**Returning to the Rapids:**

**Thriving, Educating, and Celebrating Together**

2022 Annual State Convention

National Federation of the Blind of Michigan

Michael Powell, President

Friday, November 4, 2022 – Sunday, November 6, 2022

Sheraton Grand Rapids Airport Hotel & Conference Center

5700 28th St. SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49546

(616) 957-1770

# **Message from the President**

Greetings to everyone as we join together for our first in person state convention since 2019. The fact that our gatherings always resemble a family reunion has a special significance this year. Not only are we celebrating our reunion, we are also emerging out of the isolation that, despite some difficulties, did not prevent us from continuing our mission of living the lives we want and being a strong voice for the blind people of Michigan these past two years.

This year you will notice an emphasis on families as we learn and grow in our philosophy as we deliberate over matters to adopt policies and positions to ensure blind people are included when new services, programs, and products are introduced to the general public. It is also essential that we as the organized blind have a major voice in the programs and services that have a direct impact on our lives.

All too often the sighted world, and this includes some who work with the blind, presume to understand the needs of blind people. However, with a limited understanding of what blindness really is and what it is not, many people who mean well and say they have our best interests at heart spend a lot of time and energy trying to develop empathy for our situation by closing their eyes to simulate being blind. This makes them feel as though they can somehow appreciate what we go through every day as blind people when the truth is this only leads to distorted images of blindness and low expectations for blind people.

These well-meaning people have no idea what constitutes a competent and capable blind person living a normal life with blindness being only one of many characteristics a person can possess. Because of their bias and misconceptions, they see blindness and blind people only in terms of the amount of vision a person either has lost, or by what little vision remains. In other words, we are all alike because we are blind, and the more vision we have, the better off we are considered to be.

In my message last year, I mentioned that the National federation of the blind has what we call a functional definition of blindness. It has nothing to do with how much usable vision a person may or may not possess. In our organization, a person is considered blind when he or she needs to use alternative techniques to get things done that would be done with vision if the person had it. I say “needs” because many people who are losing their eyesight still attempt to function visually when the use of nonvisual skills could serve them better.

We in the National Federation of the blind have come to believe that regular contact with members of our organization who use the skills and techniques of blindness on a daily basis reinforces a new constructive set of positive beliefs and attitudes based on training, practice and our collective experience. Any remaining vision a person may have could then be used where it could do the most good since the person would no longer be totally dependent on their limited eyesight.

We are blind people, not broken sighted people. We do not see ourselves as trying to make the best out of a bad situation. Rather, we are people who have devoted time and energy in developing new ways of thinking about blindness and testing the limits of what blindness really is and what it is not as we learn to be competent and capable blind people.

We have determined that only we can set the course for our own future and anyone who presumes to tell us what they think our needs are can never know blindness as well as we do. Therefore, anyone seeking the truth about blind people should consult the National Federation of the Blind which is the largest and strongest voice of blind people. Through our collective experience, policies and positions on matters involving our lives we are the most qualified to speak on these matters and we will speak for ourselves and will not allow anyone else to speak for us.

Many times sighted people want to protect us from what they perceive as our condition as they feel they are somehow minimizing the effects of blindness by adding certain features to a product for our benefit. For example, a cookware product designer researching ways to help people with disabilities as part of a college class believed that a spoon nesting feature should be incorporated into the design of their product. It was their belief that a blind person could not locate utensils on their own while cooking without the special feature in their product.

While this feature may be convenient, why is it necessary for the blind cook to have this feature rather than a sighted cook? The student designers give us the answer. They” narrowed down the five most common fears of cooking while blind: time, temperature, pan location, spoon nesting, and being hands-on.” I cannot help but wonder why most studies like this always describe the kitchen as a place of fear and trepidation for blind people.

This would certainly not have made me feel excited about learning, cooking, or being blind. Why do they constantly seek the input of blind subjects who are the least capable of providing them with accurate information about being blind? Those who are relatively new to blindness have not yet developed any level of proficiency and confidence through training and experience to become comfortable with the mastery of new skills.

