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Quarterly newsletter of the National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico, published on www.nfbnm.org, on New Mexico Newsline, and on NFB Newsline.

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ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

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# PREAMBLE

The National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico (NFBNM) is a 501(c)(3) consumer organization comprised of blind and sighted people committed to changing what it means to be blind. Though blindness is still all too often a tragedy to those who face it, we know from our own personal experience that with training and opportunity, it can be reduced to the level of a physical nuisance. We work to see that blind people receive services and training to which they are entitled and that parents of blind children receive the advice and support they need to help their youngsters grow up to be happy, productive adults. We believe that first-class citizenship means that people have both rights and responsibilities, and we are determined to see that blind people become first-class citizens of these United States, enjoying their rights and fulfilling their responsibilities. The most serious problems we face have less to do with our lack of vision than with discrimination based on the public’s ignorance and misinformation about blindness. Join us in educating New Mexicans about the abilities and aspirations of New Mexico’s blind citizens.

(Adapted from NFB of Ohio newsletter.)

# THE POWER of LOVE and COMMITMENT

By Nancy Burns

Commitment is a commonly-used word in today's vocabulary. Television commercials may boast of a commitment to giving the buyer the best deal if you purchase a car from this dealership. Banks or loaning agencies may boast of being committed to providing customers with the best rates. Every business from grocery stores to shoe stores may boast of their commitment to providing customers with the lowest price. All of these promises seem to dilute the true meaning of commitment as they are tossed around so frequently and casually.

The National Federation of the Blind exemplifies the true meaning of commitment. This organization, which stretches from coast to coast and from Alaska to Puerto Rico, provides sincere commitment to the blind, visually impaired, and to their friends and family. At the root of this philosophy lies the belief that blind individuals will lead happy and productive lives if they have a positive attitude and the proper training.

The best way for this writer to explain commitment is to share some of my own personal experiences. At the age of eleven I suddenly lost my vision as the result of a traumatic injury to both eyes. This took place in Southern Missouri where I grew up and attended school. My parents knew nothing about blindness, mostly survived on denial, and were certain that the next of numerous surgeries would restore my vision. This, however, did not happen.

A representative from the school board visited and told us about a school for the blind in St. Louis. I was sent, although reluctantly, to this school, and that was the best thing that ever happened to me. It became the beginning of the belief in myself as I saw blind, active students. They roller-skated, swam, carried around large Braille books, and worked on homework assignments. Shortly after enrolling, I was taught Braille, and soon I found that I too could skate, swim, and read my assignments in Braille.

As I was ready to begin the tenth grade, my Mother told my sister and me that we were moving to California. We were not pleased with this decision, but the move was made. It was assumed that I would again attend a school for the blind, but this was not the case. We were living in the Los Angeles area, and the California School for the Blind was in Northern California.

This transition in my life was yet another important turning point. I was enrolled in a large metropolitan high school in Los Angeles. This move assisted me to adjust from the segregated school for the blind to the "real" world of sighted students. This is where I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Isabelle Grant. I find it difficult to verbalize the right words to express the important role she played in my life. She was a tiny bundle of energy who said that she was Scottish, not Scotch, which she explained was something one might drink.

Dr. Grant had been the principal of a large L.A. school until she lost her sight as the result of glaucoma. She was then placed in a resource room in the school I attended. This was way below her qualifications, but her impact on the blind students who returned from the classroom to that resource room was nothing short of phenomenal. If I asked her the meaning of a word, she didn't stop at the definition but would tell me the derivation. She also strongly encouraged me to take the college prerequisites. Prior to her encouragement I had no intention of attending college, and without her support, I doubt that I would have gone on to UCLA. Much of who I became and who I am is the result of my association with Dr. Isabelle Grant. She opened my mind to possibilities that I might never have considered without her encouragement. She was truly a huge influence in my life.

