



GEM STATE MILESTONES

Winter 2019

A Publication of the NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF IDAHO

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NFBI SPEAKS TO LEGISLATORS FROM AROUND THE STATE

Jan Gawith

We held our legislative luncheon on January 21st at the Red Lion Downtowner. It was wonderful to hold our NFBI Board Meeting and the luncheon at the same venue; however, we lost some legislators due to the time constraints because of the distance from the Capitol. Happily, we had representation from the far north, the far east, central and southwest Idaho in attendance, some old friends and some brand new friends, among them the first female Lt. Governor of the state, Janet McGeachin.

In this writer's opinion, all presenters did an excellent job. Susan Bradley and Erin Olsen made fine presentations discussing keeping more State Independent Living Council money for the ICB-VI and funding for Talking Books for the Idaho Commission for Libraries. The newest person on the program was Mary Beth Clare from Nampa. Anyone hearing her story came away with the



Photo: Treasure Valley President, Susan Bradley and State President, Dana Ard at the podium

understanding of the need for blindness training and library services. Al Schneider asked for new recruits for the Cycle for Independence with his upbeat remarks.

Fact sheets on the various issues were given out, and legislators and state officials not in attendance were given copies as well.

Scott Weigt brought the quilt he and Shelly made and donated for the NFBI raffle. It was on display during the luncheon, State President Dana Ard mentioned it during her remarks, and a bunch of tickets were sold that day—some to Idaho legislators.

WHITE CANE BANQUET

Sandy Streeter

The Snake River Valley Chapter held our first White Cane Blindness Awareness Banquet on October 13, 2018 in Idaho Falls. Fellow Federationist from across the state came to participate and support our chapter. There were about 90 people in attendance. Area businesses such as Melaleuca, Wells Fargo, and HK Contractors were represented. State legislators and city officials were present. Even our local television station, LOCALNEWS 8, was represented. Family and friends came out to support us.

Much time and effort goes into putting on such an event. Sean Malone made many contacts bringing in about \$2,500.00 to fund the banquet. Invitations were sent out and complimentary tickets were offered.

I served as MC, and National Federation of the Blind of Idaho President, Dana Ard, our first speaker, explained the many programs of the NFB as well as our history. Other speakers covered such topics as the Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning (BELL) Program, elk hunting as a blind person, and becoming blind as an adult. A representative from Idaho Falls Mayor Rebecca Casper's office read a proclamation declaring October 15th as White Cane Awareness Day. Ammon Mayor Sean Colleti also addressed us.

Two of our BELL students gave a brief summary of their experience as participants in this two-week summer program. I received an email from the mother of one of these students thanking me for giving her son the opportunity to speak. She went on to say that her son told her that he really enjoyed the banquet. He liked hearing from the other speakers and was glad to be with people like him. This student is 11 years old. If this event touched him like this ... it was worth every bit the time, effort, and money spent putting this banquet together!



Photo: City of Ammon Mayor Sean Coletti, Snake River Valley Chapter President Sandy Streeter, Sean Malone, City of Idaho Falls Economic Development Director Dana Briggs, MBA (presented the proclamation declaring October 15, 2018 White Cane Safety Day), Antonio Lima, Director of Public Relations for Melaleuca

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Dana Ard, NFBI President

The state convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho is less than two months away. It will be held March 21-23 at the Boise Holiday Inn, located at 2970 W. Elder St. Room rates are \$99.00 plus tax, which will make the total per night approximately \$111.00. Rooms do not include breakfast. Make your reservations now by calling 208-344-7444. The room rate is the same for singles, doubles, triples, and quads. Registration is \$20.00, board dinner \$15.00, and Saturday evening banquet \$30.00. The registration form will be up soon.



Photo: Dana Ard, Senator Mike Crapo, and Erin Olsen

This year's theme is "Raising Expectations Now and for a Lifetime." Julie Deden, from Colorado, will be our national representative. Julie is the director of the Colorado Center for the Blind. I spoke to her at our Washington Seminar and she and her husband Dan Burke, who will be coming as well, are excited to come to Idaho. Teri Rupp, who is the Nevada state president, and co-host affiliate with the Idaho affiliate for our national convention, will be attending as well. She wants to get to know our affiliate and she will be speaking about her experiences as a marathon runner. We will be conducting a seminar for parents of blind children and their families along with our convention. We have contacted the Utah affiliate to bring in a parent from their parents' division to present at the seminar and perhaps the convention.

Get ready to enjoy our blindness products and services expo, exciting dynamic speakers, inspiring scholarship winners, a fun-filled Friday night social, and so much more. We'll join together to meet old and new friends, as we strengthen our NFB of Idaho affiliate.

Erin Olsen and I attended our Washington Seminar held January 28-30. This was a highly successful event this year, as we were able to meet with our two Idaho senators and representatives. Although they did not make a commitment to sponsor our issues, they were all quite positive in their responses.

The three issues are The Access Technology Affordability Act, Greater Accessibility and Independence through Nonvisual Access Technology Act, and the Disability Employment Act. You can read more about these issues on our national website www.nfb.org and in the February Braille Monitor, now on ®NFB Newsline.

While we were in D.C., President Trump signed the necessary documents for the ratification of the Marrakesh Book Treaty. The final step is depositing the ratification with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The National Federation of the Blind has worked hard on this issue, and it was exciting to be in Washington to celebrate the conclusion of our hard work.

