

The Focus



Alabama's Blind Community at a Glance

Volume I, Number 1, Summer 2012

National Federation of The Blind
Of Alabama

Joy Harris, President

Greetings and welcome to our inaugural issue of "The Focus: Alabama's Blind Community at a Glance." The "Name Our Newsletter Contest" was a big success with great entries submitted. We would like to congratulate Barbara Manuel for her winning entry. We appreciate the five chapter presidents for being kind enough to be the judges. We would like to say thanks to everyone who took the time to participate. It was nice to have such a variety of names to choose from. Also, we appreciate American Diabetic Supply for providing the \$50 gift card to the winner of our contest.

Loads of thanks go to the contributors of this issue. This newsletter is our voice and it gives all of us a chance to communicate. Feel free to send your comments or submissions to me at mail.gailsmith@gmail.com or call me at (205) 221-1514.

Gail Smith, Editor

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This first issue of “The Focus” is dedicated to the late Rev. Frank Lee, in memory of his years of service to the NFB. He was a dedicated Federationist who will be greatly missed.



The Rev. Frank Lee

The Rev. Frank Lee, past president of the National Federation of the Blind of Alabama, died on May 9, 2012. He was born in Semmes, Alabama in 1942 and soon afterward, his family moved to Dothan. He found himself in the middle of a farm family of 15 children. When he was six, one eye was injured in an accident. The medicine available to the Lees at the time could not prevent an infection from spreading to the other eye, causing total blindness within a few months.

Lee felt fortunate that his family learned about the school for the blind in Talladega, and he went there a year later. He remembered crying when he had to leave home and return to school. He also remembered that it was the only way for him to get an education. The academic curriculum was quite good. Lee participated in many sports, including baseball and volleyball, as well as singing in the choir from elementary through high school.

The school Lee attended was the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, which consisted of four separate schools: the white deaf, the white blind, the black deaf and the black blind. The campus for the black blind was very small, and it was separated from all the others.

Frank Lee remembered things that were exciting opportunities to him at the time. In 1952, he was the first child in his part of the school to use the Perkins Braille Writer. In 1962, he was in the third class to graduate from the black blind school. Prior to 1959, there were so few black blind high

school students that they took courses in a public school in Talladega, receiving high school diplomas there. While most schools for the blind in the 1950s and early 1960s were just getting a good start at integrating blind youngsters into public school classes, Lee's school was just getting enough blind students to offer a complete high school curriculum. Integration of the races was still almost a decade away.

Between 1962 and 1966, Frank Lee spent twenty-one months operating a vending facility under the Randolph-Sheppard program. But, deep down, he wanted to go to college. He had earned good grades, but not until 1966 could he convince the state rehabilitation agency for the blind to help him. In 1970 he earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Talladega College. During these years, Lee worked periodically as a camp counselor and in vending facilities. He was also active in church work. He had been singing in church choirs for years and in 1962, he preached his first sermon. In 1973, he completed studies at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. He also studied at Colgate Rochester Divinity School in Rochester, New York.

Throughout the coming years Rev. Frank Lee served as a United Methodist Church Pastor in Opelika/Mitchell Springs, Powell's Chapel, Lafayette, Roanoke Parish, Sweethome, Lakeside, St. Thomas/Shady Grove, St. Paul's, Springhill and Lowes Chapel. He retired from pastoring while at Lowe's Chapel in 2001. He will always be remembered with fondness and respect.

In 1976, Frank Lee married Frankie Boyd, whom he met in college.

He joined the National Federation of the Blind in 1982 and was elected Treasurer of the NFB of Alabama in 1985 and served as Treasurer until 1992.

At that time he was elected First Vice President and served in that position until 2007. Rev. Frank Lee was elected to serve as President of the NFB of

Alabama in 2009 and served until 2011. In 1986, he was elected to the National Board of Directors and re-elected in 1988. Though his calling was to preach, Lee's leadership in the NFB was characterized not by preaching but by quietly setting an example. In the Associates Program, in which all the members were encouraged to reach out to attract new members and a monetary donation, Frank was the top recruiter in 1987, signing up 228 members-at-large in that year and over 180 the year before.

In 2012, Rev. Frank Lee was still serving the NFB of Alabama. He was the First Vice President both for the NFB of Alabama Affiliate and the Huntsville Chapter. He is best known in the Alabama affiliate for his stellar service as the treasurer, where his integrity and judgment won him term after term. His quiet, unassuming manner assured that when he spoke, he was heard with interest and respect.

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My personal reflections on the passing of Dr. Frank Lee

By Allen Harris

If memory serves, I met Frank Lee in the very late 1970's, as he was becoming an active member of the National Federation of the Blind and the NFB of Alabama. In 1981, I was in Alabama for the Chapter development activities. Frank was one who could be counted on for anything he could do to help.

In 1986, at the NFB Convention in Kansas City Missouri, Frank Lee was elected to the National Board of Directors; he was very proud of this "trust" shown by fellow Federationist.

Since Frank and I were on the National Board, together we became friends. Each November, at the NFB Thanksgiving National Board meeting we would have our dinner and one of our practices was to have each person or couple, tell us what they had brought. As you can imagine, the range of dishes to be passed was wonderful, representing recipes from throughout the United States. Frank and Frankie tended to bring southern dishes including "head cheese". Each year, okra was served, Frankie fried five pounds and believe me, it was a favorite.

