



GEM STATE MILESTONES

Winter 2018

A Publication of the NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF IDAHO

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TALKING BOOKS AND BELL HIGHLIGHT LUNCHEON

Allan Schneider

The 2018 Legislative Luncheon focused on the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho's call for continued funding of the talking books program and on the successes of the BELL (Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning) Academies.

The event was headed by Harry and Jan Gawith and took place January 15 in the Crystal Ball Room in the Hoff building in downtown Boise. State NFB president, Dana Ard MC'd and Megan Geisler did the invocation. The event was attended by 76 persons including 31 legislators.

Ramona Walhof and Leslie Mora spoke on the use and importance of the talking books program, and Leslie also thanked the NFBI for her scholarship. Alison Steven gave an overview of the BELL Academies' importance and activities. Emelia Lain and her mother, Sarah Symms, both gave touching talks on what the NFB, especially BELL Academies, have meant in their lives. Al Schneider, the final speaker, sought support for a team of legislators to participate in the Cycle for Independence.



Photo: Jan Gawith

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Dana Ard, NFBI President

Our National Convention will be July 3-8 at the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort in Orlando, Florida. Room rates are \$88.00 per night plus the current 12% tax for singles or doubles, and \$93.00 per night plus tax for triples and quads. If you have never attended our National Convention, you should apply for the Jernigan Scholarship, which can help with some of the cost. Idaho has had a Jernigan Scholarship winner the last three years. For further details, see the December Braille Monitor, which is our national magazine. You can access this publication on Newsline[®], or on the website: www.nfb.org. You will need to contact me so I can write a support letter for your application.

On January 15, (Martin Luther King Day) the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho held its annual Legislative Luncheon. We provided a factsheet supporting state funding for the talking book program. An informational factsheet on the programs and philosophy of the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho was provided, and our speakers focused on the role of the NFB, the importance of the talking book program, and the influence of the BELL program. Again this year, Jan and Harry Gawith coordinated this event. I want to thank all who attended and helped make this event such a great success.

Ramona Walhof, Mai Nguyen and I will attend the Washington Seminar, January 29-February 1. We have appointments with the offices of our Idaho Senators and Representatives. Issues to be discussed include legislation to assist institutions of higher education to increase accessibility of educational materials to blind students, providing a refundable tax credit to assist blind persons to purchase access technology, opposition to the ADA Reform and Education Act, designed to weaken the ADA, and the Marrakesh treaty to facilitate access to published works for people who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print disabled.

For more information about national initiatives, state activities, and activities of your president, please check out my December update on our Idaho website www.nfbidaho.org.

2018 is an exciting year to be a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho. Let's continue to spread our message that blindness is not the characteristic that defines us. It does not determine our dreams or our future. We can live the life we want. Blindness will not hold us back.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Dana Ard



Are you legally blind, and planning to be a full-time student in higher education for the 2018-2019 school year? If so, the NFB of Idaho scholarship program is for you! This year we are awarding 4 scholarships in the amounts of \$1000, \$1500, \$2500, and \$3000. Our \$3000 scholarship is given in honor of the late Larry Streeter, who served as our state president from 1999-2005 and was a long time Federationist and advocate for the blind.

To apply for a scholarship, go to our state website, www.nf-

[bidaho.org](http://www.nfbidaho.org), and complete and submit the required documentation. When this is done, please contact me either by phone 208- 345-3906, or email at danalynard@q.com to arrange an interview. Your application will be complete when my president's letter has been sent to the scholarship committee. Don't wait! The deadline to have all application documents in is March 15.

If you are a scholarship winner, you will be required to attend the 2018 state convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho. The state convention will be held in Twin Falls, at the Red Lion Canyon Springs hotel, April 26-28. All of your convention costs will be paid by the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho as part of your scholarship award. The exact scholarship that you will be awarded will be announced at our banquet on April 28.



BAKER'S RECIPES

Tips and techniques around the house

by Lisa Baker

It can be as troubling for the visually impaired as for the blind trying to read menus in a restaurant. Many restaurants are dark. The menus many times have water mark pictures behind the items along with embellished fonts. Sometimes the menus lack contrast, and sometimes the font is small. All of which make it difficult for those with low vision to read the menus. If you have a smart phone, there's a great equalizer. Set your phone to camera, this function not only allows you to magnify the image, but also casts a surprising amount of light even without trying to incorporate flash. If you're one of those receiving this newsletter via large print hard copy, try it right now!

MEET THE BOARD: ALISON STEVEN

A series featuring the NFBI Board members

If you had asked me 25 years ago where I thought I would be in 2018, I would not have in my wildest imaginings have thought that I would be living in the Wild West, working with Idaho's blind kids! I was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, and grew up and lived in England until 1998. Then my husband, our 4 kids, and I upped sticks and moved to Boise, Idaho, for my husband to work with Hewlett Packard. We fell in love with Idaho, the space, the outdoors, the weather, the people! Our kids were able to attend Riverstone International School and I volunteered and then taught music there for 12 years.

