**THE BLIND MISSOURIAN**

**November, 2011**

**National Federation of the Blind of Missouri**

**Gary L. Wunder, President**

**3910 Tropical Lane**

**Columbia, MO 65202**

**Phone: 573-874-1774**

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Coping with Vision Loss: Finding Your Way

When Your World Is Turned Upside Down

By Debbie Wunder

 I was born back in the 1950's, but unlike many other blind persons, I wasn't one of the preemies. I was born with congenital cataracts and often with congenital cataracts you develop other eye conditions such as glaucoma, problems with the cornea, and various other diseases of the eye.

If you knew my history, you wouldn’t think that blindness would be new to me because I was born blind. I went to public school up until the middle of my fourth-grade year, when my parents were finally able to get me into the school for the blind. First of all, I never knew I was blind. I knew I couldn't see a lot of things and sometimes, in my early years of school, I felt I was a bad child because of what I couldn't see. I remember in the second grade, one of the things that we did in the public school classroom was to look at spelling words on the board and make sentences out of them before we could go out to recess. I know some of you will find this hard to believe, but once upon a time in my life I was a really shy person. By the time I was in the second grade I had already had nine eye surgeries and had all of the visual signs that you would think an educator would pick up on to suggest that I was blind. When I would sit in the classroom and squint and take my glasses on and off, it never occurred to me or the people who watched me that I was blind. Since nobody ever said I was blind, I would look around and see that everyone else in the classroom was able to do their assignment. I said to myself that I'm just not doing this right. There was no one else I knew to talk to who was just like me. When it came time to go out to recess, I wouldn't have my spelling words done and I couldn't understand why the teacher, observing all of these visual problems, couldn't see that she had a blind child. Certainly I was not a disruptive child; I just couldn't get all of the work done.

I was fortunate because my grandmother, my dad's mom, went on a church outing to the Missouri School for the Blind. She came back and told my young parents about this wonderful place. My mother got married when she was sixteen and my father was just eighteen. At first my parents didn't understand. They knew that I was hard of seeing and that sometimes I had problems, but they never once had the idea I was blind. My mom, bless her heart, was a Federationist even though she didn't know about the Federation. She decided that what I needed was large print and did enough research to figure out where large print books could be had. She then ushered up the courage to go to the school principal and ask that the school buy the books. When she was told that there was no place in the budget to buy extra books for a special student, my mom asked to talk to the principal's supervisor. The principal told my mom he didn't have a supervisor. My mom promptly told him that everybody had a supervisor all the way up to God.

You know my mom was the biggest champion in my life, and she still is, even though she didn't really understand blindness either. My grandma finally convinced my parents that I needed to go to the school for the blind. At first, the school didn't want me because I had vision. This was a time when society was trying to mainstream its blind children. The school for the blind couldn't believe that someone who was already being mainstreamed wanted to go there. When we went to the school for the blind for an interview, one of the questions I was asked was "How well can you read?" I looked straight at them, with my nine-year-old eyes, and said "well, it depends on how hard the words are." Of course, what they wanted to know was how well I could read print, and at that time I was a pretty good print reader. I could see the words in my large print book; what I couldn't see were the words written on the board. When I came to the school for the blind, the theory was that if you had vision you should use that vision and so I was still encouraged to read print. Of course, print was valuable to me, a valuable tool in my toolbox, but the school for the blind never thought about adding tools I could use in addition to print. I remember on the evening I graduated from the school for the blind. I was approached by my Bureau for the Blind counselor and her husband. She congratulated me on how lucky I was because I didn't look blind. The message, both at the school for the blind and in the rehabilitation program, was that my greatest reward would come from what I could see and how well I could hide being blind.

When I was growing up I was lucky. I heard about the Federation and I heard about the Council, but I was also unlucky because a lot of the adults at the school for the blind were in the Council and mostly I thought to myself "I don't want to hang out with a bunch of old blind people." People kept asking me to come to the Federation and finally I got tricked into going to my first meeting. Thank God I did. It was then that I met people like John and Rhoda Dower, John and Susan Ford, and many many more people who started planting a seed in me that would help me find my way in life. I finally came to accept that I was a blind person. However, I have to tell you, that as much as I believed in John and Rhoda and all of you, and all the organization does, says, and works on, it wasn't until three years ago when I began to lose most of my vision that I realized I didn't know some very important things I really needed to know about being blind.

