**Fall 2020 Buckeye Bulletin**

A publication of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio

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The National Federation of the Blind knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise expectations, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. You can live the live you want; Blindness is not what holds you back.

The National Federation of the Blind of Ohio is a 501(c)3 consumer organization comprised of blind and sighted people committed to changing what it means to be blind. Though blindness is still all too often a tragedy to those who face it, we know from our personal experience that with training and opportunity it can be reduced to the level of a physical nuisance. We work to see that blind people receive the services and training to which they are entitled and that parents of blind children receive the advice and support they need to help their youngsters grow up to be happy, productive adults. We believe that first-class citizenship means that people have both rights and responsibilities, and we are determined to see that blind people become first-class citizens of these United States, enjoying their rights and fulfilling their responsibilities. The most serious problems we face have less to do with our lack of vision than with discrimination based on the public’s ignorance and misinformation about blindness. Join us in educating Ohioans about the abilities and aspirations of Ohio’s blind citizens. We are changing what it means to be blind.

The NFB of Ohio has eight local chapters, one for at-large members, and special divisions for diabetics, merchants, students, seniors, guide dog users, and those interested in Braille. This newsletter appears three times a year and is circulated by email, posted on NFB-NEWSLINE®, our digitized newspaper-reading service by phone, and can be read or downloaded from our website, www.nfbohio.org. For information about the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio or to make address changes or be added to the mailing list, call (440) 774-8077 or email barbara.pierce9366@gmail.com. For information about NFB-NEWSLINE, our free digitized newspaper-reading service, call (866) 504-7300. Local NEWSLINE numbers are: 330-247-1241 (Akron), 330-409-1900 (Canton), 513-297-1521 (Cincinnati), 216-453-2090 (Cleveland), 614-448-1673 (Columbus), Dayton: 937-963-1000 (Dayton), 567-242-5112 (Lima), 567-333-9990 (Mansfield), 740-370-6828 (Portsmouth), 937-717-3900 (Springfield), 56-806-1100 (Toledo), and 330-259-9570 (Youngstown).

**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 Ohio can be made in the form of a will or living trust or 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 contact Patti Chang at (410) 659-9314, extension 2422 or at pchang@nfb.org.

The National Federation of the Blind uses car donations to improve the education of blind children, distribute free white canes, help veterans, and 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).

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# **The Countdown Is on for You to Attend the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio’s 2020 Convention by Suzanne Turner**

Editor’s note: Suzanne Turner is vice president of the NFB of Ohio and in charge of convention arrangements. She and her committee will make sure that problems and accommodations for the convention are addressed. To contact her, call (216) 990-6199. Here is what she says about the up-coming convention:

The Vision beyond Vision is both the name and the theme of the seventy-fourth NFB of Ohio convention. The dates are November 6 and 7, 2020. We will expand our circle of participation, connecting blind Americans, not only across the state, but anywhere and everywhere for what we expect will be the largest gathering of blind people in the history of Ohio.

All events will be held on the Zoom Platform and in the Eastern Standard Time Zone. Here are helpful commands:

Phone command to mute and unmute: \*6

Phone command to raise and lower hand for speaking: \*9

Computer shortcut to mute and unmute: Alt A

Computer shortcut to raise and lower hand: Alt Y

**Zoom Meeting Etiquette**

Keep in mind that, when joining the convention, one will be placed on mute. If you wish to speak and are not on the agenda, you may raise your hand. A host will get to you as soon as possible; do not unmute yourself until you are prompted to do so. If you are on the agenda, the host will unmute you as we approach your presentation. Stay on mute if you are not speaking to the group. If on video, please do not eat or move about in any way that could be a distraction to others watching. We recommend that you don’t activate your video unless you are speaking.

**Zoom Meeting Connection Information**

One meeting link will be used for the Board Meeting, General Sessions, and the Banquet. Closed Captioning will be available in these sessions.

About the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio: The NFB-O is a 501 (c)3 non-profit organization and a founding affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind. We are proud to be an integral part of the oldest and largest organization of the blind in the United States. We are a diverse group of people dedicated to changing what it means to be blind. Our members work tirelessly to break down the legal, social, and personal barriers to living the lives we want.

The mission of the National Federation of the Blind is to achieve widespread emotional acceptance and intellectual understanding that the real problem of blindness is not the loss of eyesight but the misconceptions and lack of information which exist. We do this by bringing blind people together to share successes, to support each other in times of failure, and to create imaginative solutions.

Those who pre-registered for the Ohio convention before October 27, 2020, will be eligible for door prizes. Door prizes will be drawn during pre-convention festivities, general sessions, and the banquet. Registration is required and you must be present to win. When your name is called, please virtually raise your hand or email [ohioprize@gmail.com](mailto:ohioprize@gmail.com) within two minutes, which is the designated window of time to claim your prize. Also, if you would like to donate a door prize, please alert Ohio’s door prize Facilitator, Annette Lutz, at [president.capital.nfboh@gmail.com](mailto:president.capital.nfboh@gmail.com).

