

THE MICHIGAN FOCUS – Summer 2008

THE VOICE OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF MICHIGAN

Geer Wilcox and Mike Powell, Editors

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Letters to the president should be sent to the State office: National Federation of the Blind of Michigan, 1212 North Foster, Lansing, MI 48912, phone 517-372-8700, Detroit phone, 313-271-8700, e-mail address f.wurtzel@comcast.net.

Address changes, and subscription requests should be sent to The National Federation of the Blind of Michigan, 80459 Stapleton Rd., Decatur, MI 49045 or by e-mail to NFBofMI@yahoo.com.

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4. In Braille.
5. On cassette.

Your cooperation in this matter will assure consideration for publication of your submission in future issues of the Michigan Focus.

Focus subscriptions cost the Federation about ten dollars a year. Members are invited and nonmembers are requested to cover the subscription costs. Donations should be made payable to the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan and sent to the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan, 1212 North Foster, Lansing, MI 48912.

There will be a limited supply of The Focus available in print, in braille, on cassette and/or on CD. If you need any of these formats, please let our secretary know. She can be reached at 80459 Stapleton Rd., Decatur, MI 49045. It would be very helpful if people would avail themselves of our e-mail version, or our online version (found at our website www.nfbmi.org), or our version found on NewsLine. Though this would keep costs down; it is more important for everyone to have access to our information.

The National Federation of the Blind is not an organization speaking for the blind. It is the blind speaking for themselves.

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If you or a friend wish to remember the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan in your will, you can do so by employing the following language. "I give devise and bequeath unto the national Federation of the Blind of Michigan, 1212 North Foster, Lansing, MI 48912 the sum of" blank dollars" or "blank percent of my net estate" or "the following stocks and bonds" to be used for its worthy purposes on behalf of blind persons."

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Announcements

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

Our convention this November will be held at The Holiday Inn South in Lansing and not in the Clarion in Kalamazoo as planned. Unfortunately the Clarion which had offered very nice accommodations and great rates and had been newly remodeled suffered major damage during a severe rain storm. They could not guarantee repairs would be finished in time for us. So instead the convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan will be held at The Holiday Inn South, 6820 South Cedar St. Lansing, Michigan. Call for reservations at 517-694-8123 except on Sundays. When making your reservation be sure and ask for the special hotel rates for the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan. You can pre register for the convention by visiting our website and paying for the registration and the banquet tickets using Pay Pal. You can preregister also by mail. Send your registration materials which will be available on our website-www.nfbmi.org, registration fee and banquet ticket fee to Our

Treasurer at 3253 Dolores, Warren, MI 48091. The preregistration fees are fifteen dollars for the convention and thirty-five dollars for the banquet ticket. When registering at the convention, they are twenty dollars for the convention fee and thirty-five dollars for the banquet ticket. The convention will begin on Friday November 14 and end at noon on Sunday November 16. For more details, watch for further announcements as convention time gets closer.

Announcement from the President

During the 2007 NFB State Convention, Marcus Simmons spoke on his experiences as an automotive engineer and his efforts to open a school that would teach, among others, blind people to become automotive technicians. Automotive technicians earn \$70,000/year, or more, in their profession.

Mr. Simmons has been seeking help from the MCB for several years to assist him to get the school started. The first step in getting assistance is to develop a plan or IPE that sets forth how the Commission would provide services. Mr. Simmons had repeatedly requested a signed IPE. Mr. Simmons did not have a signed plan though the rules call for a plan within 90 days of his acceptance as a client.

The NFBM represented Mr. Simmons in a due process hearing to acquire an IPE and necessary services. An Administrative Law Judge presided over the hearing. One of NFBM's concerns is that newly hired counselors do not have adequate training in blindness and that the philosophies of the general agencies such as MRS are creeping in to MCB. Our concerns were confirmed when sworn testimony of a Commission counselor revealed that she had a total of a mere 4 weeks training in blindness skills. We believe that the reluctance to support Mr. Simmons is due to a latent societal lack of belief in the abilities of blind people to be successful in managing a complex business like a technical training school. The minimal training of MCB staff in blindness skills and attitudes exacerbates these misconceptions about blind people.

After strong suggestions from the Judge, MCB and NFBM entered negotiations to reach a settlement. Happily, the settlement included all but one of Mr. Simmons requests. Mr. Simmons now has an IPE and the Commission has provided computer and related equipment. The

Commission has agreed to assist Mr. Simmons in working with Michigan's school licensing system to get the school licensed. The Commission has agreed to assist Mr. Simmons in acquiring tools and equipment need to operate a school that may be available through government surplus or other programs available to state government.

