Spring 2021 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 members of communities of faith. 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), 937-963-1000 (Dayton), 567-242-5112 (Lima), 567-333-9990 (Mansfield), 740-370-6828 (Portsmouth), 937-717-3900 (Springfield), 419-806-1100 (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).

**Contents**

[**Dear Ohio Political Leaders and Voters by Eric Duffy** 2](#_Toc72246592)

[**From the President’s Desk by Richard Payne** 4](#_Toc72246593)

[**Editor’s Musings by Barbara Pierce** 6](#_Toc72246594)

[**The 2021 NFB of Ohio Scholarship Program by Jordy Stringer** 9](#_Toc72246595)

[**Legal Responsibilities of Non-Profit Board Members by Todd Elzey** 10](#_Toc72246596)

[**Getting Our Hands on Museum Exhibits by Marianne Denning** 12](#_Toc72246597)

[**The Parents That Didn’t Have to Be by Todd Elzey** 13](#_Toc72246598)

[**Discovering eSight by Todd Elzey** 15](#_Toc72246599)

[**I’m Smokin’ It, Baby by Eric Duffy** 18](#_Toc72246600)

[**Buckeye Briefs** 19](#_Toc72246601)

[**Activities Calendar** 21](#_Toc72246602)

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# **Dear Ohio Political Leaders and Voters by Eric Duffy**

Editor’s note: Eric Duffy chairs the NFB-O Legislative Committee. Here are some of his thoughts on legislative issues directed to Ohio’s political leaders and the general public:

Dear Ohio Political Leaders and Voters:

The National Federation of the Blind of Ohio has an important message for all political leaders and in fact for all of the people of Ohio. Our message is simple, but, if we all took it to heart, it would be life changing, not only for the blind, but for all of the people of the state.

Blind people live in your community, maybe even in your neighborhood. We attend your places of worship and your schools, shop in your businesses, and serve in your communities. But all too many of us are still denied opportunities to participate equally in life. These are opportunities that most sighted people take for granted. In fact, they are basic rights, and you can help us to work to be treated as first-class citizens.

Governor DeWine, one of your first acts as Governor was to sign an executive order Establishing Ohio as a Disability-Inclusion State and Model Employer of Individuals with Disabilities. The National Federation of the Blind of Ohio commended you with the following resolution:

**Resolution 2019-01  
Commending the DeWine Administration:**

WHEREAS, the blind of Ohio have suffered from chronic unemployment or under-employment for decades; and

WHEREAS, state officials have given mere lip service to the idea that state government should be a leading employer of the blind and others with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Governor Mike DeWine had the conviction and courage to issue Executive Order 2019-03D, Establishing Ohio as a Disability-Inclusion State and Model Employer of Individuals with Disabilities: Now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio in Convention assembled this third day of November, 2019, in the City of Columbus, Ohio, that this organization commend Governor DeWine for issuing this executive order; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization offer itself to Governor DeWine as a nationally recognized expert in the employment needs of the blind and that we urge his office and all other state Officials to consult with the organized blind as the state moves forward with the implementation of this executive order; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this consultation occur annually at a minimum.

As Ohio rises up from the economic ashes created by the pandemic, we urge you to work with us and others with disabilities to see that Ohio does indeed truly become a Disability-Inclusion State and Model Employer of Individuals with Disabilities. We need entry-level positions, but we also need middle- and upper-management positions. We ask you to spend a little political capital to support the legislative initiatives that I will discuss later in this column. We urge you to require all state agencies to make their websites fully accessible and user friendly.

Attorney General Yost, please work with us to take action against those who deny the blind and others with disabilities accommodations under the various laws that are meant to provide us with protections. Understand that we do not always desire to engage in litigation, but that, when possible, we prefer to provide public education. When possible we will work with you to educate, but, when necessary, we ask you to work with us to litigate and protect fully the rights of blind individuals.

Secretary of State LaRose, the blind of the state want full and equal access to the ballot in every election. This means that we want to cast a secret ballot independently, which is a fundamental right of our democracy that most Americans, including those living in Ohio, take for granted. We should not be denied this right, whether we are voting in person or by mail. Please work with us to make this dream a reality.

All members of the Ohio General Assembly, we call on you to pass legislation to provide us with protections that most Ohioans now take for granted. In the two most recent General Assemblies, legislation passed the House to protect the rights of blind parents or those wishing to become parents. A new-born child should not be taken into custody by Children’s Services simply because one or both parents are blind or have a disability. Parents should not be denied the right to adopt solely because of a disability. Finally, disability should not be a factor in determining custody or visitation rights. These are the issues addressed in HB188 in the 133rd General Assembly. This legislation has faced no opposition in the House. We beg members of both chambers to help us by providing these basic protections to disabled parents. Please do it now. This is not a partisan issue; it is a family issue and a basic civil rights issue.

HB214 in the 133rd General Assembly required pharmacies to provide an accessible prescription label upon request. Most blind and deafblind individuals do not have easy access to the information on their medication bottles. This includes the name of the medication, the dosage instructions, and other essential information that is often life saving. Once again access to this information is something most people take for granted. We will soon be testifying before the relevant committees in both chambers about these issues. We will be calling and emailing you to ask for your vote. Please give us your support.

Finally, to the members of the general public, it is your support we need most of all. Remember that we are just like you. We laugh, cry, and feel things the same way you do. We need your understanding and not your pity. Please make your websites accessible. Give us the opportunity to work in your places of business. Invite us out for a drink or to the next cookout or party. Don’t be afraid to accept our invitations when we invite you to the same. We are normal people who happen to be blind. We are not broken sighted people who need to be fixed or compensated for the tragedies of our lives.

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

As the President of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio, I often find myself reflecting on the progress we have made over the years, while at the same time thinking about how much things still need to change before the blind can take their rightful place in society. In this column I want to examine from real-world experience how the blind and the sighted often interact with each other. The best way to do that is by examining some of my personal experiences over many years now.