**Resolutions:** All resolutions must have been submitted to the Resolutions Committee chair, Barbara Pierce, no later than October 23. Resolutions will be considered at the general session on Saturday, November 7, 2020. For questions, email Barbara Pierce at [barbara.pierce9366@gmail.com](mailto:barbara.pierce9366@gmail.com).

The Ohio affiliate is delighted to have the PAC Man as our National Representative for 2020. We extend a warm welcome to Scott C. LaBarre, Esq., who is a leader in the National Federation of the Blind.

Scott C. LaBarre owns and operates LaBarre Law Offices (LLO). LLO specializes in employment law, disability rights, Social Security appeals, estate planning, Randolph-Sheppard Act cases, and business law. He has appeared in federal and state courts throughout the United States, securing many important victories for his clients. He is permanently admitted before the Supreme Court of the United States, the United States Courts of Appeal for the Seventh and Tenth Circuits, the United States District Court for the District of Colorado, and the Supreme Court of Colorado.

Before launching his own firm in July 1998, Mr. LaBarre acted as general counsel for the National Federation of the Blind of Colorado, where he specialized in laws affecting the blind and disabled. He served in that capacity for five years. Even after establishing LLO, he remains very active in the NFB through his volunteer service in many leadership roles. In October 2005 he became president of the Colorado affiliate. He also serves as chairman of the national PAC Committee.

He is president of the National Association of Blind Lawyers and vice chairman of the Board of Directors for the Colorado Center for the Blind. From 1996 until June of 2002 he was president of the NFB of Denver.

He is active in national, state, and local bar associations. Currently he serves as chair of the American Bar Association's Commission on Mental and Physical Disability Law. Mr. LaBarre is also active in the ABA's General Practice Solo and Small Firm Division through his service on the governing council and as vice director of the Division's Internal Affairs Group. He has also served as a director in the ABA's Young Lawyers Division, vice chairman of the ABA-YLD Bar Leadership Team, YLD liaison to the ABA Commission on Mental and Physical Disability Law, a member of the Colorado Bar Association Board of Governors, and treasurer of the Executive Council of the Denver Bar Association's Young Lawyers.

Mr. LaBarre received his Bachelor of Arts from St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, in 1990 and his Juris Doctor from the University of Minnesota in 1993. He left Minnesota in 1993 to work at the National Headquarters of the National Federation of the Blind. He moved to Colorado in June 1994. His wife, Anahit Galechyan, is from Armenia. They have two children, Alexander (born October, 2002) and Emily (born December, 2004).

**Rookie Roundup**: Wednesday, November 4th at 6:30 P.M. EST.

Introducing the Ohio Affiliate, door prizes, and more.

Join us as we celebrate the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio’s annual convention and expand our circle of participation.

**Exhibit Seminar**: Thursday, November 5, at 3:00 P.M. EST.

HIMS, Universal Vision Technology, Vispero, Vanda Pharmaceuticals, and more

These and more vendors will be on hand to demonstrate their high-tech and low-tech products for blind and visually impaired users.

**Happy Hour**: Thursday, November 5 at 7:00 pm EST.

Music, BYOB, Door Prizes, and More

Also come and meet special guest Jeanetta Price, who will provide the “Spoken Word,” inspiring and uplifting members and participants.

Here are a few convention highlights:

* Network with blind people from all parts of the country.
* Encourage blind people to expand their knowledge of resources.
* Attend workshops designed to promote leadership, membership-building, and successful employment strategies and attitudes.
* Attend the banquet that provides scholarships for blind college students.
* Visit the Hospitality Room, which will be open to mix and mingle Friday, November 6, from 9:00 to 10:15 am and on Saturday, November 7, from 12:00 noon to 1:45 pm.

The gavel will fall on Friday, November 6, for the opening ceremonies and general session promptly at 2:00 pm. We will have a series of speakers covering a wide range of topics, including a report from our Ohio president; A Welcome to Dayton by the Hon. Nan Whaley, mayor of Dayton; our national representative; Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD); and educational and inspirational presentations. Of course Annette Lutz will have exciting door prizes as well.

Friday evening will see a flurry of activities. The At-Large Chapter, Ohio Community Service Committee, the Ohio Association of Blind Students, and the Ohio Association of Blind Merchants will hold their annual business meetings that evening. The Nominating and Resolutions Committee meetings will also take place.

Saturday morning, November 7, we will begin with a breakfast meeting of the Ohio Association to Promote the Use of Braille at 7:30 am. If Braille is important to you, be sure to attend the OAPUB meeting. The Diabetes Action Network (DAN) will also have its meeting at 7:30 AM EST. If you are interested in becoming a member of this division, you should strongly consider attending.