Three years ago I started having more eye problems. and we started the first of what would be many many surgeries. Not only did I want to preserve the vision I had, I wanted to do something about the ever present pain in my eye. I first had laser surgery for glaucoma pressure. and it was then that they found my eye didn't react well to laser treatments. My surgeon said "I've done this surgery for twenty-five years and this is the first time I've ever experienced this kind of problem."

I am listening to him and thinking to myself "neither have I." The next surgery I had was for the placement of a valve in my eye to relieve the ever-rising pressure of glaucoma. That particular surgery seemed to work and gave me some relief from the eye pressure. Then my cornea decided "I'm so tired of all of this stuff it's my turn to get some attention." So, in the last three years, I've gone through four cornea transplants.

I have to tell you that I didn't go down this road because I was looking for great vision. All of us have heard some of the stories about blind people getting good vision. That was never ever the thing that motivated me. What I was looking for was relief from the pain resulting from the blistering of the cornea.

As my cornea began to die, the vision in what we then called my good eye, the eye that allowed me to read print, tell that my blouse was yellow, and sometimes find things on the floor, grew ever worse. Even though I consider myself a blind person and certainly was more blind than sighted, this vision I previously had was helpful. I had been comfortable in my zone and in my box. I knew how to live there, but I also knew that people like Susan Ford and my best friend, my husband, knew how to live as totally blind people. I had learned all the things to say. I knew what all of the techniques were supposed to be. I could even give the message to others that they could deal with their blindness and just go on with life; but I've learned it isn't always that way. You can find yourself in a place, even though you've been talking the talk for a very long time, where you realize you haven't been walking the same walk. As I progressed through my surgeries, each giving me back some of my vision but never to the level I had before, I found myself on a real emotional roller coaster. All along my intention was to ask God and the surgeons, "Please let me stop hurting and, of course, if you can give me back the vision I had, that would be good too."

When my vision didn't come back and it became obvious to me that it wouldn't, my first reaction was to be grateful for no longer living in constant pain. I was not angry; I was grateful to God for all of the years he'd given me to enjoy blindness from a different perspective and to enjoy things that a little bit of vision allowed me to see. At the same time I was grateful, I was also very frightened by the things I wanted to do but no longer could. I asked myself "how can I have been telling people all of these years that blindness is no more than a physical nuisance if I'm not living that way right now?" I felt like I had lied to so many people, that I had let them down, and most of all I didn't know how I could tell my husband, my family, and my friends in the Federation that I was so scared.

At first I tried to pretend I wasn't afraid. I pretended life was going along fine. At that time Gary wasn't working from home and so when Gary would go out the door for work and I would get the kids off for school, I would often find myself sitting in a chair crying. Again, I was not angry about losing the rest of my vision; I was angry at myself for not being able to put all of the tools together that I knew were in my box, but I was having trouble finding them. For some reason I simply couldn't say to all of you, "I know that you're doing it, but I haven't learned too yet." I know how to say to someone else that you can do it, but I wasn't leading by example for others.

I've worked through some of this now. I was finally able to talk to Gary about how hard things were without feeling guilty. I had to admit that trying to put everything into play was overwhelming to me, but I know that I can do it because I have all of you, and I know this is a gift I can pass on to other people. I feel like for the first time, I can say to them “Yes, blindness is a physical nuisance, but until you have learned the skills and the techniques to live with blindness, until you have really traveled that road and gone through the process of figuring it all out, it can be much much more difficult than a nuisance." Some days I still get a little afraid about something and now I can talk to Gary or one of my friends about it. I know that each day I live because of what this organization has given to me. I will keep getting stronger. I will continue to learn those skills of blindness I don't already know. I will keep getting braver and I will keep shining that light that we give to people, that light of hope that comes from the National Federation of the Blind. I know that our message is important and that saying it is important, but I also know that keeping our eyes and ears open to what other people are telling us is important. We need to listen to their story, even if we think we've heard it one hundred times before.

By being in this organization, I was really caught off guard by the grief I experienced. As important as our positive message is, it won't immediately take the place of that grief. I want to thank all of you who've taken the time to teach me the things I know and I pledge to you that I will continue to work hard to pass on the gift that has been given to me. That message will include the honesty to admit that some days when you're struggling through, it's really tough, and some days it's not so tough. Thank goodness more and more of those not so tough days are coming to me. More days now I find myself feeling like I once did, and this group is what has made that possible in my life. Thank you.