While a student at the Arkansas School for the Blind, I soon learned that people with disabilities (including the blind) are often not seen as individuals but rather lumped into one big group. We were discouraged from going to places that were not considered blind friendly. I wasn’t sure what that meant all those years ago, and I still don’t know today, so I will leave that to your imagination. The staff also believed that there were only certain jobs that blind people could do as well as only certain places we should go. Of course those beliefs were based on low expectations for the blind.

The truth is that many of us have challenged those low expectations and broken down barriers to employment. I was the first blind person that my current employer hired. They have hired many more since then. I simply refused to allow myself to be trapped in a corner and never get out to interact with the world. I do what I can to make the small changes that I can as an individual and the larger changes I can be a part of through my work with the National Federation of the Blind. We have said it many times in the National Federation of the Blind, and we will continue to do so. The blind are simply a cross section of society. Our skills, abilities, talents, temperament, and our hopes, dreams, and desires are the same as those of our sighted friends and neighbors who are similarly situated. Therefore we cannot allow society to cram us in the same box as all others with a disability.

One size does not fit all, even among the blind. We are all products of our culture, and our families play a major role in shaping us. This is true for the sighted as well. The blind who are sheltered by their families, the school system, or both frequently fail to reach their true potential. Diminished expectations can also create barriers for those working their way through the vocational rehabilitation system. In my opinion the best way a blind person can reach his or her full potential is through active participation in the National Federation of the Blind.

It is up to us individually and as an organization to continue to change public attitudes about blindness. I can think of no better way to do this than to talk directly to the children of today. After all, they are the leaders of tomorrow. How many times have you been going about life, just doing what you do, when you hear a child ask, “How come he has that stick?” If you’re a dog user, how many times have you heard the question, “Why does she have that doggy in here?” The reaction of the child’s care taker is predictable. Right? “Shshsh. It’s not nice to ask questions.” Well, I encourage children and adults to ask questions. I don’t want anyone to be afraid to ask me questions or to engage in a conversation just because I am blind. I welcome the opportunity to educate the public about blindness, and you should as well.

As for the blind ourselves, we should not wait for others to ask questions before engaging with the public. We must move beyond our comfort zone. For those of you who say, “But I am truly comfortable only around other blind people,” I say, “Get over it. I love and cherish my blind friends, but, to be honest, if I had only blind friends, I would not feel balanced. I think I would always see myself as being stigmatized. I don’t date people because of their vision or lack thereof. I would not marry someone because she is blind, but I would not refuse to marry her because she’s blind either. We all have our personal preferences when it comes to characteristics that we look for in significant others. Some guys like blondes; others prefer brunettes. There have been times in my life when I have thought a blind person would understand a particular set of circumstances better than a sighted person just because of lived experience. No matter your preferences in dating and marriage, what we cannot do is isolate ourselves in the blind community and then expect others to treat us as equals.

From an early age my family instilled in me the importance of dressing nicely. I believe that first impressions are very important. Therefore I keep myself clean, well groomed, and nicely dressed when I leave my house. In fact to this day, Crystal McClain and Eric Duffy still tell me that I don’t know how to dress for camping. But I often receive compliments about how well dressed I am. I appreciate the compliments, but I don’t appreciate the sting when the complimenter then asks, “Who picks out your clothes?” Anyone who doesn’t believe I pick out my own clothes should talk to the tailor at the store where I shop most. Ask him how many times I have rejected the clothing that he has recommended. I like to touch the clothes I am considering. I want a good description of them. I consider many things when buying clothes. I have my own techniques for keeping them clean and matching them. This is a long way of saying that I pick out my own clothes. But, if the sighted public does not believe that we can do something as simple as manage our own clothing, how will they ever come to see us as equals? Why would they ever give us a job?

I often prefer to wear shades. To me this is a matter of fashion and has nothing to do with blindness. People often try to figure out how much I can really see. They do not seem to understand when I tell them that I can’t see anything. They often say, “Oh, then it’s always black to you. “No, it’s not! It’s neither light nor dark, black or white. I simply don’t see anything.” Of course we know that blind people have varying degrees of vision. Some see very well in a restricted field (having close to normal vision) while others see nothing at all.

I do my best to be aware of my surroundings. People are often surprised when they stop by my apartment and discover that the lights are on even when I am there alone. To those who can see them, lights usually indicate that someone is home. I feel more comfortable walking during the day or in a well-lit area at night. I would say this is the same for most people, and it is no different for me.

Most people ask questions about blindness because they genuinely want to learn. I do my best to answer their questions with patience and to provide them with the best information I can. This is the only way we are going to get sighted people to understand that we are normal people who just happen to be blind. One last thing. I always try to tell people about the National Federation of the Blind, and I think you should do the same.

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

At the last Lorain County chapter meeting we got to talking about the old days when we could visit classrooms to talk with students about blindness and what it was like to be a blind person. We decided that surely by next fall we should be able to visit classrooms again, and we promised ourselves that we would certainly make a point of doing so. I suspect that NFB members in other chapters will begin doing such educational visits as well. So I thought that I would dedicate this column to reviewing some of the things that we should remember to include when addressing students.

I have heard people describe such talks as easy and obvious because we are all experts on the subject. It is important to remember that, if an NFB member makes an appointment to talk with a class, he or she goes as a Federation representative. It would be a missed opportunity for one of us to talk as just a blind person and to chatter with no planned content for the talk. So the first rule is to consider the age of the children and to have an outline in mind of what you want to cover. As a good Federationist you should aim to minimize the impression that students naturally have that blindness is a catastrophe that leaves the blind person more or less helpless. The first time I went to an elementary school, I was motivated to do something because my son came home angry and upset that children on the playground were taunting him because his mom couldn’t cook dinner or do the other things that moms usually do. The teacher was happy to have me come to talk about the facts about blindness. It helped my argument that I brought brownies with me. Here is what I do. I start by saying that reading print and driving a car are pretty much the two things that present obstacles to blind people and that even they are giving way to technological solutions. I then illustrate the over-lapping sensory information that blind people depend on to function efficiently. I try to match the following exercises to the age of the class. First I have them sit quietly with their eyes closed and just listen to what they can hear. If the classroom door is open, they may hear other teachers talking or people walking down the hall. If windows are open, they may hear traffic noise or kids on the playground. If things are very quiet, I walk around the room and close the door or move a chair or drop a coin on the teacher’s desk. When students cough or sneeze or move around so that their clothing rustles, I call attention to those noises.