As I reflect on Frank's passing, I am reminded of so many things that "made Frank Lee" who he was. Certainly he was a man of God and his life's work was presiding over several Churches throughout the State of Alabama.

Back in the day, I liked to help individuals get their rooms and assist with their luggage. Frank and Frankie had rooms on the second floor, accessible only by stairs. First, the Lee's did not travel light, usually having two "steamer trunks" and I wrestled them upstairs. I recall on one occasion I asked Dr. Maurer, if the Lee's might get a room on the first floor. I do not remember if that happened but in any event, the arrival and participation of the Lee's was something we all looked forward to.

Frank knew that I was a High School wrestling Coach and he shared his love for professional wrestling; I had little interest in professional wrestling and knew nothing about the subject. In any event, each year at the NFB Board meeting or anywhere we were together he would regale me with the current World Champ and other details.

When Joy and I moved to Alabama, Dr. Lee was among the first Alabamians to welcome us and make us feel at home.

Dr. Lee loved the NFB, and could be relied upon to participate in whatever way he could.

As I attended the Celebration of Dr. Lee's Life, his friends and colleagues spoke of a man that I certainly recognized.

From the President's Desk

By Joy Harris

President, National Federation of the Blind of Alabama

This is the very first issue of our newsletter, "The Focus, Alabama Blind Community at a Glance". In this issue, you will read about the activities of the NFB of Alabama and Highlights of our progress.

In the past year, the NFB of Alabama has added the Greater Rocket City Chapter in Huntsville. Also we have recently organized a Merchants Division of the NFB of Alabama.

On October 11th, 2011, we met in Huntsville to organize our newest Chapter. Larry Povinelli was elected as President of the new chapter, (Greater Rocket City). On April 28th, in Montgomery we met to establish a Merchants Division. Barbara Manuel was elected President of the National Organization of Blind Merchants of Alabama. We are encouraged by our continued growth and know that the NFB of Alabama will be stronger and continue to spread the "The Truth About Blindness".

Currently we are planning to consider an At-Large Chapter of the NFB of Alabama. We know that there are many blind persons who want to be active in the NFB of Alabama, but they do not have a Local Chapter. Also we are planning to revise our Student Division of the NFB of Alabama. Both of these activities will assist in Building and Strengthening our Affiliate.

In the first week of February, 2012, the annual Washington Seminar was held in Washington D.C., and we were able to send four members. They were Teresa Armstrong, Alice Hebert, Cindy Jones and Joy Harris. We were able to meet with all of the members of Congress who represent the State of Alabama.

The three issues this year were:

1. Americans with Disabilities Business Opportunity Act.
(ADBOA)
2. The Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities "Act of 2011,
HR 3086".
3. The Home Appliance Accessibility Act.

More than 500 Federationists from all 50 States participated. This event keeps the Federation on the minds of our Congress and allows us to establish personal relationships with our representatives of Alabama.

On March 2nd through the 4th 2012, we had our annual State Convention. It was held at the Double Tree Hotel in Birmingham, Alabama. Some highlights of our Convention were: More than 160 persons were registered at the Convention with 115 attending the Banquet. The Greater Rocket City Huntsville Chapter was given their Charter of Affiliation. The 2012, Margret K. Hutton award was given to Alice Hebert. This award recognizes an individual who has contributed significantly to the NFB of Alabama. Our National Representative was Mark Riccobono. His participation was lively and he provided a national perspective to our membership.

At our Convention Banquet, we had an auction and raised a thousand dollars. As you can see, our Convention was exciting and we heard from State officials who represent Blind Services in Alabama. We will have our 2013 State Convention in Huntsville, Alabama on the first weekend in March at the Huntsville Marriott Hotel. Please begin planning now to attend our annual State Convention.

On June 30th, 2012 in Dallas, Texas the NFB held our annual National Convention.

It seems to expand each year, with membership, special interest groups, training and recreation opportunities. I am pleased to report that the NFB of Alabama was number nine in the top ten of states. This is the second year that we have been in the top ten! Sixty members of the NFB of Alabama participated and we were active in a wide range of activities. I want to thank those members who attended our Convention in Dallas and to recognize the commitment and determination it took to get to the Convention.

Next year, the 2013 Convention will be in Orlando, Florida. Let's begin to plan now, so that we can have a very strong participation in Orlando.

It is not too soon to begin saving for the Convention and we will be making plans to charter a bus or maybe two. The details will be worked out soon to allow all of us to make our plans.

As you can see, the NFB of Alabama has been very active and our members have worked especially hard to continue NFB growth and progress.

In this issue of The Focus, you will see many other activities that our Chapters and Divisions are involved with. I want to thank Gail Smith for agreeing to be our Editor. Gail is very anxious to receive articles, announcements and any other information from many of our members for future issues.

As we all know, there is always work to be done as our movement seeks to "Change What it Means to be Blind, What Blindness is and What it is Not".

Our newsletter will be posted on our web site, WWW.nfbal.org. We look forward to hearing from members about the Newsletter as it must reflect the ideas and successes of our work in the NFB of Alabama. Feel free to contact me at joy.harris@dwx.com.

