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*Gary Wunder, Editor*

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NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

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[PHOTO CAPTION: Palm-lined drive leading to front entrance to Rosen Shingle Creek Resort]

**Orlando Site of 2016 NFB Convention**

The 2016 convention of the National Federation of the Blind will take place in Orlando, Florida, June 30 to July 5, at the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort, 9939 Universal Boulevard, Orlando, Florida 32819-9357. Make your room reservation as soon as possible with the Shingle Creek staff only. Call (866) 996-6338.

The 2016 room rates are singles and doubles, $83; and for triples and quads $89. 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 27, 2016. The other 50 percent is not refundable.

Rooms will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Reservations may be made before May 27, 2016, assuming that rooms are still available. After that time the hotel will not hold our room block for the convention. In other words, you should get your reservation in soon.

All Rosen Shingle Creek guestrooms feature amenities that include plush Creek Sleeper beds, 40″ flat screen TVs, complimentary high-speed internet capabilities, in-room safes, coffee makers, mini-fridges, and hair dryers. Guests can also enjoy a swimming pool, fitness center, and on-site spa. The Rosen Shingle Creek Resort has a number of dining options, including two award-winning restaurants, and twenty-four-hour-a-day room service.

The schedule for the 2016 convention is:

Thursday, June 30 Seminar Day

Friday, July 1 Registration Day

Saturday, July 2 Board Meeting and Division Day

Sunday, July 3 Opening Session

Monday, July 4 Business Session

Tuesday, July 5 Banquet Day and Adjournment

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**Exploratorium Puts Science at Your Fingertips**

Touch is a magic sense but one that is all too often forbidden, precluded both by instruction and construction. How often do we hear blind children talk about going to the museum with friends or family and finding that there is nothing there for them except what someone will read or verbally try to describe? This very hands-off mentality is one of the barriers that has come between blind people and the sciences, and one of the objectives of our STEM2U program is to tear down this artificial barrier by figuring out creative ways for blind people to enjoy the majesty of science, technology, engineering, and math with all of their remaining senses.

The latest program was held in San Francisco at the Exploratorium, a museum unique for the displays and exhibits that can be touched. Mya Jones, one of the staff members coordinating the project said, "It was amazing to see Caleb as he observed how air can be used to move and set the direction for objects. What makes this museum so unique is that it values hands-on experiences, and our students loved it."

The director of our STEM2U program, Natalie Shaheen, is excited about a museum exhibit that is almost totally accessible for blind people. The exhibit represents a data set showing the tide levels for a year. Each day is represented by a tile with a lid that can be opened. The tide for a day is represented by a stick; the higher the tide, the higher the stick. It is therefore easy to observe the tide from day to day and by opening the lids for multiple days to track the patterns.

[PHOTO CAPTION: Chris Danielsen]

[PHOTO CAPTION: Yazmin Reyazuddin]

**Victory in the Yasmin Reyazuddin Case**

**by Chris Danielsen**

**From the Editor: Chris Danielsen is the director of public relations for the National Federation of the Blind. Previously he worked in private practice as an attorney, so we have just the right person to understand the complexity of the law and to communicate it to those of us who know only that we do not wish to break it. As with so many cases involving the rights of blind people, the issue here focuses on provisions in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act passed in 1990. At issue was the tug of war between the concept of reasonable accommodation and undue hardship, both articulated in law and regulation, but each requiring better definition as provided in ever-evolving case law. Here is what Chris says:**

On February 26, 2016, after some four days of deliberation following a nearly three-week trial, a jury in a federal district courtroom in Greenbelt, Maryland, reached a momentous verdict. The verdict was, of course, important to Yasmin Reyazuddin, the blind woman whose case against her employer was being considered by the jury. But the case made a broader statement about the importance of accessibility and technology. The jury ruled expressly and unequivocally that Ms. Reyazuddin's employer, Maryland's Montgomery County, had failed to provide her with a reasonable accommodation, as required by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and discriminated against her by not transferring her to a new telephone call center because it failed to make workplace technology accessible.

The road to this great day was a long one; the case was originally filed in the spring of 2011 and was the culmination of years of frustration for Ms. Reyazuddin, a longtime member of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland. It took five more years for the case to work its way to trial, in part because Montgomery County at one point got it thrown out of court, and that decision had to be appealed. Fortunately, the appeal was successful, and a jury finally heard the case. What follows is a summary of the case gleaned from the complaint that was filed, with the assistance of the National Federation of the Blind, on Yasmin Reyazuddin's behalf; this writer's own observation of appellate arguments in the case; Yasmin's trial testimony; information from her attorneys; NFB of Maryland press releases and articles about the case; and press reports. The NFB hired the law firm of Brown, Goldstein & Levy, which has handled many cases on our behalf, to represent Yasmin. Her trial team was led by Joe Espo, with assistance from Tim Elder, a blind NFB member now practicing in California; and Dan Goldstein, who is very familiar to *Monitor* readers and national convention attendees.

From 2000 to 2008, Yasmin, a native of India with multiple undergraduate degrees who speaks Urdu and Hindi as well as English, worked successfully for Montgomery County, first as a contract employee and then, beginning in late 2002, as a full-time merit employee. At the time that the events giving rise to her lawsuit began, she was working as an information and referral specialist in the call center of the county's Department of Health and Human Services. In around May of 2008, Yasmin learned that the county would be consolidating that call center with others into a new Montgomery County 3-1-1 call center, referred to throughout the case as the MC-3-1-1 center. 3-1-1 is the number that many counties and municipalities use to provide non-emergency information and services to their residents, just as 9-1-1 is used to provide emergency services. As an employee of one of the call centers to be consolidated, Yasmin expected to be transferred to the MC-3-1-1 call center. She was concerned, however, about whether she would be able to use the technology in the new call center. She had been using JAWS (Job Access With Speech) to access the computer programs with which she needed to interact in order to provide accurate information to callers, keep records of calls, and perform other tasks necessary for resolving the concerns of callers. She immediately inquired of her supervisor whether the software for the new call center would be accessible and was told that her concerns would be addressed. She also began to research accessible solutions herself, forwarding the information she found to her supervisor. As the months wore on with no specific information about what was coming, she escalated her inquiries to the county's Americans with Disabilities Act compliance officer, the staff liaison for the Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities, and other county officials. She also met with Leslie Hamm, the manager of the new call center. She received no specific information other than some vague assurances that her concerns would be addressed.

Montgomery County ultimately procured a sophisticated software system from the Oracle Corporation called Seibel Customer Relationship Management (CRM). Yasmin was still unable to get any information about accessibility, but she was also still scheduled to be transferred to the new call center until as late as October of 2009; in fact, she was told that she would be among the earliest group of call center employees to be transferred and required to attend an orientation meeting at the new facility.

On November 9 of 2009, Yasmin left work for a three-week vacation to India. She returned around Thanksgiving and, on the Friday following the holiday, called Leslie Hamm to find out whether she should report to the MC-3-1-1 call center or to her old office at Health and Human Services. She was told to report to HHS because the county could not yet accommodate her in the new call center. When she returned to her old office on Monday morning, the heat wasn't turned on, and there was no one else in the office. She spoke to Leslie Hamm and others about the heating problem immediately, but she remained alone, answering the phone, in an unheated office for ten days. At that time, she was moved to a new office space, with heat and where she was no longer isolated. In discussions with county officials about the situation, she was told that they were "working on accessibility." She also continued to receive calls from county residents as normal until February 4, when the calls suddenly stopped due to the "soft launch" of the new call center, and she was left with no work to do. Although she was still being paid, Yasmin was understandably upset by this development; as she testified in court, "I wanted to work. I wanted to earn my pay, and I wanted to be useful."

A couple of days after the MC-3-1-1 call center became operational, Yasmin asked to be allowed to manage referrals to the county food bank, and that request was granted. But those calls, at best, filled only three or four hours of her workday, according to her testimony. She was later assigned to take calls for the intake of adults needing protective services, but that did not increase her workload substantially.

At the 2010 convention of the National Federation of the Blind, Yasmin observed a representative of Oracle, who was also blind, using JAWS to access a version of the software being used in the MC-3-1-1 Call Center, and she conveyed what she learned to county officials. Despite this, she was told on October 1 of 2010 by Ricky Wright, a human resources official, in front of other coworkers, that she would never be transferred to MC-3-1-1, that she would need to look for other county jobs, and that she should forward her resumé to Mr. Wright so that she could be considered for other positions. Mr. Wright told Yasmin that it would be an undue hardship for the county to reconfigure the MC-3-1-1 call center software so that it would be accessible to her, and this was the primary defense that Montgomery County put forward in response to her lawsuit.

"I was devastated, frustrated," Yasmin told the court about her reaction to the news she received from Ricky Wright. "I felt like I had been left behind. In other words, the county had abandoned me." Yasmin never received another position with the county, and for about three years her official job title was changed from "information referral specialist" to "support staff," a designation which indicated a lower skill level and pay grade, although her pay was not cut. She testified that the change in her job title made her feel "humiliated."

Since early 2010 Yasmin's primary job has been to handle referrals to the county food bank, known as Manna. Initially customer service representatives in the MC-3-1-1 call center would transfer Manna calls to her, but eventually the referrals were simply emailed copies of an intake form filled out by MC-3-1-1 employees. Yasmin testified that the information taken by call center employees could have simply been emailed directly to Manna instead of through her. In other words, her duties were "make-work," and as a result she felt that she was "not useful."

All of these events, taking place over about two and a half years, led to the filing of Yasmin's lawsuit in April of 2011. The lawsuit alleged that Montgomery County violated Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 by "procuring and configuring computer database software that is inaccessible to Plaintiff and other blind individuals; failing to modify computer database software so that it is accessible to Plaintiff and other blind individuals; denying Plaintiff access to the programs and activities of the County that are made available to similarly situated non-disabled individuals; and failing to provide Plaintiff full-time work opportunities appropriate to her skill and experiences." The complaint asked the court to order Montgomery County to modify the software and to reinstate Yasmin as an information specialist in the MC-3-1-1 call center, as well as paying her compensatory damages and attorney's fees.

Importantly, Yasmin's case rested not just on the county's refusal to install accessible workplace software, but also its failure to give her meaningful work to do. The county apparently believed that, as long as it did not fire Yasmin or cut her pay, it was not discriminating against her. Yasmin and her attorneys took a different position. As Joe Espo, Yasmin's lead attorney, told the *Maryland Daily Record* just after the jury verdict: "Giving someone a paycheck is not a reasonable accommodation. It’s not just a paycheck—it’s the opportunity to do meaningful work and have the same advancement and promotional opportunities as others in similar positions do. It’s very hard to demonstrate competence and achievement and to present yourself for advancement if what you’re doing is a bunch of make-work and supervisors don’t want you around. It’s hard to excel at doing nothing.”

