



# GEM STATE MILESTONES

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## CFI Celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Event

*Allan Schneider*

The pride of the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho, the Cycle for Independence,



will mark its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on May 20<sup>th</sup>. After grabbing a pair of our *famous socks*, around 400 riders will choose among the Metric Century, the 25 mile, and the 10 mile rides. The routes are fully supported with water stops every ten miles, bike mechanics, and medical personnel. The rides are followed by food, prizes, live music and comradery. This year, Jensen Buck will be performing. Please visit for more info: [cycleforindependence.org](http://cycleforindependence.org).

*Photo: Bicycles*

### Cycle for Independence Sponsor Spotlight

Since 1994, Hollingshead Barrett Eye Center, P.C., and its affiliates has been one of the foremost centers for the treatment of eye conditions utilizing the most advanced surgical procedures in SW Idaho. Our commitment to our patients’ comfort and concerns is the focus of our work. We help people enjoy better vision by providing both medical and surgical treatment of the eye. Whether the patient is in need of a comprehensive eye exam or looking for the most advanced treatment of cataracts, glaucoma or corneal procedures the latest state-of-the-art equipment can be found at Hollingshead Barrett Eye Center, P.C..



### President’s Address

*Dana Ard, President, NFB of Idaho*

*Photo: Dana Ard*



It’s convention time! Our state convention will take place April 27-29 at the Riverside Hotel in Boise. The room rate is \$130 per night. The state affiliate will be putting funds toward all rooms to bring the nightly rate to \$130.00. The room block will close April 7. Please call the Riverside at 208-343-1871 to reserve your room. The registration form can be found on our website [www.nfbidaho.org](http://www.nfbidaho.org). If you have questions or need the registration sent or emailed to you, contact me by email or

phone using the information at the beginning of this newsletter. As with all state conventions, we will have information, education and inspiration with our speakers and events. Educational topics include the ABLE Act, Voting Privately and Independently in Idaho, drug safety and possible approaches to accessible drug labeling, suicide prevention, and speakers from the Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and Blind, and the Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

We will have presentations from our members on foreign travel, guide dogs, the need for accessible medical equipment, etc. Our vendor expo on Friday afternoon will let us know about new technology and services for blind people. On Thursday evening, the Northwest Association for Blind Athletes will conduct an aerobic dance class, and will have bocci ball on Friday afternoon. We will have live music on Friday night, Birding by Ear on Saturday morning, a luncheon for students, scholarship winners and young adults on Saturday noon, auction items and baskets to bid on, and our banquet featuring our national representative Sheila Wright. Come join us, and have fun and learn how we can enjoy security, equality, and opportunity through our involvement with the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho.

State secretary Susan Bradley, board member Fawn Owens, and I participated in the Washington Seminar January 31-February 2. We spoke to staffers in our senators' and representatives' offices about this years issues:

- 1) Websites and Software Applications Accessibility Act
- 2) Medical Device Nonvisual Accessibility Act
- 3) Blind Americans Return to Work Act.

Currently there are 40 co-sponsors in the house for H.R 1328, Medical Device Nonvisual Accessibility Act. Please call or email your representative and ask them to co-sponsor this bill. Contact me with any questions.

I hope to see everyone at our 2023 convention, as we learn and grow together building and strengthening our National Federation of the Blind of Idaho.

### **NFBI Discussion Group**

The monthly Discussion Group is open to anyone who wants to discuss issues relating to adapting to vision loss. Topics include transportation, entertainment, accessible pharmacy information, shopping, travel, parenting, and any other topics that the group may be interested in. It is held on the first Monday of every month at 8:00 MDT and 7:00 PDT. Come join us!! Ed. Note:*Lisa Baker, the group leader, lists monthly details on the NFBI listserve.*

