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**FEBRUARY, 2014**

**SENIORS IN CHARGE NEWSLETTER**

**Connecting Blind Seniors Across Colorado**

We are pleased to announce the new name for our Senior Division Newsletter, which was voted on at the State Convention last October. **“Seniors In Charge”** has become the standard by which we all try to live our lives……taking charge of our daily living through education and hands-on experience. John Batron expresses this “take-charge” attitude in the words of a song that he composed.

We're the Seniors in Charge at the CCB.

We use the white can cause we can't see,

We fight for the right of Equality,

We're the Seniors in Charge at the CCB.

We're the Seniors in Charge at the CCB,

We're learning our Braille from A to Z,

We're living our lives independently,

We're the Seniors in Charge at the CCB.

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***NOT JUST FOR THE BIRDS....***

**Jeff Clark**

**by Duncan Larsen**

Jeff Clark is a participant in the Colorado Center for the Blind’s Senior Program. He has been attending our Friday senior group meeting for the past four years. He is a very creative, inspiring, and generous man.

Jeff grew up in Casper, Wyoming and married his high school sweetheart. He and his wife, Carolyn, have been married 43 years. He says, “In spite of all life’s difficulties, we did get a lifetime guarantee.” Indeed, they have a warm, welcoming home in Centennial that they have lived in since 1976.

In 1973, Jeff moved to Denver from Casper to follow his boss who he calls “the best boss in the world.” He worked for nearly 40 years in the auto parts business and with General Motors.

Jeff refers to his family as the joy in his life. He and Carolyn have two daughters, Amy and Lea and three grandchildren: Cody, 13; Lauren, 11; and Morgan, 2. He says, “They are my trophies. I can always think about something funny or something that we did together. We have a good time when we get together.”

When Jeff was 53, he was laid off after nearly 40 years in the auto parts business. Unable to find other employment, he creatively thought about alternatives to make a living. Over the years, he had collected license plates that came off of used cars. He had a collection of 2000 license plates from states all over the country as well as plates from some sports teams. He started selling them on eBay. Later, he visited a gift shop in Grand Lake and saw a birdhouse for sale with a license plate for a roof. He thought it was an expensive price for a license plate and a few wood scraps. He decided that he would try his hand at making them. His wife, Carolyn, is a quilt maker and was selling her quilts in a craft store. Jeff decided that he would try to sell his birdhouses there, too. He was surprised at how fast they sold. “I couldn’t make them fast enough. They were one color, no trim, and made from recycled wood,” he says. He still tries to use recycled wood whenever possible.

Two years after retirement, Jeff started seeing double. He thought it was time to get new glasses but soon learned that glasses would not correct his vision. He found out that he had a thyroid disease that produced an imbalance of TSH or thyroid stimulating hormone that caused pressure to build up behind his eyes. His ophthalmologist told him that he would become blind if he did not have surgery to relieve this pressure. During the surgery, Jeff had a heart attack and actually died, so the surgery was not completed. Thankfully for everyone, he was revived. He says, “I accepted that I was going to go blind. I’d rather have that than more surgeries and heart attacks.”

His enjoyment of building birdhouses didn’t go away when he became blind. He worked out ways to continue building them, primarily using his sense of touch. He uses squares and templates to measure. He uses a variety of power tools: table saw, chop saw, sanders, and nail guns. He also has some tools that he has made for himself. He does it all by feel, using alternative or non-visual techniques for every step of building the birdhouses.

He now makes birdhouses out of two different types of wood. Those made from cedar are kept natural and those from pine are painted. He paints them two or three colors and has a trim, using three coats of paint. He explains how he paints them. “You think that you’re the paint brush. I paint from the middle of the area to the edge. I dip the paintbrush in the can about 1/4” so I don’t use too much paint. I can feel how far I dip the paintbrush in the can. This comes with practice.” Jeff’s workshop has birdhouses in various stages of construction and his shop can hold 60 of them at a time. It takes him three hours to complete a birdhouse.

With a strong work ethic and being meticulous in his workmanship, he has real satisfaction in creating them. “In a nutshell, it was something I could still do,” he says. He loves pleasing customers. He made a bird duplex for one customer. For another, he made one to look like a 1957 Chevy with fins on the back, headlights and wheels. To date, he has made 1000 birdhouses.