State Convention

By Cindy Jones

The NFB of Alabama had a great state convention last March in Birmingham. It was an exciting time as our state affiliate is growing. The 160 members that registered for the convention, were proud to welcome the new Greater Rocket City Chapter.

The agenda was packed with interesting programs and excellent speakers. Not only did we hear updates from AIDB and ADRS, we heard from experts in the BEP field. At the banquet Saturday night Mark Riccobono, our national rep, motivated us to get out of the passengers seat and to be a driver on our road to independence.

The weekend ended with our business meeting in which we elected three new board members. They are Jeff Wilson from Talladega, Tracy Watts from Birmingham, and Larry Povinelli from Huntsville. President Harris praised Ellen Jones for all of her hard work while she served on the board.

It was a great weekend, an exciting convention where friendships were made. New goals were born and hope was restored, for blindness is a minor detour on our road to independence.

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Some Reflections on the 2012, NFB Convention, in Dallas Texas

By Allen Harris

The truth be told, the annual Convention of the National Federation of the Blind is among the events I look forward to each year. I began attending NFB, national Conventions in 1971, and have never missed one since!

In fact, I joined the NFB, in 1969, and I have never missed a State Convention either, even though Joy and I have lived in Michigan, New York, Iowa and Alabama. I know where I will be at the beginning of March each year (NFB of Alabama Convention) and I also know what I will be doing on the week of the 4th of July wherever the national convention of the NFB is being held. I do not tell you this about myself because it is a "record", or that it makes me special. And, I am not challenging others to match my committed attendance, but rather I bring up this subject because of what it means to my soul and general wellbeing.

After a wonderful NFB Convention, I used to wonder "how can we top this next"? I wondered if my renewal and education would continue year after year. The answer is that the Convention in Dallas, June 30th through July 5th was, perhaps, the strongest program I have attended to date.

Why, you may ask, was it so special? Well if one looks at the six days of Programming at this year's Convention, I think you will see the reason for my enthusiasm. The Exhibit Hall is without a doubt is the most broad based opportunity to see Blindness related materials and of course, the participation of every technology is extremely complete; if there is something Blindness related, technology, adapted materials for the Blind and this allows one to see "what is new and different" and I can do it in a single location.

If you look at the agenda of the 2012 NFB Convention, you will see a wide range of presentations on Contemporary and Traditional Blindness issues. Imagine a partial list of presenters at the Convention: Anil Lewis, Scott LaBarre, Kevan Worley, Mark Riccobono, Jim Gashel and last but certainly not least, Dr. Fredric K. Schroeder. The talent that each of these individuals is extraordinary and their expertise on issues of Blindness is amazing. These individuals are members of the Federation, of course there were CEO's, from the whole range of blindness products and services. I have not even mention Dr. Marc Maurer, the President of the NFB and a dependable

person to chair the Convention and he also "Brings the Message" that blind persons respond to with compassion and commitment. Any persons who attend the NFB Convention talk about "recharging my battery" and ready to continue their work on the journey to equality for all Blind persons. It is not too soon to begin saving and planning for the NFB of Alabama Friday March 1st through Sunday March 3rd; also we can begin to save and plan for the NFB National Convention in Orlando, Florida. (July 1st through July 6th)

I am one who feels blessed about the wonderful opportunities I have had in my life and my participation in the NFB, is the most fulfilling work I have been able to volunteer with tens of thousands of other Blind persons along with our sighted colleagues.

I have had the pleasure to represent the NFB in all fifty States, Puerto Rico, Canada and countries in Europe; The work that each of us can do to "change what it means to be Blind" and to spread the "truth about blindness... what it is and what it is not".

So if you want to find me at the beginning of March 2013, or the first week in July, you know where to look.

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Congratulations Brandy Wood!

Revised from NFB News Release, May 2012

The National Federation of the Blind, the nation's oldest and largest organization of blind people, in May announced the winners of its 2012 Scholarship Program, which awards thirty scholarships each year to recognize achievement by blind scholars. Alabama's own Brandy Wood, who attends Auburn University, was selected for one of the thirty scholarships of the 500 entries. She is studying to be a rehabilitation counselor or a teacher and excels in her field. "These students represent

academic excellence, and many of them are doubtless future leaders of this nation's blind," said Dr. Marc Maurer, President of the National Federation of the Blind. "They are forging a path in disciplines as varied as climatology, software development, special education, law, and psychiatry. They are proof of our conviction that we, the blind of this nation, can compete on terms of equality with our sighted peers, and we are very proud of their accomplishments."

In July, each winner attended the NFB's seventy-second annual national convention in Dallas, Texas, where the Scholarship Committee spent several days getting to know each student. The committee then decided which scholarship (ranging in value from \$3,000 to \$12,000) was awarded to each of them. The scholarship winners were then announced at the banquet of the NFB convention on Thursday, July 5, 2012.



