

**Empowerment: Owning Your Future**

**61st ANNUAL STATE CONVENTION**

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF VIRGINIA**

Tracy Soforenko, President

**Friday, November 1 — Sunday, November 3, 2019**

**Renaissance Portsmouth**

425 Water Street

Portsmouth, Virginia 23704

(757) 673-3000

**Co-Hosted by The Tidewater and Peninsula Chapters OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF VIRGINIA**

**Stewart Prost and Uricka Harrison, Presidents**

**Our National Representative:**

**Ron Brown, Second Vice President, National Federation of the Blind**

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# The Federation Pledge

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

# Convention Registration & Information

Convention registration and information will be held at the Portsmouth Registration Desk, located on the 2nd Floor outside the Portsmouth ballrooms. The cost of on-site registration is $25. Pre-registration packet pick up and on-site registration will be open at the following times:

* Thursday, October 31 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
* Friday, November 1 from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.; from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM, and   
  5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
* Saturday, November 2 from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Door prizes and auction items can be brought to the registration desk beginning on Thursday evening.

## Meal Functions

Tickets for all meal functions are available at the registration desk while supplies last. The only way to ensure a ticket for meal functions is to pre-register.

**Banquet:** Banquet tickets may be purchased, while supplies last, onsite for $37. Seating will be open, so come early to get seats together. Do not forget to bring your ticket because tickets will be checked at the door.

**Box Lunch:** If you did not pre-register for a boxed lunch, tickets may be purchased onsite, while supplies last, for $17.50. Box lunch tickets will be sold for both Friday and Saturday and must be used for the specific day purchased. In addition, a very limited number of student lunch tickets may be available for those who did not pre-register for $8.

**Note:** For more information about hotel, registration or meal functions, please contact Joe Orozco at (202) 810-4023 or via email at jsorozco@gmail.com

## Door Prizes

Door prizes will be drawn periodically throughout convention sessions on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday and at the banquet. To be eligible for door prizes, you must be registered for the convention and present in the room when your name is called.

## Action Auction

Throughout the convention we will be holding an Action Auction to raise money for the affiliate. The auction will be great fun with many valuable items up for bid. You will have a chance to preview auction items on Friday afternoon in the exhibit area. For more information, contact Jacki Brown, Chairperson and Auctioneer.

## Information Table

If you need assistance from the NFB of Virginia (such as helping a blind child get a strong education, getting access to blindness skills training, learning to use NFB-NEWSLINE®, or resolving an employment discrimination problem), please go to the information table in the back of the Portsmouth 5 Ballroom. Additionally, if you have questions concerning accessing services from the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, the information table can be a resource for guidance. After the convention, a member of the NFB of Virginia will contact you. In addition, if you would like to sign up to receive any of our publications or would like to get regular updates about our programs and legislative efforts, please also visit the information table. The table will be open during the board meeting, after the opening ceremonies on Friday, during General Session on Saturday, and all morning on Sunday. For more information, please contact Alex Castillo at (917) 532-7439.

## Childcare

Childcare is available for infants through fifth graders whose parents are registered for the convention. It is available throughout the day on Friday and Saturday. Childcare is in the Jefferson Room, 1st Floor. We have activities and games for the children. For more information, please contact Uricka Harrison at (757) 349-9234.

Childcare is offered at the following times:

* Session 1: Friday, 8:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
* Session 2: Friday, 12:15 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.
* Session 3: Friday, 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.
* Session 4: Saturday, 8:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
* Session 5: Saturday, 12:15 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.
* Session 6: Saturday, 6:45 p.m. to one half hour after the banquet ends

Snacks will be provided during Sessions 1, 2, 4 and 5. Even though childcare will be open and fully staffed during lunch on both Friday and Saturday, lunch will not be provided. Parents should either pick their children up for lunch at the end of Session 1 and Session 4 or provide a lunch for their children in the childcare room. Also, dinner will not be provided on Friday or Saturday evening. Parents should feed their children dinner prior to bringing them to Session 6. The cost of childcare is $10 per family per session.

## Dog Relief Area

The Renaissance Hotel has designated a place for dog relief by proceeding out the doors across from the front desk in the lobby of the hotel. The designated place has a trash receptacle near the hotel entrance. Please do not use the terrace on the 2nd floor for dog relief.

## Assistive Listening Devices

A limited number of assistive listening devices are available during all convention sessions and at the banquet. For an assistive listening device, please go to the contact table located in the back of the hall during all convention general sessions. A credit card or identification card is required as a deposit for the equipment.

