**From the Desk of Linda Melendez, President, NFBNJ**

**Submitted by Ellen Sullivan, Affiliate Secretary**

Greetings all,

Hope everyone is doing well and getting ready for their respective holiday. Included in this email are the 45th state convention business meeting minutes. For you convenience I have put them in alphabetical order and used heading 1 through heading 3 for easy navigation; see heading layout below:

Heading 1 will take you to each meeting

Heading 2 will take you to agenda items

Heading 3 will take you to chapter reports in affiliate business meeting.

Warmly,  
Linda Melendez, President  
National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey  
732-421-7063  
[president@nfbnj.org](mailto:president@nfbnj.org)  
[*www.nfbnj.org*](http://www.nfbnj.org/) *Facebook:*[*https://m.facebook.com/NFB-NJ-353099574776238*](https://m.facebook.com/NFB-NJ-353099574776238) *Twitter:*[*@NFBNewJersey*](https://twitter.com/nfbnewjersey) *YouTube:*[*NFBNJTransformDreams*](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKEDbjGsCYHMlwd4gqpBPjg) *Live the life you want.*  
*The National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey is a community of members and friends who believe in the hopes and dreams of the nation’s blind. Everyday we work together to help blind people live the lives they want.*

**National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey (MFBNJ) Business Meeting Minutes for the 45th State Convention**

# Topic: NFBNJ 45th State Convention Business Meeting Minutes Date: Friday, November 12, 2021 Start Time: 7:02 P.M.

## 1. Roll Call of the Board: Ellen Sullivan

**Officers:**

Patti Gregory Chang, Esq. National Representative

Linda Melendez, Affiliate President

Joe Ruffalo, 1st Vice President

Mary Jo Partyka, 2nd Vice President

Annemarie Cooke, Treasurer

Ellen Sullivan, Secretary

**Board Members:**

Linda DeBerardinis

Jane Degenshein

Mary Fernandez

Veronica Gaspa

Zoraida Krell

Evangelia (Lia) Stone

**Parliamentarian:** Ryan Stevens, Legislative Director

**Chapter Presidents:**

At Large, Joe Ruffalo

Capitol, Mary Jo Partyka

Central Jersey, Mac Biggers

Garden State, Ryan Stevens

Northeast, Clarke King

Northern, Rick Fox

South Jersey Shore, Phil Harrison

## 2. Welcoming Remarks: Linda Melendez

President Melendez welcomed everyone to the business meeting at the 45th NFBNJ State Convention “We are More than the Sum of One”.

She invited our National Rep. Patti Gregory-Chang to make an opening statement. Patti emphasized the importance of this meeting as we are discussing the business of the affiliate. It is essential to keep everyone informed about what is going on, to vote in elected officers that you trust and to agree on resolutions to adopt.

## 3. Key Initiatives and Accomplishments in 2021: Linda Melendez

President Melendez said our top two initiatives are:

* Membership recruitment and engagement
* Legislation on the national and local levels

To this extent Mary Fernandez who led the Membership Committee in 2021 will step down due to her recent move to Virginia and Carley Mullin and Melissa Lomax will co-chair this committee. All chapters will continue to have representation on this committee.

In 2021 we had a very successful “Virtual Washington Seminar” with participation from over thirty members. The outcome was encouraging, and we recruited 75% of our representatives to support H.R. 431 the Access Technology Affordability Act. More work to be done in the remainder of this year and in 2022.

We also gained approval of the New Jersey Parenting Rights Bill in the Judiciary Committee and are waiting for legislative approval. We have a powerful ally in Assembly Woman Yvonne Lopez who plans to introduce this bill for approval during the lame duck session of the legislature.

Other 2021 accomplishments include:

* Boscov’s Fund Raiser (Chapters will keep 100% of proceeds this year vs. contributing 20% to the Washington Seminar as in the past.)
* President Melendez started consolidating Affiliate and National Items of interest into two separate emails that are sent out weekly to apprise members of important information and dates to keep in mind.
* We established “Chapter Liaisons” to our important committees including membership and legislation.
* We increased our use of technology to improve efficiencies:

1. Pay Pal and Membership forms for all Divisions and some Chapters (progress is being made to have 100% participation by chapters). (Shout out of thanks to our Webmaster Brian Mackey for his efforts here).
2. Setting up and Affiliate Drop Box to retain and share official affiliate information. (Shout out of thanks to Mary Fernandez for this great idea).
3. We held a very successful Technology Workshop in June on Zoom. (Shout out of thanks to Jane Degenshein and Tony Santiago and their Tech Team).

* We developed a “Presenters Form” for people who want to give presentations at chapter meetings. (Shout out of thanks to Zoraida Krell).
* Additional plans for 2021 include: November 30 meeting with Chapter Presidents to discuss the return of in-person meetings and finalizing an Affiliate level procedure to address behavior not in alignment with our NFBNJ expectations.

## 4. Treasurer Report (Brief Synopsis): Annemarie Cooke

Annemarie Cooke provided an abbreviated Affiliate Report which did not include individual line items. The report covered Affiliate Financial Matters from November 1, 2020 through October 31, 2021.

Comments: Patti Chang said that the complete financial report including all line items should be made available to Affiliate Members. President Melendez concurred with this. All members are welcome to reach out to President Melendez to request a copy. Linda Melendez: [president@nfbnj.org](mailto:president@nfbnj.org)

Vee Gaspa made a motion to approve the financial report, and this was seconded by Linda DeBerardinis. All agree and no one opposed. The report was unanimously approved.

5. Elections: Ryan Stevens, Chair of the Nomination Committee and Linda Melendez

Our Parliamentarian Ryan Stevens, Chair of the Nomination Committee for the Affiliate Board Elections thanked the committee members Mary Fernandez and Rick Fox for their service.

Three positions were up for election and Ryan presented the slate and turned the elections over to President Melendez:

Slate:

First Board Position: Jane Degenshein (current)

Second Board Position: Tony Santiago (replacing Mary Fernandez)

Third Board Position: Zoraida Krell (current)

1. Jane Degenshein: Any nominations from the floor? Repeated three times. None. Motion from Joe Ruffalo to close the election and elect Jane Degenshein for the First Board Position; this was seconded by Linda DeBerardinis. No one opposed, no one was undecided. Jane Degenshein was unanimously approved as the affiliate first board member.