My Experience at the NFB Convention

By Brandy Wood

WOW! What a week! This was my first, ever, National Federation of the Blind convention, and I want to go again next year. I can't say enough great things about my experience. The reason I went this year was, because I was a scholarship winner of 2012. I am so honored to have been chosen to receive one of 30 scholarships that the NFB gives out every year. I am thankful, not only for the scholarship, but also the opportunity to go and experience the convention, meeting the fabulous mentors and the great people and friends I met, through the course of the week. The information that is available to all blind individuals who attend the convention is empowering. I feel that it encourages blind people to get out there and fight for themselves and every other blind brother and sister in the entire world. After attending the convention, I am a firm believer that all blind individuals

should learn Braille, whereas, before, I really had no opinion on the subject. I'm glad that I had the opportunity to go and experience the National Federation of the Blind convention; it gave me so many good memories, friends and educational experiences. It's something I want to expand on by getting more involved in the following year.

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NFB of Alabama Members Receive Convention Scholarships

By: Allen Harris

As some of you know, the NFB of Alabama was 9th in total attendance at the NFB Convention recently held in Dallas, Texas. Among the sixty members from Alabama were five individuals who were granted Kenneth Jernigan Convention Scholarships. These Scholarships assist many individuals who want to attend their first NFB Convention. In most cases, they would not be able to go without the Jernigan Grant. The individuals from Alabama who received Kenneth Jernigan Convention Scholarship Grant were: Lakeesha Acklin, Marie Chatman, Louis Donald, Loraine Martin and Janet Rushen. The Kenneth Jernigan Convention Scholarship Committee will be looking for first time persons to attend the 2013 NFB convention in Orlando Florida.

Beginning January 1st, we will begin accepting applications. Watch for announcements in the Braille Monitor or at www.nfb.org. To apply for a Kenneth Jernigan Convention Scholarship, please send your application to kjscholarships@nfb.org

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Around Our State

National Federation of the Blind Of Alabama Chapters



Montgomery Chapter

Meeting: Every Third Tuesday of the Month

Time: 5:00 p.m.

Location: Small Business Resource Center

600 Court Street

We are actively working on fund-raisers throughout the year. The Phone Faith Chat Line has been a great success and we are proud to have had this mechanism to help not only our chapter, but the state affiliate as well. As always, we're seeking innovative ways to propel our chapter ahead.

Planning has begun to promote Blind Awareness month in October. Also, we are excited about the "Merchant Division" which was organized on April 28.

We would like to congratulate Barbara Manuel, of the Montgomery Chapter, for being elected as President of this new division. She is eager to advance this division to the next level. Any and all entrepreneurs, blind and sighted, are welcome to become a part of the NFBA Merchant Division. All interested individuals can contact Barbara Manuel at b.manuel11@att.net.

Montgomery Chapter Board Members: President, Robert Kelly; First Vice, Charles Hutchinson; Second Vice, Al Eford; Secretary, Daisy Fann;

Treasurer, Thisia Kelly; Board Member One, Mr. William Fann; Second Board Member, Georgia Armstrong.

Our president, Robert Kelly, as well as other members, are encouraging all blind persons in and around Montgomery to come and join the NFB family.



Magic City, Birmingham Chapter

Officers are: Alice M. Hebert, president; Vivian Hawkins, 1st vice president; Gary Jones, 2nd vice president; Cindy Jones, secretary; Michael Norris, Treasurer; Tangie Duke, board member; Raynell Patrick, board member.

Our dues are \$20 per year. Our elections are in November. We normally meet the first Saturday of the month and for now use AIDB as our meeting place, 220 34th St. S, Birmingham, AL 35222 from 11am to 1pm. Our main fund-raiser is our walk-a-thon, which has previously been held in May but this year we have moved it to a date in October.

This year, 2012, Birmingham hosted the largest ever NFB of Alabama State Convention. Congratulations to The Magic City Chapter President, Alice Hebert, who received the Margaret K. Hutton award of Excellence.

We currently have five state board members from the Birmingham area:

Joy Harris, president; Cindy Jones, secretary; Alice M. Hebert, Treasurer; Eldridge Hardy, Board Member; Tracey Watts, Board Member.



Mobile Chapter

The Mobile Chapter is proud to announce that one of its members, Dezman Jackson, has moved to Baltimore, Maryland where he has taken a job position as an Orientation and Mobility Instructor. Dezman graduated from Auburn University. He then attended Louisiana Center for the Blind and on to Louisiana Tech, where he received his Masters Degree. When we last spoke with him, he said he loved his job and was having a great time in Baltimore. We all wish him continued success.

School News

Tameka Williams is now attending the University of South Alabama, majoring in Business Administration.

Tony Howard left on May 5, 2012 to attend the Louisiana Center for the Blind in Ruston to receive training. We know you will do very well.

Ivan Walker has completed training in the BEP program. He is currently hoping for a placement real soon. Congratulations, Ivan!

Linda Smith was assigned a placement through the BEP program in the Montgomery area. Good Luck, Linda!

Mr. Willie Huntley, Attorney at Law, of the Huntley Firm was presented a plaque at our 2012 State Convention. This plaque was given to Mr. Huntley for his advocacy and longtime financial support. Mr. Huntley is an attorney in the Mobile area. He is also the son of member Mrs. Ada Huntley.

New Officers Elected, Mobile Chapter: Minnie Walker, President; Tameka Williams, Vice President; Ruby Anderson, Secretary; Bery Walker, Jr., Treasurer; Ada Huntley, Chaplin

Summer 2012

The Focus

Mobile Chapter members met in July at Morrison's Cafeteria for a "JUST GET TOGETHER LUNCHEON". Fun was had by all in attendance.