I come to the class with a bag full of familiar objects: a comb, a toothbrush, an egg beater, a pencil or pen. The older the class, the more tricky you can be with your objects. Then I call on volunteers one at a time. I turn the child around with his or her back to the class. Then I hand an object for identification to the child with hands behind the back. I urge exploration of the object. The class can see what it is and will be sure that the child does not cheat by looking. Children are pretty successful at identifying objects, and you can build on their success by assuring them that in their everyday life they can use their hands and ears to identify things without looking.

Depending on how much time you have, you can teach them how to use a white cane, how to serve as a human guide, how guide dogs do their jobs, and the courtesy rules of interacting with guide-dog and white-cane users. I often describe how to tell when traffic lights turn. You can explain how Braille works and send a slate and stylus around the room after passing out Braille alphabet cards. You can teach them how to say their names when they wish to be called upon to ask a question.

For all these topics I try to mention the National Federation of the Blind. With older classes you can talk about some of the efforts we are making to pass laws to give blind people a fair chance at minimum wages or equal access to websites or independent voting. I suggest that you try to postpone questions to the end of your time. The kids will ask questions to fill up any amount of available time. You want to leave them with the notion that blindness is not a tragedy and that it is all right to ask questions of a blind person. It is likely that teachers are going to have a hard time this fall helping their students catch up in their academic work, so it may take some months for them to decide that they have time to invite you in to discuss blindness. Eventually they will be ready to have us come to the classroom, so get ready and have some fun.

**Revised Committees for 2021**

**Awards Committee**

Charge: To oversee the awards process, to provide information and feedback when necessary, and to make reasonable decisions about NFBO awards.

Annette Lutz, Chair; Jerry Purcell; Ali Benmerzouga; and Emily Kiehl

**Bell Coordinator**

Charge: To communicate and help with planning the inhouse BELL Program and to organize the BELL Academy and plan efficient ways to promote and execute this important program.

Eric Duffy, Coordinator

**Community Service Committee**

Charge: To educate the Ohio affiliate about the professional and personal benefits of community service; to encourage chapters, divisions, and individuals to participate in projects in their communities; to encourage members to identify or develop and implement their own service projects; and to educate the public about NFB philosophy and the skills and abilities blind people bring to community service.

Cheryl Fields, Chair; Pat McPherson; Maggie Stringer; Candice Armstrong; Shelley Duffy; Gary Williams; Gloria Robinson; and Joann Williams

**Constitution and Resolutions Committee**

Charge: To make sure that all NFBO constitutions follow the state and national constitutions, both philosophically and rhetorically, and to oversee the submission process and to write and distribute clearly articulated and philosophically sound resolutions.

Barbara Pierce, Chair; Eric Duffy; Debbie Baker; Todd Elzey; Jessica Stover; and Andra Stover

**Deaf-Blind Coordinators**

Charge: To aid and provide information to those who are in this community and to serve as a vehicle to foster a positive relationship between the deaf-blind community and other members of the NFB.

William Turner and Suzanne Turner, Co-chairs

**Education Committee**

Charge: To advise the president about policies, legislation, strategies, and initiatives in which NFBO should be engaged to improve educational opportunities for blind youth throughout the state.

Suzanne Turner, Chair; Ali Benmerzouga; Chris Sabine; Debbi Baker; Kinshuk Tella; Wilbert Turner; Caroline Karbowski; Marianne Denning; Anne Casey; and Sadie McFarland

**Financing the Movement Committee** including SUN coordinator, Jernigan Fund coordinator, and PAC coordinator

Charge: To make members aware of these specific organizational fundraising opportunities and to implement strategies to increase participation.

Sherry Ruth and Colleen Roth, Co-chairs

**Fundraising Committee**

Charge: To investigate additional opportunities to increase NFB-O resources and to implement effective fundraising strategies and programming.

Candice Armstrong. Chair; Maggie Stringer; Todd Elzey; Colleen Miller; and Marion Parker

**Legislative Committee**

Charge: To increase the organization's visibility and effectiveness in the state legislature and to continue to support our efforts in Washington throughout the year.

Eric Duffy, Chair; Todd Elzey; Chris Sabine; Jordy Stringer; Andra Stover; and William Turner

**Membership Committee**

Charge: To implement effective strategies to recruit and retain members and to reinvigorate the chapters and divisions of NFB-O.

Carolyn Peters, Chair; Sheila Hardy-Wilson; Maggie Stringer; Pat McPherson; William Turner; Haley Thurston; Asia Quinones-Evans; Susan Day; and Gloria Robinson

**Promotion and Publicity, Website, and Newsline Committee**

Charge: To assist with updating the webpage content and the NEWSLINE service, as well as promoting and advertising NEWSLINE. Members on this committee should be proficient computer users. To develop content and suggest creative ways to promote NFBO branding. Responsibilities include researching audience preferences and discovering current trends, creating engaging text, image, and video content, designing posts to sustain readers' curiosity and creating buzz around new issues, staying up to date with changes in all social platforms, ensuring maximum effectiveness, training leaders how to use social media in a cohesive and beneficial way, developing an optimal posting schedule considering web traffic and engagement, and overseeing social media accounts.

Todd Elzey, Chair; Cheryl Fisher; Chris Sabine; Maggie Stringer; and Candice Armstrong

**Scholarship Committee**

Charge: To conduct the affiliate scholarship program and to develop and implement effective strategies to increase the visibility of the program and increase participation in both the Ohio and national programs.