Celebrating 50 Years

By Gary Wunder

In November of this year the Missouri Affiliate witnessed its fiftieth anniversary as an affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind. At our convention in March we will celebrate the momentous occasion, but, in the meantime, our editor has asked that I write a brief article about our last fifty years. The challenge is one I'm embarrassed to admit I find daunting. Who am I to try to chronicle the work of so many and the changes they have made?

Recently, while in Pennsylvania, somebody observed that I have been a member of the National Federation of the Blind for forty years--my reaction was to laugh and say, "No way! Not yet!" The statement was a well-intended overstatement, but, you know, a little figuring convinced me they were close enough to right that there was no sense in arguing. I have been in a while, and though my vanity almost forces me to say "I'm young, I'm young," the truth is that I'm not as young as I like to think. I do, however, feel very proud to have been associated for so long with this wonderful organization, and I'm really anxious to dedicate our upcoming convention to celebrating where we have been.

I know most about the beginnings of our organization from the history recounted to me and others by Gwen Rittgers, Tiny Beedle, Cotton Busby, Doc and Polly Salter, Roland and Gerry Sykes, Jana Sims-Moynihan, Jack Kelly, and, his wonderful wife and Federationist, Martha Kelly.

After the split of our organization in 1961, it took some time for people who wanted to remain with the National Federation of the Blind to gather themselves together and decide to form an organization. They were, of course, formerly a part of the Missouri Federation of the Blind, which was expelled from the National Federation of the Blind and was instrumental in starting the American Council of the Blind.

George Rittgers figured prominently in the establishment of the new organization which was called the Progressive Blind of Missouri. When later we decided to have our affiliate include the name National Federation of the Blind in the organization's name, we found ourselves being sued because of the supposed similarity between National Federation of the Blind of Missouri and Missouri Federation of the Blind. At one point the court told us we could not use the words Missouri, Blind, and Federation in any combination, and it promised to fine us fifty dollars for every day we delayed in changing our name. Morale took a big hit, but eventually we won our right to have the name National Federation of the Blind of Missouri. That's another story for another day.

In the early 1960s our fledgling organization was concerned primarily with the basics: doing the paperwork that was necessary to bring us into being, figuring out where and when to meet, and working, always working, to raise a dollar or two to be used in changing what it means to be blind. There was the establishment of a newsletter, and, in that newsletter, a prominent place for the fundraisers that would help advance our work.

When I came into the organization it was just beginning to expand beyond Kansas City. I came, if memory serves, in the summer of 1972. I will not repeat here the story about how I was strongly persuaded to come to my first meeting. One of the topics discussed there was the newly established St. Louis chapter. A real fear in the Kansas City chapter was that the upstart St. Louis folks would outdo them in terms of fundraising. Very soon that happened, and for many years the St. Louis chapter was the unchallenged king in raising money for the affiliate. John and Rhoda Dower would close down their insurance business on Friday and would use Friday, Saturday, and sometimes part of Sunday to stand outside local grocery stores selling candy and fruitcakes to raise money.

I do not remember who the state president was in 1972. Perhaps that information is to be found somewhere in our records, and I wouldn't swear that it isn't somewhere in my computer, but where I'm not sure. I know that by the time I attended my first state convention in Kirksville in 1974, the president was John Dower, and its recording Secretary was Margaret Bohley. This indicates what a force the St. Louis chapter had become, and how important it was for the Kansas City chapter to expand the affiliate so it really was a statewide group of the blind.

A major challenge in 1974 was to have our organization accepted by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt organization. A lot of time and effort went into that work, with our being denied on technicalities and semantics. We were allowed to educate the legislature but not lobby them. We could work on issues of policy but not support individual candidates as an organization. During John's time as our president, chapters were started in Kirksville and Springfield. I believe one was also started in St. Joseph.

We will do more at the convention to give a really detailed report of our fifty years, but let us admit that God has been very good to us in shepherding us through our first fifty and has given us challenges aplenty to keep us busy for the next fifty. Our founders fought for us to have the right to have a home of our own, an education, and a job. Today we fight for these same things--not because many of us still lack them, but because keeping them requires facing new challenges. In 1940 or even 1961, the challenge was how to get to the grocery store--independent mobility was far less prevalent than today. Today our challenge is to be able to check out of a grocery store or visit an appliance store and have some certainty we can use what we buy.

So, keep the dates open, make plans to come to the convention, and be prepared to rejoice as we look at our past and make a solemn pledge for our future.

