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## President's Address

*Dana Ard, President, NFB of Idaho*

This has been a very busy time for your president.



*Photo, Dana Ard*

In late June, I was asked to present a discussion for students in the ICBVI VIEW program. I chose the topic "Be Your Own Best Advocate." I discussed with the students the importance of presenting their ideas in a clear, cogent manner. We discussed having an introduction, body, and conclusion when presenting an advocacy request. Students presented skits showing both the right and wrong way to present their advocacy proposal. They learned from these presentations.

In July, the Treasure Valley chapter held its annual sports activity and picnic for the VIEW students. My long-time friend, and baseball enthusiast, Ken Jenkins, led the beep baseball activity. Al Schneider facilitated soccer, and the Northwest Association for Blind Athletes led cooperative games. Following the sports activities, the Treasure Valley Chapter provided a delicious picnic for students, chapter members, and volunteers. Students were also given information on the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho.

Eight individuals from Idaho attended the 2024 NFB National Convention in Orlando, Florida. Beth Cunningham, ICBVI agency administrator, met with Scott White, NFB Newsline Coordinator, to discuss ways to include usage of Newsline in Idaho. Our member emeritus, Jan Gawith, was attending her 62<sup>nd</sup> convention. (*Cont. on page 7*)

## Don Winiecki Wins Bolotin Award at NFB National Convention

NFB selected me and Handid Braille Services for the 2024 Bolotin Award for my work producing and promoting braille for languages other than English. In fact most of my work through Handid Braille Services is now focused on languages other than English, especially languages that do not use the Latin alphabet. I regularly transcribe braille in Arabic, Chinese, Farsi/Persian, Hebrew, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Navajo, Russian, Thai, Vietnamese and other languages.



In addition to NFB, this activity has attracted the attention of translation companies across the Northern Hemisphere, the US Library of Congress, representatives of the Saudi Arabian and Qatari governments, representatives of Native American Tribes, and leaders of Islamic and Jewish organizations.

I learned of the strong need for braille in languages other

than English in a chance encounter with a representative of the US Library of Congress at my first NFB Convention. As I considered the possibilities this could open for me and Handid Braille Services, I received a cold query from an Islamic seminary on the USA East Coast, asking if I could transcribe several books of Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Mohammed) into Arabic braille.

I recalled a saying from John Lennon of the Beatles: "90% of success is just showing up." I decided to "show up" and agreed to do the job. Several months and a lot of learning later, the books were done and delivered. Other Arabic braille jobs soon followed, as did jobs for braille in Chinese, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Navajo, Russian, Thai, and other languages.

If you attend an Arabic language course in any number of Colleges and Universities in the USA, you will use braille that I transcribed. If you visit the Museum of Islamic Calligraphy in Saudi Arabia, you will encounter braille that I produced. If you study Qur'an recitation at a school in the Middle-East, you will use my braille transcriptions. If you have a chance to review government documents in Qatar, you will find my braille. If you read Hebrew language learning books you will find my braille. If you attend a Navajo school in New Mexico, you can find braille that I transcribed. The list goes on and gets more improbable. How is a guy in Boise, Idaho, the one people go to for braille in languages other than English? Just showing up, maybe.

*(Continued on page 7)*

## Book Club Update

*Joe Thompson*

I hope everyone is enjoying their summer reading. This month we are going to be discussing: *The Paris Apartment* by Lucy Foley. If I was paying attention I would have recommended: *Birding with Benefits*. It has an interesting premise. A woman needed a fake date and he took her birding and the benefit was that she fell in love with birding and probably dumped the guy. There are just so many books to read it's hard to keep up. There's a trilogy starting with: *Three Body Problem*? I just heard about it and downloaded the first book and will let you know how it goes. I just read a 3 1/2 hour book called: *The Light in the Forest*. It was published in 1953 and seems to be a first-hand account of a young man who was abducted by Indians and raised as a son. In fact his Indian name was True Son. When he was so-called rescued after 10 years, he had essentially become a true Indian and could not live with his biological parents any longer because it was too regimented and stifling.

I hope everyone is getting out and enjoying nature. It's good for the spirit. We are still meeting the second Wednesday of the month at 7 PM Pacific time via zoom. It would be nice if more people started showing up. Everyone is welcome whether you have read the book or not. We don't even have to talk about the book. It's about getting together and sharing.

If it's too hot to go outside, then crack open your bard app and dive in. If you don't like the one you're reading, then dump it and grab a good one. Given the high temperatures these days I will leave you with a short poem my uncle used to recite: When it gets too hot for comfort and you can't get an ice cream cone, it ain't no sin to take off your skin and dance around in your bones.