Jordy Stringer, Chair; Cassandra Jones; and Suzanne Turner

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# **The 2021 NFB of Ohio Scholarship Program by Jordy Stringer**

Editor’s note: Jordy Stringer chairs the NFB-O Scholarship Committee. Here is his announcement of this year’s scholarship program:

The National Federation of the Blind of Ohio announces its 2021 scholarship program intended to benefit blind college students beginning March 2021. In the fall of 2021 NFB-O will offer three scholarships to outstanding blind students who currently live in or are attending college in the state of Ohio during the 2021-2022 academic school year.

Scholarship winners must attend the entire National Federation of the Blind of Ohio state convention, November 5-7, and participate in all convention activities sponsored by the Ohio Association of Blind Students (OABS). In addition scholarship winners will be required to meet with the Scholarship Committee during the state convention. The 2021 state convention will be held at the DoubleTree Columbus – Worthington. Scholarship winners will be notified no later than August 15, 2021. All convention expenses will be provided for each scholarship winner, including transportation, hotel accommodations, registration, and banquet. For more information on the NFB-O state convention, please visit http://www.nfbohio.org.

Applicants need not be members of the NFB-O to win these scholarships. To be eligible for these scholarships, all applicants shall:

* Be certified as legally blind.
* Be residents of the state of Ohio or be full-time students at an Ohio college or university during the 2021-2022 academic year.
* Be pursuing full-time postsecondary courses of study during the 2021-2022 academic school year.
* Participate in the entire NFB-O 2021 state convention and all scheduled OABS activities.
* Complete all application requirements by Sunday, June 20, 2021, no later than 11:59 p.m.

Application materials can be submitted electronically to Jordy D. Stringer jssocil@gmail.com, or they can complete an electronic version by visiting nfbohio.org. Or they can go to https://forms.gle/3auGhhckd5fQbx2m8 to download a Google form.

Please make sure all applications are complete. The National Federation of the Blind of Ohio's scholarship committee does not accept responsibility for incomplete applications. Each application will be reviewed by the committee, and candidates will be notified of their awards by email. All decisions made by the scholarship committee are final. Questions can be directed to Jordy D. Stringer, Chairman, Scholarship Committee, National Federation of the Blind of Ohio jssocil@gmail.com, (614) 531-3945; or Richard Payne, President, National Federation of the Blind of Ohio, Rchpay7@gmail.com.

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# **Legal Responsibilities of Non-Profit Board Members by Todd Elzey**

Editor’s note: Todd Elzey is the treasurer of the NFB of Ohio. During our recent leadership seminar he reviewed the legal duties of board membership. We thought that this was important enough information that we asked him to put it in writing for everyone to read and think about. He is speaking about affiliate board membership, but these principles hold true for chapter and division board membership. This is what he says:

It is an honor to be elected to an NFB board position. NFB board membership says that the members believe that your leadership can contribute to the success of the NFB. But board membership is more than just an honor. It is also a lot of work.

Newly elected board members often do not understand all of their duties. NFB board members have the same duties as members of any large non-profit organization board. They even have many of the same duties as members of a major corporate board. Some duties of non-profit board members are required by State and Federal law. This article will outline some of the legal duties of NFB board members.

**A Fiduciary Duty:**

Non-profit board members have a fiduciary duty to the organizations they serve, which means that board members are legally obligated to act in the organization’s best interest. This means that the NFB’s best interests come first. Board members must put the NFB’s interests even ahead of their own personal interests. This obligation includes all actions the board is involved in, including financial matters.

There are four fiduciary duties in Ohio that NFB board members must comply with. These are the duty of care, the duty of loyalty, the duty of compliance, and the duty to maintain accounts.

**Duty of Care:**

The duty of care requires board members to participate actively in the NFB’s activities. Board members must also use skill and care in making decisions. The law says that board members must use the same skill and care that is used by a prudent person conducting their own business. So what does this mean? NFB board members must attend and participate in NFB meetings and also prepare for meetings in advance.

The duty of care also requires board members to know about what is going on in the organization. Board members cannot make well-informed decisions without knowing what is happening in the NFB.

NFB board members must also participate in NFB activities outside of board meetings. So they should be participating in fundraising, helping with educational activities, helping promote the organization, and generally contributing to the organization’s success. They should participate in training opportunities. Training develops the knowledge and skills a board member needs to make well-informed decisions for the organization.

**Duty of Loyalty:**

The duty of loyalty requires board members to put the NFB’s interests first. They cannot take any action that conflicts with the interests of the NFB. They must put the NFB’s interests even before their own personal interests. This can be a tough rule. Board members must put the NFB’s interests even ahead of their own financial interests. For example, they cannot vote for something that would hurt the NFB, even if that means they will lose money.

Board members must also disclose any conflicts of interest. For example, if the board is considering a contract with an entity that a board member works for, the board member must disclose that relationship. This rule may even require that they not participate in any decisions in which they have a conflict of interest.

The duty of loyalty also means that NFB board members cannot be members of competing groups. This rule can apply to many organizations. But the most common situation involves the ACB. NFB board members cannot be members of the ACB.

An NFB board member would violate the duty of loyalty by being a member of the ACB because the NFB and ACB often take different positions on issues, compete for the same membership, and compete for many of the same funding sources. Board members have access to confidential information. Even accidental disclosure of confidential information to a competing entity could hurt the NFB. The duty of loyalty is one of the most important of the Fiduciary duties. Violating it can do serious harm to the organization and its reputation.

**Duty of Compliance:**

The duty of compliance requires board members to be faithful to the NFB’s purpose and mission. They must also comply with the NFB’s governing documents, such as the constitution and the code of conduct. They must also comply with all laws and regulations that govern the NFB’s operations.

In particular, NFB board members must comply with state and federal annual financial filing rules and fundraising rules. Failing to operate legally could cause the NFB-O to lose its non-profit status.

**Duty to Manage Accounts:**

The duty to manage accounts means that board members must ensure the NFB’s fiscal stability and accountability. They must make fiscally sound decisions. NFB boards must establish policies to account properly for how the organization spends money. For example, NFB treasurers are required to produce written reports that are saved. This rule also requires secretaries to document organization decisions with written minutes of meetings.