Jane thanked everyone for their support, and she is happy to continue to serve the Affiliate the best she can.

2. Tony Santiago: Any nominations from the floor? Repeated three times. None. Motion from Vee Gaspa to close the election and elect Tony Santiago for the second Board Position; this was seconded by Ruth Williams. No one opposed, no one was undecided. Tony Santiago was unanimously approved as the affiliate second board member. Tony thanked the board and the membership and said it was a privilege to serve on the NFBNJ Board.

3. Zoraida Krell: Any nominations from the floor? Repeated three times. None. Motion from Ellen Sullivan to close the election and elect Zoraida Krell for the third Board Position; this was seconded by Vee Gaspa. No one opposed, no one was undecided. Zoraida Krell was unanimously approved as the affiliate third board member. Zoraida Krell thanked everyone and said she really appreciated having this opportunity to serve. She hopes she can continue to learn more during her term.

Patti Chang congratulated all those who were elected to the board and said, “it is a lot of hard work” and emphasized the need to delegate, recruit and cultivate new members for these positions.

## 6. Chapter Summaries: Chapter Presidents

### At Large Chapter President, Joe Ruffalo

Joe stated that the At Large Chapter held their usual convention meeting on Wednesday, November 10 with approximately 40 members in attendance. Meeting minutes were taken and will be presented with the Division and Committee Meetings also held at State Convention on November 10.

### Capitol Chapter President, Mary Jo Partyka:

The Capital Chapter, which has been in existence for 21 years, currently has 17 members. So far this year we have met on Zoom 9 times on the 3rd Saturday of the month and are looking forward to returning to in-person meetings at the Hamilton Library (to be confirmed). Due to the pandemic our fund raising activities have been curtailed this year. Our members serve on the Affiliate Committees and two of our members participated in the Washington Seminar in February. In 2022, we will explore the possibility of having guest speakers at meetings and will spend some time learning how to write effective letters to legislators, concerning current bills.

### Central Jersey Chapter President, Mac Biggers:

The Central Jersey Chapter (CJC) has been keeping very busy with numerous Zoom events to include coffee, snack and music nights. At our meetings we have emphasized the importance of the NFB Philosophy and blindness abilities. These discussions have been led by members and the topics were suggested by the membership. This was not a good fund raising year however from November 23 through December 27 the CJC will hold a popcorn fundraiser online; 50% of proceeds will go to the chapter. The CJC increased membership in 2021 by five members. Also, this year the CJC met on the second Saturday of the month on Zoom.

### Garden State Chapter (GSC) President, Ryan Stevens:

Ryan shared that the GSC celebrated its’ 30th Anniversary in August 2021. This chapter meets on Zoom on the third Saturday of the month from January to June; August to October and in December. Our members participate on all the Affiliate Committees and share with our other members important information from the committees. Ryan stated we have a “very strong core of fund raisers” and this year made a $1252 profit from the Boscov’s Friends helping Friends event. GSC members are looking forward to returning to in person meetings in 2022 including our September picnic and our holiday party. With great sorrow Ryan reported the chapter loss a very cherished member, Liz Morgan this past week. All will miss her laughter and smiles and her many contributions to the chapter as well as NFBNJ Divisions and Committee.

### Northeast Chapter (NEC) President, Clarke King:

Clarke shared that there was a lot of reorganization of the Chapter Board and Officer positions due to vacancies. In remembrance of our long term member Al Glasgow in early 2021 the chapter established a memorial scholarship fund. Members organized a reminder call committee, and this committee not only reminds other members of upcoming meetings and events they make frequent calls to ensure the well being of the NEC members. At the suggestion of Zoraida Krell, Vice President, we started a “Dunkin Donuts $10 Raffle” to encourage members to call and/or write our legislatures on behalf of the bills that are being proposed. Fund raising was very slow this year however we did raise $100 for the Boscov’s Friends Helping Friends event and many chapter members donated money to our chapter. Chapter meetings are held by conference call or Zoom on the third Saturday of the month, and we encourage member participation.

### Northern Chapter President, Rick Fox:

This chapter and its members have been extremely busy this year despite the pandemic.

The Northern Chapter enjoyed growth and a variety of activity in 2021. Most of our members reside in Essex and neighboring counties.

* We welcomed 4 new members in 2021, Donell Anderson, Nimisha Rana, Linda Domenick, and Emmanuelle Steplight.
* We purchased chapter business cards, which we use for outreach purposes. These cards have already resulted in the recruitment of one member.
* Our continuing relationship with a local Lion’s Club bore fruit again this year, when they made a sizeable donation to our chapter.
* We participated successfully in the October Boscov fundraising event.
* Six Northern Chapter members participated in our virtual Washington Seminar in February.
* We have an active Legislative Committee, whose members lead the way in contacting our elected representatives.
* Two of our members, Debbie, and Mary Ann Bennett, prepare a written summary of Mark Riccobono’s monthly Presidential Releases, which we append to our minutes. This enables our members to reference the valuable information published in these releases.
* We have established a program committee, which recommends speakers, discussion items, and other activities to enhance our meetings with information or thought-provoking events. Claress Knight demonstrated the NFB-Newsline app. Carley Mullin talked about her work as a blind mobility instructor. Roman Dodia discussed his experiences as a blind international student, to name just a few.
* We have established a Safe Streets Committee, concerned with the installation of accessible pedestrian signals at intersections where they would be helpful and enhance the safety of our members, as well as other pedestrians. You will hear more about this committee tomorrow.
* We have a Speaker’s Bureau, which educates the public about blindness and our federation. It has been dormant during the Pandemic but will become more active in 2022. Through our Speaker’s Bureau, we will reach schools, churches, and civic groups, such as Lion’s Clubs.
* Our membership Committee reminds all chapter members of upcoming meetings, and stays in touch with members, as needed.
* I want to thank our members for their hard and dedicated work, for it is our members who are the body and soul of this dynamic organization.