Meetings are held the first Saturday of each month at 1pm

Mobile Regional Library

5555 Grelot Road

Mobile, Al. 36609

For further information please contact

Minnie K. Walker (251) 344-7960



Talladega Chapter

The Talladega chapter would like to invite visitors to come and join us at our monthly meetings. We meet on the first Tuesday of each month at the Alabama Industries For The Blind café.

The time is 5:00 PM. Alabama Industries is located at:

1209 Fort Lashley Avenue

Talladega, AL 35160

The Talladega Chapter board members are: Vincent Armstrong, President; Jeffery Wilson, Vice president; Martha Thompson, Secretary; Thelma Turner, Treasure; Willie Ward, Board Member; Pazater Turner, Board Member; Antonito Wiggins, Board Member.

In June we had a good fund-raiser. The drink sale as always was a hit. What a good fund-raiser for the hot weather!

The Talladega Chapter donated \$150 to the regional library to help purchase video and digital tapes to be used in descriptive movies.

There are so many blind children that could use help with their Christmas. The Talladega Chapter is glad to be able to help out with the Christmas for one of the children at the Alabama School for the Blind.



Greater Rocket City Chapter

Huntsville, AL

By Susan Povinelli, Secretary

Greetings from the top of the state! On October 11, 2011 we reorganized the Greater Rocket City Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind. At our inaugural meeting, we had 25 people in attendance. Today we have 25 paid members. We are truly excited about all that is happening in the Rocket City chapter.

In the past nine months, our chapter has been working hard. We hosted a Parents Seminar on February 25, 2012. It was truly an informative seminar. During the first weekend in March, 15 of our members attended and were actively involved in the 2012 NFB of Alabama convention held in Birmingham. The Greater Rocket City chapter was excited to receive our charter of affiliation at the state convention. Five of our members, Lakeesha Acklin and her mother Veronica, Dustin Aurand, Terry and Sharon Matney, attended their very first NFB convention. The chapter visited five universities in an effort to reach blind students and possibly start a local student division. A number of our members participated in the Alabama

Institute for the Deaf and Blind (AIDB) Scenario City events in Leeds and Montgomery.

The chapter has been busy raising money by selling Krispy Kreme donut coupons and selling our own designer Greater Rocket City chapter t-shirts. The logo was designed by a fellow church member of Ms. Acklin's, Mr. Don Howard. The logo has our own Whozit on a rocket. If you have not bought one or haven't seen one, you need to be ready to buy one at our upcoming state convention.

We have held many social gatherings, such as; a gift swap at our Christmas party; bowling in January; and attended Saint Patrick's Day parade in March, in which our own Arlene Starks was the parade's Queen. The Povinelli's hosted an April Fools party and a Memorial Day party. The chapter also hosted a Meet and Greet at the University of Alabama Huntsville in April in order to reach blind students. We have attended a Temptations concert, Huntsville Stars and Alabama Hammers game.

At this year's national convention in Dallas, we were fortunate to welcome three first timers from Huntsville. Two of them, Lakeesha Acklin and Loraine Martin were Jernigan Scholarship recipients. Dustin Aurand truly exhibited the federation spirit as he took in all the activities he could manage in six full and fun filled days. After visiting the Piano Tuners Division, Dustin has decided to pursue a career as a Piano Technician. Way to go Dustin!

We have many upcoming events. Sharon and Terry Matney will be hosting our upcoming chapter picnic on Saturday, August 5. You're all invited! We are planning to take a trip to visit our own Louisiana Center for the Blind (LCB) in Mid-September. If you would like to join our trip, please give Lakeesha Acklin a call at (256) 503-8271.

What we are most excited about is our plan to host the largest NFB of Alabama convention right here in the Rocket City. Please mark your calendars for the weekend of March 1 through 3, 2013 to come to the

Rocket City and be part of our 2013 NFB of Alabama convention. More details will be coming, but plan to make your reservations with the Marriott Huntsville – next to the Space and Rocket Center. A descriptive tour of the Space and Rocket Center will be arranged. The Marriott is located at 5 Tranquility Base, Huntsville, Alabama 35805. (256) 830-2222.

We had a huge loss in our chapter, when on May 9, 2012, we learned of the death of our beloved, Reverend Dr. Frank Lee. Dr. Lee was a 30 year member of the federation and a longtime leader. Dr. Lee served on the NFB national board in the 1980's, served as NFB of Alabama president and at the time of his death was still First Vice President of both the NFB of Alabama and the Greater Rocket City chapter. Our chapter is beginning a scholarship fund in the name of Dr. Lee to remember how he changed the lives of the blind of Alabama and the nation. There will be a tribute to Dr. Lee in another article in this newsletter. We very much miss Dr. Lee, but more importantly, we move forward knowing his spirit is with those of us that continue to change what it means to be blind.

Our current officers are; President Larry Povinelli ;First Vice President is vacant; Second Vice President, Richard Norwood; Secretary, Susan Povinelli; Treasurer, Stephen Turner; and board members: Terry Mantney and Brenda Sahib.