As mentioned earlier, Montgomery County's primary defense was that accommodating Yasmin in the MC-3-1-1 Call Center represented an undue hardship. (The county's lawyers also tried, without success, to cast doubt on Yasmin's skills and competence.) According to trial evidence, the cost to modify the software would have been between $125,000 and $190,000. To put that figure in perspective, the county spent $11 million to set up the call center. Nonetheless, the trial judge ruled earlier in the case that the county had proven its defense as a matter of law. That decision was appealed, and the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit reversed the ruling, saying that the question of undue hardship must be presented to a jury. On appeal, the county at one point attempted to argue that the relevant number to use in judging the undue hardship question was not the budget for the call center or the county's total budget, but its budget for reasonable accommodations. That argument was rejected; the court pointed out that, if this were the case, the county could simply avoid its obligation to workers with disabilities by setting its reasonable accommodation budget at zero.

When the case did go to trial, the jury was unpersuaded by the undue hardship defense. The jury further ruled that the county had failed to reasonably accommodate Yasmin, either in the MC-3-1-1 Call Center or outside of it, and that its failure to transfer her to the call center was an adverse employment action against her. The only disappointing aspect of the jury's verdict was that it failed to award noneconomic damages for the emotional distress that Yasmin experienced. Economic damages were not at issue, since Yasmin's pay was not affected.

As this article goes to press, the trial judge has ordered the parties in the case to engage in additional discovery, which is the legal term for the process of acquiring evidence. More changes in technology have occurred since the case was filed, and so additional evidence is needed on what the county will need to do in order to accommodate Yasmin. Once that evidence is obtained, Yasmin's attorneys will ask the court to order the county to make the necessary modifications to the MC-3-1-1 call center so that Yasmin can finally work there. This is logically the correct remedy, but it remains to be seen whether the court will grant such a request. Hopefully Yasmin will finally get the job that she should have had seven years ago.

Often it seems that the public does not understand the concept of accessibility or how the failure to incorporate it into the workplace affects not only the employment prospects of the blind or others with disabilities, but our basic dignity and status as first-class citizens as well. But Yasmin and her attorneys successfully conveyed that understanding to a Montgomery County jury, and that verdict must now be honored in some way by the court. Yasmin's case is another example of the importance of fighting discrimination when we encounter it, both as individuals and as members of the National Federation of the Blind.

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**Another Insulin Pump User**

**by Bridgit Kuenning-Pollpeter**

**From the Editor: In the April 2016 issue we ran an article about the use of insulin pumps, trying to explain what they do, why a blind diabetic might wish to use one, and some of the pitfalls that spring from less-than-ideal accessibility when one cannot see a visual display. In that article was the concern that newer pumps are not more accessible than their predecessors and that those which can be used by the blind are extremely limited.**

**Bridgit Kuenning-Pollpeter is a Federationist from Nebraska. She serves as president of the Omaha Chapter in addition to serving on the board of directors of the NFB of Nebraska. She is currently an MFA student, studying creative writing at the University of Nebraska Omaha. She lives in Omaha with her husband Ross and their son Declan. Bridgit was diagnosed with diabetes at age four. She says diabetic treatment has changed so much since she was diagnosed. She’s been using an insulin pump for twelve years and loves it despite the fact that no talking pump yet exists.** **Here is what she says:**

I have been a type 1 diabetic for thirty years. Going through the gamut of diabetic methods and tools, I have seen a lot. Diabetes is an individual experience, meaning what works for some doesn’t work for everyone. Certain protocols and treatments are essential for any diabetic: performing frequent glucose tests, being mindful of carbs and nutrition, taking insulin and/or other medicines if prescribed, doing exercise, and engaging in general healthy living. However, the amount and level of exercise I do may not be appropriate for you. Or you may be able to eat pizza with little change in your glucose readings, while I may require a lot more insulin to counterbalance the carbs. I may have fewer insulin needs in a day, while you may need more. It can take time to figure out what works best for each person. This includes deciding if using an insulin pump is right for you.

I have been using a pump for twelve years now, and I love it. A quick shout-out to my endocrinologist, who suggested I switch to a pump years ago. He never blinked twice at the thought of a blind person using a pump, and, in fact, was the one to initiate the conversation. I have had the best control over my diabetes since switching.

The reasons I love the pump: It allows me more flexibility with when and what I eat. I’m busy and active, and my schedule is not the same every day. I’m not shackled to a rigid meal schedule. It allows me to set various basal patterns throughout the day, simulating a pancreas better than most insulin regimens. If I consistently run lower at certain times of the day, I can lower basal rates for that time of day. If my weekend schedule is vastly different from my weekday, I have an entirely different pattern I can switch to for the weekend. With my pump I can actually set several different basal patterns if I want. I also do not have to keep vials of insulin and syringes on hand or insulin pens and syringe caps all the time. The pump is on me at all times, and when I need to bolus, I press a button on a pump. A bolus is the insulin you take after eating carbs.

In April’s issue of the *Braille Monitor*, Veronica Elsea shared her experience with several pumps. Being an Animas Ping user, I wanted to share my experience, especially since I use the pump daily. Like Elsea, I used a DelTec Cozmo for years. I loved it, and if Smiths Medical were still in production, I would use the Cozmo. However, when the time came to switch insulin pumps, I found the Animas Ping to be the most similar to the Cozmo. I have now been using the Animas Ping for almost three years, and I have not found it overly difficult to use and am generally happy with it.

Elsea states, “Most actions require more confirmation steps than they do on many other pumps.” I find this statement a bit misleading only because it comes across as if many functions are difficult to access or navigate, but in my experience, it’s simply that the pump asks the user to press okay after most steps as a security measure. For example, when changing a cartridge, it will ask you to press okay for each function, those being unwind, load, prime, and fill cannula. The same confirmation is required when using the touch bolus button on the side of the pump. You press the touch bolus, it beeps twice, you dial how much insulin you want (each touch beeping), then it counts back what you delivered (making a beep for each count), then it beeps twice again letting you know you can hit the button to deliver the insulin. All this is done to ensure safety with the pump. It may take a few seconds longer than some pumps, but I find it helps me, making sure I’m doing the correct function before moving on. In a nutshell, with most features it’s a matter of pressing the okay button after each function.

The Animas Ping only has five buttons. On the face of the pump, three buttons are in a column to the right. The large round button on the bottom is the okay button. Above okay are the up and down arrow, up being above the down. On the side of the pump to the right is the touch bolus, between the cartridge reservoir and battery. On the top right is an indented button, which is the contrast button. For sighted or low-vision users, you can change the contrast of the screen, making it easier to see visually. So the button layout is simple and easy enough to use. The primary buttons you use are okay and up and down arrow.

Elsea also states, “Would be able to enter BG manually if one could verify by keypad beeps. As it is, pressing button a bit too hard can cause scrolling, which would lead to errors.” In three years I have never had this happen. While it’s unfortunate the pump does not beep each time you press a main button on the face of the screen, I have never had a problem with scrolling. The buttons are tactile and make a slight click which gives audio confirmation. Each time I press a button, it does the function. Scrolling has not been a concern, nor have I had errors due to this. If you press and hold, then yes, it will scroll—similar to pressing a key on the computer. If you hit it once, it does the command you want; if you hold it down, it scrolls or does another command. Again, in three years I have never had a problem with scrolling—and keep in mind that I use the pump daily with no assistance.

If you want to enter glucose readings manually, it is possible, and scrolling is not a major concern. I do not use this feature, but I do use the temporary basal adjustment, which allows one to increase or decrease basal rates for a certain period of time. I arrow through the percentages and times, choose what I want, and set it. This is handy when exercising or increasing activity, in which case you would decrease levels. Or if running higher and bolus corrections are not helping, but you don’t necessarily need a permanent change, you can temporarily increase levels. I have never had a problem with scrolling when using this feature.

Even with my Cozmo, I have always used the touch bolus when bolusing. Because my carb/insulin ratio can change meal-to-meal, I do old-fashioned carb counting in my head, then deliver it up with the touch bolus. You can adjust this button so that each time you hit it, it dials a certain amount of insulin. For me the touch bolus button is set to deliver a half unit of insulin each time it’s pressed. So if I need two units of insulin, I press it four times. I often don’t need much insulin, so this is why my unit is set on half a unit. You can set it to deliver one unit or more with each press, depending on your bolus needs.

Entering basal patterns can be done without sight. When entering the basal pattern, it’s always at the same place. As long as you can keep track of your place, it’s possible. I prefer to have sighted help, but it is possible, and my husband (who is also blind) and I have done it before in a pinch. This is another function in which I have never had a problem with scrolling.

It is true that custom alarms cannot be set for low battery or low cartridge, but generally you know when a cartridge is low or the battery needs to be changed. The Animas Ping suggests using lithium batteries, which last up to three months, while regular batteries last about a month. So one would have a good idea when the battery needs to be changed. For me, 200 units of insulin lasts about a week, so when I hear an alarm at the end of the week, I’m 99 percent positive my cartridge needs changing. Now in three years I’ve had one alarm alert me that was not a battery or low cartridge warning. I knew instantly it was not one of these alarms because it was not time for either to be changed. I had to ask for sighted assistance to read the screen to find out what the alarm was. It was nothing major, but I was unable to determine the problem alone.

Here’s a handy tool I’ve used for my pump along with other things: using the FaceTime feature on my iPhone works well if I need sighted help. Someone can read the screen of my pump right over the phone. I have only had to do this a handful of times, but it works well.

I have either memorized menus or have written directions I follow for menus for the functions I can access. Yes, some functions are a bit complicated to follow even with written directions, but enough of the pump is available to access in this manner to allow me to use it successfully. My A1-C, which determines glucose levels over a three-month period, is great, and my overall health is good, so this would demonstrate that if you choose, using an insulin pump can be beneficial to diabetic management. And the Animas Ping is a choice that works well for nonvisual users. In my personal experience, considering it has no talking function (which is what we truly need), it has been beneficial and works well enough, allowing me to manage my insulin needs and diabetic care.

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[PHOTO CAPTION: Marion Gwizdala]

**Balancing Service Animal Users’ and Businesses’ Rights and Responsibilities**

**by Marion Gwizdala**

**From the Editor: In the May 2015 issue of the *Braille Monitor*, the president of the National Association of Guide Dog Users discusses the problem caused when members of the public pretend to have service animals in order to take advantage of civil rights legislation implemented to allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by specially trained animals. In the article Marion Gwizdala questions whether the problem is of sufficient urgency to warrant legislation and opines that the promoters of standards for service dogs are motivated more by the desire to become the be-all and end-all of service dogs than by the desire to protect the public from those who would fraudulently call their pets service animals. In this article he discusses the definition of a service dog in the Americans with Disabilities Act and its accompanying regulations, argues that existing regulations are sufficient, and argues that many state laws and proposals are in violation of federal law. He also spells out the rights of businesses to question those accompanied by an animal to determine whether it is indeed a service animal as defined by the ADA. Here is what he says:**

Immanuel Kant wrote, “In law a man is guilty when he violates the rights of others; in ethics he is guilty if he only thinks of doing so.” In my previous article I shared my contention that Assistance Dogs International (ADI) seems to be positioning itself as the sole authority for all things service animal related and is manipulating the public to believe that prohibiting the sale of service animal gear over the internet and more restrictive regulations are beneficial and necessary to protect the rights of service dog users. In support of its assertions, ADI enlisted consumers of Canine Companions for Independence (CCI) to be the subjects of a number of articles about the problem of fake service dogs. My contention is that ADI has created the perception of a problem where none exists in order to shore up their position as the certifying body of all things service animal; however, the created perception is false propaganda.