The Northern Chapter meets on the third Saturday of the month, from September through June, from 10 am until noon. We will be meeting via Zoom until the end of the year but look forward to returning to in-person meetings as soon as possible.

### South Jersey Shore Chapter President, Phil Harrison:

This year the South Jersey Shore Chapter experience considerable downsizing (Thirteen members in 2019 to our current four members). Phil has collaborated with Jane Degenshein and President Melendez to hold events to attract new members. There was no fund raising this year due to the pandemic. Vice President, Anthony Lanzilotti, has suggested that we look to  the Atlantic Center for Independent Living for possible new members. We will also make efforts to obtain new members from the Blind Center in Absecon and other organizations. Additionally, Anthony has reached out to one if his instructors at Stockton University who signed up for the State Convention and maybe interest in joining the chapter.

### Ending Comments to this session:

1st Vice President, Joe Ruffalo reminded chapters and divisions of their obligation to send $1/member to the Affiliate Treasurer, Annemarie Cooke before the end of the year. This is required by our constitution and further supports the financial success of the affiliate and our ability to support national in the many educational and outreach programs they have.

## 7. Summary of Exhibitor and Sponsorship Earnings for State Convention: Clarke King

Clarke King served as the Chair of the State Convention Exhibitor and Sponsorship Committee and shared that we had great success and raised close to $8000 due to our very generous sponsors, exhibitors and membership contributions. He thanked the committee members for all their hard work and persistence!

## 8. Washington Seminar 2022 and Legislative Accomplishments in 2021: Linda Melendez and Ryan Stevens

President Melendez said that all our chapters participated in the 2021 Washington Seminar with 31 members presenting to our congressional representatives. Ryan Stevens led this powerful effort with a great outcome. Efforts are being made to mentor “younger members” so we can continue to be New Jersey strong in this endeavor. As noted by John Paré, National Executive Director for Advocacy and Policy, on Thursday, November 11 this years Washington Seminar will be held during the week of February 7. There has not yet been a final decision as to whether the seminar will be virtual or in person or a hybrid.

## 9. Results of voting on the resolutions: Ryan Stevens

Ryan Stevens read NFBNJ Resolution 2021-01 which was recommended by the Legislative Committee on Thursday, November 11, 2021:

**Resolution 2021-01**

Regarding small vehicles impacting blind pedestrian safety

WHEREAS, small motorized and non-motorized vehicles including but not limited to electric scooters, hoverboards, skateboards, and bicycles are being used increasingly in urban and semi-urban environments; and

WHEREAS, these vehicles are being ridden on sidewalks by both adults and children; and

WHEREAS, these vehicles are either extremely quiet or completely silent, creating a potential hazard for pedestrians, especially those who are blind or have other disabilities that impact their ability to react to such a situation: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey in Convention assembled this twelfth day of November, 2021, that this organization call upon the New Jersey Legislature to establish registration requirements, age limits, noise alerts and other operating requirements for the appropriate use of these vehicles so pedestrian safety is ensured.

Rick Fox motioned to approve and adopt the resolution, and this was seconded by Mac Biggers. All in attendance voted yes in support of approving the resolution. The resolution passed unanimously.

## 10. PAC Plan: Mac Biggers

Mac Biggers updated us on the status of New Jersey and its standing in the amount of money raised for the Pre-authorized Contribution (we are in the top 20) and said members and friends may join for as littles as $5/month. This money can be taken directly from your checking or bank account or by debit or credit card. If you are able—all are encouraged to be part of the PAC Plan. The money goes directly to National to support the myriad of programs they have.

This year the affiliate has two raffles for a $25 Amazon gift card:

* $25 raffle for those who join the PAC plan for the first time
* $25 for those who increase their contribution.

Many members joined or increased their support to the PAC plan at the meeting and Mac provided contacts to make these contributions:

* [www.nfb.org/pac](http://www.nfb.org/pac)
* 877 NFB 2PAC (877 632 2722)
* Or call Mac directly at 801 916 9753.

First Vice President, Joe Ruffalo made a motion to increase the Affiliates’ contribution to the PAC Plan from $100/month to $150/month. This was seconded by Jane Degenshein and President Melendez said this would be discussed at our 4th Quarter Board Meeting in December.

## 11. Closing Comments: Linda Melendez and Joe Ruffalo

Before the final comments Jane Degenshein made a motion for the affiliate to donate the sum of $550 raised from the surprise “Joe Jeopardy Contest” to National’s White Cane Fund in honor of Joe Ruffalo. Ryan Stevens seconded this motion; all voted in favor, and no one abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

National Rep. Patti Chang thanked Linda Melendez for the work she has done with her—“Linda makes it easy because she knows what she wants.” She said it was her honor to serve as the National Rep. for the 45th State Convention of the NFBNJ.

12. Adjournment: Ryan Stevens made a motion to adjourn the meeting and this was seconded by Joe Ruffalo. President Melendez adjourned the meeting at 8:44 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ellen Sullivan, Affiliate Secretary and reviewed by Linda Melendez, President, NFBNJ

# NFBNJ At Large Chapter Meeting Minutes

## 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Joe Ruffalo at: 1:01 P.M.

President Ruffalo welcomed all to the Nov/Dec At Large Chapter Meeting and to the 45th State Convention of the NFBNJ “We are more than the sum of one”.

Joe explained that this chapter was founded in 2009 (12 years ago) to meet the needs of blind and vision impaired people in the state of New Jersey who were unable to attend a local chapter meeting. The meeting has always been held by conference call/Zoom and as a direct result of this meeting two local chapters were founded, and members can now belong to a local chapter as well as the At Large Chapter. He stated that the officers and board for the At Large Chapter and the Affiliate are the same except he is the President of the At Large Chapter.

President Ruffalo went on the thank our Reminder Call Committee,

Linda DeBerardinis and Katie Maunder and said that he believes the great attendance at our meetings are the direct result of the diligent phone calls to members by this committee.