In addition to her academic support, Dr. Grant began speaking to me about this organization of blind people. She invited me to her home one Friday evening, and I just went because she wanted me to do so. I was only a high school student, and I pictured this room full of not just blind people, but probably old, blind people. Some of these attendees were possibly in their 40's or even 50's, while I was a kid of only seventeen. With her white cane, Dr. Grant took us by bus through busy Friday evening Los Angeles traffic to her home. Blind men and women began arriving, and I met mechanics, homemakers, social workers, and office workers. During a break, Dr. Grant served tea and cookies. What an eye-opener this all was, no pun intended. This was the beginning of a true commitment to me on the part of Dr. Isabelle Grant. No other individual has ever impacted my life in such a positive manner. She encouraged me and began filling me with NFB philosophy. What an awesome honor for me to have her guidance.

After graduating from high school, I met several college students and once again the name National Federation of the Blind popped up. I found myself in the students’ group and even became president. This was the first of many positions I have held within the NFB. This was also another lesson in the true meaning of commitment. Students supported one another in many areas of life. During these years, the influence of Dr. Grant was again felt. She spoke with students and discussed the importance of organizing and of the impact that Dr. tenBroek was having on the blind population. She told us about the work of state and national conventions and encouraged students to become involved. As a blind teacher, she led the movement in California to remove the vision requirement for teachers. She put forth the argument that as long as an applicant was otherwise qualified, there should be no vision test required. With her support, a law was passed revoking the controversial vision requirement.

I moved to San Francisco and completed my Bachelor's degree in sociology at San Francisco State. My good fortune continued to follow me, as that was where I met Laurence (Muzzy) Marcelino, another dynamic leader in the National Federation of the Blind. I joined the local San Francisco chapter and experienced my own commitment to the NFB growing.

After completing my Bachelor's degree, I returned to Los Angeles and became even more involved in the NFB. As this organization had become a huge training mechanism for me, I became totally involved and organized several local chapters. Even after marrying and having two sons, my commitment to the National Federation of the Blind continued to grow. I remember bundling my babies up, and my husband and I took them along to chapter meetings.

I began attending state and national conventions and was elected to the California Board of Directors in the 1970's. My husband and I divorced, and I gained full custody of my boys. I was hired by the California State Department of Rehabilitation and maintained my involvement in the National Federation of the blind.

In 1993 my life took yet another huge turn while attending the NFB National Convention in Dallas, Texas. It was there where I met Don Burns, a gentleman who asked me to dance with him at a huge bar-b-q. He was just starting to get involved in the NFB. Don was losing his vision, had recently lost his wife, and was struggling with his future. He was from New Mexico and had connected with Fred Schroeder and Adelmo Vigil, who became his mentors. Don and I hit it off immediately, and three months later we were married.

Don told me of an opening in the Commission for the Blind training center where he was working as a cane travel instructor. While still working in California, I had completed my Master's degree in counseling and psychology and was not certain as to where I wanted to work. I applied and was hired for the position of Independent Living Instructor, so I moved to New Mexico.

Besides our love for one another, Don and I both shared a commitment to the National Federation of the Blind. He confided that after losing his job in the field of construction for many years, then losing his wife, he had struggled until he met members of the National Federation of the Blind. Our love for one another along with our commitment to the National Federation of the Blind has continued to develop and grow.

After working for the Commission for the Blind for a year, Don and I moved to Burbank, California where I still owned property. We both maintained our involvement in the National Federation of the Blind. Don was appointed to the position of Legislative Director for the NFB of California by then-NFBC-President, Jim Willows. Don became active in the causes of the California affiliate. He worked for several years on NFBC legislation, and his work was instrumental in creating Braille and math standards for blind students in California.

I was elected state president in 2000 and served until 2006, at which time we moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Prior to this move, Don and I witnessed the passage of legislation which brought Braille and math standards for blind students into existence. After moving to New Mexico, Don and I maintained our commitment to the National Federation of the Blind. It is my sincere hope that I have been able to give to others even a small portion of the gift which was given to me by Dr. Isabelle Grant. She was the epitome of love and commitment, and her influence is still felt within the National Federation of the Blind. The best way for me to describe the influence of Dr. Isabelle Grant on my life is to quote some words from Eleanor Roosevelt: "Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints on your heart.”