## Hospitality Suite

The Convention Hospitality Suite is the Commodore Room on the 2nd floor. The Commodore Room is located just off the elevator bank, in the opposite direction of all other conference rooms.

## Daylight Saving Time

Don’t forget to set your watches back one hour for the change that occurs early Sunday morning. Smart phones, of course, should handle this change automatically.

# Thursday, October 31, 2019

6:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Virginia Chapter Leadership Institute (CLI) Wrap Up / Ramp Up: Commodore Room; Joe Orozco and Domonique Lawless, Co-Chairs. By invitation only. We are continuing the Virginia Chapter Leadership Institute. This weekend’s CLI event both completes year one and starts year two.

7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Registration: Portsmouth Registration Desk.

# Friday, November 1, 2019

8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Registration: Portsmouth Registration Desk.

9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. NFB of Virginia Board of Directors Meeting and Chapter Reports (Open to All): Portsmouth 5 Ballroom.

## General Session

Portsmouth 5 Ballroom

10:00 a.m. to 10:20 a.m. Opening Ceremonies:

* Call to Order - Tracy Soforenko, President, NFB of Virginia
* Invocation - Cantor Wendi Fried, Congregation Beth El, Norfolk Virginia
* Presentation of the Colors
* Pledge of Allegiance
* Federation Pledge
* Star Spangled Banner –Julie McGinnity, President, NFB Performing Arts Division, Baltimore, Maryland
* Welcome to Portsmouth, Mayor John Rowe, Portsmouth, Virginia
* Greetings from Our Host Chapters – Stewart Prost, President, Tidewater Chapter, Norfolk, Virginia and Uricka Harrison, President, Peninsula Chapter, Newport News, Virginia
* Convention Arrangements - Joe Orozco, Chairperson, Convention Organization and Arrangements

10:20 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Introducing the Portsmouth Regatta. Christopher Walker and Earl Everett, Fundraising Committee

10:30 a.m. to 10:50 a.m. Betting on Success: Reflections from Virginia’s 2019 McDonald Fellows and Kenneth Jernigan Scholarship Fund Winners:

* Moderator: Mary Durbin, Chairperson, McDonald Fellowship Committee, and NFB of Virginia Liaison, Kenneth Jernigan Scholarship Fund Committee, Virginia Beach, Virginia
* Lois Fritz, Newport News, Virginia
* Andrea Ortiz, Burke, Virginia
* Kassahun Sahilu, Alexandria, Virginia
* Yvette Williams, Newport News, Virginia

10:50 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Action Auction.

11:00 a.m. to 11:10 a.m. Cane, Punch, Choke, and Throw: Martial Arts and Fitness as a Blind Person.

* Alex Castillo, Potomac Chapter, Washington DC

11:10 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. Serving My Country – Building My Business. Jimmy Cunningham, Vice President, Virginia Merchants Division and Vice Chair, Virginia Business Opportunities for the Blind Board, Prince George, Virginia.

11:20 a.m. to 11:25 a.m. Action Auction.

11:25 a.m. to 11:35 a.m. Disability Partnership in Action. Colleen Miller, Executive Director – Virginia Disability Law Center, Richmond Virginia.

11:35 a.m. to 11:50 p.m. Open Slot TBD.

11:50 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Announcements.

12:00 p.m. General Session Adjourns.

12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. Registration: Portsmouth Registration Desk.

12:00 p.m. to 12:30 p.m. Box lunch pick-up: Portsmouth Foyer.

12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Exhibits: Portsmouth Foyer. Annette Carr, Exhibits Coordinator.

12:15 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. Embracing Our Diversity: Empowering Our Community: Portsmouth 4BallRoom. Evelyn Valdez– Coordinator

* The National Federation of the Blind recognizes that our diversity is a core strength. This lunch, featuring Jean Brown as our keynote, will feature the stories from across the Virginia Federation Family and will discuss ways we can make our community more inclusive and vibrant.

## Friday Afternoon Concurrent Seminars

2:00 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. Owning Your Finances Seminar - Joe Orozco, Chair, Portsmouth 5 Ballroom.

From financial scams to strategic budgeting, from buying a home to building your retirement fund. Come learn how to secure your financial future.

2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Seniors Possibilities Fair – Nancy Yeager, President, Seniors division, Portsmouth 1 and 2 Ballrooms.

Have you stopped reading the newspaper or books, writing checks or other correspondence, or completing other tasks that require vision? If the answer is yes to any of the above, join us to learn about low- or no-cost solutions to these and other aspects of your daily life.

4:00p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Resolutions Committee: Portsmouth 6 Ballroom, Deepa Goraya, Chairperson.