What if these college researchers and the blind people they study could meet the National Federation of the Blind? What a difference it would make. This is why we have to do all we can to reach those blind people and their families who have never known our message or been given our perspective. This is why we are all about learning, growing and giving back. All these things work together and the more we do them the bigger and better we become.

At this convention we celebrate our right to live in the world. We are fully capable of belonging to this world and we will contribute to it by investing time in ourselves and others who become blind. As we learn, work and grow in the NFB we affirm that we indeed have the capacity to live an active and productive life which is another way of saying, “live the life you want, blindness is not what holds you back.”

So as our national president Mark Riccobono invites us, “Let’s go build the National Federation of the Blind. Let us transform our dreams into reality.”

Michael Powell, President

# **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.

# **NFB Branding Message**

The National Federation of the Blind knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back.

# **Tell Your Friends**

We encourage you to talk about the convention with your friends on social media. Our official hash tag is #NFBMI22.

# **Convention Registration**

We encourage everyone to register for the convention. Everyone who registers for the convention will be eligible to win door prizes that will be given away throughout the convention. Additionally, current members of a local chapter or state division in Michigan will be eligible to vote during resolutions and elections.

Limited banquet tickets will be available for purchase at the convention. Registration is $20 and banquet tickets are $55. Registration is open in the General Ballroom Foyer on Friday evening from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm and Saturday morning from 8:00 am to 8:45 am.

# **Quiet and Safe Space Room**

Cheboygan Room

We understand people may need a few moments of peace and quiet throughout the convention. Whatever your reason may be, we have reserved a quiet and safe space for you. Please feel free to visit the Cheboygan Room throughout the weekend whenever you need a few moments of peace and quiet. Please be respectful of other people who may be using the quiet and safe space room.

# **Inclusivity, Diversity, and Code of Conduct**

We are committed to providing a welcoming, safe, and healthy environment for everyone. Thank you for cultivating an atmosphere of mutual respect where participants from diverse backgrounds can learn, network, and share with each other. We are committed to diversity, equity, and the free expression of ideas. These principles have been outlined in our Code of Conduct found at https://nfb.org/codeofconduct.

We recognize a shared responsibility to create and uphold an inclusive atmosphere for the benefit of all. Prohibited behaviors include harassment, sexual misconduct, and inappropriate use of the NFB virtual convention platform. Prohibited behavior or misuse of the platform will not be tolerated and may result in removal from the convention and other consequences.

For assistance or to report an incident at the convention, please call

(410) 659-9314, extension 2475, or email [code@nfb.org](mailto:code@nfb.org). All reports will be fully investigated according to the steps outlined in our code of conduct. Thank you for doing your part to contribute to our community and the high expectations we strive to maintain at all our events.

# **Door Prizes**

Door prizes will be drawn periodically throughout the convention during general sessions on Saturday, Sunday, and during the banquet. Anyone is eligible to win a door prize if they are registered for the convention and are present in the room when their name is called for a door prize.

# **Friday, November 4, 2022**

## **1:00 pm – 6:00 pm Exhibit Hall–General Ballroom Foyer**

Stop by our exhibit hall with a variety of companies and vendors who are eager to share their latest products and services with you. See some of the most up-to-date in access technology, learn about services that may benefit you, and purchase some great products.

## **2:00 pm – 4:00 pm Self-Defense Seminar – Breakout Room**

Ontario and Erie Rooms

Steve Handschu, Self-Defense Instructor, Detroit Chapter, National Federation of the Blind of Michigan

Can blind people defend themselves effectively? Yes we can. This seminar will introduce affective self-defense training techniques for blind people by blind people. Learn how to defuse, avoid, and protect yourself in difficult situations.