# SNACK BAG SALE

Please visit the Albuquerque Chapter table at our state convention April 5-6, 2019. For our fundraiser this year, we will be selling snack bags. These bags will include the following: Fruit Snack, nuts, a Chewy Granola Bar, Hershey’s Kisses and a bottle of water with a Propel drink packet. Each item is prepackaged and individually wrapped, all for the low price of $5.00.

Our fundraisers help us promote chapter events and activities that encourage self-confidence and provide inspiration for the blind and their loved ones.

With your support, the Albuquerque Chapter can continue to raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. We thank you in advance for your support.

# HADLEY BOOK CHAT ANNOUNCEMENT

Do you enjoy reading and discussing books? If so, the Hadley Book Chat might be the place for you! All group members read the same book each month, and we normally meet on the first Monday of the month at 1:00 CST. Our next meeting is April 1 at 1:00 CST. We’ll be discussing Lilac Girls by Martha Hall Kelly. For further information, contact Debbie Siegel at siegel@hadley.edu or 800-323-4238 ext. 6670.

# SECRETARY TOULOUSE OLIVER AWARDED “OUTSTANDING INNOVATIONS IN ELECTIONS”

U.S. Election Assistance Commission

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

15 February 2019

Contact:

Alex Curtas, Director of Communications

505-469-2783

Secretary Toulouse Oliver Awarded “Outstanding Innovations in Elections” by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission

Blind and Visually Impaired Absentee Ballot System Recognized

SANTA FE – New Mexico Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver has received the 2018 “Clearie” Award for Outstanding Innovations in Elections by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) for her implementation of a new electronic ballot software system that allows blind and visually impaired voters to independently and privately cast an absentee ballot.

“Every eligible voter deserves the dignity and convenience of being able to mark their ballot in an independent and private manner, which is exactly what our electronic ballot system does for blind and visually impaired voters,” said Secretary Toulouse Oliver. “I want to thank the U.S. Election Administration Commission for this award and I want to dedicate it to the determined efforts of New Mexico’s blind and visually impaired community who worked closely with me and my office to ensure blind and visually impaired voters have fair and equal access to the ballot box.”

According to the EAC, the annual “Clearie” awards “recognize best practices in election administration and highlight exemplary models which can serve as examples to other officials and jurisdictions.”

"We are thrilled to recognize Secretary Toulouse Oliver and her team for their innovative approach to serving voters with disabilities,” said EAC Chairman Thomas Hicks. “We are proud to share details about this program with election officials across the nation, as well as the voters they serve."

Secretary Toulouse Oliver and her staff worked closely with the National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico and the New Mexico Commission for the Blind to create the system that allows blind and visually impaired voters to independently mark, print, and return their absentee ballot. As KOB News 4 noted in 2018 as the Secretary of State announced the new system, “New Mexico is leading the country when it comes to making absentee voting more accessible.”

“The National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico deeply appreciates Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver,” said Adelmo Vigil, President of the National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico. “Because of her work, blind voters in New Mexico, for the very first time in history, can now independently and privately mark the printed absentee ballot using the low-vision and nonvisual access technology of their choice. Secretary Toulouse Oliver worked closely with us to make this happen. She provided public testimony and support for the legislation that brought all of this about. She is a true friend of the blind.”

Greg Trapp, Executive Director of the New Mexico Commission for the Blind added to Mr. Vigil’s remarks, saying, "Because of the efforts of Secretary of State Toulouse Oliver and of the National Federation of the Blind, blind and visually impaired citizens of New Mexico can now fully and equally participate in the fundamental right to vote. This is a tremendous step forward, and New Mexico can take pride in what the Secretary of State and National Federation of the Blind have accomplished."