Regarding blindness, Jeff advises, “You look for other things that work. It’s what you can do. If you find something that you can do and it makes you feel good, you just found your happy place.”

Jeff sells his birdhouses at Parker Shops in downtown Parker, CO and Heritage Gifts & Cards in Centennial. If you would like to order one directly from Jeff, he says that he will make one for a special rate of $25 to those receiving this newsletter. You can reach him at 720-785-0917.

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***DID YOU KNOW....***

**The next NFB State Convention will be held in Denver on October 30, 31, November 1 & 2. Please give some serious thought to joining us this year. More information will be available as we near the summer months.**

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***BELL Pins for Sale***

***by John Batron***

            The Denver Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of Colorado is selling BELL Pins to support the BELL program of Colorado.  BELL stands for *Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning*.  Join us in giving our kids the gift of literacy. They are our future!

            To help, send $5 for each BELL pin you would like to purchase, to John Batron, 5807 So. Gallup St., Apt. 103, Littleton, CO 80120, or for more information, call 303-975-6341 or 720-384-7916.

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***Who was Laura Bridgman?***

***by Estelle Shukert***

Laura Dewey Lynn Bridgman, born in 1829 (the same year that Louis Braille first published his system of raised dots), in Hanover, New Hampshire, is known as the first deaf-blind American child to gain a significant education in the English language, fifty years before the famous Helen Keller.

            When she was 2 years old, her family was struck with scarlet fever, which killed 2 of her sisters and left her deaf, blind and without a sense of smell or taste.  As a child, her mother taught her basic housekeeping skills and sewing.

            Just before her eighth birthday, she was sent to the Perkins School for the Blind.  At first, very homesick, she eventually felt comfortable at the school.  Dr. Samuel Howe, the director at Perkins, took a special interest in Laura.  She moved in with Dr. Howe and his sister for five years so that he could spend more time working with her.

            She was soon able to write her name and do simple arithmetic.  While she was at the school, Charles Dickens visited and wrote about her.  He described her as being very affectionate and she always wanted to be near someone and use her tactile finger language to communicate.  One of her classmates was Annie Sullivan, who later became Helen Keller’s teacher after Helen’s mother learned about Laura and the Perkins school.

            Laura had some teachers at the school that cared very much for her.  When the teachers eventually left the school, and Dr. Howe married, and also left, these losses led her to become anorexic. She was taken to visit her family, which she enjoyed, but eventually went back to the school where her appetite returned.

            Dr. Howe made arrangements for her to be cared for at the school for life.  She read the Bible in Braille and tutored some of the students in sewing.  She became ill and died shortly after celebrating her 50th birthday at the school.

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***Win a Braille Chocolate Bar!!***

**Who doesn’t like chocolate……..especially free chocolate!!**

Everyone who contacts the staff of our National Federation of the Blind of Colorado Senior Newsletter with a question, answer, tip, request, article, suggestion, comment, or even a donation to offset expenses will be entered into a drawing for a Braille Chocolate Bar!

Whether you contact us by e-mail, snail mail, or phone, just be sure to give us your name and address and indicate that you want to be included in the drawing.

Yes, we are doing this to encourage you to read and participate in this statewide newsletter. We want to hear from you and want you to be a part of this informational resource. Contact:

Colorado Center for the Blind

Attn: Duncan Larsen

2233 W. Shepperd Ave

Littleton, CO 80120

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***Recipe Box***

**OVERNIGHT MONKEY BREAD**

Great for Easter Breakfast!

Ingredients:

1 package of Butterscotch Pudding 3.5 ounces (NOT Instant)

1 teaspoon Cinnamon (or more to taste)

½ cup Brown Sugar

1 cube Butter

1 cut chopped Pecans or Walnuts

1 package of frozen Rhodes Dinner Rolls (36 to a package) (They are

the size of a golf ball. )

Start your Monkey Bread the night before. Cook pudding, cinnamon, brown sugar & butter in a pan until butter melts and pudding and brown sugar dissolve. Remove from heat and add chopped pecans or walnuts.