We encourage the participation of all members in setting Federation policy, and the best way to influence policy is through resolutions. As a grass roots organization, we serve our movement through collective action, and such action begins with policy making and debate. Come help shape the policies of the NFB of Virginia.

5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Registration, Portsmouth Registration Desk.

5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Public Meeting on DBVI Divisions, Programs and Services: Portsmouth 5 Ballroom, Susan K. Davis, Policy and Training Coordinator, Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

We are grateful that DBVI will hold a public meeting where attendees can ask questions and speak with agency leadership. DBVI wants to hear from you so come and share your thoughts and ideas on how DBVI can better meet the needs of blind and low vision Virginians.  Let your voice be heard.

5:30 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. At-Large Chapter Meeting and Reception: Commodore Room, Patrick Johnson, President.

6:30 p.m. to 7:30p.m. Student Dinner Party: Commodore Room, Elizabeth Schoen, Coordinator, Virginia Association of Blind Students.

Join the Virginia student division leaders and members for fellowship with old and new friends to kick off the convention weekend. Open and free to all students over the age of 14.

7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Convention Hospitality: Portsmouth 4 Ballroom.

Hosted by the Tidewater and Peninsula Chapters, Stewart Prost and Uricka Harrison, Presidents. All registered convention attendees are welcome to join us for this fun evening of fellowship and hospitality featuring music and fun. Don’t forget your ticket provided with your registration to enter this event. Mix, mingle, and network with Federation members and distinguished guests, all while enjoying appetizers and a cash bar.

7:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Student Meet & Greet, Kelly Jones, Coordinator, Virginia Association of Blind Students, Portsmouth 6 Ballroom.

If you are a student of any age, this evening item is for you! Think interactive icebreakers, engaging discussion, and high energy programming all in one session! Join students across the Commonwealth to share, learn, and grow until late hours of the evening.

7:45 to 8:45 PM Friday Evening Cookie Social for Families of Blind Children

Commodore Room, Beth Sellers, President, Virginia Parents of Blind Children

Calling all blind kids ages 0-13, siblings and parents! Join us for cookies and drinks and a chance to meet other families from across the state. Bring any Braille or large print books your child no longer needs and pick up some free books from our free Braille book exchange table. (Email bsellers31@gmail.com with questions and any food allergies we need to be aware of.)

9:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Young Professional Reception, Susie D’Mello and Evelyn Valdez, Coordinators, Commodore Room.

Are you a young professional looking for something exciting to do on Friday evening? Come mingle, make new connections, and enjoy a drink or two at the Young Professionals reception in the commodore Room.

10:15 p.m. to 11:15 p.m. Scholarship Mixer: Commodore Room, Patrick Johnson, Chairperson.

# Saturday, November 2, 2019

8:00 a.m. to 10:00a.m. Registration: Portsmouth Registration Desk.

## General Session

Portsmouth 5 Ballroom

9:00 a.m. Call to Order -Tracy Soforenko, President, NFB of Virginia.

9:00 a.m. to 9:05 a.m. Invocation – Reverend Chris Coleman, Assistant Minister, Gethsemane Baptist Church, Peninsula Chapter, Hampton Virginia.

9:05 a.m. to 9:35 a.m. National Report – Ron Brown, Second Vice President, National Federation of the Blind, Indianapolis, Indiana.

9:35 a.m. to 9:40 a.m. Action Auction.

9:40 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Blind Parents Get It Done.

* Jessica Reed, Panel Moderator, Fredericksburg, Virginia
* Yasiah Hurtado, Richmond, Virginia
* Nikki Jeffords, Arlington, Virginia
* Louise Walsh, Virginia Beach, Virginia

10:00 a.m. to 10:10 a.m. A Friend in Congress. The Honorable Robert “Bobby” Scott, Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, 3rd Congressional District of Virginia.

10:10 a.m. to 10:20 a.m. Advocating for Our Children: Addressing Our Kid’s Needs. Beth Sellers, President, Virginia Organization of Parents of Blind Children, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

10:20 a.m. to 10:40 a.m. Celebrating Our Members - Sandy Halverson, First Vice President, National Federation of the Blind of Virginia, Arlington, Virginia.

10:40 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Open Doors and New Beginnings-The Future Really Is Mine:  A Panel Discussion with Seniors Who Are Living the Lives They Want: Melody Roane, Director, Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired, Moderator, Richmond Virginia

11:00 a.m. to 11:05 a.m. Introducing the 2019 NFB of Virginia James F. Nelson, Jr. Scholarship Finalists. Patrick Johnson, Chairperson.