A number of cases have come to our attention in which the remedies available to a guide dog user in a particular state were not pursued because of the conflicts between state and federal laws. In Michigan when a guide dog user who was denied access to a nationally-recognized sandwich shop filed a criminal complaint against the company, the state attorney refused to pursue the case because Michigan law requires the presentation of documentation as a condition of access, and the guide dog user refused to comply with the manager’s request for identification. In North Carolina a guide dog user who was denied medical treatment by his physician because of the presence of his guide dog was unable to pursue charges because his guide dog was not listed on a state registry. Many other states have provisions incongruent with the ADA, and the National Association of Guide Dog Users, through our affiliates, is working diligently to bring all state statutes into congruency with the ADA.

I believe the best approach is to educate ourselves about the mutual rights and responsibilities of service dog users and to empower businesses by having this dialogue with them. So, let’s examine the implementing regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) to find out for ourselves if the regulations are inadequate to prevent owners of untrained pets from manipulating the law. We will also examine how these regulations protect the rights of places of public accommodation when an animal behaves in a manner that compromises the rights of the business. Those interested in reading the entire text of these regulations can do so by visiting <<http://www.nagdu.org>>.

The implementing regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act define a service animal as, “any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability” (28 CFR Section 35.104 & 28 CFR Section 36.104). Though this definition only mentions dogs as service animals, miniature horses are also included through other regulations (28 CFR Section 35.136(i) & 28 CFR Section 36.302(c)(9)). The DOJ states that the work or tasks must be directly related to an individual’s disability but do not include “the crime deterrent effects of an animal's presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship.”

The most important element in defining a service animal is found in the tasks the dog has been trained to perform. It is not sufficient that a dog is trained in basic obedience; rather, the regulations clearly state the tasks the dog performs must be directly related to the mitigation of the disability. Furthermore, it is not sufficient that the mere presence of the dog has a calming effect, plainly stating that the innate ability of a dog to calm someone or react in a manner in which it has not been trained does not qualify a dog as a service dog under the ADA. This leads us to the question of how a public entity or place of public accommodation can determine if a dog is a service dog and the businesses’ rights under the ADA.

Because the implementing regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act provide for access to disabled individuals accompanied by a service animal and the definition is clear about what constitutes a service animal, a business has the right to ask questions to determine if a dog meets the definition of “service animal.” And the person has the obligation to answer the questions, known as “credible assurance.” Because the Act applies to individuals who are disabled, a business may ask if the dog is a service animal required because of a disability. The type and extent of the disability is irrelevant and, for this reason, no inquiries about the nature or extent of the disability may be made. A business may also ask what work or task the animal has been trained to perform (28 CFR Section 35. & 28 CFR Section 36.302(c)(6)). These regulations also provide that even “these inquiries may not be made when it is readily apparent that an animal is trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability, e.g., the dog is observed guiding an individual who is blind or has low vision, pulling a person’s wheelchair, or providing assistance with stability or balance to an individual with an observable mobility disability” (28 CFR Section 35.136(f) & 28 CFR 36.302(c)(6)). The regulations do not allow businesses to require documentation to prove that the animal has been certified, trained, or licensed as a service animal as a condition of access. A service dog is not required to wear any special harnesses, coats, or other gear identifying it as a service animal. Businesses may observe the animal working but may not interfere with the animal or its use.

I regularly hear from businesses who call the NAGDU Information & Advocacy Hotline telling me about someone who refused to answer these questions, claiming it was a violation of their privacy and that they were not required to answer them. My best guidance is that, should a person choose to use a service dog, they accept the responsibilities outlined by the law and its regulations. If a person refuses to answer these questions, a business is fully justified in refusing access to the dog.

We want businesses to know that the rights of disabled individuals accompanied by service animals are not absolute. With every right there are responsibilities, including

* The animal must be kept on a leash, harness, or tether unless doing so interferes with the work or tasks the animal is trained to perform. If the harness, leash, or tether interferes with the work of the animal, it must be kept under control by voice, signals, or other methods (28 CFR Section 35.136(d) & 28 CFR Section 302(c)(4));
* The animal must not pose a “direct threat,” defined as “a significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by a reasonable modification of policies, practices, or procedures” (42 USC 12182(b)(3));
* The animal must be housebroken. (28 CFR Section 35.136(b)(2) & 28 CFR Section 36.302(c)(2)(ii))

If a business appropriately excludes an animal, it must still allow the individual the right to access the business without the animal being present. I also suggest that a business document the reasons for the exclusion. Should a lawsuit be filed, it will be up to the business to demonstrate that it properly denied the access, and it will be up to the individual to demonstrate that he or she is a person with a disability and that his or her dog meets the definition of a service animal.

A business may not restrict the access of an individual with a disability accompanied by a service dog. Individuals accompanied by service animals are allowed to access all areas of the business where members of the public, program participants, clients, customers, patrons, or invitees, as relevant, are allowed to go (28 CFR Section 35.136(g) & 28 CFR Section 36.302(c)(7)).

Businesses are not required to provide care or supervision for the animal. This is not to say that a business may not choose to do so, only that they are not required to do so. Some businesses, such as amusement parks and zoos, provide portable crates for service dogs so that their customers who use service dogs can fully enjoy themselves when it is not feasible to allow the service dog. Such would be the case on certain amusement rides or in the close contact areas of zoos.

A business may not impose any fees or charges due to the presence of the service dog even if they charge such fees to those who bring pets; however, the service dog user is responsible for any damage caused by the dog if it is the policy of the business to charge for such damage. So a hotel, taxicab, or other business that allows pets may not impose a pet deposit, cleaning fee, or other surcharge to a person who uses a service dog. If the service dog causes damage over and above normal wear and tear, and it is the customary policy of that business to charge for damage caused by pets or patrons, the business may charge the individual for the damage caused.

Businesses often ask what they should do if they have reason to suspect a dog is not a service dog. I generally suggest they start by asking the above questions. Most of us who use service dogs do not mind answering them. Those who may be imposters may wrongly assert they do not need to answer these inquiries. If they cannot or will not give credible assurance that the dog is a service dog, a business has the right to refuse admittance. If a business follows the rules and is threatened with a lawsuit, the threat is likely an attempt to intimidate. If a business knows its rights and follows these guidelines, it is protecting itself from such lawsuits. If the business doubts the credibility of the person seeking access after asking these questions and getting the right answers, I suggest businesses err on the side of permissiveness. It is far better to allow a well-behaved pet access than to deny a legitimate service dog team and face legal action. After all, if the dog is not well-behaved—service dog or not—a business has the right to ask that the dog be removed.

As the leading membership and advocacy organization for guide and other service dog users, it is up to us to educate businesses about our rights and responsibilities. The National Association of Guide Dog Users has many tools to help initiate this dialogue. Our newly edited “Meeting a Working Guide Dog Team” brochure is an impressive piece, complete with pictures of guide dog teams in action. Our latest addition to the Independence Market is our 4-inch x 6-inch “Service Animals Welcome” decal. These decals require prior authorization for receipt due to the expense involved in creating them, so please send an email message to <[info@nagdu.org](mailto:info@nagdu.org)> to get your authorization. We are also producing video programs about guide dogs and will pass the word around when they are available. Our first video program, “Service Animals in Zoos,” will be screened during our annual meeting in Orlando on July 2 at 7:00 p.m.

If you would like to be a part of the most dynamic organization of guide dog users in the country and shape public policy concerning guide dogs and other service dogs, becoming a member of the National Association of Guide Dog Users is easy. If there is an affiliate NAGDU division in your state, joining that division makes you a member of NAGDU. If there is no division in your affiliate and you would like to create one, please get in touch with us. You can check out our affiliate division contact list by visiting our website. You can also join NAGDU by going to our website. While you are there, check out the new design and features of the site. We know you will like what we have done! The command we give our dogs is the movement we share: Forward!

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[PHOTO/CAPTION: Barbara Loos]

**Corky Canvas**

**by Barbara Loos**

**From the Editor: Sometimes we are asked to go way beyond our limits, risking that what we are asked to do may be impossible. In this article Barbara Loos is urged to take on a recreation activity and accepts the challenge. Here is her story:**

I think it is safe to say that all of us have scars from childhood wounds that can continue to affect our lives, sometimes festering into adulthood. When one of these wounds is reopened, we have a fresh opportunity to clean it out and offset its negative impact. We can, of course, choose either to accept or to reject that opportunity. In the National Federation of the Blind we encourage one another to take advantage of such chances.

On December 12, 2012, (I remember the date partly because I like dates with patterns like 12/12/12) I was sitting on the couch at my friend Barb's home at a meeting of Symphony Circle, a church women's group to which I belong. Angie, a new member, suggested in response to an inquiry about possible fun ideas for us to consider, "How about Corky Canvas?"

After her brief explanation that we would go and all paint the same picture by watching the instructor and following directions, I blurted, "That probably counts me out, since that sounds like a pretty visual experience to me."

It felt like the Christmas spirit that had, up to that point, filled the room with laughter and holiday banter, got up and left. Angie's deflated, rapid fire, "Oh. I'm sorry. I hadn't thought of that. I didn't mean to be inconsiderate. Maybe that's not such a good idea for Circle, but I'd like to try it sometime, and they want groups ..."

As her sentence was trailing off, other voices were examining, smoothing out, and ultimately folding up the plan for further consideration in the new year. I apologized for my hasty comments, Angie offered to call to see what accommodations might be available, and the conversation soon regained its festive flavor. But I continued to feel a nagging regret.

The friend with whom I rode home said she was sure we would work something out that we could all enjoy. I appreciated her optimism, but didn't feel good about what I had done. It wasn't right to smear Angie with the residue of the scar tissue I had accumulated over the years from uncomfortable attempts at inclusion in society.

This thing reminded me of the milk-carton aluminum-pie-tin birdfeeder incident that happened over half a century ago in Girl Scouts. I was admonished by the troop leader for reaching for the materials, and Elizabeth Miller was asked to make two of them. Afterward, the leader said in front of everyone what a good job I had done. Feeling both embarrassed and incensed, I said the good work was Elizabeth's, and she should get the credit. I wanted to defend my ability to have done it myself if someone had shown me how, but I wasn't altogether sure I could, and the authority with which the leader had dismissed my initial attempt dashed what little confidence I had brought to the table. Would this Corky Canvas thing help me to offset that kind of experience, or would it just lead to yet another scar?