**2. Roll Call: There were approximately 40 people in attendance at the meeting including the following Officers and Board Members:**

**Officers:**

Linda Melendez, President, NFBNJ

Joseph Ruffalo, President, At Large Chapter

Mary Jo Partyka, Second Vice President

Ellen Sullivan, Secretary

Annemarie Cook, Treasurer

**Board Members:**

Jane Degenshein

**Guest:** Patti Gregory-Chang, National Representative

## 3. NFB Pledge:

Abby Mesce did an excellent job reciting the NFB Pledge. Thank you Abby!

## 4. Secretary’s Report:

This report is sent out minus two and ten days before each meeting by Ellen Sullivan. Ellen sent out the October 26, 2021 report along with this meeting agenda. Wesley Burden motioned to approve the minutes as presented and this was seconded by Jane Degenshein; there was no discussion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

## 5. Treasurer Report:

President Ruffalo said we are in good standing financially and our Treasurer, Annemarie Cooke confirmed this.

## 4. Overview of 2021:

* This is our tenth meeting of the At Large Chapter in 2021.
* We meet by Zoom or conference call on the last Tuesday of the month. Our next meeting will he held on Tuesday, January 25, 2022.
* Our meetings have had approximately 25 to 30 attendees.
* This was a rough year for President Ruffalo due to serious health issues however, he did preside over 5 meetings.
* At Large Members are represented on the following Affiliate Committees:

1. Communications and social media
2. Fund Raising
3. Legislation
4. Membership

We also have representatives for Green Drop; Vehicle Donation; and White Cane List.

* Our members have actively participated in advocacy for the Washington Seminar Issues as well as the New Jersey Parenting Bill of Rights.
* We have 68 dues paying members which includes 14 new members joined our Chapter in 2021.
* A membership form and PayPal/Credit Card/Debit Card dues payment was implemented in 2021.
* Our meeting members are active and participatory. Our meetings provide a forum to share National and Affiliate information and other important discussion items. All members share about activities in their life, and we have lively discussions.

## 5. Plans for 2022:

* Return to in-person fund raisers.
* Continue strong monthly chapter meetings with ACTIVE participation from all our members.
* Consider forming a “Program Committee” who could advise on a special 10 to 15 minute event at each meeting to discuss blindness issues or related support.
* President Ruffalo plans to “share the leadership” of this meeting in 2022 and assign a member to work with our secretary to develop an agenda and review minutes. He said it is critical to develop new leadership.
* Continue to attract new members to our chapter.

President Ruffalo congratulated Linda Melendez on the phenomenal job she is doing in moving the NFBNJ forward! He also said how important each member was to our organization and compared us to a four legged chair:

Member, Chapter/Division, Affiliate, National. When you join the NFBNJ you help support the four legs of our organization.

## 6. How to make dues payments for 2022.

2022 Dues Payments ($5) and membership form:

<https://www.nfbnj.org/chapters-and-divisions/at-large-chapter/membership-form/>

Or mail check to our Treasurer:

Write check to the NFBNJ AL Chapter and put “AL Dues 2022” in the memo session. It is ok to pay for more than one year.

Annemarie Cooke

7 Mayfair Road

Southampton, NJ 08088

(Special Note: President Melendez clarified that all members must complete the membership form even if they have prepaid their dues and do not have any changes in their personal information. This form is needed to support the NFB Connection Database that must be updated on a yearly basis.)

## 7. The meeting was open for members to share.

Several members shared and Laura Ramos agreed to lead a 10 to 15 minute discussion at our January 2022 meeting to describe the work of the Non-Profit Agency she works with and how they help people with their housing needs. Enough time was left for Joe to share two jokes!!!

## 8. Adjournment:

Jane Degenshein motioned to adjourn the meeting, and this was seconded by Laura Ramos. President Ruffalo adjourned the meeting at 1:39 P.M.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ellen Sullivan, Secretary and

Reviewed by Joe Ruffalo, President, At Large Chapter, NFBJ

# NFBNJ Braille Committee Business Meeting Minutes

## 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mary Jo Partyka, Chair at 3:00 PM following a lively rendition of the song (All About that Braille) which was very appropriate.

## 2. Roll Call:

There were 31 in attendance.

NFBNJ Officers:

Linda Melendez: President, NFBNJ

Joe Ruffalo: First Vice President, NFBNJ

Mary Jo Partyka: Chair, Braille Committee

Guest: Patti Gregory-Chang, National Representative

Guest presenters:

Deborah Kent Stein, NFB of Illinois

Zora Stover, BELL Student

## 3. NFB Pledge:

Mary Jo recited the pledge

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

## 4. Welcoming Remarks:

Mary Jo welcomed everyone to the call.  She thanked Tracy Carcione, our Zoom host, and Miss Ruth Williams for taking minutes.

## 5. Overview of 2021:

The Braille Committee met in February, June, and September and discussed ways to strengthen our Braille mentoring Program, the Braille Challenge, the BELL In-home Edition, and the NLS E-reader.

## 6. Plans for 2022:

Our goals for 2022 include: increasing our membership base, using the White Cane list to find out who reads Braille, and how we can help them, making Braille materials available if our affiliate meets in person next year.

## 7. Synopsis from our guest speakers:

Zora Stover, a bright, inquisitive third grader, participated in our in-person BELL Academy for 3 years and participated in the BELL In Home Edition last year.   Due to Zora’s knowledge of Braille, she took part in the last two Braille Challenges.   She won first place in this year’s Braille Challenge and won first place in her age category. During the Braille Challenge, she participated in the following activities: spelling, proofreading, reading comprehension, interpreting charts and graphs, broiling material presented to her on a recorded message. Zora explained that she uses a Braille note taker in school and can print out her work so the teachers can understand it.

Our second speaker, Deborah Kent Stein is a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Illinois  since 1987.  She has been active in Parents of Blind Children in Illinois and with blind youth.  She has been a mentor with the Illinois Freedom Link Program for middle and high school students and coordinated their BELL Program.  The Illinois Affiliate was instrumental in reviving the “Braille Readers are Leaders” contest. After the national office stopped administering it. Children and adults from all 50 states are encouraged to enter the contest and this year the amount of reading each person performs will be determined by the number of minutes read.

