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Back in the Saddle Again!

Allan Schneider

After a two-year hiatus, the pride of the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho, the Cycle for Independence, was back! On May 21, about 350 riders took off from River Glen Junior High. The weather was pleasant, the riders were enthusiastic, and the volunteers unstoppable in all aspects all day. The event account registered over \$19,000 by day's end. Thanks to all those who helped or participated.



Photo: Bicycles

Cycle for Independence Sponsor Spotlight

At High Desert Hardwood we sell lumber, plywood and molding to hobbyists and professionals alike. We believe in being an active part of our community and partnering with organizations like the NFB of Idaho to promote activities such as the Cycle for Independence. We wouldn't have it any other way!



“Dream, Believe, Achieve”
Our 2022 NFB of Idaho State Convention

Dana Ard, President, NFB of Idaho

Our Thursday night reception gave us opportunity to visit with friends while we enjoyed refreshments provided by the hotel. We welcomed former Idaho members Pat and Trudy Barrett, who now live in Minnesota. Our Friday morning opening ceremonies featured vocalists Chris Dunbar, choral director at Blackfoot High School, and his former student Porter Williams, who performed several musical selections from Broadway musicals and other popular standards. Our Friday keynote speaker, Quincie Mattick inspired us with stories about her dreams and how she has achieved them. In addition to updates by Beth Cunningham, Administrator of the Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Jeanne, Marie Kopecky, Director of Blind and Visually Impaired Outreach Services for the Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and Blind, and LeAnn Gelskey, Talking Book Service Program Supervisor, we heard presentations from a panel of employed blind people, presentations from Ski for Light, C.W. Hog and Northwest association for Blind Athletes, and 64 oz. games. Blind Yoga instructor, and Teacher of the Blind, Marcie Chapman, provided excellent short fit breaks during each session. Our Friday afternoon began with a vendor show which included technology from Karl Smith of Axis Technology, aids and appliances from ICBVI, and some items available from our NFB Idaho on-line store. At the end of the afternoon, we reconvened for the “Dream Big” seminar. Participants were divided into 6 discussion groups. Each group was given one of the following topics: Increasing our scholarship applicants, planning the 2023 state convention, increasing utilization of NFB Newslines, communications, fundraising \$5000, and revitalizing chapters. Each group shared their ideas, and all groups are sending a written copy of the ideas to the president for further action. Following the board dinner, we enjoyed our Friday night social playing adapted board games provided and hosted by Emily and Richard Gibbs, from 64 oz. Games.

Our Saturday morning session began with an inspirational keynote address from Jordana Engebretsen, the 2021 NFB national teacher of the year. Jordana talked about managing life’s challenges. 10% is the challenging situation, and 90% is how we handle it.

Amy Ruell, our national representative, updated us on information from our national office, including our upcoming convention in New Orleans, July 5-10. Natalie and Amber Morgan talked about their experiences at their recent national leadership training. We heard a presentation from the Idaho Falls Area Humanitarian Center. Our final session of the morning was a presentation from John Pare, NFB Executive Director of Advocacy and Policy. He encouraged us to continue sharing our personal stories around our national legislation with our Congressmen.

President Dana Ard began the Saturday afternoon session with her state report. She encouraged chapters to begin meeting in person and becoming more involved in their communities. We had inspirational presentations from TJ Squires and Leslie Mora, Alison Steven, Deeann Solis, Erin Olsen, and Pat Barrett.



Photo: Dana Ard

In our business meeting, we re-elected Vickie Bateman to the state board, and elected Shane Ostermeier and Fawn Owen for their first term as affiliate board members. I welcome the opportunity to work with our new members and thank our outgoing members Garren Aubrey and Frank Skogsberg for their service and leadership. We also passed two resolutions, which are the policy of our organization. Resolution 2022-01 commends Boise State University for hiring blind educator and advocate Natalie Shaheen to work with the Educational Access Center at Boise State University to improve services for blind and disabled students. Resolution 2022-02 commends the Idaho Department of fish and Game for its work to improve accessibility for hunters who are blind.

Our banquet was filled with excitement as we bought tickets for our raffle baskets, bid on auction items, and raised our pledges for the Preauthorize Contribution plan. Amy Ruell shared her life experiences as a blind person in her inspiring banquet speech.