Once in a while during the holidays and beyond, I considered contacting Angie. But, knowing that we weren't meeting in January, I kept putting it off. I wasn't really sure what to say, and part of me just wanted the whole thing to go away.

On February 4, 2013, I received an email message from her that added a jolt of shame to the regret I had felt that December night. How had I let my own scars and insecurities keep me from at least reaching out to her?

In part, she said, "... I just wanted to apologize if I hurt your feelings over Corky Canvas. It was never my intention, and I clearly wasn't thinking when I suggested it as an idea. Afterwards I felt really bad about it. I did however contact them to see if they could accommodate you. They said they would be happy to if we could help you paint. I am not sure how you feel about that. I would be happy to help in any way I can if you think you want to give it a try. If not, I understand. Anyways, I don't want you to have any bad feelings towards me, so I hope you will accept my sincere apology."

On February 6, I responded, "Angie, I'm sorry you spent as much as a second worrying about having hurt my feelings. Actually, I like the fact that you took initiative in suggesting an idea for something fun for Circle to do. I came away from that discussion hoping that I hadn't done anything to cause you to feel shot down for bringing it up.

“The reason I spoke up so quickly is that, since assertiveness often feels unnatural to me, if I don't speak up right away, I'll talk myself out of doing so and often regret it later. The trade-off is that now sometimes I think I say something when waiting would be better. I hope I live long enough to strike a balance someday.

“The Corky Canvas definitely takes me out of my comfort zone, but that's not altogether a bad thing. It's good for me to go there sometimes. I don't, however, want either to have accommodating me become the focus of attention or to have my sitting on the sidelines while others participate become the solution, since the activity really is pretty much a visual thing.

“For me, a movie, however well described, has not yet trumped a book for experiencing something solo. Camaraderie is worth a lot, though, so I'll go to movies sometimes for that. My husband, who is also blind, does enjoy movies, either by himself or with others, which just goes to show that not all blind folks are any more alike than all sighted folks are.

“I appreciate your writing and your offer of assistance, and I very much like spending time with Symphony Circle, so I haven't made up my mind about this yet. I know I'll learn something if I go, because, if I decide to do it, I'll be intentional about that. Whether or not I can let myself lighten up and really enjoy it is still up for grabs.

“Again, I want to emphasize that I'm glad you brought up this idea. I prefer that people be who they are around me and allow me to be me, which includes deciding what to do when things like this arise.

“Thank you for writing. I look forward to seeing you next week at Circle."

On April 26, Trish, a long-time friend from Circle, emailed, "Angie said you were signed up for painting at Corky Canvas next Wednesday, so I'm writing to see if you want me to pick you up. I love it that you are going to try painting. It should be fun. It starts at 6:30, so I'll be by to get you about 6:10 or so. Have a great weekend. See you Wednesday."

I responded, "Thank you, Trish. I really appreciate the ride. I have no idea how this is going to turn out, but I seem to be into trying quite a few things—once, anyway.

“I look forward to seeing you on Wednesday. I hope you have a good weekend. It looks like the weather is finally going to be like spring."

As it turned out, May 1, the evening in question, was anything but spring-like. Not only was it cold, but also there was what is often referred to here as a "wintery mix" falling from the sky. My twinges of hope that the event might be called off faded into nothingness when Trish, cheerful as always, arrived at my home.

Others, both from Symphony Circle and elsewhere, were hurrying from their cars and gathering just inside the door when we got there. The woman in charge welcomed us and invited us to pick up a palate (in the form of a paper plate) and arrange dollops of paint of specified colors around the edges. I had a sinking feeling as Trish handed me hers and filled mine. Not only would I not know which color was which, but also there were no separate compartments for the dollops.

After Trish introduced me to a friend of hers she was surprised to see there, we sat down beside each other at our group’s assigned table. There I found a canvas balanced on an easel in an almost vertical position. I figured out immediately that moving it forward even a little caused it to come into contact with that of Penny, the person across the narrow table from me. Trish's abutted Angie's, and Michelle's was on its own beside hers. No one else from Circle was available to paint that evening. Beside each of us on the table were three brushes, a small cup of water, and a couple paper towels.

Soon our instructor's voice cut into the blare of the overhead music to give us a preview of the evening's activities. After reminding us that we could, if we chose, paint whatever we pleased, she said she would be providing instructions for the group picture, a vase of flowers. We were invited to accompany our painting with wines, which she listed. Then she said she was going to give us formal definitions for the kinds of brushes each of us had at our places. "There's the large one, called the big brush; the middle-sized one, called the medium brush; and the small one, called the little brush."

After the laughter subsided, she asked us to gauge the center of our canvases and use black paint to draw the outline of a squatty vase, leaving an inch or so at the bottom, and allowing for plenty of room at the top for a border and some flowers.

Although I had considered calling ahead to see if there might be something I could bring to make this project more doable, I decided not to do that. I thought I might either be talked out of coming or talk myself out of it. Deciding to wing it was very out of character for me, but here I was. I accepted Trish's offer of assistance, thinking that perhaps a Braille ruler and a bendable material with which to make a template to paint within could have put me more in control of this part of the painting.

Once the vase outline was completed, we were told to put a small amount of black paint into our red, mix them together, and cover the entire rest of the canvas, including all four edges, with that color. That would create a brick red background.

After Trish helped me mix the colors, I did as directed, asking to be informed about any spots I missed, if I was coming too close to the outline of the vase, and when I needed to refill my brush. At that point the bartender, Kylie, who is an art instructor and said she wasn't all that busy at the bar, offered to guide my hand around the vase. At first I felt somewhat self-conscious about that; but, having no ready alternatives to suggest, I willed myself to relax and embrace the moment.

The next step was to fill in the vase with black paint. Again, Kylie guided my hand for the edges, and I did some freehand in the center with prompting for spots I missed, and intermittent brush refills.

Next we used white with a little pink and yellow mixed in to paint flowers using the medium brush. I again allowed Kylie to guide my hand, making six-petaled flowers at various levels above the vase.

When the instructions were given for stems, the woman said something like, "Just do a little here, then a little there, and be sure to pick up your brush as you go." Imagining little pieces of stem strewn about the canvas, I wondered how that could possibly make a painting that would be appealing to anyone. I figured that some kind of optical illusion was afoot.

When Kylie took my hand, which was already holding the little brush as instructed, and dabbed the green paint, I let the question hang in my mind as she began. "Oh," I inwardly said as she gently stroked down, raised the brush, moved down a bit, continued the trajectory, and performed the same kinds of strokes.

"Are you raising the brush so that it will look like the stem goes behind the flower that is lower than the one on top?" I asked.

"Yes," she answered. "And we'll do the same thing to complete the other stems."

There it was again—that pesky perspective thing, in which things that are behind one another are accounted for visually by disappearing part of the one in back. I was relieved that the concept wasn't any more abstract than that.

By the time we got to the point of putting white polka dots on the vase, I had become comfortable enough with Kylie to talk about possible ways of creating boundaries for what was being painted. I mentioned stencils that could be painted within or a shape to be painted around. She created a stencil made of construction paper with a circle to be painted within. Although construction paper creates a very shallow border and is both porous and prone to disintegrating when dampened, I was pleased that she understood what I was suggesting and was willing to act upon it. Because she only made one "dot," it needed to be moved to various locations to create the desired effect. After doing several whole circles, she guided my brush to put partial ones at the edge of the vase to suggest roundness.

After putting the finishing touches on our paintings by using a tapping motion with the little brush to put five black dots in the center of each flower, adding small white polka dots just below the rim and just above the bottom of the vase, and scattering a few loose petals beside the vase, we were instructed to let our canvases dry for a bit before gathering for group photos.

As Angie and I stood at the sink washing the remains of paint from our hands during this interim, she leaned in and quietly confided, "I'm so glad you came. I was hoping you would, and," lowering her voice almost to a whisper, "I even prayed about it."

"I did, too," I confessed. "And I'm glad I came, too. Thank you for making it happen for us."

Photos completed, coats donned, and paintings loosely wrapped, we stepped out into the fizz of crystalline snow blanketing the world in tiny, sleet-like beads. The crunch of its accumulation underfoot and its relentless pelting from above caused scurrying to vehicles, remaining mindful of the need to protect our masterpieces against the moisture, while, at the same time, guarding against smudging spots not yet altogether dry. By then, though, I felt like, whatever happened to my canvas, the memory of this night would find itself on the plus side of changing what it meant to be blind in a positive way, not only for me, but also for those with whom I had shared it.

"What fun!" Trish exclaimed, once our paintings were safely stowed and she was pulling onto the slushy street. "All the paintings looked great, too! I'm so glad you gave it a try."

"It really was fun," I acknowledged. "And I'm glad I got out of my comfort zone long enough to find that out."

"Would you do it again?" she asked.

"I don't know," I said, reflecting on how much assistance I had accepted and how I depended entirely on feedback from others for confirmation of its appeal. "If so, I would want to work on some ways to be more in control of what I was doing. And I would still prefer to work with three-dimensional objects or materials with properties like varying texture that I could experience myself. Would you do it again?" I inquired.

"I would," she said, "but I'd also like to try some of the other painting options in town." There we were, true to form—she already up for the next adventure; I willing to consider, but somewhat hesitant. Over the years we have shared many cherished moments.

As she dropped me off that night, I thanked God for this experience. Among other things, it gave me a chance to reopen the bird feeder wound and allow for some healing. There is, of course, still a scar. But it is no longer festering underneath, and that's worth a lot to me.

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[PHOTO/CAPTION: Danielle Trevino smiles broadly as she sits beside her guide dog, Katie.]

**Facing the Tweetbook: Getting Linked into Social Media**

**by Danielle Trevino**

**From the Editor: Danielle is the coordinator for social media and member engagement for the National Federation of the Blind. She is taking us into the new frontier of social media by demonstrating its value and teaching us how to use it with assistive technology. Here she offers a primer to help those who are just trying to get started in this sometimes-confusing world of the internet and social media.**

Social media was once considered a fad. A mere twelve years ago, “liking” something didn’t mean double-tapping on a button and “tweeting” was a verb reserved for birds and anyone singing *Rockin’ Robin.* Once smart phones became more affordable, available, and accessible, the world saw a rapid increase in the use of social media.

Nowadays, you’d be hard pressed to find anyone over the age of six who doesn’t know what social media is, and just as the general public has embraced these networks, so have businesses and nonprofits.

So of the hundreds of thousands of nonprofits on social media, what sets the National Federation of the Blind apart? Why should people join us and/or fund us? The answer is simple: we change lives. Whether it’s putting a free cane in the hands of a person who hasn’t been able to get around independently, advocating for changes to laws on Capitol Hill, establishing BELL programs across the country so that blind children can practice their Braille skills, or giving away thousands of dollars in scholarships, the NFB really does work every day so that blind people can live the lives we want. Ours is a story worth sharing, and today the most powerful way to do that is through social media. I know that for many, the idea of using Facebook or Twitter is daunting, but I can assure you, it’s as easy as one, two, share.