## NFBI Discussion Group

*Lisa Baker*



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 listserv.*

## NFBI Summer Programs for Youth

*Alison Steven*

This year, the ICBVI and NFB summer programs aligned so that it was possible for students to do all three if appropriate! This did not happen but some students did pick two of the three. For the ICBVI View program, I hired 22 staff, and we had 16 students attend. The Visually Impaired Experiencing Work (VIEW) Program is five weeks long and focuses on students getting work experience in the local community. We had students working across the city at the Discovery Center of Idaho, the Boise Zoo, the Grove Hotel, the Riverside Hotel, Computers for Kids, the Boise Co-Op, RISE Inc., Quality Logic, Boise Parks and Rec, and Garden City Police Department. Students relished their work and the employers were engaged and interactive with them.

ICBVI collaborated with the Northwest Association for Blind Athletes (NWABA), the International School of Protocol, and NFB of Idaho to bring a variety of experiences, and more importantly, new relationships with strong and independent adults. Over the five weeks of the program, students met with Jennie F., Ramona W., Al S., Dana A., Nate H., Kebbie Y., Deanne S., and Earl H., as well as several others of our community at the adaptive sports and picnic event hosted by NFB.

While the activities the students participated in were valuable, it is the relationships they develop and the role models they meet that have the greatest impact now and in the future.

We had a fabulous staff with just under 40% returning staff and a similar proportion of staff who were blind or visually impaired. They put 100% of themselves into supporting the students, developing solid friendships in the process.

The VIEW program ended on Saturday July 20, and the next day, staff headed to McCall for the NFB BELL and Beyond Program. Two staff and three students moved on to the BELL and Beyond Program at Pilgrim Cove Camp. There were a total of 20 students ranging in age from 9 through 17 years of age, and 15 staff, with Jackie Stallings and myself co-leading the program. We stayed in cabins with bathrooms overlooking the lake and the mountains as our daily backdrop. Students participated in braille and literacy and O&M classes each morning. In the afternoon, we had various activities which always included getting in the lake at some point. This year, the schedule for a group of the older students was different, because for the first time we introduced a "Challenge Track". These seven students spent three mornings practicing putting up tents, making a camp fire, planning food, and canoeing to be ready for an overnight tent camping trip on Thursday evening. (*Continued on page 6*)

## 2024 Cycle for Independence

*Daniel Solis*

The 2024 NFB Cycle for Independence fundraiser was a resounding success, thanks to the combined efforts of our Treasure Valley Chapter and the entire state of Idaho. This event not only brought our community together but also raised funds to support scholarships, conventions, and various activities for the blind across Idaho throughout the year.



This year, we had 303 registered participants riding in one of the three routes—10 miles, 25 miles, and metric century. Participants came from California, Nevada, Utah, and beyond to support us, participate in the event, and enjoy the beauty of the Treasure Valley.

Each participant received our signature bike socks, designed in Boise State’s blue and orange colors. Following the ride, they enjoyed a delicious barbecue featuring hamburgers, hot dogs, and a variety of beef, turkey, and

*Photo: CFI poster* veggie burgers, complete with all the fixings: fruit, desserts, and cold soft drinks. The event was enhanced by lively music from our DJ, creating a vibrant spring morning atmosphere.

We were honored to have Mr. Ken Bass as our MC, who kicked off each ride. The event was supported by over 70 volunteers from our community, whose dedication and hard work were invaluable in making the event a success. We deeply appreciate their contributions and hope to see them again next year. Thank you to everyone involved for a fantastic job and to the NFB of Idaho for their continued support. We look forward to another successful event next year!



(Youth, *continued from page 4*)

With five staff to support them, they had a fantastic trip, mosquitoes notwithstanding, and arrived with a sense of accomplishment. One student told me he had been on camps before, and had always been on the sidelines, never being considered capable of helping out. On this trip he had done everything, paddling, lighting fires, cooking and putting up tents.

As a finale to our week, we had a family day on Saturday, organized by IESDB. Campers and siblings took part in activities run by AWeSOMe, while parents, guardians, and staff shared stories and resources. The campers performed their Readers Theater Selection, "The True Story of the Three Little Pigs", before everyone departed for home.

Everyone, that is, except Tyler Merren, Kyle Owens, Rosemary (my niece, visiting from England) and myself, who headed up to Moscow for the start of College Days.