The gavel falls again promptly at 9:00 am to continue general sessions. We will break at 12 noon for lunch. The Ohio Association of Parents of Blind Children with special guest, Carlton Anne Cook Walker, president of NOPBC, the NFB of Ohio Senior Division, and the Ohio Association of Guide Dog Users (OAGDU) will conduct their annual business meetings. The afternoon promises provocative workshops on promoting leadership, membership building, and successful employment strategies. Those interested in attending one of the NFB centers will have a chance to talk with the three center directors. A very special opportunity will be available for students and teachers. It is a workshop called Innovation in STEM: Access for Blind Students and Science Lovers. The moderator is our own Caroline Karbowski. Presenters are drawn from a number of institutions of higher education. Please make a point of calling this workshop from 2:00 to 3:50 pm to the attention of anyone interested in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics. Chapters and divisions will also have the opportunity to hold fundraisers as well.

Saturday night’s banquet will surely be the highlight of the convention. This is an opportunity for fellowship and for all of us to share a meal. Our keynote speaker for the evening will be our national representative, Scott LaBarre. We will also have our Gavel Awards ceremony to celebrate chapter and division accomplishments from the past year. The finale of the banquet will be the announcement of the 2020 scholarship winners and the annual Money for the Movement that supports Ohio’s programs and services. Be sure to order or prepare your convention banquet meal before you come into the Zoom Room. Don’t worry, the night is not over – plans are in the works for an exciting after-banquet activity.

Finally, our Convention Planning Committee is committed to making your convention experience memorable and quite enjoyable. Therefore our goal is to bring you the most up-to-date information on the convention. So please feel free to contact the committee chair with any questions, concerns, or requests for accommodations at SMTurner.234@gmail.com.

, Dr. Carolyn Peters, president, along with the Miami Valley Chapter will be ready to greet you bright and early at 8:30 am on Friday morning, November 6, 2020. Please notify Anette Lutz of any donated door prizes. You can email her at president.capital.nfboh@gmail.com.

For your convenience Eric Duffy and the tech team will ensure that all technological issues are addressed. Consult the convention agenda on how to connect to all meetings and how to contact the team.

The Ohio President, Richard Payne, along with the NFB-O Board of Directors, will be on-hand to welcome you. We are excited and looking forward to seeing you at the 2020 virtual Ohio Convention! Together, with love, hope, and determination, the members of the National Federation of the Blind transform dreams into reality. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back.

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# **From the President’s Desk by Richard Payne**

My fellow Federation members, we are filled with hope, energy, and love by participating in the National Federation of the Blind. Every day we work together to help blind people live the lives they want. When I think of these words, they give me the joy of knowing that you have put your trust in me to be your Ohio affiliate president for over three years. We have come a long way together, even with this year, which has brought about a different way of conducting the business of the organization.

While I write this column, it is raining in Dayton, and I keep reflecting on all of the things that we could not do this year. But I still stay uplifted by the fact that we are very engaged in Ohio and across the nation, doing the important work of the Federation. Moreover, I believe that it is especially vital to give empathy while we are doing the work of a large nonprofit group. People want to know that we care about them and their causes. Many have lost family, friends, and others who were significant in their lives. I want to encourage you to become aware of your surroundings, proactive with your health, and responsive with your well-being.

Furthermore, we can get nowhere unless we begin by taking stock of what is likely running through the minds of those who rely on us and of the ones who provide the valuable services to those that we serve: students, families, and members, and those who serve us all, staff, volunteers, donors, vendors, and community partners. We have been faced with a number of unknown events that certainly have been historical in 2020.

Business as usual is not where most people’s heads are right now. Yet, in fact, those who rely on us and our organization are desperately longing for things to get back to some normalcy. This is why it has been so important that we continue to reach out to our membership. As your president I can understand that, because of social distance, physical meetings at this trying time have taken their toll. People need a little hope. Hope is what we spread in the Federation, a sense that, if we tend the garden now, flowers will bloom again next spring. It may take a while, but it will happen by working together, and the membership will make it happen along with our friends

The NFB has always been a great resource for people looking for help, and even a place to get involved with a powerful organization. In Ohio it is very recognizable that the NFB of Ohio has made a lot of progress when it comes to advocating for the rights of blind people. I implore you to continue to make a deeper commitment by becoming invigorated and ready to spread the mission of the National Federation of the Blind. The hopes and dreams of thousands of blind people depend on it. I can promise you that, for as long as it is possible, we will be in the trenches together. Certainly, while numbers speak a lot, getting people to attend the convention is not the focal point. It is most important to help them connect and find a permanent home, where they can learn, grow, and become respectable. .