Grease a bundt pan with butter or Pam spray. Remove 24 balls of frozen dough from the package and arrange them in a bundt pan. Pour the warm (not boiling hot) butterscotch mixture over the frozen dinner rolls.

Take a large piece of aluminum foil and grease it generously. Cover the bundt pan with the aluminum foil greased side down. This will prevent the aluminum from sticking to the rolls as they rise. Let the bread rise overnight.

In the morning, heat your oven to 350 degrees. Remove the foil from the Monkey Bread and bake for 35 minutes. Remove from the oven and very carefully turn the bread upside down onto a platter, taking care not to burn yourself. Serve warm. Just pull off a gooey piece of warm Monkey Bread and enjoy! Your family will love you for it!

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***MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!!***

**Orlando Site of 2014 NFB Convention**

Each year nearly 3,000 blind men and women from across the United States come together for the National Convention of the National Federation of the Blind. We join together for a week packed with information, fun, and friendship. Our Colorado affiliate, one of the most vibrant affiliates of the National Federation of the Blind has well over 100 members in attendance each year. From our most curious children to our spry seniors, there is something for everyone!

The schedule for the 2014 convention is:

Tuesday, July 1-Seminar Day

Wednesday, July 2-Registration Day

Thursday, July 3-Board Meeting and Division Day

Friday, July 4-Opening Session

Saturday, July 5-Business Session

Sunday, July 6-Banquet Day and Adjournment

On Tuesday there will be seminars for seniors, students, parents of blind children, rehabilitation professionals, individuals interested in technology, and much more. This is a great day to delve into an area of interest. Our own Diane McGeorge heads up the senior seminar so it is always a great time! From there we move into a whirlwind of meetings on anything and everything related to blindness. Our General Sessions kick off with a BANG on Friday, July 4th. General sessions are meetings that everyone attends. The content of general sessions are topics of blindness that hold content that we believe is important enough for everyone to hear. General sessions will also be held on Saturday and Sunday. Sunday evening will end with a banquet that includes a riveting address by the President of the National Federation of the Blind, Marc Maurer.

During down time, there is always lots of fun to be had. The exhibit hall is one of the largest exhibits of technology and adapted devices for blind people in the United States. You can also enjoy the amenities of the beautiful luxurious hotel!

If you are interested in attending the 2014 National Convention of the National Federation of the Blind please keep in mind that there are opportunities for financial assistance. Each year, the National Federation of the Blind gives assistance to first time convention attendees through the Kenneth Jernigan Convention Scholarship Fund. For more information, please contact Jessica Beecham at [jbeecham@cocenter.org](mailto:jbeecham@cocenter.org) or call 303-778-1130 x 223. The National Federation of the Blind of Colorado also offers financial assistance. You can request convention assistance by contacting Scott LaBarre, president of the National Federation of the Blind of Colorado at [slabarre@labarrelaw.com](mailto:slabarre@labarrelaw.com) or by calling 303-504-5979.

The 2014 convention of the National Federation of the Blind will take place in Orlando, Florida, July 1-6, at the Rosen Centre Hotel at 9840 International Drive, Orlando, Florida 32819. Make your room reservation as soon as possible with the Rosen Centre staff only. Call (800) 204-7234.

The 2014 room rates for singles, doubles, and twins are, $82; and triples and quads, $88. In addition to the room rates there will be a tax, which at present is 13.5 percent. No charge will be made for children under seventeen in the room with parents as long as no extra bed is requested. The hotel is accepting reservations now. A $95-per-room deposit is required to make a reservation. Fifty percent of the deposit will be refunded if notice is given to the hotel of a reservation cancellation before May 28, 2014. The other 50 percent is not refundable.

Rooms will be available on a first-come, first-served basis until our block is filled or until May 28, whichever comes first. After our block is filled and/or after May 28, the hotel has no obligation to accept any further reservations, but may do so if it has rooms available. In other words, you should get your reservation in soon!

Guest-room amenities include cable television; in-room safe; coffeemaker; hairdryer; and, for a fee, high-speed Internet access. Guests can also enjoy a swimming pool, fitness center, and on-site spa. The Rosen Centre Hotel offers fine dining at Executive Chef Michael Rumplik’s award-winning Everglades Restaurant. In addition, there is an array of dining options from sushi to tapas to a 24-hour deli. The hotel has first-rate amenities and a shuttle service to the Orlando airport.