Let’s start with a bit of history. In 2004 Mark Zuckerberg, a student at Harvard, created thefacebook, a website designed for his fellow students to connect with one another. It was very simple back then and one of its draws was the exclusivity of it. The site quickly expanded to grant access to all students with a .edu email address. By 2006, Facebook was available to anyone age thirteen and up. More features were added, and today it is a robust platform on which we can share every bit of our lives if we want to. Once you’re signed up the amount of content you create is up to you. You can do anything from occasionally posting a picture or status update to giving your network a play-by-play account of your day complete with photo, video, and web links. Organizations, such as the NFB, can leverage the page feature which allows users to create profiles specifically about the company or nonprofit they want to showcase. Most of our affiliates and some of our chapters and divisions have very active Facebook pages.

In 2006, just as Facebook was being opened up to the world, Twitter came along. A couple of friends wanted a way to send messages to the internet using text message, and they called their invention Twitter. Though much simpler to use, it is much more limiting in its features. For example, a Tweet has a limit of one hundred and forty characters. However, that is more than enough to share Federation news. You can also upload pictures and video to Twitter, but these options can end up taking up all of your character count. The best way to post is to say a few words and then send your followers to a web link.

Though there are other platforms such as Linked-in, Pinterest, and SnapChat, Twitter and Facebook are the most popular and accessible.

So now that you know the background and basic functions of the two platforms, let’s take a minute for a short vocabulary lesson, starting with Facebook. The two words you need to keep in mind are: like and share.

To like something in the normal sense of the word is to approve of, appreciate, agree with, or believe in something. That’s exactly what it means on Facebook, only the secondary definition is to hit the “like” button. It looks like a hand giving a thumbs-up, and this is something you want for your posts; you want people to “like” them. The more likes, the more popular your post is.

Sharing posts is also something you want, even more than having people like your post. When someone shares your post, all of the people in their network of friends see it, including people that you don’t know and aren’t friends with. In this way, your post can spread and be viewed by thousands more, and might reach someone who needs the NFB in their life.

On Twitter the case is very similar. You want people to “favorite” (like) and “retweet” (share) your posts.

So now that you know the basics, how do you use your newfound knowledge to spread the Federation word? It’s quite easy! You can always start by liking and sharing the NFB’s posts. You can find the national organization on Facebook by searching for “National Federation of the Blind,” and liking our page. You can find us on Twitter by following @NFB\_Voice. Most affiliates have established social media pages that you can follow and share content from. You can also simply write your own posts about how the NFB helps you live the life you want. Your networks will like and share your words, and they just might reach someone who needs to hear our message of love, hope, and determination.

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[PHOTO/CAPTION: Gabe Cazares]

**Loan Discharge Program**

**by Gabe Cazares**

**From the Editor: Gabe is a governmental affairs specialist for the National Federation of the Blind and brings to his job the ability to write and speak passionately about issues confronting the blind and the legislative proposals to address them. This article will be of particular interest to you if you or your parent received a government loan for your college education which you or your parent now cannot repay due to your disability. Here’s what he has to say:**

Recently the Obama Administration announced changes to its Total and Permanent Disability Discharge (TPD) Program. The TPD Program relieves individuals from their responsibility of repaying, on the basis of a total and permanent disability, the following types of loans: William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan, Federal Family Education Loan, and/or Federal Perkins Loan, or completing a TEACH Grant service obligation.

In 2012 the Obama administration took steps to make it easier for qualifying individuals with disabilities to use their Social Security designation to apply for the program. Despite this effort, the administration saw a very small increase in the number of applicants. On April 12, 2016, the Obama Administration announced that the United States Department of Education, in conjunction with the Social Security Administration (SSA), began a match program in which those recipients of Social Security benefits with the specific designation of medical improvement not expected, who also qualify for the loan discharge program, are being identified between the two agencies. Upon its first review, the Departments of Education and Social Security identified 387,000 individuals. Of those identified 179,000 are currently in default of their loans.

## How does the TDP program work?

In order to qualify, an individual must have a total and permanent disability as defined by the Veterans Administration determination of employability due to a service-connected disability, or the Social Security Administration’s designation of medical improvement not expected, or by certification by a qualified medical professional. Starting April 18, 2016, qualifying individuals began to receive letters from the Department of Education explaining step-by-step how they can have their loans discharged. These explanations also include the tax implications of a discharge; the government can—in most cases—tax the loan amount forgiven.

Individuals with disabilities will no longer have to submit proof of disability and can simply fill out and sign a customized application. Letters will be going out over a sixteen-week period, with a second letter following up in 120 days. If a qualified individual does not receive notification, he or she can follow the necessary steps found on the Department of Education’s website <<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/disability-discharge>>.

## Once approved

Once approved, your loan or TEACH Grant service obligation is discharged on the basis of a total and permanent disability. However, those who discharge their loans under a Social Security designation or a physician’s authorization will be subject to a three-year monitoring period that begins on the day the discharge is approved. During this three-year monitoring period, “loans can be reinstated for repayment if:

1. You have annual employment earnings that exceed the poverty guideline amount for a family of two in your state, regardless of your actual family size;
2. You receive a new William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program loan (Direct Loan), Federal Perkins Loan Program loan (Perkins Loan), or TEACH Grant;
3. A disbursement of a Direct Loan, Perkins Loan, or TEACH Grant that you received before the discharge date is made, and you do not ensure the return of the full amount of the disbursement within 120 days of the disbursement date; or
4. You receive a notice from the SSA stating that you are no longer totally and permanently disabled, or that your disability review will no longer be the five-year or seven-year review period indicated in your most recent SSA notice of award for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.”

A word of caution to readers considering this program: in 2016, 100 percent of the federal poverty level for a family of two is $16,020. If your annual compensation exceeds this amount, or if you expect to soon be making more than this allotted amount annually, you do not qualify for a TDP discharge. The federal poverty level is adjusted from year to year. It is also important to note that these monitoring requirements do not apply to individuals qualifying under the Veterans Administration determination of employability due to a service-connected disability. When determining if this program is best for you, it is important to consider all current and future plans for employment.

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[PHOTO CAPTION: Deborah Kent]

**Living in Three Dimensions**

**by Deborah Kent**

**From the Editor: Deborah Kent is a well-known writer of children’s books, the editor of *Future Reflections*, the vice president of the National Federation of the Blind of Illinois, and a reflective and articulate observer of life as a blind person. “Living in Three Dimensions” was originally published as “Vivre en Trois Dimensions” in *Revue des Lettres et de Traduction, No. 15*: La Main, published by Universite Saint-Esprit de Kaslik, Junieh, Lebanon, 2013. The anthology was published around the theme of the hand, and when a friend of hers mentioned it, Deborah offered to contribute something from her unique perspective. She found a translator to put her work into French, but here is the original English version:**

The poison bottle stands on a shelf above my desk. Sometimes I pause in my work, lift it down, and turn it in my hands. It is about three inches tall and made of clear glass—before I wrote that statement I checked with my sighted daughter just to be sure. Unlike an ordinary bottle, it is flat on one side, as though it were meant to stand flush against a wall. The flat side is perfectly smooth, but the rounded side is scored with distinct, vertical ridges from top to bottom.

I found the poison bottle in a little antique shop in California. The place was crammed floor to ceiling with odd bits from bygone years, and to my delight, nothing was hidden behind glass. The shopkeeper was talking to another customer, and I hoped he was too busy to notice me as I feasted upon the tactile cacophony. I made fresh discoveries everywhere I reached—a wind-up doll, a carpet sweeper, a pile of carved picture frames, a clothes wringer, an assortment of buggy wheels and harness parts.

"Are you looking for something?"

The shopkeeper had seen me after all. My hands dropped to my sides, and I braced myself for the inevitable admonition. Gentle or stern, it would mean the same thing: "Please don't touch."

"You have such interesting things here," I said, trying to distract him. "It must be fun to collect them all."

He hesitated. I didn't breathe. "Come with me," he said. "I want to show you something."

I followed his footsteps down a narrow aisle, brushing past shelves to right and left, and heard him move some cartons aside. "They made these in the 1850s, before electric lights came in," the shopkeeper said, placing the poison bottle in my hand. "If you got up in the night to take your medicine, you probably didn't bother to light a lantern. You did everything by touch. Chances are you didn't have much shelf space, so your rat poison might be right next to your concoction for headaches. Poison bottles were designed so you could distinguish them in the dark, with your hands."

After I brought the poison bottle home, I tried to think of objects in general use today that are specifically made with touch in mind. My list was pitifully brief. Computer keyboards have a raised dot on the F and J keys to help the user position his/her hands without looking, and the 5 on a telephone keypad is also marked with a dot. It seems a paltry concession to the hand, compared to the myriad appliances and devices that cater to vision. Colorful packaging; sleek, buttonless phone screens; and the dazzling graphics of webpages all testify to the primacy of sight. The hand—despite its capacity to gauge size and weight, texture, shape, and detail—has been rendered nearly superfluous as a means of perception.

As a blind child I was blessed with parents who understood that touch was my portal to knowledge. When I was three or four, my mother showed me split-rail fences, mailboxes, fire hydrants, lawn chairs, birdbaths, and telephone poles. My father took me for walks in the woods and showed me acorns, mushrooms, and the footprints of rabbits and raccoons. Together we explored the construction sites in our suburban development. In half-finished houses I learned that doors and windows fit into frames and discovered that bathroom pipes descend through holes in the flooring. My hands gave me a vast repertoire of information that has endured and expanded throughout my life.

The desire to touch was not unique to me as a blind child. All children have a hunger to touch the objects in their environment. In fact, the eagerness to touch motivates most early movement. When Baby Sarah spots a bright pink rattle across the room, she is not content to lie on the carpet and admire it from afar. She wriggles forward, focused and determined, until the rattle is in her grasp. Now she is free to learn about all its properties. She rubs it and pats it, feeling its hardness and its smooth, rounded shape. She shakes it and listens to its mysterious clattering sound. She puts the handle into her mouth and explores it with her tongue and gums. Her hands bring the rattle close and give her an intimate knowledge that she would miss if she only viewed the object from a distance.

Nevertheless, touch is highly subject to regulation, and the rules go into effect by the time a child is old enough to walk. "Don't touch the Christmas ornaments—you'll break them!" "Don't touch Mommy's scissors—you'll get hurt!" "Keep your hands to yourself—that doesn't belong to you!" "Just look at it. Don't touch! Don't touch!" The richness of tactile experience is forfeited, and touch becomes suspect. It is the terrain of infants, deviants, and thieves. Vision—so safe and clean—reigns unchallenged.

As early as Old Testament mythology, touch was cast as a dangerous and forbidden sense. In the story of the Garden of Eden, Eve reports to the serpent: "But of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Eve ignored God's "look, don't touch" mandate, and as a result, humankind has suffered to this day.