More information about the U.S. Election Assistance Commission:

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) was established by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). It is an independent, bipartisan commission charged with ensuring secure, accurate and accessible elections by developing guidance to meet HAVA requirements, adopting voluntary voting system guidelines, and serving as a national clearinghouse of information on election administration. EAC also accredits testing laboratories and certifies voting systems, as well as administers the use of HAVA funds.

# AT SEA AGAIN

By Nancy Burns

Whether by land, or sea, or air, travel holds possibilities for fun, relaxation, and sometimes challenges. Regardless of transportation mode, a successful adventure will depend upon thoughtful planning. The amount of careful consideration needed will depend upon the length of the trip, and of course, the destination.

My husband, Don, and I have traveled to the Caribbean, France, England, R.

and many European countries. We have also ventured to Columbia, South America and through the Panama Canal. And from Sydney, Australia we have cruised through many of the South Pacific Islands. Sometimes we have gone through a travel agent, and other times we have independently selected our own destinations. Why have we chosen to cruise? Since we are both blind, we obviously don't drive, eliminating the possibility of a vacation trip in some RV. Because of the distances involved in our travels, air transportation is necessary most of the time.

We both love the excitement of exploring new countries and meeting and mingling with new people. There is a vast wealth of not only fun but also educational opportunities along the way. We enjoy shopping for treasures to bring back to friends and family. While interacting with venders, storekeepers or other people, we bring away information on customs and cultures of the area. In addition, we share information about our white canes, and we hope that by observing us move about, we might educate those with whom we converse. It is a two-way process: in addition to exploring new and wonderful countries, it is our desire to leave behind a positive image of blind people and of our ability to move about.

Our most recent cruise was from Sydney, Australia to Los Angeles, California. It was necessary to endure the nearly 15-hour flight from L.A. to Sydney in order to board the ship there. We had only two days in Sydney, and much of the first day was lost because of confusion with the cruise ship about our arrival time. We woke up the following morning with the desire to explore the area, but it was pouring rain. We persevered and managed to explore a small area of Sydney.

This particular cruise was scheduled for 25 days. This fact alone creates the need for careful planning of items to be packed. Once aboard the ship, the next challenge is to unpack and store clothes, etc. into the pocket-sized closet space. The cabins are compact but quite comfortable. Cabin attendants spoil us by cleaning and changing towels twice daily; and yes, there were chocolates left on the bed each night. Along with the goodies, there is always a planner for the next day's ports and ship-board activities.

It was fascinating to me to learn that some of the symbols used by Islanders are similar to those of Native Americans here in New Mexico. For example, the turtle is evident in items such as carvings and paintings. We were told that the turtle stands for good luck, or good health. In speaking with Native Americans, depending on the tribe, the turtle usually stands for safe travel. We did leave the South Pacific Islands with a carved turtle, a bowl with a turtle carved into the inside of it, and yes, even turtle-shaped earrings.

The Holland America ship sailed easily from the Australian to the California Coast. It is mind-boggling to wonder how the ancient mariners sailed from island to island in their tiny canoes, which were generally carved from a tree. Those early sailors navigated by the wind, the sea current, the color and temperature of the water, and by the stars at night. Experiencing three days of stormy seas brought this to our attention in a most meaningful way. Our large ship bounced and was tossed around for three consecutive days. Walking the long hallways of our ship was made challenging. The side to side motion of an elevator was even more disconcerting.

Don's first thought in the morning is of coffee. He went from our Deck Two cabin to the Lido Deck every morning and returned balancing two cups of coffee. During those stormy days, I reminded Don that we could call for room service, but he would have none of that. He successfully took the elevator up to the ninth deck and back without incident. When I ask him how he manages, he reminds me that he served in the Navy. He served on a destroyer, which is a somewhat small ship. These destroyers bounce around in the ocean, creating the name Tin Can Navy.

Food is a most popular item on cruise ships and is available 24 hours a day. Some new food or dish usually catches my interest, and I often attempt to duplicate one of the new dishes back in my own kitchen. An item called Damper rolls was served daily, and I learned that it is a traditional Australian bread. I attempted to make them once, and the results were rather disappointing, but I might try again.