## **4:00 pm – 6:00 pm Resolutions Committee Meeting – Breakout Room**

**Petoskey and Mackinac Rooms**

Steve Handschu, Resolutions Committee Chairperson, National federation of the Blind of Michigan

Do you believe the National Federation of the blind should take a specific position on an issue? Please bring your ideas and resolutions to this meeting. This is where the policies of the organization take place. Everyone is welcome to attend. Please try to submit resolutions in writing prior to the state convention to Chairperson Steve Handschu at [stephenhandshu@gmail.com](mailto:stephenhandshu@gmail.com).

## 4:00 - 7:00 PM Registration –General Ballroom Foyer

We encourage everyone to register for the convention. Limited banquet tickets will be available for purchase at the convention. Registration is $20 and banquet tickets are $55.

## **8:00 pm – 11:00 pm White Cane Karaoke – General Ballroom**

Michigan, Superior, and Huron Rooms

General Admission $20

Join the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan as we return to the rapids and celebrate the return of our state wide community of blind parents, students, educators, chapter members, and allies.

Our Annual hospitality event combines family-friendly fun and chances for more to celebrate. Enjoy the vibes of lilting tones from your peers, jam out to the music by Southwest Michigan’s own DJ Ironic, or enjoy a drink at our cash bar. We can’t wait to celebrate with one of the winners of our door prizes, which will be announced throughout the event!

Our theme is “Returning in Rouge,” so wear something in the family of red to represent love. To make your live request and perform, simply text your name, song choice and artist live at the event to (616) 536-1694.

# **Saturday, November 5, 2022**

## **8:00 am – 8:45 am Registration –General Ballroom Foyer**

We encourage everyone to register for the convention. Limited banquet tickets will be available for purchase at the convention. Registration is $20 and banquet tickets are $55.

## **9:00 am – 12:00 pm Opening General Session – General Ballroom**

Michigan, Superior, and Huron Rooms

9:00 am Call to Order and Welcoming Remarks, Michael Powell, President, National Federation of the blind of Michigan

9:20 am A Few Words from Our National Office, Pan Allen, First-Vice President, National Federation of the Blind, and Executive Director, Louisiana Center for the Blind

9:50 am Introducing the 2022 Scholarship Finalist, Sabrina Simmons Scholarship Committee Chairperson, National Federation of the Blind of Michigan

10:00 am The ongoing commitment to education of the blind and Low Vision, Pat Love, Education Consultant, Michigan Department of Education Low Incidents Outreach

10:20 am Report from Bureau of Services for Blind Persons, Lisa Kisiel, BSPP Director of Field Services; Scott Lacey, Assistant Director, BSBP Training Center; Shannon McVoy, BSBP Transition Services Manager

10:50 am Inside Perspectives on the Business Enterprise Program, Zach Eagle, and Member Elected Operators Committee

11:05am Careers in the field of rehabilitation at Western Michigan University, Elyse Coners, PhD. CVRT, COMS, Associate Professor Department of Blindness and low Vision studies

11:20 am Sharing Our Collective Story: Reasons Why I Joined the National Federation of the blind, Tara Morgan, Board Member, National Federation of the blind of Michigan; J.J. Meddaugh, First-Vice President, National Federation of the Blind of Michigan; Felecia Bradford, Secretary, Flint Chapter, National Federation of the Blind of Michigan

11:50 am New Innovations in Navigation Assistive Technology, James Bloomfield, President and CEO, Hearsee Mobility

12:00 pm Adjourn for Lunch

## **1:00 pm – 5:00 pm Afternoon Breakout Sessions**

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm Hearsee Mobility User Feedback Session – General Ballroom Foyer

Hearsee Mobility is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization created to develop navigation assistive technology tools to help the Blind and Low Vision navigate in indoor and outdoor environments. We have been working with leaders in the community to develop a product that meets the navigation needs of the blind and low vision community. Please stop by and provide feedback on our product.