Ms. Stein  mentioned another Illinois project called the “LIFE”(Literacy is for Everyone)  reading group of four to six people who meet once a week to read parts of a Braille book together, taking turns reading out loud.

## 8. Synopsis of Other Issues:

Mary Jo indicated that Liz Morgan, one of our members, had passed away last week.  She noted that Liz was always excited about reading Braille and labeling it was not unusual to see her Brailling items and door prizes for the state conventions.

Mary Jo also mentioned that the Braille printer, which was purchased in 2007, is no longer working. Joe Ruffalo suggested that she apply for a grant from the Fund for the Blind.  Our state board will determine the action which should be taken on this matter.   The Braille committee website is:

<https://www.nfbnj.org/projects>

Our national website is:

[NFB—Braille-Discussion](https://www.nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfb-braille-discussion_nfbnet.org)

## 9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 PM.  Mary Jo reminded everyone that our next Braille Committee Meeting will take place in February 2022.

Respectfully submitted by Miss Ruth Williams, Assistant Secretary and reviewed by Mary Jo Partyka, Chair, Braille Committee, NFBNJ

# NFBNJ Diabetic Committee Business Meeting Minutes

## 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Co-chair Angela Perone at 4:05 P.M. The meeting was held on our State Affiliate Zoom platform.

There were approximately 30 Participants on the call.

Officers and guest speaker in attendance were:

Angela Perone, Co-chair, Diabetic Committee

Joe Ruffalo, First Vice President, NFBNJ

Guest Presenter: Debbie Wunder, President of the National Diabetic Action Network

## 2. Welcome

Angela welcomed all to the call.  She explained that Committee Co-chair Ed Godfrey was unable to attend the meeting because he attended the funeral services of Lizzy Morgan who passed away.  Lizzy was a very inspirational member and secretary of our committee and a very active member of our organization.  She will be missed by all.

## 3. NFB Pledge:

Joe recited the pledge

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

## 4. Overview of 2021 Activities:

Angela talked about the year in review. We have our meetings on the first Thursday of the month except for meetings in November, December, July and August. The meetings are held at 7 p.m. on our state conference number. We had general discussions on various diabetes topics such as nutrition, exercise, mental health, stress management, medication and glucose control monitoring systems. In addition, we had speakers from Accessible Pharmacy, Dexcom, and Free Style Libra as well as Jocelyn Santiago who is a nurse from the Commission for the Blind and a member of our committee.

## 5. Synopsis from our Guest Speaker:

Angela introduced our guest speaker, Debbie Wunder who is the President of the National Diabetic Action Network (DAN).  Debbie explained the purpose of DAN, accessible technology for the blind and various devices. Debbie spoke about the Accessible Technology Affordability Act (HR 431). Joe Ruffalo also added his comments. We should contact our congressmen to support this bill.

Debbie said that we should consider joining DAN. Dues are $10.00 a year.  Debbie will email the information to Committee Co-chair Ed Godfrey which he will forward to the committee members as well as our state president and secretary for distribution.

## 6. Plans for 2022:

Angela spoke about upcoming plans for 2022. Members expressed considering moving our calls to the Zoom Platform, getting more information about DAN, continuing our general discussions and recruiting more speakers to talk about diabetes management.

## 7. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by and Angela Perone, Co-Chair Diabetic Committee and reviewed and submitted by Ed Godfrey, Co-Chair, Diabetic Committee, NFBNJ

# NFBNJ Guide Dog Committee Meeting

## 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Brianna Murray at 7:02 PM.

## 2. Roll Call:

Committee Chair: Brianna Murray

Guest Presenters:

Lukas Franck from the Seeing Eye

Tammy Prouty from Southeastern Guide Dogs

Jake Koch from Guide Dogs for the Blind,

Leslie Hoskins from Leader Dog

Total participants: 40

## 3. NFB Pledge

Brianna recited the pledge

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

## 4. Overview of 2021:

This is our fourth quarterly meeting. The other meetings included an introduction meeting where we talked about plans for the year, a talk with a Seeing Eye trainer about how to work with dogs as the world opened back up again, and a panel of puppy raisers.

## 5. Plans for 2022:

Continue quarterly meetings with topics applicable to the guide dog community.

Suggestions can be emailed to

[brianna2393@gmail.com](mailto:brianna2393@gmail.com)

## 6. Introduce presenters and provide a brief synopsis of what they discussed

Panelists included Lukas Franck from the Seeing Eye, Tammy Prouty from Southeastern Guide Dogs, Jake Koch from Guide Dogs for the Blind, and Leslie Hoskins from Leader Dog.

They discussed how schools evolved during the pandemic, what they learned and gained as a whole, and what might change in future.

Panel questions included:

* We've all made quite a few changes over the last 20 months or so. What change, or alteration, have you found to be the most beneficial?
* Are there any changes or alterations, introduced on account of the pandemic, that you could see becoming permanent?
* What transition or modification in protocol or procedure has been particularly difficult?
* We’ve talked a lot about the changes that effect applicants and handlers, but can you give some details about the experience for other aspects of the process such as the puppy raisers, training of dogs before students come into the picture, and staff?
* If we are faced with another situation like the current health crisis in the future, would you approach things similarly, or are there different techniques that you would want to put into practice next time?

## 7. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned by Brianna Murray at 7:57 PM

Minutes written and reviewed by Brianna Murray, Guide Dog Committee Chair, NFBNJ

# NFBNJ Senior Division Business Meeting Minutes

## Call to order by President Janie Degenshein at 10:00 am

Hey, are you psyched up? This is our 45th state convention and we are doing it Jersey style!

Jane gave a giant woo hoo as the seniors open the convention. We are welcoming our NFBNJ membership and those of you from around the country. We are hopeful that all the work behind the scenes insures us a fabulous convention. Hats off to our affiliate President and her teams who put in countless hours. All I can say is woo hoo!

## 2. Roll Call:

Officers present:

Janie Degenshein, President

Mary Jo Partyka, First Vice President

Jennifer Uchanow, Second Vice President

Linda DeBerardinis, Secretary

Andrew Rees, Treasurer

Board Members: Ward Biondi, Anne Marie Harris

Guest: Patti Gregory-Chang, National Representative

There were approximately 42 members and participants in attendance.