Well, speaking of the convention, I guess I will now return to working feverishly on crossing my t’s and dotting my i’s. Hear you in November when the gavel falls!

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# **Editor’s Musings by Barbara Pierce**

I do not ever remember living through a period with as much division and difference of opinion among neighbors in this country. The NFB has a tried and true policy opposing the airing of controversial issues. Sometimes we can be tempted to take swipes at those who hold different political or moral positions from those we hold, but the NFB is absolutely an inappropriate place for such comments or jokes. This is such an important organizational policy position that I have decided to use this column to review the evolving NFB history and resulting policy for everyone’s edification. It starts with the fact that we are part of a nationwide organization whose primary purpose is to improve the lives of blind people. We attract all sorts of people: second amendment advocates and gun control believers, right-to-lifers and right to choice adherents, Republicans and Democrats, anti- and pro-immigrant believers, pacifists and military supporters, etc. We try very hard not to alienate any of these folks because of our organizational positions on any secondary issue. The one exception to this principle is that we do enthusiastically take positions on issues affecting blindness and blind people because this is the cause that has brought us together and about which we think that we have the knowledge and experience to hold and defend particular points of view. Sometimes NFB members hold differing positions about blindness issues: audible traffic signals, the right to learn Braille in school, whether or not cane travel teachers should or can be blind, whether local agencies for the blind should seek National Accreditation Council accreditation, whether blind passengers should be allowed to sit in exit-row seats, and probably many more. The NFB has had and lost members who hold minority positions on all of these issues, but, as I say, we know something about blindness, and we have developed strong opinions about many blindness-connected issues. These we are prepared to go to the mat over, and we are sometimes willing to lose members who disagree with us about them. But we don’t want to lose people over issues that have nothing to do with blindness.

In the sixties and seventies just about every year someone would bring a resolution to the national Resolutions Committee in support or opposing the Vietnam War. We got them quite regularly opposing abortion and in support of a woman’s right to choose. Without hesitation we ruled all of these out of order and refused to consider them.

We have always taken the position that we will give support to any Member of Congress who supports our bills, and we have done so. Sometimes I had to bite my tongue when we supported a politician who voted for our bills but whose other positions I did not personally approve of, but I did it—not very enthusiastically, but I did it.

We are an organization made up of human beings. When we look back over our history, we can see how much we have changed through the years. For example, in the fifties and sixties there was a chapter in New Jersey made up only of men, and women were not welcome. Here in Ohio we had two chapters in Cleveland, Akron, Columbus, Youngstown, and probably several other cities. One was Black, and the other was white. When my son told me that he was gay, I worried for a while about how Dr. Jernigan would react and whether he would not want me to take positions in support of gay rights. By the way, he told me in no uncertain terms that he had close friends who were gay and that he was in complete support of their rights.

These are all positions that we have done our best to work through, and now we have embedded in our code of conduct antidiscrimination positions that make it clear where we stand in acceptance of members or potential members of any race, either gender, or any gender identification. So it should be clear that no joke or behavior underscoring discrimination is acceptable in the Federation, I don’t think that politics or religion of one flavor or another will ever evolve so far as to be acceptable for discussion in an official NFB meeting. Of course Federationists who are friends can and do discuss such issues among themselves, but we should never allow NFB gatherings to take up such topics. I hope that the whys and wherefores of this policy are now a bit clearer.

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# **Meet the 2020 Scholarship Class by Jordy Stringer**

It was my privilege to serve as a member of this year‘s scholarship selection committee. Fellow committee members Suzanne Turner and chairperson Cassandra Jones were phenomenal to work with, and, despite the uncertainty because of the pandemic, we were able to have a process that was smoother than the situation should have allowed for. We had a very difficult time making our selections since there were so many supremely qualified candidates. We are able to award only three scholarships each year and strongly encourage any applicant who was not selected to apply in the future.

The National Federation of the Blind of Ohio is a membership organization changing what it means to be blind. We are committed to promoting equality, opportunity, security, independence, and dignity for all blind Ohioans, and we are committed to doing what we can to secure career equality and equal access to education for all blind people. To this end, at the 2020 virtual state convention, we will award three scholarships to deserving blind students who are planning to pursue their postsecondary education fulltime during the 2020-21 academic year.

Our first finalist is someone who will be familiar to many of you, Kinshuk Tella. Kinshuk will be a sophomore at Miami University this fall, where he plans to major in geology with co-majors of environmental science and energy. He has appeared on the dean’s list numerous times and exhibits many characteristics of a future leader. In addition to these things he is also a lover of music and the performing arts and was honored with the Outstanding Musicianship Award two years running. He is president of the Ohio Association of Blind Students and took third place in the 2020 national student division talent contest. Kinshuk says in his essay: “Each year I am increasingly able to view my blindness as more of a positive through the work I and others do. I strive to give back through NFB to impact others the same way I was not too long ago.”