In addition to our visits in congress, Erin and I had an excellent tour of the Capital lead by a new intern from Mike

Crapo's office. We were even able to observe the proceedings of the House of Representatives. The next day, we toured the Supreme Court building. We got to stand at the lectern where Thurgood Marshall rendered his decision on the Brown Versus Board of Education case, and with the help of an intern, we toured an exhibit about women in the Supreme Court. The whole event was fabulous and a great success.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at our state convention, as we work to build and strengthen our Federation family.

MEET THE BOARD: KEVIN PIRNIE THE REST OF THE STORY

A series featuring the NFBI Board members

Many of you that are reading this know me as someone active at all levels with the National Federation of the Blind. Like so many of you, the NFB has become an important part of my life. Now let me take a moment or two and share a little bit about me that you may not know. I was born in Boise Idaho and moved to Oklahoma when I was five years old.

I remember receiving my first pair of glasses at the age of three. I can remember being so amazed at all of the things I could now see. The first thing I noticed was the cracks in the sidewalk. Then my attention was quickly diverted to the big circus tents and activity across the street from the ophthalmologist's office.

I was born with an eye condition known as retinitis pigmentosa, and with glasses I could still see pretty well during the day until about ninth grade. I believe I was fifteen when I was officially diagnosed as legally blind. From an early age my parents raised my brother and myself to be independent and to be people of virtue.

I have always had an insatiable appetite for knowledge and understanding how things worked. I can remember going to the back of the room and reading the encyclopedias and trying to memorize all I could about geology and electricity. I became a rock collector and got licensed for ham radio and even built a couple of my own radios.

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BAKER'S RECIPES

Tips and techniques around the house

by Lisa Baker

One of my favorite things about winter is it is a great time to watch some movies that you may not have had time to watch during the warmer months. I am so excited to see all the advances we have made recently when it comes to accessibility. There are now accessible televisions with every manufacture and we are seeing more movies and TV shows with audio description. Netflix and Amazon have increased their numbers significantly, and all Disney produced movies are now accessible. One movie that is quite the topic of conversation lately is a Netflix original called *Bird Box*. If you need an interesting blindness movie to watch during these cold winter days, I would highly recommend it. It will definitely invoke some conversation. To go along with a good movie, here is a yummy winter soup recipe that uses leftover baked potatoes.

BAKED POTATO SOUP

Ingredients:

12 slices bacon	2/3 cup margarine	2/3 cup all-purpose flour
7 cups milk	4 large baked potatoes, peeled and cubed	
4 green onions, chopped	1 1/4 cups shredded cheddar cheese	
1 cup sour cream		

Directions:

1. Place bacon in a large, deep skillet. Cook over medium heat until browned. Drain, crumble, and set aside.
2. In a stock pot or Dutch oven, melt the margarine over medium heat. Whisk in flour until smooth. Gradually stir in milk, whisking constantly until thickened. Stir in potatoes and onions. Bring to a boil, stirring frequently.
3. Reduce heat, and simmer 10 minutes. Mix in bacon, cheese, sour cream, salt, and pepper. Continue cooking, stirring frequently, until cheese is melted.

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Two more of my passions were sports and entrepreneurship. As a young entrepreneur I started a lawn mowing business, sold garden seeds in the spring, sold the paper, *Grit*, and even sold greeting cards.

By age 14, my eyesight had become much worse, and I was really struggling to see my school work. The schools provided no real viable assistance and it was a real challenge getting my assignments completed. I became a very astute listener and bold in asking questions.

Fortunately, I had an uncle in Boise that had also become blind from RP that was very active in the NFB. It did not take long before I knew the philosophy and became aware of the valuable work and advocacy that the NFB was involved with.

At the age of sixteen I had quit high school, went through the Idaho Commission's orientation training, earned my GED, and soon enrolled fulltime at Boise State University.

My biggest challenge in college was I had so many different interests. I had fallen in love with

the guitar so took several music classes but spent most of my time in the geology and business departments. This resulted in me co-founding the Geothermal Aquaculture Research Foundation along with a good friend and Dr. Finton Kelly, a fisheries biologist at BSU.

In 1985 I was asked to manage a sixty-acre commercial fisheries facility just outside of Palm Beach, Florida. I later assisted the company in moving all operations to Idaho and transitioning to the use of geothermal resources for all production.

By this time I was providing consulting services to others in Idaho that were interested in exploring the possibility of utilizing the geothermal resources they had rights to, for aquaculture purposes.

I had a strong desire to go back to school so I changed focus all together and got involved with the Business Enterprise Program as a way to finance my schooling. I soon discovered that God had other plans for me.

The day following my return from a week in the Sawtooth Mountains with my brother, I was told that a close friend (a single mom with two young kids) had passed away suddenly. There was no family to take care of them. After much prayer and soul searching, I knew that those children would be the most important thing in my life. I made the decision that I would adopt them.

Being a single guy and being blind complicated things. I asked for a meeting with the kids' case manager, the head of adoptions, the director of Health & Welfare, and others involved to address these items up front. That was the best decision I could have made as they all were in support of me through the six year process of foster parenting to the finalization of the adoption.

God brought my true love back into my life and we have been married almost seventeen wonderful years. I am blessed with two beautiful grand babies. I was also blessed to serve as pastor for a wonderful church for several years and help ministries with their reach online. My career now focuses on copywriting and online marketing ventures.

One of the most rewarding areas of my life is my work and service with the NFB. There is nothing more exciting than playing a small part in making a positive difference in a blind person's life. It was the belief that my parents had in me and as an adult the belief and confidence that my federation family had in me that kept me encouraged and strong.

Yes, you can do what you set your mind to do. If I can ever be of service to you that are reading this, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. Thank you Federation family.