A Look Back: The Early Days

By Eugene Coulter

There are few, if any people reading this publication who were members of the Progressive Blind of Missouri in the early 1960’s. As a history buff I believe it is always best to understand where you have been to appreciate what you have now.

Some things are consistent as in the need to make reading and technology more accessible. But, there have been vast improvements in the lives of blind people in Missouri and the nation “in no small part” due to the efforts of the NFB.

What follows are two short articles from the “10 Year Progress Report” of this affiliate. The Perrin D. McElroy Award mentioned in the first article is now our Jernigan Award. They are largely unedited, and the verbiage used, especially in Gwen Rittger’s article, reflects a different time. I believe Gwen’s article to be autobiographical. Gwen Rittgers was the wife of George Rittgers who served as President in the early days and always continued as a guiding force. The Rittgers convention stipends we give are named in honor of them. Elsie White was the editor of the publication and in 1971 Melvin Lewis was President.

Ten Years of the Progressive Blind

By Elsie R. White

In November 1961, a group of 12 dauntless people, with George Rittgers as the founder, formed a group called the Federated Blind of Missouri. But, that wasn't the name they were to keep. So in the summer of 1962 in Detroit, they were accepted by the National Federation of the Blind as an affiliate under the name of the Progressive Blind of Missouri.

The first year was very hard. To keep the small organization together, they had chili and stew suppers and ice cream socials and sold greeting cards. Even as they do now, they were able to give fruit baskets to the shut-in blind. Of course, by now the list of shut-ins has grown considerably, but I don't believe anyone in real need is ever turned down.

The Progressive Blind instigated the Jacobus tenBrook award. Because Dr. tenBrook was such a strengthening pillar when the blind people of this nation and other countries were struggling so hard to keep their heads above the ground, henceforth, the tenBrook award is given every year to a sighted person for outstanding services in the cause of blindness.

The first award was given in 1962 to the Uptown Optimists Club and was accepted by Mr. Mike Combs.

At the founding convention in 1962 in Jefferson City, there were 20 members present. At the 1969 convention there were 161 members present.

Then in 1965 the Perrin D. McElroy Award came into being and is given each year to an outstanding blind person.

In 1964 the Progressive Blind played host to a very amazing and outstanding man, Rienzi Alagiyiwanna, who has since become the President of the International Federation of the Blind. Since then, Rienzi has made many more visits to Kansas City.

The Progressive Blind was rightly formed with the idea of promoting self-help for all blind people in the state of Missouri.

THE DAY THE CHILDREN CRIED

By Gwen Rittgers

West Eleventh stretched from the railroad crossing straight to Lincoln Park in a wide, dusty strip of seven and a half blocks. On the south side of the street seven unmodern homes were situated among the wide fields and choke cherry trees; on the north side of the street there were only three houses. The houses contained the conveniences of electricity and water, but the inhabitants cooked and heated with coal, and made the daily trek to the outdoor privy.

Angelo lived in the middle house on the north edge of West Eleventh; he and his wife were fine Italians whom the children idolized. Angelo owned a magnificent German police dog named Captain. The children said Angelo was rich--he traveled about in a big black car and was the only one in this area who had a telephone. Actually, Angelo was a bootlegger in the minds of the adults and was shied away from on this theory. Angelo made merry with the children and was generous with "Old Cap" who was the companion of one child or another all summer long.

Mornings when the children often looked for flowers and four leaf clovers in the fields, the dog came cavorting along; in the afternoons when the children went swimming in the sink holes around the park, there was Old Cap. Sometimes he would plunge in and make a big splash all along the little bank, or jump out of the water and shake himself, sending a spray over the children as they tried to dry and dress themselves.

In the evenings, the children sometimes played Blind Man's Bluff and the small blind girl on the street was always able to catch the runners. Often Old Cap would give them away to her.

August came on West Eleventh with its long hot days, campers in the nearby park, hucksters with ripe watermelons, and hydrophobia to Old Cap.

It was the blind girl and the colored children who first noticed that something was wrong. Angelo had gone on another of his three or four day trips, leaving the food and water pan for Old Cap in care of the Negro children. He would bring them and the blind girl some trinkets on his return for feeding and watering the dog in his absence. This August morning, the children went to the high front porch of Angelo's house and called Old Cap, but the dog did not come. He lay under the porch, hot and feverish, and foaming. As the blind girl reached out her hand and said, "Come on Old Cap," the dog growled ferociously. In the same instant, the boy grabbed the outstretched hand and threw the metal watering pail down. Old Cap roared and snapped at the pan and ran foaming at the mouth and growling into the yard. The Negro children led the blind child rapidly down the street while the dog circled Angelo's house and lay in a state of languor under the porch again.