Despite Biblical sanctions, or perhaps in reaction against them, touch came into its own during the European Renaissance. Touch was considered the master sense, able to verify and expand upon characteristics only superficially perceived through sight. Benedetto Varchi, a sixteenth-century Florentine historian, claimed that the sculptor's art could best be appreciated by touch. In the eighteenth century the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder praised the value of touch over sight, which he dismissed as "a superficial sense which can only render the surfaces and colors of objects."1 Perhaps the most remarkable manifestation of this enlightened attitude toward touch is the eighteenth-century museum.

For me, a visit to a museum is a series of encounters with velvet ropes, wooden barricades, ever-vigilant security guards, automatic alarm systems, and implacable sheets of glass. Whether African wood carvings, specimens of shells and minerals, Native American artifacts, or figures cast in bronze are on display, no enjoyment or understanding through touch is permitted. In contrast, visitors to the museums of eighteenth-century Europe were not only allowed, but encouraged to touch the items on exhibit. In 1694 a visitor to the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford University described handling a variety of exotic objects, including a lodestone and a cane "which looks like a solid heavy thing but if you take it in your hands [is] as light as a feather."2 According to Constance Classen, a researcher on historical attitudes toward the senses, "Museum visitors, as polite guests, were expected to show their interest and goodwill by asking questions and by touching the proffered objects. To be invited to peruse a collection of exotic artifacts or *objets* *d'art* and *not* touch anything would be like being invited to someone's home for dinner and not touching the food."3

By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the museum had become an altogether different place. No longer were visitors the personally invited guests of the owner or management. Museums had opened their doors to the general public, and there was mounting concern for the safety of the objects they housed. Visitors were required to stand back and view the exhibits from a distance. To touch a precious object was considered disrespectful and potentially damaging.

This change in the museum reflects the social transformation that Classen calls "the rise of visualism." Unauthorized touch caused anxiety to an emerging middle class that had goods to protect from theft and breakage. An obsessive fear of dirt sprang from the new understanding that invisible germs caused sickness. The hands carried treacherous bacteria from one person to another; to touch an object that others had handled was to invite some dire disease. Moreover, Victorian prudery and Freud's preoccupation with all things sexual welded the connection between touch and something that "nice people" shouldn't do.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, touch was closely identified with the poor and unwashed, whose overcrowded slum dwellings swarmed with vermin and vice. A book on etiquette contained a whole chapter on avoiding the touch of "undesirables." Readers were advised to stay away from "slums, local trains and streetcars, third-class pubs, cheap seats at movie theatres, and crowds or celebrations in the streets."4

Technology helped the middle and upper classes escape the contamination of touch that they had come to dread. Improvements in lighting made visual observation more effective at home and in the wider community. The greater availability of glass, and later the development of clear plastic, shielded merchandise from touch while it remained fully accessible to the eyes. In the United States, window shopping replaced the trip to the market, with its open bins of vegetables, hardware, and dry goods.

The trend that began with our Victorian forebears is amplified in today's technological frenzy. Any facet of the world can leap into focus on the computer screen. From the safety of one's own living room, one can now explore a Maori village, examine the world of a coral reef, or study the fine points of a Classical Greek façade. The only need for the hand is to click the buttons on a mouse. In the virtual world it is possible to build a house without lifting a hammer or to dissect a cadaver without ever wielding a scalpel. Touch is precluded by the onslaught of visual information.

For blind computer users, a number of clever programs convert the text on the screen into human-like speech. Yet no digital genius has found an effective way to bring a third dimension to the screen. To my hands it remains lifeless. My fingers find no aesthetic delights, no maps or diagrams, no images of objects ordinary or extraordinary. Much of the virtual world is a resolutely visual world.

Beside the poison bottle on the shelf above my desk lies a polished stone. A friend brought it to me from Bryce Canyon in Utah. Like the poison bottle, it is flat on one side and rounded on the other. The rounded side, an irregular oblong, is burnished to gleaming smoothness, a miracle to my touch.

I turn the stone over, flat side uppermost. Chiseled into the surface are a palm and five slender fingers. Perhaps the carving was made by a talented machine with a blade that knew its way from pinkie to thumb. But I like to imagine that it is the work of an artist who used real tools upon this real stone and with the power of touch, created a tribute to the hand.

1. Classen, Constance. (2005). “Touch in the Museum,” in Constance Classen, ed, *The Book of Touch*. New York: Berg, p. 279.
2. Ibid., p. 275.
3. Ibid., p. 275.
4. Stallybrass, Peter and Allon White. (2005) “Bourgeois Perception: The Gaze and the Contaminating Touch,” in Constance Classen, ed, *The Book of Touch*, p. 290.

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**Leave a Legacy**

For more than seventy-five years the National Federation of the Blind has worked to transform the dreams of hundreds of thousands of blind people into reality, and with your support we will continue to do so for decades to come. We sincerely hope you will plan to be a part of our enduring movement by adding the National Federation of the Blind as a partial beneficiary in your will. A gift to the National Federation of the Blind in your will is more than just a charitable, tax-deductible donation. It is a way to join in the work to help blind people live the lives they want, a donation that leaves a lasting imprint on the lives of thousands of blind children and adults.

With your help, the NFB will continue to:

* Give blind children the gift of literacy through Braille;
* Promote the independent travel of the blind by providing free, long white canes to blind people in need;
* Develop dynamic educational projects and programs that show blind youth that science and math are within their reach;
* Deliver hundreds of accessible newspapers and magazines to provide blind people the essential information necessary to be actively involved in their communities;
* Offer aids and appliances that help seniors losing vision maintain their independence; and
* Fund scholarship programs so that blind people can achieve their dreams.

**Plan to Leave a Legacy**

Creating a will gives you the final say in what happens to your possessions and is the only way to be sure that your remaining assets are distributed according to your passions and beliefs. Many people fear creating a will or believe it’s not necessary until they are much older. Others think that it’s expensive and confusing. However, it is one of the most important things you will do, and with new online legal programs it is easier and cheaper than ever before. If you do decide to create or revise your will, consider the National Federation of the Blind as a partial beneficiary. Visit <[www.nfb.org/planned-giving](http://www.nfb.org/planned-giving)> or call (410) 659-9314, extension 2371 for more information. Together with love, hope, determination, and your support, we will continue to transform dreams into reality.

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**A Question for Our Readers**

**by Gary Wunder**

Any casual reader of this magazine knows that the National Federation of the Blind believes in Braille and believes that some of the most significant problems we face come from not having an efficient way to read and write. Denying blind students Braille is indefensible, and the consequences are at best long-lasting and at worst devastating to those of us who want a career in which reading and writing normally play a vital part.

Even for those of us who have been blessed with early, quality instruction, the shortage of Braille has meant that most of our information has come from listening to the spoken word. When I went to high school and college, I was advised that Recordings for the Blind (now renamed Learning Ally) would be my primary source for books, and material they did not have could be read to me by someone I would hire at the state agency's expense. Certainly the computer means that more material is available today, and most of us are less reliant on human narration, but much of what is digitized is read with speech.

All of this preamble finally brings me to my question and concern. How does one learn to spell if he or she is predominantly an audio reader? Recently I was addressing a group of parents about why they should ensure that their children learn Braille. Spelling was one of the reasons I gave. I told the group about not knowing how to spell certain words whose sounds gave me no clue as to how I could find them in my thirty-six volume Braille dictionary. I thought the word that means "of undisputed origin," and "genuine" was spelled “offentic” rather than authentic. I thought that the word frustrated was pronounced flustrated, a logical consequence of being flustered. When I got down to business and decided I wanted to write something other than business owner, I tried to find “ontraprenure,” and never did I guess it was a French word and started with an e and is spelled entrepreneur. I believed there were different words to describe when one was interested and when something was inter resting. When people looked at my check register, they got a laugh out of J. C. Penny, Wallmart, and Hardy’s (JCPenny, Walmart, and Hardee’s). Business signs simply aren't obvious regardless of one’s proficiency in Braille.

So if one gets most of his or her material from a Talking Book from NLS or through a speech synthesizer, how is learning to spell accomplished, and how does one continue to enlarge his or her vocabulary? Certainly there are spell checkers and easy-to-use dictionaries, but are they learning tools or a tool we always need in writing? Does practice with these tools mean we are better able to take a writing device that is not electronic and still generate material of which we can be proud and which shows us to be the competent people we wish to be?

I'd like to hear from readers who have addressed this problem, the results you have had, and how you suggest we become better spellers who can write without the aid of a $1,000 piece of technology? I don't need an article but something I can use as a contribution to one. Just as we have come to question and refute the notion that blind people should not study or hope to contribute to the hard sciences, let's address head-on the commonly held belief that blind people are poor spellers because we have so little direct physical contact with the written word. With your help, we will give those who wish to become better spellers some practical and effective tips.

It seems only right that we follow this article by demonstrating that blind people can become good spellers, so enjoy the presentation that follows from former President Maurer, one of the best spellers I know. Thanks, and remember to give me your suggestions.

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[PHOTO CAPTION: Marc Mauer]

**Reflections of a Lifetime Reader and Library Maven**

**by Marc Maurer**

**From the Editor: Since the written word is a significant key that can be used to unlock knowledge and to experience places and situations never encountered, the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped remains an essential tool for the blind. In recognition of its ongoing role, we reprint here an address delivered by former President Maurer in 2008. Here is how it was introduced in the July issue of the *Braille Monitor* from that year:**

**President Maurer delivered the following address at the national conference of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Congress in San Antonio, Texas, May 5, 2008:**

Insofar as I remember, I have never previously been called a maven. In my position as president of the National Federation of the Blind (and in certain other roles), I have been called many things—but “maven” is not one of them. I thank you for the compliment, and I hope that I can live up to the billing.

Books have been important to me for as long as I can remember. When I was a small child, my mother read them aloud to me. When I attended the school for the blind at the age of six, I discovered that books had been recorded on great big records. The teacher would play them for us in the afternoon. One of the first I ever heard was *Sharp Ears—The Baby Whale* by John Y. Beatty. As I listened, I was worried about the whale.

In 1960 a library for the blind was established by Dr. Kenneth Jernigan in the state of Iowa, where I lived. I could get books simply by asking for them. They came in big packages from the post office. The first recorded book I ever received was ***White Falcon* by** Elliott Arnold: a story about a pioneer child captured by Indians and raised to become a leader of the tribe.

I did not have a record player, but our family owned a stereo that we kept in the living room. If my homework had been completed, and if nobody else was watching television, I could listen to recorded books on our stereo. My father had connected a speaker to the stereo so that he could listen to music while he worked in his carpenter shop in the basement. The volume control of the stereo adjusted both the volume of the speakers in the living room and the volume of the speaker in the basement. I discovered that, when other family members were watching television, I could turn the volume of the stereo down. I could not hear the recorded book in the living room. However, if I stretched out on the workbench in the basement with my ear next to the speaker, I could listen to the book even with conversation or television watching in the living room. The workbench was covered with sawdust, but I didn't care. To avoid missing pieces of the recorded book, I had to get from the living room to the basement in a hurry. In order to hear what I wanted to know, I would start the stereo and race to the basement so that I would miss the fewest words. Sometimes the basement was a little cold, but I got to read anyway. It was worth it.