Next is Jonathan Thomas from Fairfield, Ohio. Jonathan will be a student at Wright State in the fall, where he will be pursuing a master’s in English, rhetoric, and writing. JT has been voted Quest for Excellence Award winner five consecutive times and has appeared on the dean's list consistently since 2015. JT has not always felt ok about his blindness. However, he has come to know the National Federation of the Blind, and with this and other influences he writes the following: “My youth pastor’s and case manager’s words, along with writing, have helped me love myself and my blindness. I’ve learned that it’s okay to be different and that my future isn’t limited because I’m blind.”

Our final winner is Hannah Grace Abel. Hannah will be attending Cedarville University this fall and will major in social work. Hannah served as the secretary for her high school National Honor Society and has also been awarded the Cedarville University Chancellor’s Excellence Academic Scholarship Award. Hannah says: “It has taken me a long time, but I now view my blindness as a blessing. While my life may not have turned out exactly the way I expected, I wouldn’t change anything about it. Stargardt’s makes my life harder, but it also makes me a hard worker.”

These are three very deserving students, and they are truly living the lives they want. This is the NFB-O scholarship class of 2020.

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# **Nothing Worth Having Is Free by Eric Duffy**

Editor’s note: Even before I joined the NFB, I had come across the free or half-price things and services that were available to blind people. Bus and train companies would allow blind people to travel with a friend for the cost of one ticket. In fact, a blind person was often denied a ticket if he or she showed up without a caretaker to ensure that company personnel would not be bothered with providing instructions or assistance. Public places, like zoos and art museums, let blind people in for half price, because they could not fully appreciate the animals or art, I guess. I had to be very careful not to be scooted up to the front of the line waiting for check-in in amusement parks, theaters, and airports—because I was deemed to be too fragile to wait my turn, I suppose. These and like advantages made me uncomfortable, but I did not know why. When I joined the NFB, I learned that we paid a hidden price for all these and similar perks. Sometimes it was nothing more than the other patrons pitying me and feeling virtuous for letting me skip the line. But very often organizations salved their consciences with these cost-saving rules by denying us full service or even any service unless we brought along a minder. I learned to turn down free bus passes in London because I did not need the financial assistance and I did not want other passengers to feel sorry for me. I began to look for the hidden costs of these blindness perks.

Let me say here and now that, when cutting a line is truly necessary for the comfort or safety of a disabled person, I am all for it. Blindness is not such a disability, so I will wait my turn, thank you very much. Sometimes low-cost bus passes or having fees waived is a welcome benefit in a world where disabled people earn well under the minimum wage or are otherwise denied good jobs or even any job at all. That is a slightly different matter, and the fight for equal rights should be connected with doing away with half-price anything. But it is well for us all to remember where these perks come from and what price we pay for them.

This is a slightly different matter from what Eric Duffy is talking about in the following article, but I was reminded of these issues when he raised the matter of no such thing as a free lunch. Eric is the secretary of the NFB of Ohio and a longtime leader of this affiliate. He also chairs the Legislative Committee and is the Legislative Director of Ohio. This is what he has to say about free anything:

From the time I was very young, I heard people say there's no such thing as a free lunch. I didn't understand that. My parents gave me everything I needed and most of what I wanted. When I went to school, I got a free lunch every day. During my early childhood I was young and dumb and did not realize that somebody was paying for everything that I thought was free. My dad worked hard and provided well for eight children and a wife. For him nothing was free. When I was about six years old, I started receiving recorded books from the Library of Congress Talking Book program. I will date myself here, because the books came on records. But they were free. My family told me I got them for free because I was blind.

Well, with age comes education, and one can hope that a little wisdom gets thrown in for good measure. I soon learned that my dad had taxes taken out of his check, as did all working Americans. I also learned that he paid taxes on the money he earned during the year. Those taxes paid for the talking books and the lunches I thought were free. I discovered that, when I got a job, I was going to have to pay taxes too. Talk about a rude awakening! I began to understand what was meant when people said there's no such thing as a free lunch.

All of this hit home for me many years ago now when I was testifying in a state budget hearing. (This was before our current arrangement of many years’ standing in which OOD funds NEWSLINE.) At the time I was there trying to get funding for NFB-NEWSLINE®. The National Federation of the Blind of Ohio thought it was important for the blind of the state to have equal access to newspapers. I was asking the Ohio General Assembly to fund the cost of the NFB-NEWSLINE service. Before leaving for the hearing, I received a call from one of the then members of the organization's Board of Directors. She said that I needed to be sure that the Cincinnati Library was funded. In the proposed budget the Cincinnati Library for the Blind program was slated to be combined with the Cleveland Program. I said that, if I were faced with choosing money for NFB-NEWSLINE or the Cincinnati Library, I would go with the former rather than the latter. This individual was none too happy with me.