I had had a diagnosis of Retinitis Pigmentosa back in England when I was 26. As my eyesight continued to deteriorate, I gave up my teaching job and attended the Assessment and Training Center at ICBVI. This was a life-changer, as I learned not only the practical skills

I needed but also the understanding that life is not over when you lose your sight, it just gets a whole lot more exciting!

At my first NFB Chapter Meeting, I heard about the NFB BELL Program for elementary-age blind kids and I was hooked. I now run various programs for blind kids through the NFB and most recently started my job as Transition Coordinator at the ICBVI, developing and implementing programs for blind and visually impaired high school students to prepare them for college and careers.

I love the life I'm living and feel very privileged to be part of this community.



Photo: Alison Steven

HEARD BIRDS

By Steve Bouffard, Curator of Birds, Orma J. Smith

Museum of Natural History, The College of Idaho

When snow and ice make getting around more difficult, the best way to bird by ear is to listen near bird feeders. Identification may be tricky because most birds will be making only contact, flock, and alarm calls, rather than singing their mating songs. But there will be plenty of calls to work with. Depending on what food is in the feeders, you can hear American and lesser goldfinches, house sparrows, pine siskins, dark-eyed juncos, black-capped chickadees, red-breasted nuthatches, house finches, mourning and Eurasian collared doves.

Most of the calls are short “chip” notes – basically a bird’s way of saying “It’s me, here I am”. Chickadees say their own name. Nuthatches give a string of calls that remind me of a truck’s back up alarm, eent, eent, eent Whenever you are out and about keep an ear out for birds. You can hear ducks, Canada geese, black-billed magpies, European starlings, and cedar and Bohemian waxwings. The waxwings travel in flocks looking for berries and crab apples; they make a whining whistle call.

By March through April you might also hear sandhill cranes flying over as they migrate back north. If you’re out after sunset or before sunrise, listen for great-horned and western screech owls. They’re entering their breeding season now, so they are making lots of calls. The great horned owls are large and make correspondingly loud hoots. The western screech owls are small, only 8 inches tall or so; they make a short series of soft toots that speed up toward the end.



Photo: Black-Capped Chickadee

SMARTPHONE CROSSWALK APP

(Ed. Note: adapted from an article by Vidya Murali, Ph.D. James Coughlan Ph.D., published by the Eye Research Institute)



Street crossings can be especially dangerous for people with low vision. James Coughlan, Ph.D., and his colleagues at the Smith-Kettlewell Eye Research Institute have developed a smartphone app that gives auditory prompts to help users identify the safest crossing location and stay within the crosswalk.

The app harnesses three technologies and triangulates them. A global positioning system (GPS) is used to pinpoint the intersection where a user is standing. Computer vision is then used to scan the area for crosswalks and walk lights. That information is integrated with a geographic information system (GIS) database containing a crowdsourced, detailed inventory about an intersection's quirks, such as the presence of road construction or uneven pavement. The three technologies compensate for each other's weaknesses. For example, while computer vision may lack the depth perception needed to detect a median in the center of the road, such local knowledge would be included in the GIS template. And while GPS can adequately localize the user to an intersection, it cannot identify on which corner a user is standing. Computer vision determines the corner, as well as where the user is in relation to the crosswalk, the status of the walk lights and traffic lights, and the presence of vehicles.

LIVE THE LIFE YOU WANT

Part of Sarah Symms message to Idaho legislators

The NFB is the force that tells our daughter, YOU CAN and YOU WILL.

I'm so thankful that we have the NFB in our lives to serve as sort of a 'drift correction' always there to steer her and us back on track towards an independent future.

Emilia talked about her experiences during the NFB BELL Academy. Each Summer, after Emilia completes her two week camp, I always see a noticeable difference in her.

She is more confident in her abilities than any time during the rest of the year – she asserts her independence.

This is a direct result of the high expectations of the NFB mentors who work with the kids every day. They know, better than anyone, how important it is to learn the skills needed for an independent life: A life of your choosing.

The NFB motto is: live the life you want.

With the support and encouragement of our friends in the NFB and her own hard work, I have no doubt that Emilia will fulfill that motto.



Photo: Legislators and other attendees listening to speaker

20th Anniversary

May 19th, 2018

www.cycleforindependence.org



Route	Individual	Team** Member	Boy/Girl Scout ***	Check-In	Start
Metric Century	\$40.00	\$35.00	\$15.00	7:00-7:45	8:00 am
25-Mile	\$40.00	\$35.00	\$15.00	8:00-8:45	9:00 am
10-Mile	\$30.00	\$25.00	\$15.00	8:45-9:15	9:30 am

** **Teams** add comradery and fun to our event. Teams must have at least five members. Individuals riding as part of a team get a \$5.00 discount on the registration fee. Last year's team winner, The Waterfront District, boasted 34 riders.

*** **Boy/Girl Scout Teams:** \$15 per rider on any route. (Must have at least 5 members, ride the same route, and be accompanied by an adult.)