From Sydney we sailed to New Caledonia, Fiji, Samoa, the Hawaiian Islands and finally to Los Angeles Harbor. During our numerous adventures, we have often been asked why we like to travel and also how we manage to navigate various ports. One such curious shipmate said that she heard that we took a tender and went into the Island of Lahaina. When a large ship is unable to dock near land, a tender is used to transport people from the ship to the dock. Stepping from the ship to the tender and then from the tender to land can be tricky for anyone. The ship's crew is always quite capable in assisting with these transfers. We did tell the curious woman that we always disembark and go into every port. She said that she and her husband always stayed on the ship because of bad knees. We both wondered why they bothered to take such an incredible trip and never leave the ship.

To conclude with a personal thought, this trip was taken to celebrate our 25th anniversary. We feel so fortunate to have had 25 years of togetherness, fantastic adventures, and most of all 25 years filled with love.

# ABLE: ACHIEVING A BETTER LIFE EXPERIENCE

What is ABLE?

\* An ABLE New Mexico Account is an investment account that allows qualified individuals with disabilities to save and invest money without losing eligibility for certain public benefit programs, like Medicaid or SSI.

\* ABLE New Mexico Accounts are made possible by the federal Stephen Beck, Jr. Achieving a Better Life Experience “ABLE” Act passed by Congress in 2014 and the New Mexico legislature in 2016.

\* ABLE New Mexico, administered by the New Mexico State Treasurer’s Office, launched January 18, 2018.

\* ABLE New Mexico Accounts are similar to a 529 college savings account and can work alongside Special Needs Trusts. They can also function like a regular checking account.

Benefits of ABLE New Mexico Accounts

\* ABLE New Mexico Accounts provide financial independence and empowerment for individuals with disabilities by dramatically increasing the ability to save and invest.

\* Prior to this, individuals with disabilities could save only $2,000 before losing needs-based benefits.

\* Now, ABLE New Mexico Accounts allow individuals with disabilities to save and invest up to $15,000 annually without affecting eligibility for certain public benefits programs.

\* Account funds can be used on Qualified Disability Expenses including: education, housing, transportation, healthcare, assistive technology, employment needs, and basic living expenses.

\* Earnings on an ABLE New Mexico Account grow tax-free and are not subject to federal income tax, as long as they are spent on Qualified Disability Expenses.

Eligibility

\* An “Eligible Individual” is someone whose disability began before the age of 26, has been living with their disability for at least one year, or expects their disability to last for at least a year.

\* An individual must also do one of the following: 1. Be eligible for SSI or SSDI; 2. Have a condition listed on the Social Security Administration’s List of Compassionate Allowances Conditions; or 3. Self-certify their diagnosis.

\* Visit ableNewMexico.com/eligibility/ to take the quick and easy eligibility quiz to learn more.

What is the STABLE Card?

\* The STABLE Card is a debit card participants can use to easily spend money from an ABLE New Mexico Account. It is available at no cost to all ABLE New Mexico Account holders.

\* The STABLE Card is a loadable prepaid debit card. It does not pull money directly from a STABLE Account to better protect spending. The card is accepted anywhere MasterCard is used.

How do I enroll?

\* An ABLE New Mexico Account can be opened by a qualifying person with a disability, the parent or legal guardian of an eligible individual, or by a designated Power of Attorney.

\* Online enrollment is free. Participants will need to deposit a minimum of $50 to open an account.

\* Account creation and enrollment are done online at ableNewMexico.com or call 1.800.439.1653. No bank trips!

New Mexico State Treasurer’s Office

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# GOOD EATING

## REDUCED-CALORIE SHAKE

From Veronica Smith

Here I am again, handing out some tips for not consuming thousands of calories when you just “gotta have it.” Some of the days and weeks that are so hard to not munch your way through are during the Christmas holiday season. Then in my world is my birthday, then we settle into Valentine’s Day, and then comes St. Patrick’s Day, and then the Easter season, and so on and so forth. It just never ends. So instead of sabotaging yourself at every turn, remember you do have choices.