I felt better about my decision after hearing the testimony of each person who testified before me. I heard directors of food banks asking for more money to help the hungry. I heard those in charge of programs for children asking for more money so that children could get the medical services they needed; others were asking for money to help poor, pregnant women get the proper medical care for themselves and their unborn children. It was a tough budget cycle. A lot of programs were in need, and the state had very little money. Yet no one wanted to raise taxes. I wondered where the money would come from to support all of the programs that needed funding.

I was told by many with as much experience as I had or more in state government that I was not likely to get support for NFB-NEWSLINE. But we got the funding we requested, the Cincinnati Library for the Blind merged with the Cleveland Library, and we have all lived happily ever after. But money comes out of the state budget for NFB-NEWSLINE and the Library program each year. Now I have been a taxpayer for many years, and I know there's no such thing as a free lunch.

Over the years I have heard people complain about the cost of access technology. Occasionally I have complained myself. But I realize that a great deal of funding goes into the development of every product, from the time the concept for a new product is developed until it reaches our hands or our desks. The cold, hard reality is that most of us can't afford to purchase our own access technology, especially if we need Braille or screen-reading technology. Much of this equipment is purchased by an employer or government agency. But what good does it do me or for that matter any of us to complain?

I ask this question a lot when I hear people complain about the cost of AIRA, or when I hear about how people have abused the free offers the company has made to give everyone who wants it access to the service. As many of you know by now, AIRA stands for “artificial intelligence remote access.” Through this service one can get access to visual information from a live agent who can see anything that the camera of a smart phone can see. This is a subscription service so that users can purchase a block of minutes to be used in the month in which they are purchased. For some time AIRA made the first five minutes of each call available at no charge to the Explorer. (AIRA users are called Explorers.) Explorers would often make four calls in order to complete a twenty-minute task. This is not how the generous offer from AIRA was intended to be used. So AIRA has had to revise drastically what it offers to make the service more affordable.

This has made me do a little soul searching. I’ve asked myself how many times I have abused a program or service meant for my benefit. I am human, so I'm sure that I've done it. How many times have I complained about the cost of a service or a product? I am sure that I've done it way too much. I then ask myself if I have done enough to work for change. I've worked for change, but I know I can do more. I know none of us should expect anything for free simply because we are blind. I know it is hard to find a job. I have been unemployed. I know that SSI and SSDI don’t provide enough cash to meet all our needs. In fact, the program rules and regulations keep us down. I have worked to change the laws that govern these programs, but I can do more, and so can you. I have worked to build support in Congress for the Access Technology Affordability Act. But I can work harder, and so can you. By supporting the work of the National Federation of the Blind, we can make life better for ourselves and for the next generation.

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# **30 Years after Covering the Signing of the ADA by Deborah Kendrick**

Editor’s note: Deborah Kendrick is a longtime member of the NFB of Ohio. She has been dividing her time between Ohio and Florida. I am happy to say that she is now back in Ohio. Deborah is a widely published author with a number of books to her name. She was invited to write the following recollection for the NFB this past summer on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This is what she said:

Blend in. Stand out.

Those were the two seemingly dichotomous goals driving me on July 26, 1990. Always, as a blind person I wanted to find some level of obscurity, to be just one of the herd. And, always, as a writer I wanted my work to stand out, stand up, be stellar and noteworthy as topnotch writing. The fact that I was here at all, on the White House south lawn on this gorgeous July morning, was the result of one more struggle.

President George Bush was signing into law the world’s first sweeping civil rights bill for people with disabilities. The ADA, as we would call it, mandated that restaurants and concert halls and schools and amusement parks had to treat every American equally. It was nobody’s business if you took a guide dog or a sign language interpreter to college; nobody’s business if you used a white cane or an orthopedic cane to attend a job interview.

When President Bush said to let the wall of exclusion come tumbling down, I knew I was not the only one to feel goose bumps and a visceral affirmation of belonging. We were all ecstatic to be part of this moment, to see this glorious future unfolding.

Three years earlier my pitch for a column on disability rights had been accepted by the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. While I had worked past the point of needing to hide my blindness, I had no intention of showcasing it either. I didn’t want to write a vapid weekly treatise on blindness or an insipid Q&A on how to get a handicapped parking card or a device for magnifying print. I admired tough, clear communicators populating op-ed pages. My intent was to write opinion, mixed with news and information, about all disabilities. To do that, I needed to immerse myself not only in blindness–which I’d been living since age five–but in deafness and quadriplegia and dyslexia and Down syndrome. I needed to hang out with and understand people who had Parkinson’s and bipolar disorder, chronic asthma and multiple sclerosis.