11:05 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. Rehabilitation Services for the Blind in Virginia. Raymond Hopkins, Commissioner, Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

11:20 a.m. to 11:25 a.m. Announcements.

11:25 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Action Auction.

11:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Presidential Report, Tracy Soforenko, President, NFB of Virginia.

12:00 p.m. General Session Adjourns.

12:00 p.m. to 12:30 p.m. Box Lunch Pickup: Portsmouth Foyer.

12:15 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. 2019 Welcome Luncheon, Joanne Wilson and Jimmy Morris, Co-Coordinators, Portsmouth 4 Ballroom. Whether you are a member who wants to get more out of your membership, are a new member, or just want to learn from others in this interactive lunch-based discussion session, the Welcome Lunch is for you.

Learn more about the Federation and our positive philosophy on blindness, understand how you can better tap the broad Federation network, and be inspired to take ideas home from positive role models in our movement.

12:15 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. Seniors Division Luncheon and Business Meeting, Portsmouth 7 and 8 Ballrooms. Nancy Yeager, President. Join other seniors for lunch and conversation, followed by a short business meeting.

12:15 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. Virginia Association of Blind Merchants Division Luncheon and Business Meeting: Portsmouth 6 Ballroom. Harold Wilson, President.

12:15 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. Virginia Parents of Blind Children Luncheon and Business Meeting: Portsmouth 3 Ballroom. Beth Sellers, President.

Grab the boxed lunch or bring your own, but please join us for our business meeting and parents’ lunch.  Our lunch hour is an informal roundtable conversation for parents of children of all ages with low vision, blindness, deaf-blindness, and multiple disabilities.

12:15 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. Student Luncheon and Virginia Association of Blind Students Business Meeting: Commodore Room. Gerald Meredith, President, Virginia Association of Blind Students.

Student Lunch pick up will be held in the Commodore Room starting at 12:05 p.m. Students are the leaders of tomorrow. During our annual luncheon, our members will elect the officers and board members for the upcoming year, as well as reflect and brainstorm on the work of our statewide division. Pre-register online for the $8 lunch by October 25.

1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Registration, Portsmouth Registration Desk.

## Saturday Afternoon Breakout Sessions

2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Chapter Leadership University: Portsmouth 4 Ballroom, Tracy Soforenko and Kathryn Webster, Coordinators.

Chapter Presidents, Treasurers, membership coordinators, and participants in the chapter leadership institute will participate in a Saturday afternoon workshop on how to make our chapters more engaging, welcoming, and dynamic. Role play real life scenarios and bring home ideas that can be applied in your chapter in 2020.

2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. The ABCs of Life

Portsmouth 5 Ballroom, Nicky Jeffords, John Bailey, Martha Macias, and Rich Sorey, Co-Coordinators.

The ABCs of Life

A = Attitude, B = Breaking Down Barriers, C = Creating Connections

Come and learn about strategies necessary to earn, retain, and advance your brand in the professional and personal spheres.  This interactive session will provide you with tips and techniques to meet your full potential.

2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. – Student Seminar: Surpassing Our Limitations. Commodore Room, Gerald Meredith, Virginia Association of Blind Students, President.

Every blind student faces barriers; and every blind student overcomes obstacles. But not every blind student has a nationwide network of role models who conquered greatness given society’s limitations. During this seminar, you will be introduced to successful and ambitious blind professionals and students, confident and independent throughout their lives. This afternoon will afford all students with an opportunity to ask questions, learn from others, and engage in hands-on activities to learn how to excel in and out of the classroom.

2:00 p.m. to 4:30p.m. Parent Track: Encouraging Success in All Ages and Stages. Portsmouth 3 Ballroom, Beth Sellers, President, Virginia Parents of Blind Children.

Join us as we dig into resources that are available in Virginia to promote success for blind children and young adults in all stages of development. Topics discussed will include IEPs, Transition, and Community Based Services through DD Waiver. Question and Answer time will be available for topics relevant to participants.

2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Senior Track: Seniors in Charge: Portsmouth 7 and 8 Ballrooms, Nancy Yeager, President. Our exciting senior seminar will cover a broad range of topics including health and fitness, grocery shopping, new mobile phone options specifically targeting seniors, how to use easy to use reader services through a smartphone, programs of our national senior division, and much more.

5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Project RISE Open House for Virginia students and parents: Portsmouth 6 Ballroom, Kathryn Webster, Project RISE Program Coordinator. Learn more about Project RISE, meet our team and ask your questions.