When the big black car returned later that day, Angelo looked at the maddened dog and sprinted into the house. Soon afterward, all the children on their porches saw a blue police car drive up in front of Angelo's house. Angelo came to the door and yelled to the policeman that the dog was under the porch. The policeman, who was sitting on the right of the car, drew his gun and fired under the porch; there were six loud reports as the gun was emptied. Both police officers stepped out of the car and peered at the quiet dog. Angelo came down the steps and shook hands with the policemen. They told him they would send a man to take care of the dog. When they had gone, Angelo placed a gunnysack over the magnificent dog, and all the children began to cry. The little blind girl cried the most, for she knew what the shots had meant for her faithful friend.

MUSCLES

By Tom Stevens

Arriving shortly after 8:00 a.m., Helen and I placed the well worn card table, with the National Federation of the Blind sign in front of it, along the sidewalk about 20 feet from the entry door. Shortly we had eight small packets of candy, a dozen Federation brochures, and a money jar on the table. I seated myself in a folding chair behind the table and we sat the cooler, which had water, brochures and more candy on the sidewalk on my left. I was in business.

About five minutes later came footsteps and the sound of coins dropping into the jar. Two men spoke greetings, received the brochure I handed to each and went their way. I assured them that they made the start of my day better.

Over the next three hours, I sat in near 90-degree heat and encouraged people to bring needed rain and to make contributions to the Federation of Columbia. This was the same routine we had followed four times in the past few weeks. Numerous short conversations have occurred. And there were always those who passed by silently except for the leaving of a small donation in the jar. I have been surprised at the amount of activity at the entrance of this grocery outlet. Because of some direct sunlight on me, a few people were concerned about overheating. One reminded me of a series of robberies in Columbia. Throughout the morning, the eight packets of candy diminished only to four. Brochures were readily accepted, some with my explanation that they make good bedtime reading.

Whenever a child was readily noticeable, I would inquire as to age and sometimes offered my hand to be shaken. Responses came from those ranging in age from 17 months to 10 years. Once or twice a morning my offered hand would be greeted firmly and I would challenge that youngster to a brief hand wrestle. I never won and those were a time of pleasure for me. I assured both a nine-year old and a ten-year old that the schools, which they attended, were excellent. I noted with interest that parents actively encouraging the children to put their money in the hole in the lid of the jar. To me this encouragement was a wonderful teaching moment.

One lassie responded to my greeting with the most distinct southern accent I had heard in many years. Yet she claimed to have been raised about 35 miles north of Columbia. She had done excellently in learning her southern!

There would be long periods of inactivity and then suddenly a deluge of people. I always attempted to assure donors that they made my day better and this seemed to please everyone. During periods of inactivity, I announced our goals to what Helen observed was a well-informed empty parking lot. These inactive periods could be very frustrating, but when we counted the receipts my frustration vanished. Generally speaking those mornings have been enjoyable. To illustrate, I arm wrestled one six year old and he, his dad and I all three engaged in a mock battle, his father encouraging verbally. As they left, I called “So long muscles.” I could hear his parting giggle from fifteen steps away.

A Hero Amongst Us

By Carol Coulter

Larry Arnold was born and raised in Springfield, MO. Larry says he was born just 8 days before WWII ended; I’ll let you do the math. His father was a truck driver and a master wood worker. His mother was a homemaker, but later in life she went to work in the garment industry. His dad died at age 86 and his mother died at age 91 of Alzheimer’s. Larry said his mother was a feisty woman and that he got his desire to be involved from her.

When Larry was 11 years old he started working at a grocery store and had many jobs growing up. In high school Larry kept very busy. He was involved in many clubs such as Key Club. He loved science and the arts. Larry played the violin in orchestra, was in choir, was a stage manager, and acted in several musicals. He was the Wizard in *The Wizard of Oz* and the bar tender in *Calamity Jane*. Larry graduated in 1963. Besides his activities in school, Larry was also involved with church as a youth pastor.