That immersion led to decades of firsts, and this date, July 26, 1990, was among the first of the firsts. Ecstatic upon receiving the invitation, I approached our new editor. He refused to send me to Washington. Undaunted, I took my request to the publisher–who loved it. This editor didn’t like me or the beat I represented, but he was stuck.

“We’ll send you,” he said, “but you can’t possibly get a page 1 story. You’re blind. You’d have no way of writing/transmitting it. Just call me and tell me the facts. I’ll write it.” I pretended not to hear.

This was 1990. No laptops or iPhones. No ubiquitous email and internet. No one had done what I wanted to do. Still, there was no way I was going to hand off this opportunity of a lifetime to an editor who didn’t even like me or the people I represented. No way would anyone but me write my story. I would figure something out.

I don’t remember the flight from Cincinnati to Washington. I don’t remember the taxi to the hotel or even which hotel it was. I do remember the electricity in the air as we milled about, eventually taking seat in that gigantic crowd on the White House south lawn.

My senses were hyper-tuned, alert to every nuance around me and every camera click, wheelchair motor whir, and guide dog chain jingling. I had to catch every word I could, every sidebar conversation, and the historic phrasing of our president. The crowd was 3000 strong. There were guide dogs and white canes and wheelchairs and crutches. There were politicians and press, interpreters and personal care assistants.

Later, standing in line to get a quote, I was suddenly aware of a guy in my face. With that cloyingly patronizing tone we have all come to know and loathe, he said: “I’m with Knight Ridder. How do you feel about this exciting law?” Clearly he thought I was one of the metaphorically unwashed, another “crip” or “blink” who might have a quotable quote.

“I’m from the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, a Gannett paper,” I replied, “and I think it’s great. How about you?” If he’d had a tail, it would have been tucked. He for sure disappeared into the crowd without a word.

I got my quote. I got my taxi back to the hotel. Alone, I wrote my story on a Braille ‘n Speak, connected it to the dial-up modem I’d brought with me, and connected said modem to the hotel phone line to send my story to the paper. It was on page 1 the next morning, and no one had tampered with a word of it.

Oddly, it did not occur to me at all that day–but only later with that clearest of hindsight that, while I was by no means the only blind person there, I was for sure the only one sent by a major metropolitan daily to get a page 1 story.

Today, 30 years later, there still might well be only one blind journalist at any landmark event, and there still might well be professionals who condescend to that blind journalist as less-than, rather than as an equal. Before the law, I knew that it was up to me to get the story and to make it a story worth reading. The shimmering promise offered by the ADA needs each of us to work, with confidence and competence, to make it a law worth celebrating.

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# **Healthy Attitudes, Real Achievement by Suzanne Turner**

Editor’s note: NFB-O Vice President Suzanne Turner recently began a job with the U.S. Department of Defense. Here is her reflection on her remarkable working life:

October is one of the months that are known for many celebrations of awareness: Breast Cancer Awareness Month, National Hispanic Heritage Month, National White Cane Awareness Day, Meet the Blind Month, and my favorite, National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The reason for my enthusiasm about disability employment awareness is that I have come a long way from my days of working in a sheltered workshop. As a teenager with hopes of attending college in the Department of Music at Jackson State University, I found myself in an alarming situation. I was losing more of my vision, and I did not know how to stop it. However, this is not about my vision, but the barriers I faced seeking competitive employment.

I left Mississippi Royal Maid’s Sheltered Workshop for the Blind in 1984, where I had worked for $1.98, when the minimum wage was $3.30 an hour. I knew that working as a blind person in this facility was not the characteristic that defined me or my future, although I did not formulate this idea until I heard it mentioned at the 2013 National Federation of the Blind national convention. Even though I knew that I wanted to break through the traditional barriers of blindness, I did not have any socialization skills or the support I needed to rise above sheltered employment. I was stuck! I became passive. I did not know that someone was looking for me to become a light for others. Please do not misunderstand me; I am no saint! But I have developed and assembled my talents, goals, and mission to give back to the community a little of what I have been fortunate to receive.

Not only did working in such an environment assembling brooms and mops prepare me for my opportunities, I have come to realize that someone had to do such jobs. Just think, without a broom or mop, homes, restaurants, and other businesses would be filled with trash. But the difference for me is the underlying meaning of opportunity, equality, diversity, and inclusion. First, opportunity should be your choice. Second, equality means fairness for all. Third, diversity must embrace multiplicity, and, finally, inclusion means accepting of everyone. Without these concepts, where do the blind fit in? Putting us in sheltered workshops, working below the Mississippi minimum wage, and isolating the blind were unfair and degrading. If I had been making a decent wage, I might never have achieved all I could or explored beyond the scope of the blind working in sheltered shops. Those who work assembling brooms and mops should have been provided the same opportunities as the sighted received. So I am appreciative of all of my experiences. They are what made me who I am today. When I worked on high powered machines, I was one of the best workers. I was taught by my grandmother to do the best I could at whatever is available. I still live by that principle today.

