this sound is outside my hearing range.

Conclusion

Though the changes in iOS 15 are not quite the amount of enhancements we have seen in past releases, Apple continues to expand and enhance its accessibility features with each release. Overall, I have noticed some general stability improvements in this release. Whether you should upgrade to iOS 15 is an individual decision no one should make on your behalf. Remember, the ability to revert to iOS 14 is available for a short time after release, but this process is not for the faint of heart. Once Apple quits signing iOS 14, though, there will be no going back. I would again encourage users to take a look at the bugs listed on the AppleVis website and to check out iOS 15 on another device if possible prior to installation on your primary device. iOS 15 is a free upgrade for all iOS devices which run iOS 14, and can be downloaded and installed by visiting Settings> General> Software Update.

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**What’s Up?**

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This feature is dedicated to submissions on tips, tricks, and technologies to help make our lives a little easier.

This month we are talking about the Versa Slate.

The Versa Slate is a braille slate that is paperless and erasable. It works just like a regular slate and stylus, but without paper.

It is available in two sizes. The regular Versa Slate size is 4 rows of 20 cells each. Then there is the Versa Slate Mini which has two rows of 12 cells each. The unit has a magnetic stylus that is built into the side of the unit for easy storage.

The following information is specifically for the regular unit.

How it Works

The Versa functions like any other braille slate, but without the need for paper. Simply use the included stylus to make braille, and flip over the slate to read it. When you want to clear all or part of the slate, press one of the buttons.

The slate has 2 sets of 4 buttons along the top and bottom of the reading side of the unit. There is a button above and below each group of 5 cells. Press the top and bottom buttons together to erase the dots from section of the slate. You can also gently push single pins down to erase a specific dot. It is recommended doing this with a finger, not the stylus.

Versa Slate for Education

The Versa Slate is an excellent tool for teaching braille as well as slate and stylus skills. The dots on the slate are easier to press than a typical stylus with paper. And since the lines are erasable, students can practice as much as they want without going through lots of paper or needing to line up a traditional slate.

Versa Slate for Travel

The slate is great for taking down a quick note or phone number while on the road. If someone gives you a phone number while you're on the phone, it's much easier to have another device handy to jot down that important information. Or, pull out your slate during a meeting to take a quick note without disturbing the meeting or letting others know what you're writing.

Warranty

This product comes with a one-year warranty against defects. The warranty does not cover damage due to misuse or abuse.

Deanna and Sheryl bought their slates at [www.atguys.com](http://www.atguys.com). On this site, the regular slate is selling for $120 and the Mini for $60.

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**Here’s a little bit of humor**

Easter:

What do you get when you pour hot water into a rabbit hole?

Hot cross bunnies.

Mother’s Day:

Sunday school teacher: Tell me, Johnny. Do you say prayers before eating?

Johnny: No, ma’am, I don’t have to. My mom’s a good cook.

Father’s Day:

What do you call your dad when he falls through the ice?

A POPsicle!

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**This Month’s Recipes:**

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**3 Packet Roast**

Serves: 6

**Ingredients**

1 (3 pound) boneless beef chuck roast

1 (.7 ounce) package dry Italian-style salad dressing mix

1 (1 ounce) package ranch dressing mix

1 (.75 ounce) packet dry brown gravy mix

1 cup water

**Instructions**

1. Whisk
2. the water, Italian dressing mix, ranch dressing mix, and brown gravy mix together in a bowl until smooth.
3. Place the beef roast into a slow cooker, and pour the sauce over top.
4. Cook on Low until the roast is easily pierced by a fork, 6 to 8 hours.

You can add quartered potatoes and baby carrots to the pot with the roast to make this a complete meal!

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**Stuffed Pepper Skillet**

**INGREDIENTS**

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 pound 90% lean ground beef

1 cup diced sweet yellow onion

1 teaspoon minced garlic

2 tablespoons tomato paste

1 cup diced red bell pepper

½ cup diced green bell pepper

14.5 ounce can fire roasted diced tomatoes

1 cup long grain white rice, like Jasmine

2½ cups low sodium beef broth

2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley, divided

2 teaspoons Italian seasoning

½ teaspoon smoked paprika

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 cup shredded pepper Jack cheese

½ cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Heat the oil in a deep 12-inch skillet over MEDIUM heat.
2. Add the ground beef, onion and garlic and cook, breaking up the beef with a spoon, until cooked through and crumbled. Drain the excess grease from the skillet and return it to the heat.
3. Stir the tomato paste into the beef until well combined. Add the bell peppers, diced tomatoes, rice, beef broth, Worcestershire, 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, Italian seasoning, smoked paprika, salt and pepper. Stir to combine and bring the mixture to a boil.
4. Reduce the heat to a simmer, cover and let cook until the rice is tender, 15 to 18 minutes.
5. Stir the mixture to fluff the rice. Top with the cheese, cover and continue to cook over LOW until the cheese melts. Garnish with remaining parsley and serve.

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**A penny for your thoughts**

A party without cake is just a meeting.

Julia Child

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Remember, we want your inputs!

Please send recipes, events, tech tips, jokes, questions, and your feedback.

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