When Larry was 17, he joined the Navy Reserves. Larry wanted to be a doctor and the Navy had a program where they would pay for your education in return for a 6 year tour of duty. During his second semester of his freshman year at Southwest Missouri State, Larry volunteered to enlist. The Vietnam War was heating up, and since no one in his family had served in the military, Larry decided it was his duty to serve his country. In fact, Larry served two tours in Vietnam. On June 15, 1965, he served his first tour as a hospital corpsman. Larry said his Battalion was known as the Walking Dead. He would have to decide if a solider would be able to return to the fighting if they received medical attention. If the soldier could, they got help, and if not, the corpsmen had to leave them. The second tour Larry spent as an advisory to the Vietnamese Army. He lived with the Vietnamese people and was able to get the military to build him a 10 bed hospital. Larry not only took care of the wounded soldiers, he also delivered a lot of babies. He told me about the time he delivered a baby, stepped outside to have a smoke, and when he came back in, the woman was gone. He went across the compound and found her back at work in the rice patty. Larry spoke highly of the Vietnamese people. He said they were hard workers and had the most beautiful art work. Like so many Vietnam Vets., Larry experienced the awful treatment the Veterans received when they returned home. Larry said he remembers stepping off the plane only to have garbage thrown at him. This was not the homecoming these soldiers deserved after having gone through such a traumatic experience. Larry said it took him 15 years before he could talk about it. This experience caused Larry to give up his dream of becoming a doctor. He said he did not want to feel like he was playing God anymore, deciding who would live and who would die.

When Larry returned to Springfield, he got a job working for Litton Industries making circuit boards. He became an engineer and in 1971 moved his family to Texas to work in several other companies that made circuit boards. Each new job came with advancements until he had become Vice president. Larry would not hold this position long because in 1979 he started losing his eye sight. It took a while, but he was finally diagnosed with Hystoplasmosis. Unable to do this type of work because of failing vision, Larry and his family moved back to Springfield, Missouri, and in 1980 he went back to school to get a degree in Public Administration. Along the way he picked up minors in Accounting, History, and Economics

Larry found out about the NFB from Theresa Meyers. They met on a bus and she told him about the organization and invited him to a chapter meeting. He said he went to the meeting, and there he met Billie Weaver, who was the affiliate president at that time. Billie invited Larry to the next board meeting. He told me that this was the board meeting that had to deal with the problem of Nick Whitney. When Larry went to the next chapter meeting, Billie told him she was surprised to see him after the board meeting. Larry told her it didn’t bother him because he could see the importance of the organization.

Larry, along with seven others, helped form the Student Division in Springfield. They were responsible for getting equipment for the blind students on campus. Larry was the only student liaison on the Disabilities Committee. He also served on the Student Government Justice Committee. If a student had broken a school rule, they would go before the justices who would determine what needed to be done. Larry was the only blind student to become Chief Justice. Larry was a very active person in his younger days and still does what he can; but like so many of us, Larry knows that age has a way of slowing us down. So as many of us grow older and the body is not able to do as much as the mind would like, we need to remember what the individual has contributed to our organization and society and respect and appreciate them for what they have done instead of complaining about what they are no longer able to do. Thank you Larry for all you have done for our country and the National Federation of the Blind.

National Federation of the Blind of Missouri

2012 Scholarship Program

The National Federation of the Blind of Missouri announces our 2012 Scholarship Program. We invite all qualified candidates to apply. Applicants must be legally blind and plan to enroll in a post-secondary school in Missouri for the fall of 2012. Applicants need not be a member of the National Federation of the Blind. Scholarships begin at $500 and are based on merit. All application materials must be postmarked on or before February 1st, 2012.

A complete application consists of the official application form and a student essay, plus these supporting documents: student transcripts, two letters of recommendation, a letter from an NFB of Missouri representative, and proof of legal blindness.

In an effective essay the applicant will talk about his or her life in a way that gives the committee insight into him or her. The essay should cover the ways in which one lives successfully as a blind person and describe one’s personal goals for the future. Committee members give the essay a great deal of attention.

In addition to receiving the monetary award, the scholarship recipients will attend the convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri, March 30-April 1, 2012, in Kansas City, MO. Transportation, registration, and rooming expenses to the convention will be covered. Throughout the convention, scholarship winners will have an opportunity to learn about the National Federation of the Blind and network with successful blind persons. In addition, final interviews with the Scholarship Committee will aid the committee in determining which scholarship each winner will receive.

You should know that merit scholarships from the National Federation of the Blind go directly to the winner and should not be considered as a similar benefit by Rehabilitation Services for the Blind. Therefore, students can use funds to meet expenses not already covered by other funding sources. Also, merit scholarships are viewed very favorably when included in a resume.