We meet the second Tuesday of the month from 6:30 to 8:30 PM at the Huntsville Regional Library at 915 Monroe Street in downtown Huntsville. You're all welcome to come and see how we are changing what it means to be blind in the Rocket City!

National Association of Blind Merchants of Alabama

By Donna Bates

The Alabama Division was founded in April 2012. It is comprised of blind business owners, entrepreneurs and interested sighted people from all over the state. Their purpose is to plan and carry out programs to improve business opportunities and quality of life for the blind. In addition, the group is looking to maximize opportunities under the Randolph-Sheppard Act.

Barbara Manuel, of Mobile, was elected the founding president of the Alabama Division. Other board members were elected as follows: First Vice President, Tracy Watts of Fairfield; Second Vice President, Karen Underwood of Columbiana; Treasurer, Robert Kelly Jr. of Montgomery; Secretary, Donna Bates of Spanish Fort; Board Member, Richard Norwood, of Huntsville; and Board Member, Eldridge Hardy of Birmingham.

The National Association of Blind Merchants (NABM) of Alabama is part of a national movement to band together and be recognized as one regarding purchasing power. Nationally, blind vendors are one of the largest vending supply purchasers. As we all know, there is power and strength in numbers. So the more we stand together, the louder our voice becomes when it comes to negotiating prices of commonly purchased products such as Pepsi and Coke. The NABM has annual conferences and they are affiliated with the National Federation of the Blind.

Since the Alabama Division is so new, we are actively seeking new members to get in on the ground floor and make a real difference in their

lives and the lives of other blind business people. Currently there are 28 members in the Alabama Division of the NABM. Membership is \$10 annually. Joining the Alabama Division is an opportunity to network and exchange ideas with others who have similar circumstances.

Please contact Barbara Manuel at b.manuel11@att.net if you are interested in becoming a NABM of Alabama member.

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Crying My Eyes Out

A chronicle of my experience with structured discovery

By Kate Smith

Anyone who has any experience with visual rehabilitation, as a "rehabilitator" or as a "rehabilitatee", knows there is a disagreement among professionals about whether persons with low vision should be trained to use methods to optimize their vision or trained to do what they have to do without vision. I think the person who is living with low vision should be the one who makes this choice. But many people with low vision will resist training methods that require them to wear a blindfold and work without their sight. I am here to convince everyone with low vision to try training under a blindfold a few times before making a decision.

I have struggled for many years with fading vision. Like most people with low vision that I know, I mostly tried to ignore my limitations. Whenever I found a task that I could no longer do efficiently or optimally, I searched for magic glasses or a magic surgery or magic machine that would allow me to keep on pretending that I was still able to function visually in a visual world.

My "method" worked for quite a while but, then it didn't. At some undefinable point, I crossed a visual line and stepped into a confusing world of shifting shadows, glaring light and fuzzy, diffuse edges. I started having conversations with coat racks. I visited men's rooms. I spilled fine wine in posh restaurants. I tripped and fell too many times to count. I lost control of my life.

So by the time I recognized I needed vision rehabilitation, I was fed up with my vision and I was fed up with vision aids. I was desperate to learn how to get along without my eyes. I eagerly accepted the opportunity to work with a blindfold. I was ready for the darkness. Or so I thought. I cried uncontrollably the first time I put on a blindfold. And the second time, too. I was surprised the first time I cried. And then was surprised again the second time I cried. Now I think the most surprising thing is that I actually thought I wouldn't cry. You see, I thought this was a rational decision. And I am pretty good at rational decisions. I am a rational, educated woman. So, once I had accepted that I needed to learn how to function without my vision, the next rational step was to blindfold myself and get a teacher to show me how to function that way. Isn't that the rational thing to do?

But the rational educated woman had failed to consult the rebellious terrified child within. I had been ignoring her for years. She was still sure she could see if she tried hard enough. She was pretty sure there were monsters in the dark. She was scared. And she was having none of this blindfold business.

So there I was, educated woman and terrified child, crying in front of my brand-new cane travel instructor. Crying on a public street, crying my eyes out. This wasn't new – this public humiliation. I'm the woman who hangs out in men's restrooms. But it was still surprising. Because this time I had decided. I had taken control of my destiny. Me. The grown-up, rational, educated woman. And I couldn't figure out why I was crying.

My instructor, Chantal, allowed me to continue my first cane travel lesson without the sleep shade. But the second time, when the tears surprised me again, the sleep shade stayed on. We both just pretended the tears weren't there.

By the third lesson, the tears were gone and the grown-up was firmly in control. The worst was over. Or so I thought. I started a new phase of rehab training – the Independent Living class. The teachers, Carol and Sue, told us we would spend part of each class day working under sleep shades. I smugly informed them that I had already worked under a blindfold and I was comfortable with the experience. I grandly announced to the class at large that, in my opinion, structured discovery was the best form of rehab and the blindfold was the best teaching practice available. We were lucky, I said, to have teachers willing to guide us through the process. I assured everyone who could hear me that the fear would subside quickly. And then another student, Janet, started to cry. And then I cried, Again. So much for the grown-up, rational, educated woman. But, as I write this, we are almost finished with the Independent Living class. Janet and I don't cry anymore. We ironed shirts under a sleep shade and we didn't cry. We cooked spaghetti under a sleep shade and we didn't cry. We have even been able to laugh some days. Almost every day. So here's what I learned under the sleep shade. I learned to walk with a cane. I learned to eat without spilling. I learned how to cook spaghetti. The blindfold helped me to "turn off" my eyes and learn things in a non-visual way. Important stuff. But even more important was the stuff my terrified inner child learned from the blindfold. She learned that I can still do the things I need to do. She learned that I am still going to laugh. She learned not to be afraid of the dark. And, she learned that sometimes, you just have to cry your eyes out.