**The Kenneth Jernigan Convention Scholarship Fund**

**by Allen Harris**

**From the Editor: Allen Harris is the chairman of the Kenneth Jernigan Fund Committee and was one of the people who came up with the idea of honoring our former president and longtime leader by establishing a program to promote attendance at the national convention, where so much inspiration and learning occur. Here is Allen’s announcement about the 2014 Kenneth Jernigan Convention Scholarship Fund Program:**

Have you always wanted to attend an NFB annual convention but have not done so because of the lack of funds? The Kenneth Jernigan Convention Scholarship Fund invites you to make an application for a scholarship grant. Perhaps this July you too can be in the Rosen Centre Hotel in Orlando, Florida, enjoying the many pleasures and learning opportunities at the largest and most important yearly convention of blind people in the world.

The three biggest ticket items you need to cover when attending an NFB national convention are the round trip transportation, the hotel room for a week, and the food (which tends to be higher priced than at home). We attempt to award additional funds to families, but, whether a family or an individual is granted a scholarship, this fund can only help; it won’t pay all the costs. Last year most of the sixty grants were in the range of $400 to $500 per individual.

We recommend that you find an NFB member as your personal convention mentor, someone who has been to many national conventions and is able to share money-saving tips with you and tips on navigating the extensive agenda in the big hotel. Your mentor will help you get the most out of the amazing experience that is convention week.

**Who is eligible?**  Active NFB members, blind or sighted, who have not yet attended an NFB national convention because of lack of funding are eligible to apply.

**How do I apply for funding assistance?**

1. You write a letter giving your contact information, and your local NFB information, your specific amount requested, and then explain why this is a good investment for the NFB. The points to cover are listed below.

2. You contact your state president in person or by phone to request his or her help in obtaining funding. Be sure to tell the president when to expect your request letter by email, and mention the deadline.

3. You (or a friend) send your letter by email to your state president. He or she must add a president’s recommendation and then email both letters directly to the Kenneth Jernigan Convention Scholarship Fund Committee. Your president must forward the two letters no later than April 15, 2014.

**Your letter to Chairperson Allen Harris must cover these points:**

* Your full name, and all your telephone numbers and label them--cell phone, home, office, other person (if any).
* Your mailing address and, if you have one, your email address.
* Your state affiliate and state president; your chapter and chapter president, if you attend a chapter.
* Your personal convention mentor and provide that person’s phone number.
* Your specific request:

Explain how much money you need from this fund to make this trip possible for you. We suggest you consult with other members to make a rough budget for yourself.

The body of your letter should answer these questions:

**How do you currently participate in the Federation?** Why do you want to attend a national convention? What would you receive; what can you share or give? You can include in your letter to the committee any special circumstances you hope they will take into consideration.

**When will I be notified that I am a winner?**  If you are chosen to receive this scholarship, you will receive a letter with convention details, which should answer most of your questions. The committee makes every effort to notify scholarship winners by May 15, but you must do several things before that to be prepared to attend if you are chosen.

1. Make your own hotel reservation. If something prevents you from attending, you can cancel the reservation. (Yes, you may arrange for roommates of your own to reduce the cost.)

2. Register online for the entire convention, including the banquet, by May 31.

3. Find someone in your chapter or affiliate who has been to many conventions and can answer your questions as a friend and advisor.

4. If you do not hear from the committee by May 15, then you did not win a grant this year.

**How will I receive my convention scholarship?** At convention you will be given a debit card or credit card loaded with the amount of your award. The times and locations to pick up your card will be listed in the letter we sent you. The committee is not able to provide funds before the convention, so work with your chapter and state affiliate to assist you by obtaining an agreement to advance funds if you win a scholarship and to pay your treasury back after you receive your debit or credit card.

**What if I have more questions?** For additional information email the chairman, Allen Harris, at <[kjscholarships@nfb.org](mailto:kjscholarships@nfb.org)> or call his Baltimore, Maryland, office at (410) 659-9314, x2415.

Above all, please use this opportunity to attend your first convention on the national level and join several thousand active Federationists in the most important meeting of the blind in the world. We hope to see you in Orlando!