This year, College Days took place at the University of Idaho to give students the opportunity to get acquainted with another of Idaho's universities. We had seven students participating this year and the University staff were incredibly cooperative and helpful, even providing audio description to their Thursday Screen on the Green community movie night at our request. Students spent time in classes learning Executive Functioning skills with Kathy Nimmer, Self-Advocacy and Listening Skills with Jerry Catt and Liz Alexander, and Fitness and Education with Tyler Merren. They got to know the campus walking from the dorms at the north end to class in the Education Building at the south end. They also had a class with Chelsea, a textiles teacher, who happened to be visually impaired. On Wednesday, we took a side trip to Lewis and Clark State College to expose students to one more option for college that they could take advantage of.

We also very much enjoyed seeing Joe Thompson and Janine Sholander representing NFB at the resource fair. By the end of the week, all students felt very much more prepared for college and all the opportunities and challenges it will provide. Another busy summer of youth programming was complete!

Thanks to all the organizations and individuals that collaborated to give our youth the step they need to move towards productive and independent adult lives.

(President, *continued from page 1*)

NFB has numerous interest groups. I attended the meeting of NAGDU, the National Association of Guide Dog Users. We discussed the ongoing problem with denial of rides by Uber to those of us who use guide dogs, despite a court settlement where Uber agreed to fix this problem. Our own treasurer and operator of Handid Braille Services, Don Winiacki, was awarded a Bolotin Award for \$15,000 for his transcription work producing braille in numerous non-Latin-based languages. I always enjoy the President's report, which outlines the tremendous work we are doing in our organization to make the world better for all blind people. You can read this report, and the banquet speech at [nfb.org/conventions](http://nfb.org/conventions). The presentation by Joe Stretchay on his work on the Netflix Series, *All the Light We Cannot See*, was especially interesting, since the book, on which this series is based, is written by a Boise author, Anthony Doerr. I just returned from our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual BELL and Beyond camp in McCall. We had 20 campers this year. We partnered with IESDB and ICBVI to make this happen. I taught braille writing. In addition to writing, I have a spelling contest with my classes and work on dictated sentences and composition.

Next weekend I will join Snake River Valley Chapter for their summer picnic. It's not too early to plan for Blind Equality Achievement Month in October. Let's continue to work together to build the National Federation of the Blind in Idaho.

(Award, *continued from page 2*)

In addition to a very impressive trophy with a braille plaque and an image of Jacob Bolotin, the Bolotin Award came with a \$15,000 cash prize. This award is being used to purchase new equipment for scanning and OCR of multiple languages (but OCR for Arabic is terrible. Really. I type most of it by hand.), language learning resources, and seed money for the next endeavor by Handid Braille Services -- instructional materials for learning braille for languages other than English. I figure, if more braille is needed, then I could help to prepare more braille readers too! When I mentioned that to faculty who teach at NFB Centers, and Universities with TVI programs, in conversations at the 2024 NFB Convention, I was met with immediate smiles and excitement!

If I was in a position to have to make a living transcribing braille, I may never have taken that first job. So much learning is necessary in what I do now, that it slows down the speed of production and that has a downward force on cashflow. But because I have a "day job" I can focus on and specialize in something that other transcribers won't consider doing. The learning is challenging. Knowing I am producing a product that fills a need is very rewarding. But in the end, receiving acknowledgement from NFB that contributing to the goals of the Federation is unparalleled. Thanks, Federation Family!

## It's Your Toolbox

*Marcie Chapman*



Some of my greatest tools besides my white cane and my guide dog, Guinness, are screen readers such as Voice Over on an iPhone/iPad, and JAWS for my PC. My dad recently asked me, after observing me navigating on my phone, "How limited would your world be without all the tools you use?" He added, "I would imagine that it would be very limiting." I told him he was very correct. Having these assistive technology tools is so invaluable. Without these screen readers, I would not be able to search for things on the internet, compose/send/edit my own messages and emails, make and receive phone calls, add in my own contacts, check my voicemails, access apps on my phone, pay bills, access programs on my computer such as Windows Explorer, Word, Excel, Outlook, access settings, etc. I wouldn't be able to access the programs we use at work as well to do my job. With these tools, I can do all of these independently. I also love using Seeing AI and the Be My Eyes apps. They help me to identify text that I can't see to read, to identify money, colors, products, and scenes around me, no matter where I am. There is literally a whole slew of tools right at your fingertips, and all you need to do is give them a try, and your eyes and your mind will be opened.

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The [National Federation of the Blind](#) provides advocacy, training, and access to opportunities that help individuals with disabling vision loss become independent. Your tax-deductible donations help us to help our members "live the lives they want!"

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