Violating the duty to maintain accounts could cause the NFB-O to lose its non-profit status. Violating this rule could also erode the trust of donors.

**Consequences of Violating a Fiduciary Duty:**

Board members who violate a fiduciary duty likely will no longer be trusted by membership to serve on an NFB board. Board members who violate fiduciary duties can also be held civilly financially liable for their breaches. In extreme cases of willful or intentional violations, they could even be criminally prosecuted.

NFB board membership is certainly an honor. But being elected also brings with it a host of legal obligations that board members must be prepared to comply with. Not complying with these duties can have serious consequences for both board members and the organization.

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# **Getting Our Hands on Museum Exhibits by Marianne Denning**

Editor’s note: Marianne Denning is a teacher of blind students who lives in Cincinnati. She is a member of the state Board of Directors. In the following article she discusses the need for accessible museum exhibits and like displays. We hope that this discussion my inspire some chapters to contact museums in their areas to see if they would be interested in having us help them make their exhibits more accessible to blind visitors.

I have been blind since birth. I am writing this article to discuss the need for increased accessibility for blind visitors to museums and similar organizations. My first experience was visiting the home of the first woman elected mayor in the United States. I loved the information I received as part of the visit, but I could not touch anything to gain a better understanding of the late nineteenth century. I was frustrated. No one was willing to stand beside me and describe what my classmates were observing, and we had limited time. Now fast-forward many years, and very little has changed.

I love to visit museums related to music, history, the future, and much more. I also visit presidential libraries and their homes. I also visit homes of other famous Americans or buildings that show a style of architecture. In almost every situation I find the same lack of access.

When I visit a museum, I ask if they have material in Braille. I am often handed a very short document or map of the layout of the facility. While this can be very helpful for orientation, it does not provide much information about the collection.

Many museums have a video or short movie at the beginning to give useful information to help museum visitors, but there is no specifically descriptive audio, so I listen to the information, but I would like the information provided by the pictures. My husband is great at describing this information, but I sometimes visit museums with other people who do not share his skill.

Some museums provide devices to all visitors so they can use numeric keypads to control access and listen to recorded information. This is very helpful, but it requires a sighted person to tell me the numbers to access each block of information. There are plaques near most exhibits that provide additional information, but these are not accessible unless you can read the print. If someone reads all of this information to me, it can be very time consuming and decreases my independent enjoyment of the exhibit. Many items are behind glass, so there is no way to touch them. I understand that handling these items can be damaging, and I don’t want to hurt anything.

The experience of navigating a museum is daunting because each one is laid out differently, and the traffic is usually moving in different directions. I have never tried to go to a museum without sighted assistance. They also operate on a very limited budget, so providing a personal guide may not be possible.

I have laid out many of the challenges I have faced, and now I want to share some better experiences. I hope this will get other NFB members thinking about possible solutions to the challenges I have described.

An exhibit of Shaker furniture came to a museum near me, and I contacted the museum to see if I could touch the various pieces. The owner of the exhibit gave permission for me to use white gloves and touch all of the furniture except two pieces. It was a great experience. I could feel how the furniture was constructed and how it had aged over the years. I have asked several other museums about using white gloves to touch different items, and this permission has been given in several instances. But I have also been turned down. I have touched the crack in the Liberty Bell and touched all of the visible parts of the replica of the Wright brothers’ airplane. I always have a chill when this happens.

We recently went to Nashville and toured Studio B (the studio where Elvis Presley and many others recorded music from 1957 to 1971). There were several instruments in the studio, and I used the white gloves I brought to touch these. Due to COVID 19 restrictions we were the only people on the tour, so this made it easier.

One of the best accessible tours I have taken was the World Trade Center. It was designed to be interactive for everyone, and I definitely took advantage of the technology. I began by taking a public tour on which an interpreter took us through the museum and talked about the day of the tragedy, the clean-up of the aftermath, and the continuing health problems of many of the survivors. It brought home the horror of the day and the years that have passed.

The NFB can and should be involved in making museums and similar facilities accessible for the blind. Maybe grants could help make this possible. I would like independent access to the information on the plaques, a way of independently traveling through the exhibits, and accessible video description of movies. I believe most of this could be accomplished using a smart device. That would also make it possible for information to change as exhibits change and the museum exhibits are rearranged.

I hope many other blind people love museums as I do, and I hope they are thinking about accessibility. I would love to hear from you. My email address is marianne@denningweb.com.

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# **The Parents That Didn’t Have to Be by Todd Elzey**

Editor’s note: We are now in the season of Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. The following article is a tribute that NFB-O treasurer Todd Elzey pays to his grandparents who raised him. They certainly did a find job, and we are lucky to benefit from their success. Here is Todd’s story:

Country music singer Brad Paisley had a hit song entitled “He Didn’t Have to Be.” The song tells the story of a boy who does not have a father until a stepfather comes into the picture. The point of the song is that the stepfather becomes a fantastic father even though he took on the son of another man. In other words, he becomes a great father even though he never had to be the boy’s father at all.

Although from a slightly different perspective, I can identify with the sentiment of the song. I was born in 1965 at the tail end of a rubella outbreak in the United States. This outbreak caused a lot of children born from 1963 to 1965 to be born with congenital rubella syndrome. I was one of those kids.

I was born with congenital rubella syndrome because my mother was exposed to German measles in her first trimester of pregnancy. Back in 1965 they didn’t yet know all aspects of this birth defect. In fact, they hadn’t even put a name to the syndrome. So it was not until years later that my vision loss and hearing impairment were attributed to the rubella outbreak.

What my family knew was that I was born with significant vision loss. I was totally blind in my right eye, and I had residual vision in my left eye. In first grade my hearing loss was discovered. Hearing tests found that I have no hearing in my left ear and without a hearing aid only about 50% of normal hearing in my right ear. So how does this all relate to having parents who didn’t have to be, you might ask.

Well, when I was born, my mother was only sixteen years old and my father only nineteen. They got married and had my brother Troy three years later. But they were simply too young for the marriage to last. Just before I turned five years old, they got divorced. At the time neither of them were able to take care of either me or my brother.