## 3. NFB Pledge

Jane asked Linda DeBerardinis to recite this for us.

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.

## 4. Overview of 2021

The Senior Division was busy in 2021. We held meetings during the months of January through June and then again in September, and October. We had an average of 30 in attendance for these monthly meetings.

We have 3 committees that reported each month:

A. Caring Calls and Cards: for those in need for an illness or loss

B. Birthday Calls: Ada Crandle

C. our Senior Corner: Jennifer Uchanow/Janie Degenshein

Here we relay pertinent information for the senior population and on the lighter side some quotes or stories.

We have our own NFBNJ Senior Division listserv and I post fun trivia questions and quotes here. If you have ever gotten an email from me, or hundreds of emails, then you know that in my signature block

is the link to join our NFBNJ listserv.

Join us by going to:

<https://www.nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbnj-seniors_nfbnet.org>

We had 10 book clubs that were well attended. All books can be found on BARD and cover many genres of reading. The discussions are always enjoyable, and attendees often share a bit about themselves while on this call. As a result, it makes the book club time truly a bonding experience for all. Our next senior division sponsored book club will meet up on Monday, December 6 at 6 PM on our state Zoom link. We are reading:

A Blue and Gray Christmas by [Joan Medlicott](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/73859.Joan_Medlicott) DB 70886.

We also continued a Senior Division chat session during the summer months that was a super way to reach out and feel supported. We had 5 of these as it became fun and popular. These were held at 10 a.m. and we had the equivalent of a coffee clutch. Many times, we shared our struggles or triumphs as well as some good-hearted laughter.

We were also involved in our statewide senior and Deafblind resource fair sponsored by our NFBNJ and the Commission of the Blind and Visually Impaired. We had 3 paid vendors and their contributions

went to an affiliate line item for the Senior Division Retreat Matters. More about this in the senior retreat agenda item.

## 5. Our National Senior Division Updates: Jane Degenshein

I have been a Board Member of our National Senior Division for the past 5 years. We held our second virtual retreat at the end of September, and it was a huge success. We had 11 from our New Jersey division attend this and of course for the second time we had the most attendees. woo hoo to the New Jersey Senior Division.

I want to thank the Affiliate for their contribution to our National Senior Division as well. We received $150 to use for assistance to those from our division to attend the retreat and $50 of that was used as a daily door prize to make the retreat fun as well. The retreat was recorded, and a thumb drive will be given to those that attended for free. If anyone else wants one, the cost is $10 as a fundraiser. This will take place in January.

Our fabulous division has purchased and offered 5 of these thumb drives as an incentive. Here's how it works friends: If you have registered for the Senior Division for 2022 and filled out your membership form as well, your name will go into a file. Then I will use random.org to randomly choose the first 5 as winners of these thumb drives. The names will be announced on our first meeting in January.

woo hoo again.

The National Senior Division is already planning our monthly Zoom calls, which may start as early as January. They will probably be on the fourth Tuesday of each month, starting at 4 p.m. eastern.

Some ideas were:

Discussion of family dynamics when dealing with blindness

Adapting to a new hotel mobility tips

Grand parenting while blind some tips and tricks

This was my idea, and I will co-host with Shelly Coppel from South Carolina.

If you have Any other topics for consideration, please send them to me at:

[jdegen16@comcast.net](mailto:jdegen16@comcast.net)

## 6. How to make dues payments for 2022

You can make your check out to: NFBNJ Senior Division. The amount is $5 per year, in the memo write dues for 2022. If you wish to write it for $10 then you will be paid through 2023. Send it to our treasurer, Andrew Rees

129 Drake Road, Somerset, NJ 08873

If you have or use mobile online banking, then that is also an option. PayPal is an option as well.

Remember, it doesn't matter which way you send in your dues but know that you also need to fill out a membership form for each division you join. This becomes our database in compliance with National.

## 7. Elections

I want to personally thank the officers and board for their unending support and love they have shown me and the division; Mary Jo Partyka, Jennifer Uchanow, Linda DeBerardinis, Andrew Rees, Anne Marie Harris, Ada Crandle, Ward Biondi, and Marie Sawyer. The division thanks you for your service to this organization.

Annemarie Cooke the chair of the nominating committee will hold our elections. We will do this by unmuting all for a yeah or nay. The officers are a 2 year term and board members a one year term.

The slate is as follows:

President: Jane Degenshein

First Vice President: Mary Jo Partyka

Second Vice President: Jennifer Uchanow

Secretary: Linda DeBerardinis

Treasurer: Andrew Rees

Board members:

Ward Biondi

Ada Crandle

Anne Marie Harris

Vincent Elorza

All were voted in by acclamation. Congratulations to all and I know the division is in good hands.

## 8. Year 2022

We will continue with calling each other, reading books and sharing together. I am hopeful that we can continue on our path to empowering our senior population and bonding together so that all on our Zoom calls feel a part of this warm and inclusive division.

We have a surprise gift from Accessible Pharmacy, A talking thermometer. I have entered those names on this call into random.org.

The winner is: Anne Marie Harris.

## 9. Comments:

Linda Melendez: Thank you for an amazing job, Janie!

Patty Chang: I am very glad to be here, standing in for President Mark Riccobono. Let me know if I can be of any help.

Joe Ruffalo: Jane, you run a super meeting! Your Senior Division’s objective seems to be to enhance senior lives and instill confidence to all. I know this division will continue to be successful.

Linda DeBerardinis: I love to read; thus love the book club and I also love our Senior Division!

Les Cameron: Keep up the good work! I miss you guys here in Georgia.

Allen Young: I enjoyed this meeting and want to join. How do I go about it? I am a member of the Northeast Chapter. Answer: I will send you email with info.

Ed Godfrey: I love all the things this division does! Is there an age limit? Answer: 50 & over. Ed says I’m going to join!

## 10. Adjournment:

Jane thanked all for their support and love for each other. Keep up the great work and see you in January on the 17th!