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm Braille Carnival- Breakout Room

Ontario and Erie Rooms

Event Generously Sponsored by the Baiardi Family Foundation

The National Federation of the Blind of Michigan promotes braille literacy and enrichment because it is connected to academic and vocational success.

Join our membership as we highlight the different ways braille can be effectively used in activities of daily life. Our braille instruction, leisure, literacy and technology stations provide information for braille learners or users of all ages.

Work on your reading speed, learn about community and state resources, or create connections with other braille users that have the potential to create future opportunities for everyone.

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm Self-Defense Seminar – Breakout Room

Petoskey and Mackinac Rooms

Steve Handschu, Self-Defense Instructor, Detroit Chapter, National Federation of the Blind of Michigan

Can blind people defend themselves effectively? Yes we can. This seminar will introduce affective self-defense training techniques for blind people by blind people. Learn how to defuse, avoid, and protect yourself in difficult situations.

2:00 pm – 3:00 pm Advocacy at Every Age – General Ballroom

Michigan, Superior, and Huron Rooms

Session Facilitated by Robert. Parsons, MA, CRC, CVRT, LLPC, Board Member, National Federation of the Blind of Michigan

The National Federation of the Blind believes advocacy is an important tool for creating opportunities for growth and independence. Learn how various individuals use advocacy at different stages of life to accomplish goals and turn dreams into reality.

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm Blind Michigan Seniors Advocating for Seniors Annual Division Meeting –General Ballroom

Michigan, Superior, and Huron Rooms

Session Facilitated by Patricia Pyle, President, Blind Michigan Seniors Advocating for seniors

Are you losing your eyesight as you settle into retirement and wondering how to deal with your vision loss as you enter into your golden years of life? Or have you been blind your whole life and are looking to meet other blind people who share some of the same goals and interests as you? Please join the senior division as they hold their annual meeting to pay annual dues, meet other members, and discuss general goals and directions of the division.

4:00 pm – 5:00 pm Stronger Together: Federation Membership Building and Chapter Development –General Ballroom

Michigan, Superior, and Huron Rooms

Session Facilitated by Rachel Newland, Vice-President, At Large Chapter, National Federation of the Blind of Michigan

Are you new to the National Federation of the Blind? Or a long-time member interested in learning how to build a stronger organization? Hear various members explain the fundamentals of Federation membership and the important role of participating at the local, state, and federal levels of the organization. This is an interactive session, so please bring your questions to illustrate the diverse roles of the Federation.

6:00 pm Happy Hour Social Hour – General ballroom Foyer

## **7:00 pm –10:00 pm Banquet General Session – General Ballroom**

Michigan, Superior, and Huron Rooms

INVOCATION

INTRODUCTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Keynote Address, Pam Allen, First-Vice President, National Federation of the Blind, and Executive Director, Louisiana Center for the Blind

Scholarship Awards Presentation, Sabrina Simmons, Scholarship Committee Chairperson, National Federation of the Blind of Michigan

Auction and door prizes, Donna Posont, Door Prize and Auction Chairperson, National Federation of the blind of Michigan

10:00 pm Banquet and Auction Adjourn

# **Sunday, November 6, 2022**

## **9:00 am – 12:00 pm Business General Session – General Ballroom**

Michigan, Superior, and Huron Rooms

President’s Report - Michael Powell

Secretary’s report - Diana Mohnke

Treasurer’s Report - Mark Eagle

Convention Voting Logistics

Election of Board Members

Delegate and Alternate Delegate for 2023 National Convention

Resolutions – Steve Handschu

2023Washington Seminar

2023National Convention

2023 NFB of Michigan Convention

State Division Reports: Seniors

Chapter Reports:

Capital Region, Jackson, Wayne County, Detroit, Flint, At Large

Old and new business

# **Convention Sponsors**

Baiardi Family Foundation

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# **Thank You!**

Thank you for participating in the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan 2022 state convention. We hope to see you again next year at the 2023 state convention, or at your next local chapter or division meeting.