So what to do – two children, one with two disabilities? One of those disabilities wasn’t diagnosed yet, but it undoubtedly made it difficult for a young mother to raise the child because she often felt as if the child didn’t listen to her.

Many kids in a similar situation end up in the foster care system. I have often wondered if that could have happened to me. But, fortunately for me, my paternal grandparents Evelyn and Harry Elzey stepped in. They certainly did not have to. In fact, their daughter, my Aunt Donna, had not been out of the house that long. So Ev and Harry H. (as I had always known them) were at that point in life where they could start living life for the first time without having to worry about raising kids.

But instead of planning all those vacations they could have taken, they said, “Yes, we will raise our Grandson Todd.” Why, except for the fact that they were fantastic people; they were willing to put their lives on hold for me. I will probably never truly know. But they did, and I will forever be grateful.

It really hit me how much Ev and Harry H. meant to my life when I tried to speak at Ev’s funeral. I had a lengthy presentation planned out about all the things she did with family and how fantastic she was with her grandkids. But I never got beyond talking about how she and Harry H. raised me even though they didn’t have to because I got too choked up to go further.

But how does this relate to blindness, you may wonder – this is a publication of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio after all.

Well, as far as I know, my grandparents never had any experience with blindness or any other disabilities before I was born. In fact, I think that they probably did not understand the full capabilities of blind people. But, although I am sure that they were often scared to do so, they always let me try anything I wanted to do.

As blind people we often hear from society and even friends and family that we can’t do something we want to try, whether it is getting that college degree, starting a business, or taking a vacation independently. In extreme cases we even hear that we can’t live on our own, can’t cook for ourselves, or can’t raise children.

I suspect my grandparents often had their doubts about what I could do given my blindness and hearing loss. They certainly never encouraged me to do labor tasks like mow the grass or other activities involving mechanical skills or equipment. But to their credit, when I expressed an interest in trying something like these activities, they also never stopped me and never openly expressed any reservations. Instead, they let me figure out for myself what I could and couldn’t do. They also let me find out what I was or was not interested in doing. In fact, I never remember Ev or Harry H. saying, “No, you can’t do that because of your vision or hearing.”

As I neared graduation from high school, they also fully supported my decision to attend college. And, when that initial decision didn’t quite work out the way I expected, they also supported my decision to move 3,000 miles away to California. But I know that they probably worried about what would happen with that and many other decisions I made.

I write all of this for two reasons. First, I want to honor my grandparents for being the parents they didn’t have to be. They put their lives on hold and raised me when my parents couldn’t. Second, I also think it is important for parents of blind children to see how others put aside their fears or misconceptions about blindness and other disabilities to let children find their own way. While it is certainly difficult as a parent, one of the greatest gifts you can give your child is not to limit their activities or goals because of blindness. Rather step back and let them try things. Allow them to succeed in what they succeed at. And, more important, let them fail at what they fail at. Failing is particularly valuable because we often learn more from our failures than we do from our successes. Allowing blind children to find their own way will allow them to live the lives they want to live as adults.

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# **Discovering eSight by Todd Elzey**

Editor’s note: Here is an interesting product review of a relatively new device to assist those with residual vision. Todd Elzey assures me that it is not glasses even though it is worn on the face. This means that a legally blind person is still legally blind even using this device that increases vision to far above the legally blind definition of twenty over two hundred in the better eye with correction. Here is Todd Elzey’s review of eSight:

Blind people use access technology in many facets of their lives. They usually pick the technology they want to use based on the task they are performing. If there are multiple styles of equipment available for the same task, a blind person can choose to read hard-copy braille, read with a refreshable braille display, or read with audio output.

What many people often don’t know or do forget is that the National Federation of the Blind believes that you are blind even if you have residual vision. So a blind person may select access technology based on how much residual vision he or she has. I do not read Braille because I was never taught it in school on the assumption that with my residual vision I did not need it. So I use large print, magnifiers, and Zoomtext screen magnification to read. Others might use a CCTV or some other alternative technique.

Wearable devices are one of the newest approaches in access technology. Wearable technology is simply devices you can wear like a pair of glasses to enable you to perform various visual tasks. Some devices have optical character recognition (OCR) features that will read printed material. Other devices have cameras embedded and connected t either to a live agent or an artificial intelligence software (AI) program to describe surroundings.

And some of the newest devices have cameras with displays in the headsets. The camera is used to transmit video of the surrounding area to the displays. Blind people with residual vision can wear these devices to view the surrounding area. The big advantage of these devices is that they allow the user to magnify their surroundings. The wearer can also adjust visual elements such as contrast. In some cases wearers can even access different functions to change settings for daytime, nighttime, indoor, or outdoor surroundings. These functions can significantly improve what a person sees.

I have tested three different brands of wearable devices designed for people with residual vision. I first tested the Iris Vision and the Patriot ViewPoint, both virtual reality headsets. They are equipped with a Samsung Galaxy cell phone that serves as the camera. These devices work and can magnify up to around 22X. But both devices have virtual reality headsets that are completely enclosed. They are almost airtight, and so the cell phone battery can get hot. All of this makes the devices extremely hot to wear. I couldn’t wear either without my glasses fogging up.

Both the Iris Vision and Patriot ViewPoint can be uncomfortable to wear for long periods of time because of their weight. Finally, both operate using the cell phone’s internal battery. When the battery runs out, it has to be recharged. This can limit how long you can use the devices without being near a power source. After trying the Patriot ViewPoint and Iris vision, I decided not to go with either because of these problems.

I recently had an opportunity to try a third device called eSight. eSight completely changed my perspective on wearable devices. It is completely different from the Iris Vision and Patriot ViewPoint. Instead of an enclosed virtual reality headset, the eSight uses an adjustable open headset. The headset can be moved away from or close to the eyes and never completely encloses the user’s face. This has several advantages. First the wearer always has use of peripheral vision. This allows the wearer to be mobile while using eSight. Second, eSight is much cooler to wear than the virtual reality headset. Third, users can easily raise the screen portion of the headset without taking the whole device off, to view their surroundings with their own residual vision.