Motion to adjourn: Joe Ruffalo.

Second: Chris Franz.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 AM.

Respectfully submitted by, Linda DeBerardinis, secretary and reviewed by

Janie Degenshein President of the Senior Division of the National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey

# NFBNJ Student Division Business Meeting Minutes

## 1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order by Jonathan Zobek at 11:04 AM.

## 2. Roll Call:

Officers:

Jonathan Zobek – President

Kaleigh Brendle – Secretary/Treasurer

Board Members:

Andrew Chin

Guests and Speakers:

Patti Gregory-Chang, National Representative

Roland Allen – Cane Instructor, Louisiana Center for the Blind

Nina Marranca – NABS Representative, Secretary, National Association of Blind Students, President, New York Association of Blind Students

Vee Gaspa – Board Member, National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey

Lia Stone – Chair, Scholarship Committee, Board Member, National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey

2021 State Scholarship Recipients:

Kaleigh Brendle

Anthony Oropeza

Treasa Praino

David Vargas

Jonathan Zobek

There were 16 participants at the meeting.

## 3. NFB Pledge

Recited by Jonathan Zobec

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.

## 4. Opening remarks by Patti Chang, National Representative

Patti Chang urged NJABS to focus on membership for the upcoming year, as NJABS is a small group.

## 5. Remarks from Nina Marranca, NABS Rep. and NABS Liaison

Nina described her position as NABS Rep and Liaison and NABS as a whole. She described the four Committees of NABS: Legislative and Self-Advocacy, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Outreach, and Fundraising.

## 6. Discussion of Scholarship – Lia Stone

Lia discussed the NFBNJ Scholarship Class of 2021 and urged everyone to apply for a Scholarship. You cannot get a scholarship you don’t apply for one. She also emphasized that filling out one application makes you eligible for two scholarships: National and State. Lia also emphasized that the Scholarship is one of the best recruitment tools for the NFB.

Lia reminded the students that the 2022 Scholarship Application will open on December 1 and close on March 31.

## 7. Discussion of Hobbies and Activities – Roland Allen

In his discussion of hobbies and activities, Roland Allen mentioned the following: accessible basketball, bowling, running, cycling, swimming, working out with machines at the gym, fitness classes, and rock climbing.

If equipment is not accessible, he said that we can ask for help and discover alternative techniques to operate the machine (hearing clicks for settings on an in-place bike for a spin class, etc.). He also told everyone to be open and explore options on campus or in the community. Even if someone is nervous, they should still try it.

In terms of hobbies, Roland mentioned accessible board games and 64 Ounce Games, which sells accessible components of games that are not otherwise accessible.

A Q&A followed the presentation.

## 8. Division Presidential Report – Jonathan Zobek

In his report, Jonathan said that we had 12 paid members of NJABS in 2021. He then highlighted the conclusion of Students Supporting Seniors, and that he received positive feedback from both students and seniors. He ended his report by stating that the main goal for 2022 is membership and outreach.

## 9. Elections – Conducted by Nina Marranca

* 1. President – Kaleigh Brendle nominated herself for President. Jonathan made a motion to close nominations, seconded by Jillian Milton.
  2. Vice-President – Claress Knight nominated herself for Vice-President. Kaleigh Brendle made a motion to close nominations, seconded by Jonathan Zobek.
  3. Secretary/Treasurer – Jonathan Zobek nominated himself for Secretary/Treasurer. Claress made a motion to close nominations, seconded by Kaleigh Brendle.
  4. Board Member 1 – Lauren Altman nominated herself as Board Member 1. Kaleigh Brendle made a motion to close nominations, seconded by Jillian Milton.
  5. Board Member 2 – Vee Gaspa nominated herself for Board Member 2. Jonathan Zobek made a motion to close nominations, seconded by Kaleigh Brendle.

## 10. Round the Phone

Patti Chang gave some closing remarks She urged NJABS to focus on membership and suggested sharing the Self-Advocacy in Higher Education Toolkit.

Vee Gaspa stated that membership has fluctuated in the past and agreed we should focus on membership in 2022.

Lia Stone urged NJABS to focus on membership building in 2022.

## 11. Membership Dues

Dues for the New Jersey Association of Blind Students can be paid using the following link:

<https://www.nfbnj.org/chapters-and-divisions/students/membership-form/>

## 12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Jonathan Zobek at 12:22 PM.

Minutes written by Jonathan Zobek, President, Secretary/TreasurerNFBNJ Students Division

# Sports and Recreation Division Business Meeting Minutes

## 1. Meeting call to order by Linda Melendez, President at 2:00 PM

2. Roll Call:   
Linda Melendez, President  
Annemarie Cooke, Vice President  
Board Member: Tony Santiago

Guest: Patti Gregory-Chang, National Representative

There were approximately 41 members and participants in attendance.

3. Welcome and About Us:  
Linda welcomed everyone for taking the time to join us. This will be her last meeting as Division President as she is stepping down this year and supporting Vee Gaspa to be elected as the new President.

Our division has two purposes; the first is to promote and share our organization with other blind and vision impaired individuals so they can become members of the National Federation of the Blind, The National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey and the NFBNJ Sports and Recreation Division with paying their yearly division dues. The second is to encourage and promote our members to become involved in sports, recreational and spectator activities on a state, local, and individual level.

## 4. NFB Pledge:

Recited by Joseph Ruffalo  
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.

## 5. Overview of 2021:

* We met the 3rd Wednesday of each month Jan through June; we took the summer off and were back in Sept, Oct and in person Nov.
* 62 Members
* Participated in a Virtual exhibit on ancient Egyptians through Penn Museum Free
* Had a Pampered Chief and Tupperware Fundraiser raising $90
* Hosted Representatives from Accessible Pharmacy as a Spotlight Speaker
* Conducted a virtual cooking class
* Virtual Cooking Class with Annemarie Cooke
* Hosted Blind Athlete, Alvin Suarez, as a spotlight speaker

## 6. Plans for 2022:

* Increase membership
* Phase back to in person activities with the guidelines from the State Affiliate
* Reestablish the regional activity coordinators and events
* Additional virtual cooking class with Annemarie Cooke
* Continue collaborating with previous organizations, such as, Penn Museum and Philly Touch Tours to provide engaging experiences.