## Heard Birds

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

Spring is just around the corner and nature is responding. Trees are starting to bud, flowers are popping out, and birds are beginning to migrate back to their breeding areas. The large flocks of robins and waxwings that have been around all winter are thinning out, but you can still hear their calls and the robins are starting to sing their territorial songs. The rattling calls of sandhill cranes can be heard as they fly over. They are impressive birds with long legs and neck, they stand over four feet tall and have a 6 and a half foot wing span. You can always hear flocks of geese; they are ubiquitous around cities. If you are near water, you may hear rattling calls of belted kingfishers or the prehistoric croak of great blue herons. Ducks are starting to pair up now. Depending on species, the males make a variety of short whistles, buzzes and burps. Only the female dabbling species, such as mallards, quack. Female wood ducks give a squealing alarm call. At night you can hear the deep hooting of great horned owls and the quieter tooting of western screech-owls. Both are nesting now, both in and out of town. Songbirds are starting to sing now too. Recently, I have heard house finches and song sparrows singing breeding songs. The caws of American crows can be heard. They, and their relatives, ravens, magpies and jays, are highly intelligent birds. They can recognize



human faces and remember people who feed them and people who threaten them. They often leave gifts of small objects for people who feed them and scold people who threaten them. Scientists don't know if gift giving is their way of reciprocating for the food they have received or a bribe to keep the food coming. I personally think it is the former. They can also be vindictive. There is a report of magpies defecating on a man's car after he repeatedly harassed them, while avoiding his wife's car since she fed them. They specifically

targeted the windshield. He tried switching parking places with his wife's car but the birds were not fooled.

As the weather continues to warm this spring it will be a good time to get out and listen to birds. The next few months will be the best time as bird song will be at its max and weather will be pleasant. You can get out and walk a trail or you can just sit on your patio with a cup of coffee or hot chocolate and feel the sun rise and listen to the morning chorus. You can check [www.birdability.org](http://www.birdability.org) for a list of birding sites near you suitable for birders of different abilities.

## ***Opportunities for Idaho's Blind Youth***

*Alison Steven*

I have been pondering the word heuristic today as it occurred in the book I am reading. It means enabling someone to discover or learn something for themselves. It occurs to me that that is exactly what I would like to do for our blind youth. My ultimate goal when I am working with them is to encourage independence and discovery, problem solving and self-awareness. To that end, ICBVI and NFB of Idaho are engaging with youth through a variety of programs .

The virtual Road to Success program will run twice a week in April and May for eight weeks. It gives students the opportunity to learn about their strengths and interests, create resumes, conduct an informational interview and practice interview techniques. Instructors from the International School of Protocol who Zoom from Maryland and Nebraska will aid our students. The students going on to have a work experience at the VIEW program in July will do their Road to Success interview with their summer employer. There will be a lot of learning, laughing, creating and interacting.

The VIEW Program (formerly known as SWEP) is shorter this year, just five weeks, and we have 24 students signed up for it. It will follow the traditional path with students working six hours five days a week at different locations around the Treasure Valley. Some adjustments this year include recruiting from further afield to gather a higher

percentage of blind and visually-impaired staff, having students cater for themselves in groups of three or four with an adult mentor helping them learn through the process, and weekly workshops on skills of adult life such as budgeting, safety and consent, basic car maintenance and many more. There will be a lot of learning, laughing, creating and interacting. And some money earned.

College Days is the week long college prep program that takes place in June the week before the VIEW Program starts. Students will have classes in Academics and Executive Functioning with Kathy Nimmer, finalist in the National Teacher of the Year 2015, Fitness and Education with Tyler Merren, (winner of the Holman Prize for his Re:Vision Fitness App, and Self-Advocacy and Meta-Cognition with Jerry Catt, co-founder of "Listen for a Change". This will be a powerful week of self-discovery with some incredible role models and mentors. There is a lot of learning, laughing, creating and interacting. And students are encouraged to take a college class as well.