The post office also brought me big packages of Braille. The books were wrapped in brown paper with string tied around it. I would untie the string very carefully and save it. I would also unwrap the paper from the books and fold it carefully to be reused in returning them to the library. In a pocket under the front cover of the first volume of each book I would find a mailing label. This was to be used to return the books to the library. When I had finished reading them, I rewrapped the bundle, tied the string, and licked the label so that it would stick to the package. I had to be careful to cover my address with the new label so that the package would go where it belonged. When I first began receiving the Braille books, I did not know that the postman who brought them would also carry packages away. I got permission from my mother to carry the packages to the post office to be shipped back to the library. I had learned that they needed no postage—that they would go as Free Matter to the library. I came to know the people who worked at the post office, and I was delighted when I discovered that they would indeed take charge of my Braille.

The Braille was more versatile than the recorded books. I could read it wherever I went. I could keep a Braille volume under my bed and sneak it out at night after I was supposed to be asleep. This system also worked at the school for the blind. Special reading rooms (little cubicles containing a chair, a desk, and a Talking Book machine) had been built for listening to talking books. However, I could read the Braille anywhere. One time I did sneak off at night to read a Talking Book. I thought it would be better not to turn on the light in the reading room. The houseparent did discover me there after a while, but he thought I had fallen asleep while I was reading and missed the bedtime bell. It did not seem prudent to me to correct his error in thought. However, if I was in bed, he didn't check to see if a book was under the covers.

When I reached high school, the library offered to lend me a Talking Book machine. I could listen to books in my own room at any time. This was liberating. Some of the books I wanted to read were for recreation, and some of them were assigned literature. At one point I invited some of my classmates to listen along with me to William Golding's Lord of the Flies. My Talking Book machine went with me to college, and I have had one or another model of it wherever I have been since I first obtained one in high school.

When I was fourteen years old, I lived in Boone, Iowa, a small town about forty miles north of Des Moines, where the library for the blind was located. I had been borrowing books from the library for about five years. A listing of books would arrive in the mail. Because it was a printed document, my father would read the list to me. I would tell him what books I wanted to read. Eventually he got sick and tired of helping me make my selections because he thought some of the books I picked were too racy for me to read. Mostly I don't think he edited my lists of requests, but I think he skipped some of the books listed in the catalog.

He would mail my requests to the library, and the packages of books would arrive from the post office. I usually got two (and on rare occasions three) books at a time. When I mailed them back, more would come. I loved getting the big fragrant volumes to read whenever and wherever I liked.

I told my mother one summer's day when I was fourteen that I would very much like to visit the library. To my amazement she said that I could go. My younger brothers, Max and Matt, who were eleven and nine, planned to go with me. I was responsible for watching over them and seeing that they and I did not get into trouble. I saved my allowance until I had enough money for a bus ticket. The Greyhound bus stopped at a little bookstore in our town. We went to the station and bought bus tickets to travel to Des Moines. We knew that we would be visiting an important government facility, so we dressed in our Sunday clothes.

The bus depot in Des Moines was only a couple of blocks from the library for the blind in those days. We arrived there in a little more than an hour, and we found our way to the building housing the books. The receptionist directed us to the fourth floor, where we met library personnel. They seemed bemused that a blind kid would visit the library without being accompanied by an adult. They showed me the stacks, and I began to look joyously through the rows upon rows of Braille books. After a time one of the staff members at the library brought me a chair. I selected a volume and sat down to read it. My brothers, who were through enjoying the library in a very short time and who were tired of watching me read books, said that they would go outside to look around. I said this would be all right but that the bus for our return trip was leaving shortly after four o'clock. I urged them to be back in time for us to catch it, and they said that they would be there. They left me, and I spent the remainder of the day reading Braille.

When my brothers returned shortly before four o'clock, they told me that they had explored the state capitol building and climbed all of the stairs to the top of the dome. We had spent all of our money to buy the bus tickets to come to Des Moines. We were penniless, and we had not had the forethought to bring any lunch. However, I was permitted to borrow two books from the library. On the bus ride home, we were hungry but satisfied with our adventure, and I had two new books to read.

At the school for the blind those of us in the first grade who had very little remaining vision were taught Braille. We started by studying flash cards, but fairly soon we graduated to the “Dick and Jane” book. Sixteen of us were in the class arranged in two rows of eight. My desk was the sixth one from the front in the first row. We were told to open our books to page one. The teacher asked the first student in the first row to read the Braille page. When the student had trouble reading the Braille, the teacher corrected the errors made by the student. Then the teacher called upon the second student in the row and again corrected the errors that student made. Before the teacher came to me, we had been through this exercise five times. When my turn came, the teacher asked me to read page one. I put my fingers on the page and spoke the words that were there. I was called to the front of the room, praised, and given a gold star to paste onto page one of my book.

We lived more than a hundred miles from the school. On weekends my father came to pick me up for the drive to our home. When he appeared in our first-grade class on Friday afternoon, my teacher advised me to take my book home with me to show to my mother. My mother had learned Braille because she thought she might need to know it to communicate with me or to help me with my homework. I carried my book with me on our trip home; I explained what had happened in class; and I showed my mother my gold star. However, my mother is a suspicious woman. She asked if she could borrow my book, and I gave it to her. Later during the weekend she brought me a piece of Braille paper with words on it, and she asked me to read it. When I told her that I could not, she explained to me that it was an exact copy of page one of my book.

When I had completed the first grade, during the summer months, my mother took me in hand. She decided that I was to learn Braille. For an hour each day she taught me to read. I objected. My brothers didn't have homework during the summer; I was the only one. But my mother insisted, and I had no alternative. By the end of that summer I had learned to read. I returned to the school for the blind in the fall, and I discovered the school library. By the time I had finished the fifth grade, I had read every book in the school library that the librarian would let me have. Some of the books in the library were too advanced for me, she said. I have wondered ever since what they were.

I have read Braille to myself for study and pleasure; I have read Braille to my children; I have read Braille to judges in courts of appeals; and I have read Braille to tens of thousands of blind people. My mother taught me to read it, but the librarians gave me the chance to become efficient with it and to learn the thoughts of great minds by reading it. Perhaps it is possible to do the work that I have undertaken without Braille, but I don't know how it could be done. I have sometimes heard people argue that libraries are a luxury, but I cannot imagine how anybody with perspective could believe this.

During my time at the university, I sat with Thucydides’ *Peloponnesian War* under my hands, and I heard in my mind the stentorian tones of Pericles's *Funeral Oration*. Later I studied the clauses of the United States Constitution in the same way, and I wondered what they had meant to Abraham Lincoln. History is the record of what people have done. Literature is the record of what people have thought. Poetry is the record of the song of the spirit. In 1776 Adam Smith wrote *The Wealth of Nations*, declaring that this wealth is based upon labor and the efficient methods of using it. At about the same time Benjamin Franklin said that, if you want to be remembered, you should do something of sufficient importance that somebody else will want to write about it or write something worth reading. Much of the wealth of nations is contained between the covers of books. The librarians are charged with maintaining this wealth.

Within the last two years a substantial argument has raged regarding the importance of the Books for the Blind program, now known as the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Should the technology employed in this service be upgraded to provide access to recorded material in digital form? Is the library of sufficient value to justify expenditures for continuing present services and for upgrading those that have not kept pace with the developing needs of the blind community and with modern technology? The answers to such questions depend on the estimated value of the population to be served. If the intended population will not read the books, or if (even if they read the books) the people who get them will accomplish nothing or almost nothing with the information, little is lost if the library fails to provide the service that might be expected from it. On the other hand, if those who read the books gain potential thereby and undertake development of intellectual property and socially useful programs, depriving this population of reading material is not only a dramatic mistake but an act equivalent to gross and intentional negligence. It is equivalent to discarding a valuable commodity, and it diminishes the society in which we live. This is no small matter; it affects the lives, the futures, and the destinies of an entire class of human beings.

Will the lives of this group of human beings be stultified, diminished, belittled, or circumscribed? Or, on the other hand, will they be expanded, encouraged, and enlivened? One of the most common experiences encountered by any blind person is to be told to wait. The lives of blind people are important, yes, but not as important as something else. Wait. We will get to you. We will get to you as soon as the current emergency has come to an end. We will get to you as soon as the other priorities have been met. We will get to you when the important things have been managed. Wait. Is it any wonder that sometimes blind people feel that something needs to be done now? Is it any wonder that blind people have trouble understanding why everything else seems to be important, but our lives can be conveniently moved to the back burner? Is it any wonder that after a time restiveness becomes a primary characteristic of this so frequently underserved population? Is it any wonder that, when the National Library Service determines that a modest sum is needed to give us literacy, we feel betrayed by public officials who tell us that, one more time, our right to read must be postponed?

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped serves in excess of 700,000 blind people in the United States. Estimates are that 1.3 million blind people live in the United States. Well over 50 percent of the target population uses the services of this program. This rate of use of the Library for the Blind is substantially higher than the rate of use of libraries for the sighted. These numbers may reflect the reality that the only substantial source of readily available reading matter for the blind is the National Library Service.

Experience indicates that blind people read in the neighborhood of thirty books per year on average. This is many, many times the number of books read by the average sighted person. Blindness is a tremendous social disadvantage and a moderate physical one. However, literacy is a way to compensate for the disadvantage. In the 1950s Dr. Jacobus tenBroek, then president of the National Federation of the Blind, estimated that between 1 and 3 percent of blind people were employed. At the time of the founding of the National Federation of the Blind in 1940, the employment rate for the blind was under 1 percent. Today it is estimated that as many as 30 percent of blind people are employed. This is at least ten times as many as were estimated to have employment in the 1950s. The difference may be measured in rehabilitation programs for the blind and in library service, with the greatest emphasis on library service.

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped was established more than seventy-five years ago. The standard of excellence that it has enforced in the production of Braille materials and in the creation of recorded documents is the envy of programs serving the blind throughout the world. This standard is so thoroughly met by the National Library Service that it has become an article of faith. If material is produced by the Library, it is right. If it is produced by the National Library Service, it is good. A book from the Library will be without error. Can this standard be universally met? Of course exceptions occur, but this high standard is so frequently a part of the Library program that the occasional error is an aberration.

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is committed to producing materials in Braille that are second to none in quality. This program also produces recorded matter of exceptional quality. Historically the Library has been committed to ensuring that the best available long-term technology is incorporated in the production of materials. Today the transformation to the Digital Talking Book is a high priority. The National Library Service believes that it has a fundamental contribution to make to the growth of opportunity for the blind of the nation, and its commitment to quality has never been compromised. The network of libraries throughout the nation that provide most of the distribution of materials to patrons has demonstrated the same commitment to quality and excellence. The people who have produced the materials, distributed the books, repaired the machines, answered the questions, and offered an encouraging word have enhanced literacy and changed lives.

