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December 2020

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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Contents

[PREAMBLE 2](#_Toc57542988)

[THE 2020 NFBNM STATE CONVENTION 3](#_Toc57542989)

[LOVE AND MUSIC: TAKE ME DANCING 6](#_Toc57542990)

[THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS 8](#_Toc57542991)

[ENTERTAINMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC 10](#_Toc57542992)

[THE POWER OF COMPASSION 14](#_Toc57542993)

[MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS 16](#_Toc57542994)

[POLL RESULTS 17](#_Toc57542995)

[Serious Question 17](#_Toc57542996)

[Silly Question 18](#_Toc57542997)

[ABLE ACCOUNTS: BUILDING UPON THE PROMISE OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT 20](#_Toc57542998)

[GOOD EATING 21](#_Toc57542999)

[RED CHILE SAUCE 21](#_Toc57543000)

[DON’S SCALLOPED POTATOES 22](#_Toc57543001)

[POTATO SAUSAGE CASSEROLE 22](#_Toc57543002)

[MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS 23](#_Toc57543003)

# 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 2020 NFBNM STATE CONVENTION

By Pat Munson

With technology, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) has been able to host conventions virtually. Participants have choices of connecting via a land-line, computer or cell phone. In-person attendance cannot occur during the pandemic.

On Monday evening, August 24, Affiliate President Adelmo Vigil gaveled the activities to order with the NFBNM state board meeting. Among the usual business, President Vigil stated that two of the divisions would be meeting: Senior Action Group Energy (SAGE) on Tuesday evening, and the NM Association of Blind Students (NMABS) on Thursday evening. Of course, this convention could not happen without the assistance of the technology helpers, and President Vigil expressed much gratitude to them.

Friday morning commenced with the reading and discussion of four resolutions. Urja Lansing ably chaired this committee. The first resolution dealt with improvements to the accessible absentee ballot marking system in New Mexico, which would facilitate a blind person’s ability to independently receive, mark and submit their ballot. The second and third resolutions addressed Braille instruction and accessibility of school software and online programs in public schools. The last resolution dealt with the problem of medical providers using inaccessible video and telemedicine platforms to conduct virtual visits with patients.

Next, Joaquin Luna from the West Mesa Chapter and Larry Lorenzo from the White Sands Chapter suggested forming an arts and entertainment group. With all the talent in this affiliate, many found this a great idea. No decisions were made.

President Vigil gaveled the convention to order that afternoon. The usual openings were offered: invocation, Ernest Esquibel; Pledge of Allegiance, Valeria Ceballos, fifth-grade student who recited the pledge in both Spanish and English; National Anthem, Diana Marquez; NFB Pledge, Carlos Sanchez; and finally Tim Keller, Mayor of Albuquerque, welcomed convention-goers via video.

"No-Nonsense Tips from America’s Only Blind Comic and Game Shop Owner" was the title of Richard Early's presentation. He hails from North Dakota, and his business is called Paradox Comics-N-Cards. His business started with the sale of a comic book for thirteen dollars. His business is quite successful.

Tara Chavez told us about the Pre-Authorized Contribution (PAC) Plan. She said at the end of her presentation that we raised over $100, moving New Mexico up into the top ten states for the amount of giving. These donations help fund the work of the National Federation of the Blind.

In his presidential report, President Adelmo Vigil stated that the affiliate is on the move. He thanked all those who assisted with Zoom. He noted the high attendance at this virtual convention. The blind are very resourceful, and this convention is an example of that.

The report from our National Office followed. James Gashel, our National Representative and Secretary of the National Federation of the Blind, stated that NFB activities are moving right along, but in different ways because of the virus.

Next, Lucy Mallahan, President of the New Mexico Parents of Blind Children (NMPOBC), told her story of blindness and how the Federation has helped her live the life she wants.

Later that afternoon, the New Mexico Commission for the Blind held a Town Forum about services and priorities of the Commission. Commission Director Greg Trapp stated that he would like to see our state make some changes to the Commission for the Blind Act, which would expand the size of the Commission board and require that a majority of the board members be persons who are blind.

Friday's activities ended with a social gathering, hosted by Jedi Moerke, President of the White Sands Chapter. Attendees had a fine time chatting and catching up with old friends.

Saturday morning began with a discussion about forming an interest group for rehabilitation professionals. Jedi Moerke chaired the group.

Next we held an open discussion concerning growing diversity In Our organization. Daphne Mitchell led the discussion. Everyone is welcome in the National Federation of the Blind, no matter their race, religion, and so on. One group that expressed how they have unmet needs within the blindness community was the Navajos. Their tribe is spread between New Mexico and Arizona. For the time being, participating in the Chapter at Large meetings is a beginning.

Mistress of Ceremonies Daphne Mitchell hosted our lunchtime banquet. Since we were all at our homes and not at a hotel, we had a meal of our choosing. The invocation was given by Brianne Kotschwar. Keynote speaker James Gashel, National Representative and Secretary of the National Federation of the Blind, said when he was seventeen, he journeyed from his small town to Des Moines to meet with Dr. Jernigan, who was running the NFB Skills Training Center. Dr. Jernigan asked Jim what his work goals were. Jim stated he might want to be a teacher, but he was not too sure a blind person could do that job. After months of blindness skills training and philosophy classes, Jim began to realize that he could be a competent public school teacher. He said he came out of the shadows and into the bright sun! He did become a public school teacher.

The afternoon session commenced with the status report on the New Mexico Commission for the Blind. Executive Director Greg Trapp brought us up to date on all the changes because of folks having to stay at home. He said that Commission employees are providing services remotely. He also said that the Commission received a $312,500 budget increase during the regular legislative session, but that it was cut by four percent during the special session held in June. Director Trapp further reported that the budget will be reduced by an additional five percent for the next state fiscal year. He said that the Commission will still receive a net increase in its budget, and that the Commission is able to serve all eligible vocational rehabilitation consumers.

Sherry E. Shirek presented the next topic, "Road to Finding Work in the Arts." She told of her journey finding work in her field of choice.

Next was the status report on the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NMSBVI) from Superintendent Patricia Beecher. Again, with all the changes required because of the virus, students and staff have had to adapt as best they can.

Then several people presented about their experiences at the Washington Seminar: NFBNM President Adelmo Vigil; Kaden Calahan, President of the New Mexico Student Division; and Tara Chavez, President of the Albuquerque Chapter. The Washington Seminar, which occurred in February of 2020, was one of the last NFB activities before the pandemic began. Our three speakers did a great job presenting the NFB’s desired legislation.

During the business meeting, the four resolutions were discussed and adopted, the minutes were read and approved, and the Treasurer’s Report was presented and accepted. The last order of business was elections. The Nominating Committee was chaired by Caroline Benavidez, NFBNM First Vice President. On behalf of the affiliate, she thanked Curtis Chong for the fantastic job he has done as treasurer. He had said he would not run again, because he is now living in Colorado. The following officers were elected: President, Adelmo Vigil, Alamogordo; First Vice President, Caroline Benavidez, Albuquerque; Second Vice President, Tara Chavez, Albuquerque; Secretary, Tonia Trapp, Albuquerque; Treasurer, German Benitez, Albuquerque. The following Board Members were elected: Martin Gallegos, Santa Fe; Ernie Esquibel, Albuquerque; and Daphne Mitchell, Albuquerque.

# LOVE AND MUSIC: TAKE ME DANCING

By Nancy Burns

During this life-changing Covid time, we are all looking for activities to keep our minds occupied. Some of us write, some crochet, some create beautiful art objects, some of us cook, and some just read or watch TV. No matter what we do, it is mostly done with the attempt to keep from going stir-crazy during this pandemic. As someone who loves to dance and just listen to good music, I recently saw featured on GMA television Jason Derulo, a singer and dancer. His music caught my attention as it was so upbeat, and I also loved the story behind it.

While the talented Jason Derulo was spending time in his home, as most of us are doing these days, he decided to create a video with song and dance. The song is called “TAKE YOU DANCING” and the video shows Jason and his dance partner dancing through his bedroom, kitchen, and around his home. The additional reason this music and story caught my attention is because Don and I love to dance and often dance through our apartment.

Don and I met at the Dallas NFB convention in 1993 after being introduced by Christine Hall, a mutual friend. This convention featured a Texas-style barbecue complete with food, beer, and a live Western band. Don and I danced and were immediately attracted to one another that fun-filled evening. Don was living and working in Alamogordo, New Mexico, and I was living in Burbank, California. I had just completed my Master’s degree and had left the California Department of Rehabilitation in order to search for other employment opportunities.

After the convention, Don and I stayed in touch with nearly daily phone calls. On one such call he mentioned that a position at the Commission for the Blind had just become available. I applied for and was accepted as an Independent Living Teacher based out of the Alamogordo facility. I packed up my Burbank home and moved to New Mexico. Shortly after moving there, Don and I were married. We had known each other for only three months, but it just seemed right.

I soon met and became friends with Commission staff. Many of my new friends also loved to dance, and Saturday night at the Desperado became a weekly fun event. After working in Alamogordo for a year, Don and I moved back to Southern California, where we danced in several Western clubs in the L.A. area. Eventually we again relocated, this time to Albuquerque, where we have also danced in several clubs. We also managed to dance at nearly every NFB National Convention.

Because of age-related aches and pains, we have found it necessary to confine our dance steps to stereo music, and our dance floor is the living room. A variety of music is out there, but Don and I have always preferred Country Western. We love boot-scootin’ to just about anything, but our favorite is a waltz. To both of us, it is just hard to sit still while listening to Jason Derulo. As long as we possibly can, we will keep moving, even if it is in our living room.

# THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS

By Veronica Smith

SAGE stands for Senior Action Group Energy, and those vibrant words provide an excellent description of the SAGE Division, which I am currently serving as president. We have been doing a lot this year. I could start at the beginning of the year, but I decided to begin at our state convention that happened at the end of August.

Our topic was “Can I do what I used to do and want to do with vision loss?” We are always willing to educate you about how to do things that you used to do and still want to do. Peggy Hayes, a member of the White Sands Chapter, gave a talk on how easy it can be to read. “Read what,” you ask or “read, how?” Well here are a few things Peggy had to say during our Tuesday evening seminar on August 25. If reading books, magazines or newspapers is your thing, there are several ways to do this. You can use a device that plays the items for you, such as a Victor Stream, DAISI player, or a Talking Book machine from NLS. If you are partially sighted, you can use a CCTV, a device that enlarges print and or changes the background from white to black. Or, you can use portable magnifiers, which come in many shapes and sizes. You can also use your home computer with a screen reader such as JAWS, or even your cell phone that also comes with its own voice application.

If you are able to use a telephone, you can call NFB Newsline, which is a digital service that reads newspapers and magazines from many cities and countries around the world. You can also call New Mexico Newsline, provided by the NM commission for the Blind. Each day several volunteers read and record newspapers so that individuals losing their sight can call a number and listen to their favorite categories of news, such as local news, state news, national news, comics, grocery ads, movies, dining in or out columns, horoscopes, health, and voting information, to mention just a few. Mrs. Hayes also mentioned reading magazines or books using Braille or through the help of a trusted family member or friend.

Our second guest speaker was Robert Wilkerson, an orientation and mobility instructor and a member of the West Mesa Chapter. He gave us some pointers on how to find bus stops, curbs and other things a blind individual needs to find while they are out traveling alone.

Caroline Benavidez, a member of the West Mesa Chapter, gave a presentation about home management. She talked about labeling items in the kitchen, folding paper money, and staying organized.

Our last guest speaker was Daphne Mitchell, a member of the Albuquerque Chapter. She presented on entertainment. Some of the pointers she gave us were real eye-openers. They were definitely different from what I expected when I heard the word “entertainment.” She started out by saying, “In this time of physical distancing, identifying outlets to engage in entertainment is of the utmost importance to assist in maintaining mental health and well-being. Tonight, I’m going to focus on fitness, the arts, and general entertainment.” She began by telling us how important exercising is, even in a pandemic. She talked about using small weights and resistance bands. She told us about fitness videos that you can download from www.blindalive.com for a few dollars or even just a donation. They have programs such as Pilates, yoga, bar (as in ballet), cardio, boot camps, etc. She said Blind Alive has topped producing new videos, but their existing programs are really good. You can download the audio files to your computer, your phone, or another mobile device.

Daphne also enlightened us about all the wonderful ways to access the arts. Here in Albuquerque, Popejoy Hall is currently providing audio performances and video performances. Some are free, and some cost a few dollars for an entire family. She told us about virtual tours of museums in the United States and in other countries. Again some are free, and some cost from a few dollars to a lot of dollars.

Everything these guest speakers shared with us was so enjoyable. But the SAGE Division didn’t stop there: we have been on the move joining in with the Chapter at Large. These groups meet the second Monday of every month at 7:00 PM. We’ve done some fun things lately, like taking a field trip to Nebraska (of course it was a virtual field trip via Zoom). When asked where we were going, I replied, “to Zoomville.” We met several members of the Nebraska Senior Division, including their president Robert Newman. We had the opportunity to enjoy hearing from one of our own, actually a transplant from Peru to New Mexico, then from New Mexico to Nebraska: Carlos Servan, Director of the Nebraska Commission for the Blind. He has written two books about his experiences after he became blind.

In October, we were joined by Ruth Sager, President of the Senior Division of the National Federation of the Blind. She told us all about the Senior Division, their retreat, and what they do. In September, a youngster came to talk to us about his experiences growing up: Brian Quintana, another transplant from New Mexico to California. He is currently a mid-school teacher and loves it. He told us about his adventures in New Orleans just before the pandemic actually got started and about holding a baby gator that felt like rubber to him. In August, before our state convention, Jim Babb came to tell us about his life growing up in a farming community as he lost his sight. In July, Priscilla Stansbury visited us and told us her story about being blind growing up. She told us about cooking and about making blankets with different colors and textures of yarn.

We are seniors. We are action. We are a lively group, and when combined with the Chapter at Large, are full of energy. Please come and join us on the second Monday of every month except July. You can find our information on New Mexico Newsline thanks to Krista Mireles, on the NFBNM Facebook page, via the Independent Living Teachers at the NM Commission for the Blind thanks to Juan Haro, and via our state listserv thanks to Tonia Trapp, our state affiliate secretary.

# ENTERTAINMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

By Daphne Mitchell

Note from Veronica Smith: In the article I wrote for SAGE, I touched on a few things Daphne had to say when she was a guest speaker for the SAGE seminar at our state convention. After I wrote the article, I thought about all the things Daphne had to offer. I asked her if I could submit her thoughts and adventures, and she agreed I could. So here it is in its entirety.

In this season of physical distancing, identifying outlets to engage in entertainment is of the utmost importance to assist in maintaining mental health and well-being. I am going to focus on fitness, the arts, and general entertainment.

Physical Fitness

I believe most of us will exit the pandemic with regrets about diet or exercise choices. To help exorcize some of those regrets, I want to talk about several tools I use to sustain my physical fitness.

(1) Resistance bands and suspension straps: Depending on the color of the band or placement of toggles, the amount of resistance provided can be increased or decreased. The level of difficulty in performing the exercises can be changed based on the distance between the extremities being worked. Both types of exercises can provide a full-body workout, and only use your body weight. No need to regret forgetting to put that 10-pound dumbbell away, after you have tripped over it on the floor. The final plus of these exercises is that the equipment uses nominal space for storage. Resistance bands and suspension straps weigh only a few ounces and no more than 1.5 pounds. They are relatively simple to learn how to use properly, may be used by persons of any fitness level, and used whether you are seated or standing. I incorporate use of a yoga mat, stability/exercise ball, kettlebell, and a medicine ball into home workouts. All of these items may be purchase from Amazon, Wal-Mart, or other commercial retailers.

(2) BlindAlive/Eye-Free Fitness, Revision Fitness LLC, and Walk Away the Pounds: All of these workout programs are blind-friendly. BlindAlive discontinued producing new materials a few years ago; however, you can still access/download their programs from their website for free or donate a monetary gift of your choosing, www.blindalive.com. They have programs such as Pilates, yoga, bar (as in ballet), cardio, boot camp, meditation, and full-body stretching. You can download the audio files to your phone, computer, or other mobile device.

Revision Fitness LLC is a newly-launched fitness program by a blind Paralympian named Tyler Merren. He is the recipient of one of the 2020 Holman Prizes from the San Francisco Lighthouse, and he will use his award to complete the development of an app for the blind. All videos are presently housed on Tyler’s YouTube Channel and Facebook page under the name, Revision Training, LLC. All workouts on BlindAlive and Revision Fitness LLC are described with the blind in mind to learn the movements.

Walk Away the Pounds is a private company founded nearly thirty years ago by Leslie Sansone. The founder of the company is not blind, but she created the indoor walking program with busy parents, individuals with physical limitations, and those who may have limited time to workout at a gym in mind. She is extremely descriptive of each movement being done, and uses upbeat music to keep exercisers enthusiastic. More recently-released videos feature different walk leaders, and you are sure to find a personality or music genre that matches your liking. There are videos that focus on general fitness walking, strengthening your core, use of weights, and resistance bands. Most videos available on YouTube are 1 or 2 miles in length; however, you may purchase videos with routines up to 5 miles in duration from commercial outlets. Her videos feature persons of all sizes and abilities. All that is required is a pair of athletic shoes, at least 4 to 6 square feet of space to walk, and a positive attitude! Walk Away the Pounds videos may be found on YouTube, purchased from various retailers, and/or by downloading their app, Your Daily Walk (this option has a monthly subscription fee).

(3) Hiking: Physical distancing and hiking go hand in hand. All you need is a hiking buddy, sturdy shoes, water, mobility skills, and a cane/trekking pole(s). Our state is blessed with countless hiking paths/trails, and you can find a setting and level of hiking that is comparable to your physical ability.

The Arts

So many beloved national institutions of fine arts have been broadcasting encore and new performances of classic and modern music during the pandemic. The Metropolitan Opera, Seattle Symphony, and NPR have all participated in this sharing. NPR has broadcast many archived performances from the Kennedy Center on their YouTube Channel, and they continue to upload several new installments of their Tiny Desk Series. FYI, the Tiny Desk Series features artists from all genres performing in an intimate setting--the new performances introduced during the pandemic feature artists performing in their homes or studios. You may find an abundance of options on their YouTube channel. Who knows? You may discover a new favorite artist! New Mexico entities such as the NM Humanities Council, New Mexico Jazz Workshop, Popejoy Hall, and the New Mexico Philharmonic all share weekly broadcasts on Facebook, Vimeo, and YouTube. The New Mexico Humanities Council broadcasts live lectures on Facebook and YouTube every Wednesday at 5:00 PM, and the New Mexico Philharmonic hosts chats with their conductor and other New Mexico musicians each Wednesday at 6:30 PM. Follow their social media pages, YouTube channels, and website pages, and subscribe to their listservs to remain abreast of offerings. I have randomly stumbled upon lectures offered by various universities from around the country. All of these events have been free, and they are usually broadcast on Zoom.

Other Forms of Entertainment

Some comedians and mainstream artists have begun to offer live concerts for nominal fees. I have attended two comedy shows and multiple concerts over Zoom and other platforms. Check Live Nation and other ticketing companies for opportunities. Most of these events have a fee--I have paid as little as $10 to the priciest at $50 for entrance.

Rishika Kartik is a sighted teenager who connected with Ann Cunningham, a blind artist, in Colorado. Rishika’s mission is to open the world of art to the blind. Due to her work with Ms. Cunningham, Rishika was awarded a grant to bring art to Colorado blind teens. As the pandemic continues, she has expanded her work to teach monthly tactile art classes on Zoom to persons of any age and from any corner of the globe. The materials are usually supplies you can find around your home or relatively inexpensive to purchase. You may find her by going to www.RishikaStudio.com.

Many authors and publishers have sponsored book tours/virtual book signings for a nominal fee. Usually, the cost of attendance includes a signed copy of the book and/or other swag. The pandemic has given me the chance to hear several cherished authors speak about their newest releases on their virtual book tours. Some of these events have taken place on Facebook and others on various website platforms. If you follow your favorite author(s) on their social media pages or publishing houses, you can learn of upcoming opportunities.

A quick note: The proliferation of smart speakers has made participating in many of these activities easier. If you purchase a smart speaker with a screen, you can surf the Net with your voice, and remove the barrier of using a tiny little keyboard or other gadget. I own several styles of the Amazon Echo products, and I have found countless instances to use them. Learning a few voice commands can have you connected to an event or your friends/loved ones in a few words.

# THE POWER OF COMPASSION

By Nancy Burns

Compassion, along with love and commitment, is the backbone of the National Federation of the Blind. It was compassion for others that inspired Dr. Jacobus tenBroek to gather a handful of blind men and women together in 1940. This organizing meeting was nothing short of miraculous. The purpose of his crusade was to bring a united voice to the blind population, which was unthinkable at that time in history. Blind people from seven states listened to and absorbed the inspirational words of Dr. tenBroek, and thus the foundation of this new and exciting organization was laid. Prior to this, monumental meeting organizations were primarily alumni groups of residential schools for the blind, and they met only locally. The results of this impressive historical meeting initiated by Dr. tenBroek trickled down through more states, and local chapters began to appear.

When I was a high school student in the 1950s, my teacher and mentor, Dr. Isabelle Grant, enthusiastically shared her reflections with me as a result of attending the recent convention of the National Federation of the Blind held in San Francisco. She spoke of Dr. Jacobus tenBroek and how he was an influential leader within the blind community. It was she who introduced me to a local chapter meeting of the NFB of California, and I was hooked. Dr. Grant and her compassion for blind students drew me into the NFBC. Years later as a senior attending San Francisco State, I had the honor of actually meeting Dr. tenBroek when he spoke to the student group. I was amazed and honored to meet this powerful and influential blind man. Although many years have passed since that meeting, I do recall that he spoke of the importance of organizing as blind students.

I was asked to participate in a leadership seminar at the Iowa Commission for the Blind. Once again I met a compassionate leader who concentrated on independence of a blind person. He shared many personal experiences, but one that particularly touched me was about a group of blind people who went sledding. It seems that the only person falling from the sled was a sighted person. Apparently, the blind sledders were surprised that it hadn’t been one of them. This led to a conversation about expectations of blind people.

Much later, I had the opportunity to spend a weekend with Mrs. Hazel tenBroek. At that time I was living in the L.A. area. A work-related meeting was to be held in San Francisco, and the NFBC state convention was conveniently scheduled for the following week. Mrs. tenBroek graciously invited me to stay in her home during the weekend between the two meetings.

The magnificent Berkeley Hills home was beyond description. This unique residence was multi-level, as it was built on the side of a hill. The tenBroek home was filled with evidence of the powerful man who lived here until his death in 1968. I could feel his presence as Mrs. T, as she was sometimes referred to, pointed out various areas of interest. She indicated an area in the long and multi-level stairs where Dr. tenBroek needed to duck because of his height. One level held numerous floor-to-ceiling book shelves filled with law books. Lower levels contained bedrooms and office space. An unusually large kitchen equipped with a commercial-sized stove was perched on the top level. Adjacent to the kitchen was a dining area with an impressive dining table that had welcomed educators, politicians, and other influential community leaders invited to the tenBroek home. I felt totally honored to break bread with Mrs. T at that very same table.

Such was the groundwork for my philosophy and my ability to become active in the NFB, and later, to hold offices within the organization. The National Federation of the Blind offers a most efficient training opportunity. It was Dr. Jernigan who pointed out the importance of a job for everyone in local chapter meetings.

As I gained more experience and was ultimately elected president of the NFB of California, my association with dynamic blind leaders became the backbone of my philosophy. At the time of my election, Dr. Mauer urged me to create new and imaginative programs within the state. Hopefully, I succeeded in a small way in accomplishing this challenge. It is my hope to have shared even a tiny bit of the compassion that I have received from the NFB leadership.

It was after I put my gavel away that I had the honor of meeting President Mark Riccobono, though I have not had the privilege of working closely with him. He is successfully leading the nation’s blind men and women during a most difficult time. The Covid-19 pandemic has created the need to hold local, state, and national meetings in a far different manner than they are normally held. The business of this organization proceeds in an undaunted manner. We as blind people continue to live the lives we want as a result of the dynamic leadership of the National Federation of the Blind. It is doubtful that Dr. tenBroek could have imagined the growth and power of the National Federation of the Blind resulting from that tiny 1940 meeting.

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS

By Gabriella Smith

It’s time once again for this issue’s member spotlight! This time we talked to Raquel Ortega of the Mesilla Valley Chapter and Nathalie Martin of the San Juan Chapter.

Raquel is a vocational rehabilitation counselor for the Commission for the Blind. She describes herself as hard-working and loyal. She became a Federationist because of the stories she heard from other members, which inspired her.

Raquel was born in Silver City, New Mexico, and she learned she had Juvenile Onset Macular Degeneration at age nine. In the 4th grade she moved to Gila, New Mexico and began attending a small school in Cliff. She had a good school counselor there who connected her school with NMSBVI, so she was able to get large-print books and a large-print typewriter. At age twenty-five, she went to Alamogordo to get intensive blindness skills training.

Raquel is the Mesilla Valley Chapter president, which she says is challenging, but she enjoys the position nonetheless. She says that it has been a lot of work getting new members, and there has been a learning curve to it. She was placed into the position when the previous president left, and she says she had never been in that type of leadership position before. Raquel’s goals for the future are to continue doing exactly what she is doing. Her goal has always been working with people who can’t see. She believes she is in a good place in life and has found peace and happiness.

Our second spotlight member is Nathalie Martin. Nathalie is a busy mom of three kids, thirteen chickens, two cats, and two puppies. She was born in Toronto, Ontario, in Canada. She moved to the United States and spent ten years in Nevada, where she met her husband. She later moved around because of her husband’s job, ending up here in New Mexico.

Nathalie began losing her sight around age twenty, when she learned she had the beginnings of Myopic Degeneration. Her vision would continue to decline over the years until she had her second child. She left work to become a stay-at-home mom around the same time when her sight declined enough that she had to stop driving.

Nathalie is the president of the San Juan Chapter, and she says she became president before she knew much about the chapter or the NFB itself. She says that she seriously considered not doing it, but decided to take a chance. She has never regretted it. Because the San Juan Chapter is more of a chapter at large, it presents certain difficulties. For example, she says it is harder to organize fundraisers due to the chapter being unable to meet in one place. The chapter has members in Farmington, Shiprock, Crownpoint, and other towns. Nathalie is currently working with the Commission for the Blind so that she can return to school to finish her bachelor’s degree, and she plans on working in blindness rehabilitation.

# POLL RESULTS

## Serious Question

Please tell us one thing that has helped you find peace or joy, amidst all the chaos and difficult circumstances this year.

Staying home hoping and praying that they will find a good vaccine for this virus. I have faith that they will.

I think the thing that has helped me get through the pandemic is the walks that we have tried to do every day. We walk a mile to a mile and a half every day that we can.

I’ve enjoyed the fact that our chapter has been able to get together on Zoom.

My Spiritual practice.

The one thing that has brought me peace amid the chaos has been the faith I have that we will all come out of this with new appreciation for the little things in life. Believing that we'll take better care of our relationships with each other and our new consideration for the well-being of others. That makes it all worth it.

Harp music.

Reading the wonderful newsletters our priest puts out once a week.

Not having to commute.

The one thing that has helped me keep it together during this pandemic is my wonderful husband. The two of us always manage to keep laughing. This is not always easy but we manage to keep each other afloat.

Listening to my favorite music, especially songs from Christian artists.

Friends, family and my newly-adopted 11-pound Terrier.

## Silly Question

What food item do you hate the most?

I absolutely despise mushrooms—the taste, the smell, the texture—major yuck! In my mind, if mushrooms could talk, they’d sound somewhat like Alvin and the Chipmunks trying to talk with marbles in their mouths, sort of warbly and squeaky.

Liver and Brussel sprouts.

Tripe

I only eat eggs when they are in pancakes, waffles and other baked goods; I’ve always had a gag reaction when trying to eat bacon and eggs for any meal.

Caviar

I don't like mushrooms at all!!!

Water chestnuts

Cauliflower

Liver and onions, Ugh!!!

Curry. Any kind of curry.

Cauliflower (I really don’t think it is food, it is a weed).

Liver.

Beets.

My wife does not know whether she likes the following because she cannot tolerate the smells: frying fish, canned sardines, and limburger cheese.

Yams and sweet potatoes.

# ABLE ACCOUNTS: BUILDING UPON THE PROMISE OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

By Miranda Kennedy

(From the ABLE NM Newsletter, August 2020)

Approximately one in five Americans has a disability. These Americans have the same hopes and dreams to participate in society as everyone else. On July 26, 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act. President Bush then said, “As the Declaration of Independence has been a beacon for people all over the world seeking freedom, it is my hope that the Americans with Disabilities Act will likewise come to be a model for the choices and opportunities of future generations around the world.”

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires accessibility for people with disabilities and prohibits discrimination. It extends the promise of equal opportunity and full participation for those people living with a disability.

Full participation includes the opportunity to become economically self-sufficient. Yet, millions of people with disabilities and their families depend on programs such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for food, housing, and other benefits. These programs are restricted to those people who have limited income, resources, and savings. Historically, to continue receiving benefits under these and other programs, you cannot save money.

Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts beneficiaries save and have power over their own money. The funds in an ABLE account are not counted by most federally funded means-tested benefit programs like Medicaid and SNAP. SSI does not count up to $100,000 in an ABLE account.

Disability-related expenses can lead to financial stress. Savings and contributions made to an ABLE account by the account owner, their family, friends, employer, or other sources can be used for emergencies or to support education and the owner’s future retirement. The funds can also be used for qualified disability expenses including food, housing and maintenance, medical expenses, and expenses related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. ABLE accounts add an additional layer of financial security, especially while navigating an uncertain future.

Over 63,000 individuals—out of an estimated eight million who are eligible—have opened ABLE accounts to date, making ABLE accounts one of the most underused ways to save money and retain much-needed benefits. For many people with disabilities, ABLE accounts have transformed their lives. Read our ABLE Ambassadors stories to learn what motivated them to take advantage of this opportunity and what advice they have for those who have not yet taken this important step.

To learn more about ABLE accounts and state ABLE programs, visit the ABLE National Resource Center (ABLE NRC)

https://www.ablenrc.org/

managed by the National Disability Institute. The website has information on how to become ABLE ready and offers a state ABLE program comparison tool and guidance on setting financial goals. Building on the promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the ABLE Act can forever change lives by providing the opportunity to save money in an easy-to-open, low-cost, accessible, and tax-advantaged account.

This blog was written by Miranda Kennedy, Director, ABLE National Resource Center for the Social Security Administration (SSA), for the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

# GOOD EATING

## RED CHILE SAUCE

Submitted by Veronica Smith

My mom and dad made this on a regular basis, but during the holidays you could always find a large pot of it simmering on the stove.

12 dried red chile pods (split open, devein and remove seeds)

6 garlic cloves

1 pinch Mexican oregano

1/4 cup cold water

1 pound pork, if desired (cut into one-inch cubes)

Once you seed and devein the chile pods, put them into a sauce pot and boil them for at least 10 minutes to soften them. Then put about half of them into a blender with half the garlic and water. Blend until pureed. Pour back into sauce pot and start again. Put the remaining pods into the blender with the remaining garlic and water. Continue to blend until you get the consistency you want. More water can be added if needed.

Add oregano to the pot before you add remaining chile from the blender. Simmer for about 20 minutes.

If using pork, make sure and add it early so it has time to cook.

## DON’S SCALLOPED POTATOES

By Don Burns

2 lb. potatoes, peeled and sliced

1 can cream of mushroom soup

1 can cheddar cheese soup

1/2 cup green chili

Salt and pepper to taste

Set oven to 350 degrees. Spray casserole dish with pam. Place potatoes in the casserole dish. Season the potato slices with salt and pepper. Stir the soups and chili in a small bowl and pour on top of potatoes. Cook for 1 hour or until tender. Enjoy.

## POTATO SAUSAGE CASSEROLE

By Sarah Villavicencio

1 pound bulk pork sausage

1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed cream of mushroom soup, undiluted

3/4 cup milk

1/2 cup chopped onion

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon pepper

3 cups potatoes, sliced and peeled

2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

Minced fresh parsley, optional

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large skillet, cook sausage over medium heat until no longer pink; drain and set aside. Combine soup, milk, onion, salt and pepper.

In a greased 2-qt. baking dish, layer half of the potatoes, soup mixture and sausage. Repeat layers.

Cover and bake 60-65 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Sprinkle with cheese; bake, uncovered, 2-3 minutes or until the cheese is melted.

Garnish with parsley if desired.

Optional: I put some of the cheese in the mix, then put the rest on top at the end. Add jalapenos or green chile if you care to spice it up.

# MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

December 1, 2020 through January 18, 2021: Braille Readers Are Leaders contest

December 13, 2020: NFB Open House Gathering Call for potential members

February 8, 2021: Washington Seminar and Great Gathering-In, virtual