The eSight is worn with a halo style band rather than straps. The halo band evenly distributes the weight of the device. It is much more comfortable to wear. I was recently able to wear the device comfortably during a three-hour baseball game.

But for me one of the biggest advantages of the eSight is the changeable batteries. The eSight comes with two batteries that last around 2 ½ to 3 hours. The eSight gives you a warning when the battery is near dead. It has a short-term internal power source. This allows the wearer to take out one battery and insert a new one without turning the eSight off. The user can easily change the battery without taking the eSight off. You can also purchase additional extra batteries. With this battery set-up, wearers can use the eSight for long periods without ever having to be near a power source to charge a battery.

How can the eSight be used? Well, as a freelance journalist I have often wanted to be able to cover live events that require me to be some distance away from the action, as with sporting and theater or concert events. I do not see well enough to use my residual vision to cover these events. I could find an alternative technique, but I discovered that eSight enhances my residual vision enough to allow me to do so more quickly and independently.

eSight allows users to zoom in as far as 24x. The eSight improves my vision to just about 20/20 (although in a severely restricted field) in the one eye I see out of. This allows me to see enough detail to be able to cover live events independently. I was recently able to view a track meet in which I was able to follow runners all the way around the track. Even from this distance of 50+ yards I was able to tell independently who was in what place. Despite being over 50 yards away, I was also able to follow a pole vault event during the meet. This is something I would never have been able to do without the eSight.

I can also use the eSight to do close, detailed tasks that I could not have done before. I was recently asked to read a QR code for someone. The code was on the inside of a smart light. The person could not get his cell phone camera to read the code. An Aira agent was also unable to read the code. But, when I put on the eSight, I was able to zoom in close enough to read the code easily. The eSight’s reading feature is so good that it will also allow me to do detail work such as cutting along dotted lines. Again, could I find different alternative techniques to achieve the same results? Yes, but the eSight makes it extremely easy for me to do quickly.

eSight also has some interesting high-tech functions. The eSight can be connected to a computer or other video source by an HDMI cable. This allows users to view a computer screen or video feed directly on the eSight’s screen. Users can also zoom in on the feed to see specific details. Once you have zoomed in to where you can see the screen the way you want, you can move your head side to side or up and down to view different portions of the screen. eSight also has functions to take pictures, to shoot videos, and to share your video feed with others so that they can see what you are seeing.

As good as eSight is, it’s not perfect. I tried using eSight at a golf course to follow the flight of a golf ball. The ball was simply too small and too fast to follow. I understand from eSight that almost no one has had complete success with this particular use.

I have also found that positioning is extremely important. At a recent Cincinnati Reds baseball game, I had difficulty following the baseball off the bat. Following the ball was hard because I was on the third baseline, so, when the ball was hit, I had to move my head quickly from right to left to follow it. The ball came off the bat so quickly that it made my head snap. This made it very difficult to follow the ball. However, I was able to see the ball being pitched and even in flight off the bat when I accidentally found it. In the future I should be able to follow the ball off the bat by sitting behind home plate. This will keep the action in front of me and avoid the need for sharp head snaps.

eSight also has two fairly small screens. This means that it has a limited field of vision when zoomed all the way in. So the farther you are away from the action, the more of the overall picture you will be able to see.

Unfortunately, eSight does not work for everyone. It can work for people with residual vision as low as 20/800, or even 20/1400 in some cases. But eSight does not work well for people without central vision.

Despite these limitations, I believe eSight is the best wearable device on the market for blind people with residual vision. I found it so useful in both my work and life that Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) assisted me in purchasing it. If you would like to learn more about eSight, you can visit www.esighteyewear.com. I would also be happy to answer questions. You can reach me at toddelzey@gmail.com

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# **I’m Smokin’ It, Baby by Eric Duffy**

Editor’s note: Eric Duffy is currently the secretary of the NFB of Ohio. He is a familiar voice in these pages. Here is a summertime article about living the life he wants:

Wait! Stop! I am not talking about what you think I am after you read the title of this article. I’m talking about smoking meat and smoking life. Several years back I wrote an article about my experience with grilling for this newsletter, so I will just briefly summarize it here before proceeding with the rest of the story.

As is the case for many blind children, especially those of my generation, my parents did not want me anywhere near a barbecue grill. They said, “Of course you can’t light the grill. Just wait, we’ll bring you your food.” Therefore I didn’t learn to light and cook on a grill until I was in college and got tired of finding ways to arrange for others to do it for me. My first experience was with a charcoal grill because it was the only grill I had at the time and because I thought it would be the most challenging to learn to use.

I then bought a small gas grill, and since that time I have had three other gas grills. I have grilled a lot of good meat over the years, but I hadn’t really believed I could do it until I heard that other blind people were already grilling. I first heard about Dr. Jernigan’s technique for grilling steaks. I then got to experience Dr. Maurer’s grilling. I must say I was very impressed. I then had all of the proof I needed that blind people could grill safely and well. About the time I began to think that I had mastered the grill, I began to hear about meat smokers. This time I didn’t wonder if a blind person could smoke meat; I just thought about how I might do it.

A few years ago I started hearing NFB of Ohio President Richard Payne talking about using his electric smoker. He smoked ribs, chicken, and who knows what else. He has never invited me over to try his smoked fare, but, knowing Richard as I do, I’m sure it is quite good. Debbie Baker has also put her hand to the art of smoking, and of course Dr. Maurer and President Riccobono have as well. So I finally ordered a smoker from Amazon, I got it assembled, and, as of this writing, I have smoked five chicken breasts. I still need to refine and improve my technique, but the chicken was very good.

I have invited Bob and Barbara Pierce to travel to Dayton to have smoked lamb this summer. I have eaten many delicious meals in their home, and now I will get to return the favor. Many years ago Barbara said she would fix lamb for me, but the timing just hasn’t been right. I have tried lamb since then, and I definitely like it. I have found a recipe similar to the one I think I remember her telling me she was going to use. I will practice using the smoker more and smoke lamb at least once before the Pierces arrive. I promised Barbara that I will not experiment on them.