As we proclaimed loudly throughout the convention, "This was the best convention ever."

Meet the Board: Megan Geisler

A series featuring the NFBI Board members

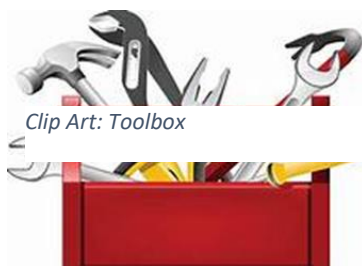
I live in Moscow, ID, and I am a member of the Palouse Empire Chapter. I joined the NFB in 2016 while living in Boise. Currently I am a stay-at-home mom to our two children who are 4 and 2 years old. Even though it is challenging at times, it is wonderful to be able to watch them during their younger years.

The other large part of my life is receiving the gift of a kidney transplant. It has almost been a year since my transplant. I love being a part of this organization. It has given me so much since losing my eyesight during college years. I enjoy helping with legislation and working towards passing these important laws.

It's Your Toolbox

ChessAbilities, Inc. — Check It Out!

Previously appeared in the ABC FORUM



Kevin McConnell, past VP of the Colorado State Chess Association and ChessAbilities, Inc. have begun a chess tournament specifically for children with disabilities. The purpose of this tournament is to provide a unique and safe environment for youth with disabilities under the age of 21, to compete in an over-the-board chess competition.

The 1st annual North American Chess Cup for Children with Disabilities will be held June 21st through June 26th, 2022, at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Denver, CO. If you have any questions or to sign up, please contact Kevin McConnell at (303) 501-0974 or email at mcconnellk2@yahoo.com.

Heard Birds

*Steve Bouffard-Curator of Birds, Orma J. Smith
Museum of Natural History-College of Idaho*

Many of our wintering birds have left. We are seeing fewer Dark-Eyed Juncos and Cedar and Bohemian Waxwings. American Robins have been here all winter, but their behavior is changing from wintertime flocking to pairing up. If you've been outside



Photo: American Robin

recently, you've noticed that bird song has increased dramatically. It's not just local birds you're hearing. You may have heard the rattling calls of Sandhill Cranes as they migrate north. Often, they are so high you can only hear them. And thousands of Snow Geese stop at wetland reserves for a month or so, creating a cacophony of sound as they move back and forth to nearby farm fields to feed.

Spring is in the air and the birds are thinking of love, and song is their expression of love. Males (and females in some species) sing to attract mates and to claim territory. Mostly what I am hearing are Song Sparrows, House Finches, House Sparrows, Black-Capped Chickadees, and Lesser and American Goldfinches. Also, I've heard Pine Siskins, California Quail, Cooper's Hawks, Northern Flickers, European Starlings, American Robins, Red-Winged Blackbirds, Mourning and European Collared Doves and Downy Woodpeckers. The woodpeckers have a unique way of claiming their territory; they drum on something that acts as a sounding board, often a telephone pole. Each species of woodpecker has a different cadence to their drumming.

Song Sparrows have several different songs. They all start with 2 or 3 whistles followed by various buzzes, warbles and trills. They prefer brushy, shrubby vegetation especially along waterways. Females select males with better territories. My male

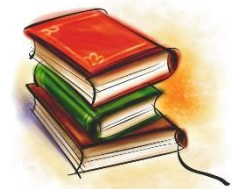
Enjoy the Spring and Good Listening

ICBVI VISTA Summer Programs

Alison Steven

For those not aware, VISTA is the acronym that ICBVI uses for youth programming. It stands for Visually Impaired Students Transitioning to Adulthood. I love this acronym, kindly created by April Mills, Pocatello Rehab Teacher, because it encompasses the concept of looking ahead and beyond. This is what we want for our students as they explore the possibilities after high school and the skills and resources they need to achieve their vision.