Phone Faith Chat Line

By Barbara Manuel

Join the fun!

We are excited about the platform that has made its way to Alabama! Every night, members of the blind community are gathering on the chat line. We are being educated, motivated, and connected.

Here's a schedule of events:

Sunday – ASB Memories with Linda- 7:00 p.m.

Monday –Exercise class – Rockin Roxann – 11:00 a.m.

Computer class – 2-4 p.m. - J. B. Johnson

Healthy Eating for the Soul and Body – Lois Williams

Every first and third Monday – BEP Roundtable – Michael Tally

Tuesday – Conferences with various topics and personalities

Wednesday – Healthy Connection (A Q & A session with a health professional)

Exercise classes – Rockin Roxann – 11:00 a.m.

Computer classes – J. B. Johnson- 2-4 p.m.

Thursday – Conference

Friday – Book club – 6:00 p.m.

Game Night - 7:00 p.m.

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Computer class – J. B. Johnson - 2-4 p.m.

Exercise class – Rockin Roxann – 11:00 a.m.

Saturday – Bible Study – 11:00 a.m.

As you can see, we are having a ball!

Come and join us!

Simply dial (616) 515-2970 and follow the prompts to room 7.

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Five Qualities of a Great Diabetic Supplier

By Taylor Drescher

As the second generation administrator of American Diabetic Supply “ADS”, I wanted to take the time to give you five criteria for choosing the right diabetic supplier for you.

1. The Ability of Your Supplier

Suppliers that only offer a small selection of meters or cheaper models are very common in this industry. A supplier not consistently seeking newer technology is not focusing on their patients. Each patient is unique and a limited variety of products a supplier offers is very telling.

At ADS, we do our best to offer a wide variety of meters, including audio meters. We realize that there is always new technology entering the market and we strive to do our best to only allow the best to reach our patients.

2. Communication

How well does your current supplier communicate with you and your physician? Although a diabetic needs to be involved in their healthcare, a great supplier bridges the gap between the physician, insurer, and the patient.

A supplier that is knowledgeable about your benefits, your physician's plan of care, and current trends in healthcare policy in general is a sign that they care about you. Make sure your supplier can and will take the time to answer any of your concerns.

3. Integrity

I have always been told that character is best defined by what you do when no one is watching. It's true.

Medicare and Medicaid have a set of Supplier Standards that all providers are required to abide by. A good provider obeys the regulations. A great provider goes above and beyond the standards set by our government.

Simple things like an additional free meter for a disaster kit for the visually impaired can truly shine a light on a supplier's character.

4. Motivation

What motivates your current supplier? When you call, do you reach a live person? Do you have to press 1 for customer service to only be placed on hold?

I have learned that if you do what you love, you eagerly await the opportunity to shine. ADS does not use automated phone lines because talking one on one with our patients is what motivates us. We are committed to making sure your meter is meeting your needs every time you call. We take pride in the opportunity to speak with a patient to ensure we are a part of their successful diabetic management.

5. Trust Your Instinct

So much of life is guided by our instinct and intuition. If you call your current supplier and you realize you are simply another order rather than a patient to them, take the time to shop around for another supplier. You are not a customer. You are a patient. Find a supplier that will provide the diabetic healthcare you deserve!

If you feel our company might be the right supplier for you, or if you have questions about how to better manage your diabetes, feel free to call us at (888)699-1237

Here is a diabetic friendly recipe that you might enjoy.

Chicken in Wine Sauce

Chicken and hearty vegetables are simmered in a delicate wine sauce for this recipe. And it's made in the slow cooker for ease.

MAKES: 6 servings

SERVING SIZE: 3 1/2 ounces cooked meat, 3/4 cup vegetable

CARB GRAMS PER SERVING: 24

Ingredients

- 4 medium red-skin potatoes, quartered
- 4 medium carrots, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 2 stalks celery, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 small onion, sliced
- 3 lbs. chicken, skinless
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. dried rosemary, crushed

- ½ tsp. dried thyme, crushed
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 cup chicken broth
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 3 Tbsp. butter
- 3 Tbsp. all-purpose flour

1. In a 5 or 6 quart slow cooker place potatoes, carrots, celery, and onion. Place chicken on top of vegetables. Sprinkle with salt, rosemary, thyme, pepper, and garlic; add broth and wine.

2. Cover and cook on low heat setting for 8 to 9 hours or on high heat setting for 4 to 4 1/2 hours. Use a slotted spoon to transfer chicken and vegetables to a serving platter.



Apple Core

By Susan Povinelli

Many of us use the I-Phone, I-touch, and I-pad as our note taker, money identifier, color identifier, and web browser. There are thousands of free and low cost apps to choose from. These apps are the core of the Apple products. The purpose of this column will be to learn what apps everyone enjoys using and which apps do not work with “Voice Over”. You can send your write-ups on your favorite apps to skpovinelli@gmail.com. Look forward to learn about your favorite apps and trying them out.