The application for this year’s Scholarship Program is attached. If you have any questions about our scholarship program, please contact the Chair:

Shelia Wright, Chair

Scholarship Committee

National Federation of the Blind of Missouri

7928 NW Milrey Drive

Kansas City, MO 64152

Phone: 816-741-6402

Email: sbwright95@att.net

Web Page: [www.nfbmo.org](http://www.nfbmo.org)

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

OF MISSOURI

2012 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Scholarships begin at $500.00

Applications may be submitted via e-mail or USPS mail postmarked by February 1, 2012. (If you run out of space, continue answers on an attached sheet, numbering your answers carefully.)

Name: (Please include any birth or other names) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Home address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Address of lodging at school (if different from home): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phone number at which you can be reached: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Are you legally blind? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Educational history**

Name of institution you are currently attending with location, dates and class standing (freshman, sophomore):

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Current cumulative grade point average at this institution: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

List other high school(s) and post-secondary institutions attended, including dates, location, and cumulative grade point average:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

ACT or SAT scores: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Rank in graduating class: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Significant honors and awards received: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Future plans**

College or post-secondary institution to be attended in fall of 2012 with class standing: (If accepted after application deadline, indicate this and submit documentation as soon as possible under separate cover.)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In what area do you plan to major? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What are your career goals? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Additional documentation**

1. Write an essay of no more than 1000 words which introduces you to the committee.

2. Provide two letters of recommendation from individuals familiar with your academic performance. These should be sent under separate cover to the Scholarship Committee Chair. List the names of your references below.

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. Provide under separate cover transcripts from your high school and the college(s) you have attended.

4. Schedule an interview with the president of the local chapter or a member of the scholarship committee. Request a letter evidencing the fact that you have discussed your scholarship application with him/her. You may contact Shelia Wright, Scholarship Chair, to learn the name of the appropriate person in your area.

To help us with distribution of application forms in the future, please indicate how you obtained information about this scholarship. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Students who are selected to receive a scholarship will be invited, at the NFB’s expense, to the state convention on March 30-April 1, 2012, in Kansas City, MO. Final interviews determining the awards will take place during the convention and the scholarships will be presented Saturday evening at the banquet. Recipients should arrive on Friday afternoon and plan to participate in the entire convention which concludes at noon on Sunday. No recipient will receive less than a $500.00 scholarship. Winners will be notified in time to make arrangements to attend.

Applications and all documentation, including letters of recommendation, must be postmarked no later than February 1, 2012. Prepare and send these in a timely manner so they can be handled via regular first-class mail. For applications or additional information, please feel free to contact Ms. Wright.

Ms. Shelia Wright, Chair

NFB of Missouri Scholarship Committee

7928 NW Milrey Drive.

Kansas City, MO 64152

816-741-6402

E-mail: sbwright95@att.net

**NFB of Missouri**

**Holiday Inn Coco Key Resort**

**9103 E 39th street; Kansas City, MO 64133**

**816-737-0200**

**March 30 – April 1, 2012**

Let’s celebrate! It is the Golden Anniversary Convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri. We are returning to our roots in Kansas City as the organization was founded over 50 years ago in this beautiful city.

During this jam packed weekend we will honor our roots and look forward to the next 50 years!

Our host city and chapter are vibrant and dynamic. The Kansas City area is home to sports venues such as the College Basketball Experience, Sprint Center, and Kansas Speedway and teams such as the Royals, Wizards, Chiefs, and T-Bones. The City of Fountains boasts exceptional parks, and great culinary and shopping experiences in places such as Crown Center and Country Club Plaza.

Our hotel this year is the Holiday Inn Coco Key with exceptional room rates of $75.00 a night plus $15.58 a night tax (tax rate as always subject to change). The Holiday Inn Coco Key has an on site water park which may be accessed for an additional fee. The water park features all the water fun you could want and Gator’s Grab & Go and Wet Rooster Bar where you can get fast food items. The main restaurant is Tradewinds where you can get breakfast, lunch, and dinner; children under 12 eat free when escorted by paying guardian but limited to hotel guests only. The hotel also features wireless internet and a fitness center. The Coco Key Market is off the main lobby and features coffee, ice cream, fresh sandwiches, Salads, and Coco Key merchandise. The Hotel is across the street from Truman Sports Complex.