This summer brings many opportunities to build those skills and resources and students have been able once again to register for in-person residential programs based at Boise State University. We have the collaborative IESDB and ICBVI Work Readiness Camp, “Ready, Set, Go to Work”, which will take place mid-June. This is 3 days of exploring the world of work, building interview techniques, getting CPR certification, scuba diving and rock climbing to name but a few. Eighteen students aged between 14 and 17 will live in the dorms and travel around Boise to build their independence and confidence. College Days starts out the same week with 5 days of information and exploration of what College is all about. We are back in-person with the benefit of being open to a



Clip Art: A stack of books

wider reach for teachers and presenters afforded by our time in lockdown. Tyler Merren (Paralympian), Kathy Nimmer (blind Teacher of the year) and Amber Kierra (Health and wellness coach) will all be joining us to teach and share their experiences as blind professionals who have navigated the college system. Following this week, students will participate in a BSU foundations class to experience what taking a college course is really like. For four weeks they will study oral communications and discover what it takes to complete assignments, upload to Canvas (the software used in Online courses at Boise State University), and track all the requirements that a class brings. This extension to College Days will allow students to investigate their preparedness for college with the support of ICBVI staff as they adjust to advocating for their needs. It is a wonderful challenge to take on the Summer Work Experience Program (SWEP) after Larry Henrie’s retirement earlier this year. He

developed a great model for our students to not only experience the world of work but also to learn independent living skills as they prepare meals at the dorm, navigate to the workplace, and build social skills with peers and summer staff. This summer will see the return of many favorite extra-curricular activities such as the NFB adaptive sports and picnic, rafting with Parks and Rec, tie-dye, and Dutch oven cooking. New this year are weekly improvisation classes with Karen Manthey, a local actor and drama teacher, and a day zip lining near Horseshoe Bend. Students will work for 30 hours a week at jobs around the valley at such places as Life's Kitchen, Boise Urban Garden School, Riverside Hotel, and the Commission on Libraries. These community partners have been very generous to embrace SWEP as many businesses are still struggling with the aftermath of the pandemic.

We are grateful to these community partners for working with us to support our students' growth and transition to adulthood. I also know the businesses will benefit tremendously from seeing the determination, dedication and perseverance of our young people.

In total we will serve thirty-three students in these summer programs, and I could not finish this article without thanking the ICBVI staff for their dedication and hard work on behalf of all these young clients. The ICBVI counselors work hard to share information and recruit students, following up by assisting them with applications and the mountains of paperwork that needs completing. Earl Hoover, our Business Engagement Specialist, has reopened channels and developed new partnerships in our community, which takes a lot of persistence and positivity, and Bailie Weir has arrived on the scene in time to be a tremendous support with the administration of all these life-changing programs.



Photo: Governor Little holding up the proclamation, next to a life-size cutout poster of Fred Riggers with many agency directors and other advocates for people with disabilities.

(See "Fred" on next page)

Remembering Fred

Beth Cunningham

On February 1, Governor Little signed a proclamation to make February 2nd, Idaho's official Fred Riggers Disability Awareness Day. Fred was a gentleman who lost his vision in his late 50s. Prior to that he was a farmer. He came to the ICBVI for services and then became a huge advocate for people with disabilities. He was frequently at the Capital during the legislative session, representing people who are blind and people with disabilities. Fred's daughter presented the Fred Rigger's Disability Awareness Award.

Expectations Challenged

Leslie Mora

I didn't hear about the National Federation of the Blind until I started college. Even then, it wasn't much, though I remember hearing that the organization sued a lot of people. The context was certainly lost on me until years later. My first contact with someone in the Idaho affiliate was Mike Gibson through Boise State University. He helped me get set up with everything I needed to begin classes there and was the person who sent me the application to the 2016 NFBI scholarship. I was one of the recipients of the scholarship that year, and this brought me to state convention where I began to understand what the organization does.

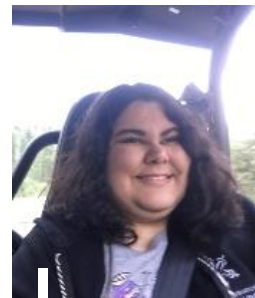


Photo: Leslie Mora

Not only did the NFB provide me with assistance in purchasing supplies to aid my pursuit of a college degree, being a member has provided opportunities for me to learn and grow. I joined the organization shortly after that year's state convention and was very fortunate to attend the national convention the following year. Here, I was exposed to the reasons why the organization was known for suing people. In addition, I met many more blind individuals who were successful and thriving independently. I am excited to be part of a movement that seeks to better the lives of blind people, and I will always be thankful for what the NFB did for me on a personal level.