Philosophy of the National Federation of the Blind

The Federation's positive belief system about Blindness.

Members of the Federation realized the simple truth many years ago that blind people are just people who cannot see—we are not broken sighted people. Blind people are as different as sighted people are; that is, we are a cross-section of the broader society and, therefore, are not all alike as some assume. Blindness is a physical characteristic, but it is not the characteristic that defines us or our future. It is low expectations and misconceptions, not blindness itself, that stand between blind people and our dreams.

Given proper training and opportunity, blind people can and do live the lives we want. It is respectable to be blind, and, with the right tools and techniques, blindness may be reduced to the level of a nuisance or inconvenience. To combat the low expectations, misconceptions, and stereotypes that are the true barriers to achieving our dreams, the blind have organized for the same reasons other minorities have—to make positive social change through collective action. The Federation philosophy provides an overall framework for thinking about blindness, what it means, and what it doesn't mean. However, it is not intended to be rigid or dogmatic. As we just said, blind people are individuals, and we may disagree on any number of things, including how to handle a given situation as blind people. What our philosophy does do is give us a positive way of thinking about our blindness, rather than the negative ways in which we have often been conditioned to think about it by society. Rather than saying that we as blind people can't do something, we try to find ways that we can, and to challenge each other, in a loving way, to always push the envelope and expand the limits of our independence. As you read further, you'll discover that, to the extent we need to formulate specific positions about blindness and the policies related to it, we use a democratic process to arrive at these positions.

The National Federation of the Blind also provides encouragement and support to families with blind children and to people who are losing vision or have become blind later in life, by bringing them into a network of tens of thousands of blind people who are living full lives and who can serve as mentors and role models. Together, with love, hope, and determination, the members of the National Federation of the Blind transform dreams into reality.