Literacy has meant that blind people have capacity, but it has even greater significance. The literacy of blind people has provided a mechanism for the blind to gain inspiration and hope. We read of what others have done, and we imagine how we can do likewise. A book in the hand today frequently means an act of courage in the future. This is what library service has meant to us—more reading, more recreation, more participation in community activities, more education, more employment, more contemplation of a brighter tomorrow, more building, more joy! All of this comes from the Library, and we thank you for the enormous, the incalculable contributions you have made.

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**Recipes**

**This month’s recipes come from the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona.**

**Braised Cabbage with Apples and Bacon**

**by Bob Kresmer**

**Bob Kresmer has been president of our Arizona Affiliate for the past ten years. He is a retired rehabilitation teacher.**

**Ingredients:**

1 medium green cabbage, cored, quartered, and cut into 1/8-inch slices

4 slices bacon, diced

1 red onion cut into 1/8-inch-thick slices

1 teaspoon salt

2 Cortland or other tart apples, peeled, cored, and cut into 1/8-inch slices

2 teaspoons cider vinegar

3 tablespoons light brown sugar

2 tablespoons apple cider

**Method:** Cook bacon until crisp. Add onion and cook until soft. Add cabbage, salt, and cider; cover and cook about two minutes. Stir in apple, sugar and vinegar; cook until cabbage is soft but apples retain shape, about ten minutes. Serves four.

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**Double Date Loaf**

**by Lynn Kresmer**

**Lynn Kresmer is a member of our Tucson chapter, and is working as a rehabilitation teacher at the Southwestern Veterans Blind Rehabilitation Center in Tucson.**

**Ingredients:**

1 cup Medjool dates, chopped

1 cup boiling water

2 teaspoons baking soda

1 cup Miracle Whip salad dressing

1 cup sugar

1 egg, beaten well

1 teaspoon salt

2 cups flour

1 cup pecan pieces (optional)

1 teaspoon vanilla

**Method:** Cut up dates and pour water mixed with baking soda over the dates. Refrigerate while mixing the rest. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix Miracle Whip, sugar, egg, and scant teaspoon of salt. Add dates and water, mix. Mix in flour, pecans, and vanilla. Grease a 9-by-13-inch pan. Spread batter evenly into baking pan, bake for about an hour. Top of loaf will break open as it bakes, and it can be tested with a toothpick.

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**Dirt Dessert**

**by Debi Chatfield**

**Debi Chatfield is a long time member of our East Valley chapter, a member of the National Association of Blind Veterans, and is the editor of the monthly newsletter, *Arizona News and Views*.**

**Ingredients:**

1 stick butter, softened

1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened

1 cup confectioner’s sugar (powdered sugar)

1 teaspoon vanilla

3 1/2 cups milk

2 small packages instant vanilla, white, or milk chocolate pudding

1 12-ounce Cool Whip

1 package of original Oreos

**Method:** Crush Oreos by placing them in a plastic Ziploc bag, about twenty at a time, and roll a can over the bag. Set aside crushed cookies in a separate bowl. Mix softened butter and cream cheese with a wire whisk. Add confectioner’s sugar and vanilla and set mixture aside. In larger, separate bowl, mix milk and pudding. Stir until thickened. Fold in Cool Whip, then fold in butter mixture. In glass dessert dish or gardening pot (see below) layer by starting with mixture, then add the cookies and continuing until everything is gone, ending with crushed cookies on top. Refrigerate overnight.

To make this extra special, place dessert in an actual gardening pot. You can purchase either a plastic or pretty ceramic pot just to use for this recipe. Gummy worms can be added before the last layer of cookie crumbs, and extend out onto the top layer, but not necessary! You can also put an artificial flower in the middle of the pot for added effect. It really looks like dirt, especially when it is in a gardening container. It is a big hit when brought to the picnics and potlucks. But, most importantly, it is really yummy. Enjoy!

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**Frank’s Redhot Buffalo Chicken Dip**

**by Nikki Jeffords**

**Nikki is a member of the West Valley chapter of the NFB of Arizona. This is an easy and delicious recipe that she has made for family functions, potlucks, and work parties. Every time she takes it somewhere new, it is the most popular dish, with many requests to bring it again.**

**Ingredients:**

2 cups shredded cooked chicken

1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened

1/2 cup FRANK'S RedHot® Original Cayenne Pepper Sauce or FRANK'S RedHot® Buffalo Wings Sauce

1/2 cup blue cheese or ranch dressing

1/2 cup crumbled blue cheese or your favorite shredded cheese

**Method:** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine all ingredients and spoon into shallow one-quart baking dish. Bake twenty minutes, or until mixture is heated through; stir. Garnish with chopped green onions if desired. Serve with tortilla chips, crackers, and/or vegetables.

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[PHOTO CAPTION: Janna Peyton]

**Nine Can Taco Soup**

**by Janna Peyton**

**Janna Peyton is a longtime member of our Tucson chapter. She has taken responsibilities for senior recreation, crafts, and organized tours and outings.**

**Ingredients:**

1 can drained black beans

1 can drained pinto beans (Mexican style)

1 can Ro-Tel tomatoes

1 can drained Mexican style corn

1 can cream of chicken soup, as is

1 can red or green enchilada sauce

1 can chicken broth

2 cans of prepared chicken (tuna-sized cans)

One package of taco seasoning

**Method:** Combine all in crock pot and cook on low for two hours, until it is hot enough for your taste. Garnish with tortilla chips, black olives, green onions, Mexican cheese, or whatever you fancy.

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***Monitor* Miniatures**

**News from the Federation Family**

**Blind Parents Needed:**

Are you a blind parent, grandparent, foster parent, or caregiver for children? Would you be interested in passing along your knowledge and giving your support to a parent, grandparent, or other caregiver who also happens to be blind? If so, the National Federation of the Blind needs you! If you are willing to serve as a mentor to an expecting parent, a current parent who is seeking support, a grandparent, or someone else who plans to provide extended care for children, please send an email to Melissa Riccobono at <[parenting@nfb.org](mailto:parenting@nfb.org)>.

As you know, the National Federation of the Blind is the leading advocate for the rights of blind parents and the largest resource network for blind people who are considering being parents. We are continuing to build our resources in this area, and the next step is to formalize a program of mentoring. Mentors will follow-up with individuals they are assigned to mentor and will be asked for ideas about other resources needed to strengthen the network of education, support, and advocacy the National Federation of the Blind provides to blind parents, grandparents, and other caregivers.

If you are an individual who would be interested in being matched with a mentor, please send an email to <[parenting@nfb.org](mailto:parenting@nfb.org)>. This program is in its beginning stages, but we will do all we can to match you with a mentor as soon as possible.

Finally, please watch for future announcements regarding our Blind Parents Initiative. The National Federation of the Blind wants to gather data and develop truly useful resources for parents who happen to be blind, but in order to do this we will need your help and feedback. We will have at least one survey we will need people to complete, and there may also be opportunities to participate in focus groups, share techniques in short videos, write reviews for particularly helpful or accessible children's products and toys, and much more. We look forward to hearing from you and having you help us build a variety of tools to empower blind parents as they live the lives they want with their children.

**Volunteers Needed for Braille Book Fair:**

The Braille Book Fair (BBF) has become one of the highlights of the convention for many teachers, parents, blind kids, blind parents, and adult beginning-Braille readers. But the event could not take place without the help of many dedicated, talented volunteers. And that's where you come in. As a past worker or simply an interested supporter of the Braille Book Fair, I hope you can either volunteer or give me the contact information for someone that you recommend.

You do not need to work the entire afternoon or evening, but I do ask that you try to work an entire shift. We especially need people who will be helping customers to come *before* we open the doors at 5:00 p.m. and to commit to staying until at least 6:30 p.m. Book lovers are great for this shift since you will assist visitors in book decisions/selections.

Shift times are as follows: set-up is 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., 12:00 to 2:00 p.m., and 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.; the event is 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.; clean-up is 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. The room we will use has not yet been assigned, so please see the NFB convention agenda.

If you can help, please contact Sandra Oliver, NOPBC Board Member, at (713) 825-4573 or by email at <[Sandra.Oliver@ey.com](mailto:Sandra.Oliver@ey.com)>. If you contact me using email, please provide the following information: Yes, I can work the following shift(s) ...; my cell phone number that I will have at convention is . . .; I live in (state); or maybe, I’ll check my schedule, but if possible my preference is to work these hours . . .; Braille skills (including if you read by touch or by sight as a sighted person). Note: if you are a parent of a blind child under the age of eighteen (or still in high school or below), we know that you will want to attend the NOPBC annual meeting which takes place just before the BBF, but we would welcome you to work either during the event or on the clean-up shift after the event.

**In Brief**

**Notices and information in this section may be of interest to *Monitor* readers. We are not responsible for the accuracy of the information; we have edited only for space and clarity.**

**Disney Offers Special Ticket Pricing to the World Blind Union/ICEVI General Assembly:**

Disney World is offering attendees of the World Blind Union/ICEVI General Assembly special ticket pricing, including pre- or post-conference stays. These special offers include after 3 p.m. tickets, which allow you to visit a single park after 3 p.m., or you can add the Park Hopper Option so you can visit multiple parks in one evening; specially priced multi-day tickets that offer pre-arrival savings of 10 percent and are not available at Walt Disney World ticket windows. Buy a two-day or longer full-day ticket, and receive one free admission to an additional Disney experience including a visit to either of Disney’s water parks, Blizzard Beach or Typhoon Lagoon, or a round of miniature golf at Disney’s Winter Summerland miniature golf, Disney’s Fantasia Gardens miniature golf, Disney’s Oak Trail golf course (Disney’s nine-hole walking course), or ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex.

The deadline to purchase tickets through this special offer is August 21, 2016. To purchase tickets, either visit <<https://www.mydisneymeetings.com/nfbice16>>**,** or call (407) 566-5600.

**Perkins Brailler Repair:**

Bring your Perkins Brailler back to life. The Selective Doctor Inc. specializes in the repair of Perkins Braillers and also sells reconditioned Perkins Braillers. The totally reconditioned Braillers sell for $450 for a manual Brailler and $550 for an electric Brailler. All Braillers are guaranteed. Repairs for the Perkins Braillers are $65 for labor on a manual Brailler, plus the cost of parts. You can send your Brailler to: The Selective Doctor Inc., P.O. Box 571, Manchester, MD 21102 using the US Postal Service. Free Matter for the Blind is accepted. It is recommended that you insure it, but it is not necessary. After the repair is completed we will send it back to you with the invoice and will insure it for $400. The premium presently is $5.50, and this will be added to your invoice. For more information, please call (410) 668-1143 or email <[braillerrepair@yahoo.com](mailto:braillerrepair@yahoo.com)>. You can also check out our website at <<http://www.selectivedoctor.com./>>.

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NFB Pledge

I pledge to participate actively in the efforts of the National Federation of the Blind to achieve equality, opportunity, and security for the blind; to support the policies and programs of the Federation; and to abide by its constitution.