IESDB is running their "Ready, Set, Go to Work" Camp in June as well with support from ICBVI staff. This is an excellent first experience for students living away from home. For three days, participants are kept busy with various work readiness activities which include things like team-building with NWABA, rock climbing with Jeff Reichman of "Courageous Kids Climbing" and Scuba Diving with Justin Fish of ICBVI taking the official photos. Students also get to experience ATC activities, spending time in the kitchen with Lisa, in shop with Chris and learning a little about the Business Enterprise Program with Justin. There will be a lot of learning, laughing, creating and interacting.

The NFB BELL and Beyond Academy of 2023 will take place in McCall at Pilgrim Cove at the end of July this year. Once again, blind youth from 7 through 17 from around the state will congregate to learn literacy through Braille, O&M through traveling through woods and lakes, and self-confidence through modeling themselves on our fabulous team of teachers and staff. There will be a lot of learning, laughing, creating and interacting. And some long nights!

And at the end of the day, I hope our programs are heuristic, and we see our young people becoming stronger, more independent, and coming home with big smiles on their faces!

## Legislation You Need to Act On

*Sandy Streeter*

Many laws and regulations passed by Congress which have benefitted the blind community is due to the efforts of the National Federation of the Blind. Here is some legislation currently being introduced in to Congress on behalf of the NFB.

H.R 1328 The Medical Device Nonvisual Accessibility Act was introduced by Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) on February 28, 2023 with 32 original sponsors. When made a law, this bill means that medical devices must be accessible for blind and low vision individuals to use independently. Our Legislative Specialists in our national office believe this bill will gain much support from members of the house. Work is still being done on the Senate version and hope is to have it also introduced in the near future.

The Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act was introduced on February 27<sup>th</sup> and February 28<sup>th</sup> in the Senate and House respectfully. The bill numbers are S.533 and H.R 1263. It is time to start building co-sponsors for both versions of this legislation that would phase out over a five-year period the payment of subminimum wages for workers with disabilities

I cannot express enough how important it is for everyone to contact your senators and representatives when the call comes out for support of all legislation involving the betterment of the blind community.



**REGISTER NOW!**  
**[cycleforindependence.org](https://cycleforindependence.org)**



## **It's Clearer Now** *TJ Squires*

For some things, the beginning is clear as day. For others, it seems to be a part of your life as far back as you can remember. For me, it's a little of both. I was aware of the National Federation of the Blind ever since I was a high school student. The first concrete memory I have of the NFB is trying to win the NFB scholarship my freshman year of college. I didn't win, and my NFB aspirations died.

As I continued on with my early life, I was invited by Dana, my rehab counselor at the time, and still didn't take the bait. I read online, on the budding phenomenon known as "Social Media" that the NFB was an organization crushing blind barriers throughout the courtroom. I felt victim to a narrow view. It took a person who is very close to me. Her enthusiasm for the organization helped me to get another picture; removing my own self-created barrier of advocacy organizations filing lawsuits

When Leslie, who's story can be found in an earlier addition of the newsletter, won the NFB scholarship and had the chance to attend the state convention, it was a life changing experience for her. When she came home and shared her excitement and passion she had gained, I began to soften to the idea. Someone my own age was involved, after all, so how bad could it be? Someone who's opinion I trusted and valued, and perhaps because she was a pretty girl, was predisposed to listen to! It sounded like she was having a great time, met great people, and wouldn't ya know a meeting was the Tuesday coming up. She said she was going to go and take part. The way she made it sound, I figured I had grown up and was ready to witness the truth, so, I went with her.

I remember my first meeting. I was met with open arms. Like I was family. That's all it took for me. I was all in. It's been five years now, and I still believe in the mission. I still believe that the NFB is relentlessly crushing barriers for blind people without remorse, but rather than doing it in the court room, they are attempting to do it with partnerships, education, advocacy, and lobbying. I couldn't be more proud to be a federationist. I look forward to the future as a fully-committed member. The NFB has brought a sense of purpose, a community, and a feeling that I am not alone to my life. And much as I have been reminded of this in the past, I should have listened to my elders. My one regret is not joining oh so many years before I did.