As I mentioned, I am enthusiastic about the celebration of Disability Employment Awareness Month 2020. My current employer has provided me one of the greatest opportunities that I could ever have expected. I am able to assist the military, America’s sailors and soldiers, who protect and serve. What an honor to work directly with those who have offered their lives so that we in the United States can remain free. Because of their bravery, we are free to voice our opinions, make decisions, and be whoever we want to be with no limitations placed on us. The sacrifice coupled with taking an oath to defend and protect us is not only comforting, but quite substantial.

So, as we celebrate Disability Employment Awareness, take a moment to reflect on where you are and where you would like to be in your career. In my opinion one can carry something away from just about any job opportunity and transfer that skill to whatever one decides to do. From working in a sheltered workshop to serving the military, both employers are counting on me to deliver great service. Again, my grandmother always said, “Whatever you do, do it to the best of your ability.” I have passed this advice down to the younger generation, be it making a bed or doing computer coding for Toyota. It is the quality of work that should be at the forefront of your thinking and attitude. Sure, being placed in a job that is unacceptable can be disappointing. But with the right attitude and character and putting in the time, hard work will pay off, and you’ll look back on it with a smile of achievement, saying, “I made it!”

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# **Recipes**

Editor’s note: Last June Richard asked me to solicit and then send in the recipes from Ohio for the *Braille Monitor*. I was happy to do the job. Tt least I was till I received too many really good recipes for our purposes. I had a terrible time deciding which recipes to include in the six we were supposed to submit. I solved my problem and salved my conscience by gathering together the recipes I did not include to use in this newsletter. Here they are:

**Strawberry Pie  
by Sheila Hardy-Wilson**

Sheila Hardy-Wilson is a member of the NFB of the Miami Valley. She reports that this dessert is a Mother’s Day tradition for her and her mother.

Ingredients:

2 frozen unbaked pie crusts, thawed

1 quart fresh strawberries

Confectionery sugar

1 pint heavy or whipping cream

Method: Bake pie crusts according to package directions. Allow to cool. Wash and hull the strawberries. Cut berries in half or slice if they are large. Place berries in a bowl and gently stir in a cup of confectionery sugar before refrigerating. Be sure that the cream is very cold. It is a good idea to chill the mixer bowl and beater in the freezer. Place cream in the mixing bowl and beat on high till soft peaks begin to form. Then beat in confectionery sugar to taste. Arrange berries in each pie shell and carefully top with whipped cream.

**Salmon Croquettes  
by Carolyn Peters**

Carolyn Peters is president of the Miami Valley chapter of the Ohio affiliate. She is also a state board member, and she chairs the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Advisory Council.

Ingredients:

1 can pink or red Alaskan salmon

1 cup cornmeal or bread crumbs

1 small onion, chopped, or 3 tablespoons green onions, chopped

1 egg, beaten

Dash black and or cayenne pepper

Olive oil

Method: In medium bowl place salmon and break up, crushing any bones. Stir in egg, onion, and pepper. Gradually work in cornmeal or bread crumbs until the mixture is the right consistency to form croquettes. Using a Fry Daddy or frying pan, cook the patties in a half cup of oil. Remove from pan when firm and cooked through. Alternatively you can spray a cookie sheet with cooking spray and bake at 400 degrees for 15 minutes. Serves four.

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# **Buckeye Briefs**

Annette Lutz reminds readers about the Capital Chapter’s monthly Voicecorps Radio show, usually the third Wednesday of each month at 11:00 am. You can listen by going to voicecorps.com or by enabling the Voicecorps skill on your Alexa device. The program usually gives updates about NFB activities or focuses on items of interest to the blind.

The NFB of Lorain County reports that, pandemic shut-down or no, it conducted its annual hike-a-thon in various locations and raised almost $1,000.

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# **Activities Calendar**

October, Meet the Blind Month

October 15, White Cane Awareness Day

November 1, Braille Readers Are Leaders registration opens

November 1, NFB scholarship application season opens

November 1, Presidential Release Zoom broadcast

November 6-7, NFB of Ohio virtual convention

December 1, Presidential Release Zoom broadcast

December 9, Open-House gathering call on Zoom

January 4, Louis Braille’s birthday and World Braille Day

February 8-10, Virtual Washington Seminar

March 24-26, The 2021 Jacobus tenBroek Disability Law Symposium, "Race, Diversity, and Inclusion and the Right to Live in the World”

March 31, Deadline for submitting NFB scholarship applications

July 6-11, NFB national convention, New Orleans, Louisiana