5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Sighted Spouse/Significant Other/Partner Get Together, Diane Bibb (wife of Dr. Patrick Johnson) and Sharon Soforenko (wife of Affiliate President Tracy Soforenko) Coordinators, Commodore Room.

Come join us for an informal, candid and open conversation between sighted partners of Virginia Federationists. To encourage sharing, this meeting is for sighted spouses only.

## 2019 Convention Banquet

Portsmouth 4 and 5 Ballrooms.

In Federation fashion, come dressed to impress as we celebrate our Banquet on the Waterfront with a keynote address by National Representative Ron Brown.

6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Pre-Banquet Reception (Cash Bar): Portsmouth Foyer.

7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Banquet Program – Charlie Brown, Master of Ceremonies and Past President, NFB of Virginia:

* Invocation—David Andrews, New Beginnings Outreach Center, Peninsula Chapter, Hampden, Virginia.
* 2019 James F. Nelson Scholarship Awards Presentation—Patrick Johnson, Scholarship Committee Chairperson, Christiansburg, Virginia
* Banquet Address – Ron Brown, Second Vice President, National Federation of the Blind
* Portsmouth Regatta
* Action Auction - Jacki Brown, Auctioneer

# Sunday, November 3, 2019

8:00 a.m. to 8:50 a.m. Devotions: Portsmouth 6 ballroom.

Mark and Melody Roane, Coordinators

## General Session

Portsmouth 5 Ballroom.

9:00 a.m. to 9:05 a.m. Invocation – Deborah Prost, Board Member, Tidewater Chapter, Norfolk, Virginia.

9:05 a.m. to 9:25 a.m. Be Your Own Boss.

Annette Carr, Moderator, Fairfax, Virginia

Have you ever considered if you have what it takes to be your own boss?  Make your own hours.  Answer to no one. Bring in the big bucks.  Hear what this panel of entrepreneurs have to say about the myths and facts of being your own boss.

9:25 a.m. to 10:10 a.m. Business Session:

* Audit Committee Report—Sean McMahon, Chairperson
* Treasurer’s Report—Mark Roane, Treasurer
* SUN Committee Report: Sandy Halverson, Chairperson
* 2020 Richmond and Washington Seminars—Deepa Goraya and Derek Manners, Legislative Directors
* 2020 National Convention, June 30 - July 5, Hilton Americas Hotel, Houston, Texas
* 2020 NFB of Virginia Convention, October 30 – November 1, Westin Tyson’s Corner, Falls church, Virginia
* Resolutions—Deepa Goraya, Chairperson

10:10 a.m. to 10:20 a.m. Action Auction.

10:20 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Project RISE: Resilience, Independence, Self-Advocacy, Employment. Kathryn Webster, Project RISE Program Coordinator, National Federation of the Blind of Virginia, Arlington, Virginia.

10:30 a.m. to 10:50 a.m. Breaking the Ropes: an interactive session on owning your future, Joanne Wilson, Federation Leader, Alexandria, Virginia. An interactive session to build your individual beliefs about blindness for future growth.

10:50 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Students are Paving the Path for Our Future – Sied Rizvi, First Vice President, National Association of Blind Students, Austin, Texas.

11:00 a.m. to 11:40 a.m. Interactive Town Hall Discussion with Ron Brown, Second Vice President, National Federation of the Blind and Tracy Soforenko, President.

11:40 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. Virginia Association of Blind Students Update, Gerald Meredith, President.

11:50 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Reports and Announcements.

12:00 p.m. General Session Adjourns.

12:00 to 1:00 PM Student Lunch Pick Up – Commodore Room

Thank you to our Tidewater and Peninsula Chapters for hosting the 2019 NFB of Virginia State Convention. Your hospitality made us feel like family and made our convention a success.

# Dream Makers Circle

You can help build a future of opportunity for the blind by becoming a member of our Dream Makers Circle. Your legacy gift to the National Federation of the Blind or the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia can be made in the form of a will or living trust, an income generating gift, or by naming us as the beneficiary of a retirement plan, IRA, pension, or a life insurance policy. You can designate a specific amount, a percentage, or list NFB as one of several beneficiaries. For additional information, please contact Patti Chang at (410) 659-9314, extension 2422 or at pchang@nfb.org.

# Vehicle Donations

The National Federation of the Blind uses car donations to improve the education of blind children, distribute free white canes, help veterans, and so much more. We have partnered with Vehicles for Charity to process donated vehicles. Please call toll-free (855) 659-9314, and a representative can make arrangements, or you can donate online by visiting [www.nfb.org/vehicledonations](http://www.nfb.org/vehicledonations).