For starters, you do not have to eat everything in the break rooms. Look before you leap. Look for those foods that come in smaller portions, and if there is fruit, it is a must. Do not grab the items slathered in thick icing; or if you do, try to scrape some of it off. Try to scoop up an egg dish if there is one: at least you will be getting a dose of protein. Eggs, cheeses, and lunch meats are better choices than cookies, cakes and buttery breads.

And there is no law that even says you have to go to the break room at all. Take a sack lunch and enjoy the great outdoors. Find a bench or a curb and chow down, or take a walk around the block or the playground. Taking steps is your friend.

Here is a treat that I thought you’d like. If you take a look around, and if you listen to the television, you might have heard McDonald’s is advertising their Shamrock shake. Well here is a lighter version and very much as exciting.

2 scoops light mint chocolate chip ice cream (it really does exist, Dryer Slow churn and Enlighten carry it)

1 cup fat free milk (or if milk is not your thing, substitute almond milk or even soy milk; both work)

1 scoop vanilla protein powder

Approximately 8 ice cubes

Put all in blender and blend until done.

Pour into a tall glass and enjoy.

If you feel like you are missing the loads of whipped cream on top, go ahead and spray on some Ready Whip Fat Free, it is so yummy!

## SCOOPY SALMON SALAD FOR TWO

From Veronica Smith

2 tablespoons creamy Dijon mustard

1 tablespoon low fat cream cheese at room temperature

6 ounces canned or pouched pink salmon, drained and flaked

1/2 cup halved grape tomatoes

1/2 cup chopped cucumber

1/4 cup chopped red onion

Optional seasoning: salt and pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients and mix until all are well blended.

Serving size: approximately 1 cup

I enjoy this on Crunch Master crackers.

## LOW-CAL EGG BAKE

From Veronica Smith

I know, I know … preparing something yummy for weekday breakfasts can always be a chore. Well what if you make something ahead of time and save yourself the trouble of getting up early? This delicious egg bake can be made the day before or several days before. It can also be shared as one meal that serves four, or you can put each serving in microwave-safe dishes and take to work, or school, or wherever floats your boat.

3 cups sliced mushrooms

2-1/2 cups egg substitute or 20 egg whites

1 cup reduced fat yellow cheese

2 ounces reduced fat cream cheese, at room temperature

3/4 teaspoon garlic powder

3/4 teaspoon onion powder

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Cooking spray

Optional: scallions for garnish

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Prepare an eight by eight baking pan with cooking spray.

Put a skillet on the stove on medium heat. Coat bottom with cooking spray and throw in mushrooms. Stir constantly for five minutes or until all liquid has been released. Put in a bowl and sop up remaining liquid from mushrooms with a dry paper towel. Stir in cream cheese and coat as evenly as you can.

Put in all remaining ingredients except yellow cheese and scallions (if using).

Stir well, pour contents into prepared baking pan and put into oven. Bake for 40 minutes.

Remove from oven and sprinkle yellow cheese over egg mixture and return to hot oven. Bake an additional 10 minutes until cheese is melted.

Sprinkle top with scallions if desired.

Note: the reason you do not use fat free cheese is because it will never melt.

# USEFUL WEBSITES, APPS, AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

By Jim Babb

www.bemyeyes.com

Be My Eyes is a free app that connects blind and low-vision people with sighted volunteers for visual assistance through a live video call. It is free and available on both Apple iOS and Android.

www.hitmanpro.com and www.malwarebytes.com

The local computer store recommends you use both of these to block malware and hackers. Download the free versions and run them separately.

www.google.com/flights

Use this website to pinpoint the best and lowest airfare, for example going to Las Vegas for the 2019 NFB convention. You list your origin and destination, and it will alert you via email the best time to purchase your flight.

# MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

April 4-7, 2019: NFB of New Mexico State Convention, Embassy Suites by Hilton, Albuquerque, NM

July 7-12, 2019: National Federation of the Blind National Convention, Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada