**May 5, 2025| Vol. 55**

**DELAWARE DIVISION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED NEWSLETTER**

 **Providing educational, vocational, and technical support to empower and foster independence for Delawareans with visual impairments.**



**May is Healthy Vision Month**

Around 37 million adults in the United States are affected by age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, or glaucoma, conditions that can lead to visual impairment or blindness. Nevertheless, recent research indicates that adopting healthy habits and undergoing regular eye examinations can significantly lower the risk of vision loss. In recognition of Healthy Vision Month in May, the American Academy of Ophthalmology is urging individuals to take proactive steps in managing their eye health and safeguarding their vision by adhering to a few straightforward recommendations.

**May is Inherited Retinal Disease (IRD) and Genetic Testing Month**

Prevent Blindness has declared this month Retinal Disease (IRD) and Genetic Testing Month aimed at raising awareness among patients about different types of Inherited Retinal Diseases (IRDs) and the significance of genetic testing. Prevent Blindness provides an array of complimentary resources on inherited retinal diseases (IRDs), which encompass educational videos featuring healthcare professionals and individuals affected by an IRD, as well as webpages and shareable graphics and fact sheets for social media available in both English and Spanish.

You can learn more here: <https://preventblindness.org/2025-ird-awareness-month/>

**May is Mental Health Month**

Mental Health Awareness Month is celebrated annually in May, having been established in 1949. Its purpose is to enhance understanding of mental health issues and to advocate for the significance of mental well-being. This month features a range of initiatives, such as media campaigns, community events, and educational programs, aimed at tackling the difficulties encountered by those with mental health disorders. The green ribbon serves as the global emblem for mental health awareness.

**May 3: Teacher Appreciation Week:** This week is dedicated to recognizing and celebrating all the hard work and care that teachers put into their professions. We would like to thank our TVI’s for all they do for their students.

**A Blind Bicyclist and His Daughter Work in Tandem**

By: James Barron

May 2, 2025

Thomas Panek and his daughter, Madeleine, will be cycling in the Five Boro Bike Tour this weekend.

*Good morning. It’s Friday. We’ll look at a father-daughter team that is preparing to ride in the Five Boro Bike Tour this weekend. We’ll also find out what prompted a composer to write a tribute after Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1968 while campaigning for president.*

Thomas Panek has run more than 20 road races. His time in the New York Half Marathon last year was 2 hours 9 minutes 21 seconds.

On Sunday, he will cover some of the same ground in a different way, as a rider in the Five Boro Bike Tour. “I’m a little nervous,” he said. “I don’t know what to expect when you’re using a different group of muscles in your body.”

That sentence skipped over two things that will set him apart from most of the 32,000 other riders. One is that he will ride on a tandem bicycle.

The other is that he is blind.

He has retinitis pigmentosa, a degenerative disorder that left him legally blind by the time his daughter, Madeleine, was born 22 years ago. She will be the one in the front seat of the tandem, shifting the gears and calling out when turns are coming, or she needs to brake. They have practiced stopping because, as he put it, “if she were to suddenly brake, I would get thrown forward into her.”

Many sightless athletes talk about their collaboration with their guides. “Harmony and synchrony” was how the blind runner Jerusa Geber dos Santos of Brazil described the relationship during the Olympics in Paris last year. Madeleine Panek talked about how she and her father trust each other, an idea he echoed.

“Holding my hand when she was 2 years old, helping me cross the street, it’s second nature for her to guide me,” he said. “It takes some coordination to trust the captain if you’re blind and you don’t know the person. We already have that relationship. That is going to be the easy part. The hard part is getting it done.”

He knows the route from running — it is similar to the course of the New York City Marathon. The two races start and end in different places, but both cover the 2.6-mile-long Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge and highways like the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive. Some of the hazards are similar, too, like potholes that can seem as large as craters on the moon.

Full Article link: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/02/nyregion/blind-bicylist-daughter-race.html>

**New experiences at their fingertips: Course on tactile reading shows students ‘Why Braille Matters’**

By: Nikki Rojas

April 15, 2025

In his “Literature and Disability” course taught last spring, Professor Marc Shell noticed Katie Sevier ’25 taking notes on her HIMS QBraille XL display, a device that connects to her laptop and allows her to type in braille.

A discussion between Shell and Sevier on the importance of the history, theory, and practice of tactile writing systems used by the visually impaired led the pair to create a course not seen at peer institutions. Now the professor and the student are both the teachers. Their class is called “Why Braille Matters.”

“For me, braille is a sign of access, of freedom, of independence,” Sevier said. “Having this course come to life means so much. It is a course affirming a component of the blind experience — braille — which is so integral to many blind people’s experiences.”

On Thursday afternoons, Sevier can be found preparing for a class as fellow students and two trained guide dogs fill a small room at Dana Palmer House on Harvard’s campus. Throughout the semester, Sevier and Shell have prioritized highlighting different experiences by inviting guest speakers from the blind community or those who work with the blind community.

“This is and is not a course about disability,” Shell said. “It is really a course about reading and writing systems, and that is the main linkage with Comparative Literature.

“The history of reading and writing goes back thousands of years to tactile forms. These forms might be called ‘pre-braille.’ As our research is now revealing, blind people had many methods of reading and writing,” he added.

Full Article: [https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2025/04/new-](https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2025/04/new-experiences-at-their-fingertips/?fbclid=IwY2xjawJ9uRNleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBicmlkETFtYjFyem9qd2JXT3hDUTBwAR5Z66n6w0Fq053ZYFSEz61WJ4ymdqJgj4_M_kFclmGqPXr8r2OkVbx7S8F4Sw_aem_5rJ7W8_Wyk9VtzAls9rTZA)

 **What to Check Out**

**The Active Project:** Athletes with disabilities across the country are using a new, Vermont-based digital platform to find adaptive sports events, fellow athletes, tutorial videos and equipment grants.

**Website:** <https://activeproject.kellybrushfoundation.org/>

**EVENTS**

**NFBDE Braille Family Fun Day**

All are welcome to join NFBDE’s Braille Family Fun Day for a day full of games, food, and fun for people with and without visual impairments.

**Date**: Saturday, May 10th from 12pm to 3pm

If you have any questions, please contact [northerndenfb@gmail.com](northerndenfb%40gmail.com)

Full flyer with all details below.



**Walk-In Wednesday**

The next “Walk-In Wednesday” to have all your assistive technology questions answered will be May 28th.

Date: Wednesday, May 28th from 10am to 1pm

Location: The DVI Training Center 1901 North Dupont Highway. Biggs Building. Door #3 New Castle Delaware 19720



**BlindSight Delaware May Events**

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**May DABA Events**

\*No Yoga or strength classes in the month of May.

Taking a rest from yoga and strength for the month of May, but don’t worry, we will be back in June at a new time! Starting in June, Yoga and strength classes will be starting at 10am instead of 10:30am. Mark your calendars and be ready to begin June 7th with Yoga.

**Bowling in Milford**

When: Saturday May 17th from 12:30 to 2:30pm

Where: Milford Bowling Lanes, 809 N. DuPont Blvd, Milford, DE 19963

(302) 422-9456

Cost: $5 for members, $10 for non-members

What’s Included: Bowling, Shoes, Pizza and Soda

RSVP: Amy Forrest (302) 359-2194 or Patti Addison (302) 463-8700 by Thursday May 15th.

NO WALK INS PLEASE!! Space is limited! PEASE RSVP ASAP!!!

**Outreach Events**

Empowering Community Wellness Symposium

Date: Wednesday, May 7th from 8am to 3:30pm

Location: Bally's Dover, 1131 N Dupont Hwy, Dover, DE 19901

Food Bank of Delaware Community & Resource Fair

Date: Wednesday, May 7th from 10am to 2pm

Location: 222 Lake Drive, Newark, DE 19702

Wilmington Police Department Resource Fair

Date: Thursday, May 8th from 4pm to 6pm

Location: Helen Chambers Park (700 block of West 6th Street)

**Peer Support**

Peer Support Program: Trained visually impaired volunteers assist other adults in adjusting to their vision loss on a one-to-one basis, primarily through telephone contacts. This program is available statewide and is provided through community partners, such as the BlindSight Delaware and Blind Ambition Groups.

Blind Sight Delaware:

Life doesn’t stop when one loses sight, but the day-to-day can be challenging. BlindSight Delaware provides professionally facilitated Peer Support Group meetings around the state, and one-on-one telephone support.

**Group Support:**

In-person meetings provide an opportunity to connect with others who are experiencing similar day-to-day challenges. Sharing with others reduces feelings of isolation and loneliness which are common as one loses visual ability. Group support also points out access to community resources, products and solutions and offers tips and techniques to make day-to-day living easier.

**One on one Telephone Support:**

Sometimes all that is needed is a private talk with someone. BlindSight Delaware volunteers, who not only are compassionate listeners but also visually impaired themselves, offer telephone support based on their own wealth of knowledge and experience in adapting to everyday issues.

BlindSight DE Website: <https://bsdelaware.org/services/>

Contact 302-998-5913 Ext. 102 or 103 if you would like to receive services.



1901 N. Dupont Hwy, New Castle, DE 19720

(302) 255-9800; FAX (302) 255-9388