National Federation of the Blind of Ohio

BELL Academy

Dear Parents or Guardians,

After a one-year hiatus, the NFB BELL Academy is back this summer. BELLS will be ringing in Columbus again. I am the Coordinator of this program for the state of Ohio and will be your primary contact throughout the program. This program is open to blind and low-vision students ages 4-12. Our one week-residential program begins on Sunday, June 15, 2025, and ends on Friday, June 20, 2025. It will be held at the Ohio State School for the Blind, 5220 N. High Street in Columbus. We are asking for a $125 participation fee per child. Anyone who cannot afford this fee may contact me directly to apply for one of our many scholarships. .

**Program Activities**

Throughout the course of the program, your child will engage in games and activities that involve Braille (reading and writing), cane travel, cooking, arts and crafts, self advocacy, and philosophy discussions about blindness. All of the lessons and activities in the BELL Academy are designed to enhance the students’ skills in non-visual techniques, presented in a non-judgmental, supportive environment. Students will learn from qualified teachers, competent adult blind role models, and the other blind students in the program.

**Learning Shades**

Most blind people have some residual vision. In order to effectively teach non-visual techniques, it is essential that we ask the students to wear blindfolds during some of the lessons and activities. We refer to these as “Learning Shades,” because they help children learn to use senses other than their remaining vision. We find that the use of learning shades helps the students build confidence as blind people, when they discover that they can function effectively without the use of their vision. Instructors and other staff in the program will also be using their Learning Shades during these activities.

**Residential Program**

Because we are operating a residential program, your child will receive intensive instruction in the skills of blindness throughout his or her stay with us. Our volunteer staff is committed to see that your child is given opportunities to grow and learn that are not available during the academic day.

**Field Trips**

We will be taking several field trips during the program. Part of the experience will be the use of public transportation to get to and from the destination. This is a great opportunity for our BELL kids to learn how to use the city buses and other available transit, which is a skill they will put to use throughout their lives.

Plan for your child to attend this skill- and character-building program now. For your child’s sake don’t wait until he or she is shut out because there is no more available space in the program. All you need to do to reserve space for your child today is to contact me by Email. Please put BELL Applicant in the subject line. Provide your child’s name, your name, email address, your street address, and the best telephone number at which to reach you.

We are excited about working with your child. I look forward to hearing from you very soon.

Sincerely,

Eric Duffy