I am no longer waiting for others to light the grill or fire up the smoker and bring things to me. I am smoking meat and smoking life. When I was in my mid-fifties I began working toward my MBA. Last July I graduated from Southern New Hampshire University. I was hired as a contract negotiator by Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. I have completed all of the required training for my Level 1 contracting certification. This will take me from a GS9 to a GS11 and give me a nice pay increase. I wanted a job outside of the disability field to prove to myself that I could be successful in another kind of job. I have done that, and I will continue to do it for a while. But those who know me know that my heart is in work with the blind. I get the greatest satisfaction out of helping blind people reach their goals and broaden their understanding of blindness.

I live in a ranch-style house, with a patio that has room for a big gas grill, a smoker, and a table and chairs. I have a big back yard that holds a brand new fire pit and live in a quiet neighborhood with one of my best friends since early elementary school. I still have a lot of smoking of meat and smoking of life to do.

Without a doubt, I have accomplished most of the things I’ve done in my life due largely to the support I have received from the National Federation of the Blind. You can smoke meat if you want to, and you can smoke life if you choose to. Blindness is not what holds you back. The next time you have doubts about whether or not you can accomplish something as a blind person, reach out to your local chapter of the Federation or to a friend in the organization.

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# **Buckeye Briefs**

Just a few days left to register for the national convention. Registration is free for this virtual convention, and there are no banquet tickets to buy, so the price is right. You must be prepared to check a box attesting to your having read the code of conduct. You can find it on the NFB website or on NEWSLINE. You can register by using the following link: <https://nfb.org/civicrm/event/register?id=432&q=civicrm%2Fevent%2Fregister&reset=1#main-content>. If you need help registering, call Macy McClain at (937) 935-2610. But the deadline for registering is May 31 at midnight.

Double your donation and help the Ohio State School for the Blind. Students who attended the Ohio State School for the Blind from the 1940’s to the present are undoubtedly familiar with the models created by the Works Projects Administration. Consider this excerpt from a book entitled *Models for the Blind*:

December 2, 1940

Permit me to say that the educational models used as teaching devices for the sightless have made this school outstanding in the field of tactual learning. This method and this distinction could not have been possible without the splendid services of the Work Projects Administration.

Educational models have opened up wider fields of learning for our pupils and have brought into their horizons of conception many objects that before had only vague and fantastic meanings. Consider for a moment how futile it would be to attempt to give a blind child an accurate conception of the United States Capitol, of Lincoln's birthplace, or of a skyscraper unless it were presented in the form of a model.

All of the models made and used at the Ohio State School for the Blind are accurately scaled and complete in every detail; thus the teacher has no misgivings when she says, "Boys and girls, this is the way a Dutch windmill looks." She knows it is a true replica.

Much credit for the many fine models that we now have should go to O. J. Hill, Supervisor of Elementary Instruction, who has been and is the coordinator of the project that constructed them--in this capacity securing information from teachers and pupils as to what models are most desirable, and working with the local supervisor in order to have the ideas of the various staff members and pupils crystallized into tangible form. The entire staff of the school, the model-building project, and the Ohio Writers' Project are all to be congratulated for this very splendid contribution to the cause of the education of the sightless.

Very truly,

W.G. Scarberry

W. G. Scarberry was the superintendent of the school at the time the book was published. Despite the archaic language of the day, the models he spoke of are no less valuable to the blind of today. However, over the years many of the models have fallen into a state of disrepair. For several years now the school has been working to restore them to their original condition. The estimated cost of restoring each model is $500.

The National Federation of the Blind of Ohio believes this is an important project and wants to assist the school. Therefore, the organization will match all donations made to support this project by July First. For a contribution of $500 you can place the name of a friend or loved-one on a plaque accompanying one of the models. The Board of Directors determined that, if enough money is raised, plaques will be dedicated in the names of Paul Dressell and Paul Jordan.

Please send all donations to NFB-Ohio, Todd Elzey, Treasurer, 3779 Waterbury Dr., Kettering Ohio 45439 Donations may also be made by PayPal or Zelle. No matter how you decide to donate, please be sure to make it known that your donation is for the models restoration project.

Congratulations to Brooke Dowdy and David Gray on the birth of their daughter. Emma Sophia Gray was born on January 13, 2021. She weighed in at five pounds and fifteen ounces and was eighteen inches long. She is the Cleveland chapter’s youngest member, and we are all proud.

Congratulations to Natassha Ricks of Cleveland. Her son Nigel Ricks graduated from Bowling Green University with a bachelor’s in fine arts in digital media with a concentration in 3-D animation. He already has three projects under his belt.

Congratulations to Regina Mason on her new job at Walmart Industry.

Congratulations to Cheryl Fields for her first blog. Cheryl is on the Survivor Task Force and is making a difference and changing attitudes on sexual abuse and misconduct in the NFB. She was appointed by our national President, Mark Riccobono, as one of the six members of the Survivor Task Force. Read her blog online at WWW.NFB.ORG/Survivors.

Welcome home Joann Williams, Frankie Jones, Annie Dixon, and Carolyn Ann Arrington. All were hospitalized with the virus and have recovered. They are ready to return to work advocating for equal rights for the blind in Cleveland.

Condolences to Regina Mason on the death of her beloved brother Andre Mason. Regina and Andre were very close. Please keep Regina and her family in prayer.

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# **Activities Calendar**

Every Thursday at 7, Community Service happy hour, Ohio Zoom room

June 1, Presidential Release live

June 20, Deadline NFB-O scholarship applications

June 29, Rookie Roundup on Zoom

July 6-10, NFB virtual national convention, anywhere and everywhere

August 15, Notification NFB-O scholarship winners

September 18, Meeting of the NFB-O Board of Directors

October, Meet the Blind Month

October 15, White Cane Awareness Day

November 5-7, NFB-O annual convention, DoubleTree Hotel, Worthington

December 1, Deadline for expressing interest in the Washington Seminar