**Convention registration post marked on or before March 15, 2012 will be $12.00. After March 15 the cost to register will be $18.00. Registration will be open from 5:30 to 7:30 Friday evening and 8:00 to9:30 Saturday morning. Hospitality will open on Friday evening from 5:00 to 10:00. Sorry but, as usual, the hospitality room will be a smoke free zone. Come eat, drink, and enjoy the fellowship!**

**We have several planned meals throughout the weekend at extraordinary prices. The highlight will be our Saturday banquet for 30.00. We will also have a planned lunch Saturday for $15.00 and our annual Prayer Breakfast Sunday morning at a cost of $12.00. The planned meals are open to all attendees and all are encouraged to take advantage of these meals as there are not many other restaurant facilities in walking distance.**

**We again will be offering child care for those children in need of supervised care. The cost is 20.00 for the weekend for the first child and $10.00 for each additional child from the same family. . Care will be provided on Saturday during the morning and afternoon sessions, the evening banquet until 9:00 p.m. and the Sunday morning session which will adjourn at 12:00 p.m. Meals are not provided in child care so parents need to make arrangements to feed their children. Important: Parents wanting care for their children must send a request on or before March 15, 2012.**

**Exhibit space is free to the chapters and divisions of the NFB for federation fund raising and information distribution and for a cost of $25.00 to outside exhibitors and must be reserved before March 15, 2012. If you have door prizes you wish to donate please contact Door Prize co-Chairs Willa Patterson or Jeff Wright. If you need to send an item in advance mail it to Jeff Wright 7928 NW Milrey Drive, Kansas** **City, MO 64152-2143. Phone: 816-741-6402.**

**Our Kansas City chapter looks forward to hosting us in a memorable weekend that will invigorate us as we renew old friendships and make new ones.**

**Equality \* Security \* Opportunity**

National Federation of the Blind of Missouri

2012 State Convention Registration Form

Kansas City - March 30 – April1, 2012

Please use one form per residence. Several registrations may be combined on one check if they are sent in the same envelope.

Registrant Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Second registrant: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Apt.:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, State: \_\_\_\_, Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Email: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Select preferred agenda format: \_\_\_ Braille, \_\_\_ Print, \_\_\_ Electronic

Desired Blind Missourian format: \_\_\_tape, \_\_\_Print, \_\_\_Email, \_\_\_None

Select the items or events that you would like to purchase below:

\*Convention Registration: Preregistration prior to March 15, 2012

Number of registrants: \_\_\_ at $12.00 Total: $\_\_\_\_\_\_

Planned Luncheon: \_\_\_\_ tickets needed at $15.00 Total: $\_\_\_\_\_\_

Annual Banquet: \_\_\_\_ tickets needed at $30.00 Total: $\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prayer Breakfast: \_\_\_\_ tickets needed at $12.00 Total: $\_\_\_\_\_\_

\*\* Exhibitor Table: \_\_\_\_ tables needed at $25.00 Total: $\_\_\_\_\_\_

 (Write 0-NC if a chapter or division desires a table.)

\*\*Childcare ($20/1 child; $10/additional) Number of kids \_\_\_ Total $\_\_\_\_\_

 Total amount enclosed: $\_\_\_\_\_\_

Add amounts on all forms enclosed and make your check payable to:

NFB of Missouri. Please mail to:

Carol Coulter, 1613 Blue Ridge Rd; Columbia MO 65202.

\* Add $6.00 for registration postmarked after March 15, 2012.

\*\* Exhibit tables and Child Care may NOT be requested after March 15, 2012. Indicate the names and ages of children requiring Child Care and/or any special exhibitor requests on the back of this form.

PLEDGE OF THE

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

I pledge to participate actively in the effort 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

**Board of Directors**

**National Federation of the Blind of Missouri**

**Officers:**

Gary Wunder, President Julie McGinnity, Recording Secretary

Shelia Wright, First Vice President Dacia Luck, Corresponding Secretary

Ruby Polk, Second Vice President Carol Coulter, Treasurer

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Rita Lynch, Jefferson City Gary Horchem, Springfield

Shelia Wright, Kansas City Dennis Grabill, St. Joseph (contact)

Chris Tisdal, Lewis and Clark Bryan Schulz, St. Louis

### FREE MATTER FOR THE

### BLIND AND PHYSICALLY

### HANDICAPPED

### NFB of Missouri

**1613 Blue Ridge Rd.**

**Columbia, MO 65202**