My desk at work and home are filled with colorful Post it notes, 3 by 5 cards, and other scraps of paper with things to do, buy and read. I thought there

must be an app that would help me organize and manage these random thoughts. I tried a free app called “Sticky notes” and it didn’t work with Voice Over. So I deleted it and returned back to the app store to look some more. Then I came across another app called “Ever Note”. The write up made it sound promising, saying you can take pictures using the phone’s camera, of labels and it would put it into searchable PDF format, store it, and then sink with your windows or MAC computer. The download was easy and fast on the I-phone. “Voice Over” was able to recognize the buttons on the bottom of the screen which said “notebooks”, “new Note”, etc. Once you tapped on the new note” button you were in a title text block. You could easily move and edit the field. Once you hit the “done” button it moved to the body of the note and. By tapping the save button, the document was saved. The notes are stored alphabetically by their titles. You could search this list for specific words and subject matters.

I went to Evernote.com and downloaded the version for my windows computer. I also registered for the free account so I could transfer notes between my two devices. JAWS appear to work well with this software package. I did have some difficulty registering, because I didn’t receive an audible confirmation message stating I had register successfully. Once I got everything set up the notes I created on my I-phone were automatically available on my computer.

Ever note on the computer has the capability of creating check list with check boxes. Can hardly wait to try it out. You can upgrade to a subscription program for \$5 a month or \$45 a year for more cloud storage and better OCR processing. I think I will play around with it some more before I spend any money.

GUIDE DOG ASSOCIATION LAUNCHES INNOVATIVE HOTLINE

National Association of Guide Dog Users

Marion Gwizdala

(813)626-2789

President@NAGDU.ORG

The National Association of Guide Dog Users (NAGDU) - the leader in service animal policy & advocacy – sponsors an innovative public service. The NAGDU Information & Advocacy Hotline not only offers information about the training and use of guide dogs and the legal rights of individuals who use service animals, it offers the option to speak with an advocate who is trained to mediate issues of discrimination.

“We find that most access problems are the result of a lack of information,” says Michael Hingson, the Association’s Vice President who serves as Project Manager for the hotline. “This hotline is an invaluable resource for accurate information.”

The NAGDU Education & Advocacy Hotline currently offers general information about service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as specific guidance concerning restaurants, taxicabs, and health care facilities. Future plans for the hotline include summaries of each of the state laws concerning service animals, more industry specific information, and guidance in a variety of languages, such as Mandarin and Arabic. The Hotline is available anytime by calling, toll-free, 888-NAGDU411 (888-624-3841). Members of the media wishing to experience the hotline in advance of stories are encouraged to do so.

The NAGDU Education & Advocacy Hotline was created by a grant from the National Federation of the Blind's (NFB) Imagination Fund, as well as with contributions from the California and Florida Associations of Guide Dog Users. The National Association of Guide Dog Users is a strong and proud division of the NFB. NAGDU conducts public awareness campaigns on issues of guide dog use, provides advocacy support for guide dog handlers who face discrimination, supports sound policy and effective legislation to protect the rights of service animal users, offers educational programs to school and civic organizations, and functions as an integral part of the National Federation of the Blind. For more information about the National Association of Guide Dog Users and to support their work, you can visit their website at: [HTTP://WWW.NAGDU.ORG](http://www.nagdu.org)

Or send an email message to: Info@NAGDU.ORG



Extreme Experience Retreat

Blue Lake Camp and the Covington County Blind and Low Vision Outreach Group will sponsor the 3rd annual Extreme Experience Retreat Sunday September 30-October 3 in Andalusia, Alabama. This is an all-inclusive vacation package designed for blind adults for 3 nights and 4 days with all meals and lodging. The event includes fellowship and recreation like canoeing, swimming, motorcycles and archery, as well as education in independent living and support sessions, crafts, including technology training. Registration is \$190.00 and some scholarship funds are available. Attendees are expected from the Southeast and Midwest US.

For more information please contact:

Wanda Scroggins, (334), 428-3335

Email: wareaglewanda@gmail.com

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Wanda is the Dean for the upcoming Extreme Experience Retreat and Director of the Covington Blind & Low Vision Outreach Group.

Or contact, Executive Director Phyllis Murray of Blue Lake Camps

8500 Oakwood Lane, Andalusia, Alabama 36420

office (334) 222-5407 or Email: director@bluelakecamp.com



Mississippi State University's National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision is doing a research project about transportation issues for people who are blind or visually impaired who live in Alabama. The purpose of the project is to develop an intervention to assist consumers who are blind or visually impaired to secure transportation to and from work. The MSU staff will call you about the project, describe it to you, and you can determine if you would like to participate. Your name must be submitted by your rehabilitation counselor, so if you are interested in learning about or participating in the transportation project, please contact your counselor and discuss this matter. Your services through the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services will not change in any way whether you participate or not.



At the present, this newsletter is published semi-annually. The next edition will come out in February 2013. It belongs to all of us so feel free to contribute your thoughts to our next edition. Please send any submissions to me by January 15, 2013.

Gail Smith, Editor

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