## 7. How to make dues payments for 2022:

Currently there are two ways to pay dues. Click on the link below to fill out a membership form and choose your method of payment. [NFBNJ Sports & Recreation Division Membership Form – National Federation of the Blind of New Jersey](https://www.nfbnj.org/chapters-and-divisions/sports-and-recreation-division/membership-form/)

If paying through PayPal you use a debit or credit card to process your payment.

If paying via check or money order after filling out the membership form please make the check or money order payable to NFBNJ Sports & Recreation Division with S&R dues year(s) you are paying dues for in the memo field. Please send to:  
Jocelyn Santiago  
24 Magnolia Court  
Bordentown, NJ 08505

## 8. Election results:

Jane Degenshein presented the nomination slate and assisted with the elections.

President: Vee Gaspa  
Vice President: Annemarie Cooke  
Secretary: Andrew Smith  
Treasurer: Jocelyn Santiago

Board Seat 1: Marian Lee  
Board Seat 2: Tony Santiago  
Board Seat 3: Linda Melendez

## 9. Additional Comments:

a. Annemarie Cooke, Division Vice President  
Annemarie encouraged everyone to send us your suggestions and looks forward to future online cooking events

b. Tony Santiago, Board Member

Tony encouraged all to stay healthy and active.

10. Spot Light Speaker: Sherlock Washington  
Sherlock spoke about his life; being active and an athlete. Blind Athletes Inc is a sport club for vision impaired athletes in the State of New Jersey. We want our athletes to stay active in all seasons. In order to do so, we support a multi-sports schedule including para-athletics, para-swimming, beep baseball and participation in road races such as 5K and half marathon. Our competitive athletes compete regionally, nationally and internationally. All our athletes train towards the same objectives – to raise their standard of excellence, strive for new personal records, and to discover the Champion within. We urge you to consider becoming an athlete – someone who chooses the active lifestyle and the camaraderie of friends and teammates. Someone who sets high expectations and strives to achieve meaningful goals. It takes courage, willpower and effort to make a lifestyle change. It requires the support of consistent constructive encouragement and proper guidance. That is what we are all about at Blind Athletes Inc.

## 11. Around the phone:

The meeting was open for attendees to share:

Patti Chang and her husband offered to host a Zoom Dancing class.  
Sherlock Washington would like to be speaker at one of our division meetings about Blind Athletics Inc.

12. Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m. by President Linda Melendez.

Minutes respectfully submitted and reviewed by Linda Melendez, President

Sports and Recreation Division, NFBNJ

# Technology Division (NJABTU) Business Meeting Minutes

## 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Division President, Jane Degenshein, at 11:00 A.M.

## 2. Roll call:

There were approximately 40 people in attendance.

Officers:

Linda Melendez, State Affiliate President

Jane Degenshein, Technology Division President

Tony Santiago, Vice President

Mary Jo Partyka, Recording Secretary

Annemarie Cooke, Treasurer

Board Members:

Mario Brusco, Ed Godfrey, Anne Marie Harris, and Andy Smith

Guest: Patti Gregory-Chang, National Representative

Guest Presenter: David De Notaris

## 3. NFB Pledge

Jane asked Ellen Sullivan to recite this for us.

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.

## 4. Overview of 2021:

The Division met from January through June and in September and October 2021.

Jane invited the following members  to present as guest speakers-, Tracy Carcione, Lori Falk, Ed Godfrey, Tony Santiago, and Andy Smith.

100 people are subscribed to the New Jersey Technology Division Listserv and Jane encouraged others to join and have their questions answered.

Our Division, in conjunction with Eileen Levin, has been involved with the Verizon Volunteer Project which enables members to learn and understand more about technology.

Our affiliate received $750  in 2020 and will receive another $750 in 2021, due to Eileen Levin’s diligence in helping others.

Our Division sponsored an IOS technology workshop on June 26 with 111 registered participants  from 15 states.

## 5. Plans for 2022:

Jane encouraged everyone to learn their technology. At  the January  10, 2022  Meeting, the agenda will be devoted entirely to allowing members to ask and receive answers to their questions.

Jane also asked the members to complete the membership form for the Technology Division and pay their 2022 dues. Dues are $5.00 per year and payments may be made online or mailed to Annemarie Cooke.  Her address is 7 Mayfair Road, Southampton, NJ, 08088.

## 6. Elections:

Ellen Sullivan presented the nomination slate and conducted the first part of the election and Jane Degenshein completed it.

Jane Degenshein, President.

Motion: Ruth Williams

Seconded: Jennifer Uchanow

Tony Santiago, Vice President

Motion: Jennifer Uchanow

Seconded: Ward Biondi

Mary Jo Partyka, Recording Secretary

Motion: Andy Smith

Seconded: Tracy Carcione

Annemarie Cooke, Treasurer

Motion: Mac Biggers

Seconded: Ruth Williams

The following Board Members were elected for one year terms.

Mario Brusco

Motion: Mac Biggers

Seconded: Angela Perone

Anne Marie Harris

Motion: Linda DeBerardinis

Seconded: Mac Biggers

Andy Smith

Motion: Linda DeBerardinis

Seconded: Jennifer Uchanow

Ed Godfrey was elected as a new board member.

Motion: Angela Perone

Seconded: Ward Biondi

## 7. Synopsis of Guest Presenter:

David De Notaris discussed transitional training and stressed the idea of using sound effects as part of a presentation.  He indicated that when someone is making a presentation it is important to look good and sound good.  Do not have a window behind you.  Keep your camera at eye level.  He also mentioned that when sighted people look at things on Zoom, and other websites, they are looking at images.  Pictures are very important to sighted people and blind people should do their best to describe who and what is in the picture they are sharing so that blind people also know what’s being shown.

## 8. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m. by Jane Degenshein, President

Technology Division, NFBNJ

Minutes Submitted by Mary Jo Partyka, Secretary and reviewed by Jane Degenshein, President, Technology Division, NFBNJ