If you are experiencing difficulty in receiving the services you believe you need to be successful please contact the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan. We are here to help and are willing to work with you to be successful and independent.

Announcement!

One more step toward Braille Literacy has been made, and now much work is needed in Michigan and throughout the country to put this tool to work!

A new standard in teaching and learning Literary Braille has been agreed upon. "National Certification in Literary Braille" (NCLB) is a new credential for teachers and learners of braille. To earn this credential one need pass The National Literary Braille Competency Test (NLBCT). The test and the credential, I believe, are being administered by "The National Blindness Professional Certification Board" (NBPCB). While this is important, the real significance will come when the credential is embraced by the whole braille-using community and when teachers of braille are required to obtain and maintain it. This will be the next major step in the day after the Braille Literacy Law.

For further information please contact-

NBPCB Coordinator

101 S Trenton

Ruston, LA 71270

Ph: (318) 257-4554

Fax: (318) 257-2295

braille@nbpcb.org

www.nbpcb.org

BRAILLE MEANS LITERACY AND INDEPENDENCE FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Temple Beth El Braille Bindery Volunteers wants to let people know of their services. The TEMPLE BETH EL BRAILLE BINDERY VOLUNTEERS (TBEBBV) is a nonprofit organization that provides services in the typing, binding and the distribution of reading materials in braille at state, national, and international levels. The bindery was first established in 1962 at Temple Beth El and supplies children's books to schools and libraries on a "paper-exchange" basis, without further costs. Today requests for TBEBBV services are filled for schools, libraries, community agencies, and individuals. In 2005, nearly 1,000 publications, mostly of children's books, were produced and distributed.

TBEBBV provides educational transcriptions such as text books, concept books, children's books, menus and documents. Personal transcriptions include fiction and nonfiction, cards, letters and labels. Concept books are books in large print and braille that convey concepts like numbers, shapes and textures. Their latest is "Outer Space" and tactilely displays the sun and moons, planets and stars and even types of clouds.

TBEBBV has lists of books available in grade one and grade two braille. They also refurbish Perkins Braille writers and sell them for \$275. The Temple Beth El Braille Bindery volunteers are located at 7400 Telegraph Road, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48301 3876 For information, call Ilene Sawyer SL.S.W., L.P.C. at 248-788-0358 or E-Mail Barbara Mandelbaum at asmandell@sbcglobal.net

Note from the Editors

While much time has passed since the last issue of The Michigan Focus (Fall of 2000), a number of things have change in the world of Michigan's blind. Significant changes have occurred within the Michigan Commission for the Blind. With Pat Cannon's leadership, the Commission has been moved out of The Family Independence Agency and into the Department of Labor and Economic Growth. Also Mr. Cannon was able to negotiate raising the percentage of federal funds coming to The Michigan Commission for the Blind. Though we regretted the loss of our own Melody Lindsey as director of the MCB Training Center, we are very glad that Christine Boone, also of the NFB, has come to fill that position. Elsewhere within the state, Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind has hired George Wurtzel and has greatly expanded programs at Camp Tuhsmeheeta which

now offers a wide variety of opportunities for children and youth to learn and use skills of blindness.

It provides training in other skills and offers life expanding experiences many would be envious of. Within the NFB of Michigan, the Kalamazoo chapter has been reorganized and revitalized. Our state convention was to have been held there this November were it not for a mighty rain storm that severely damaged the hotel. A new division, The National Association of Blind Merchants of Michigan, has been formed and boasts a membership of nearly forty. Within the last few years The National Federation of the Blind has put on The Youth Slam in Baltimore and now Melinda Latham is developing a youth slam program in Michigan which is full of energy and promise.

On May 30, 2000, then Governor Engler signed into law our Braille Literacy Bill, "The Blind Pupil's Braille Literacy Law". We of the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan worked hard for many years to secure its passage and are still striving to seek its enforcement. Below are several articles relating to the Braille Literacy Bill. The first two articles were written for an issue of the Focus that did not come out back in 2003. Though out of date they are reprinted here as the history and messages are still appropriate. The first by Steve Handschu relates the bills history and development. The second by Allison Hilliker contains her reflections on what next. The third is by Brunhilde Merk-Adam and was written this year. It is an up-to-date question and answer piece on the current state of Braille.

Our Braille Literacy Law: Why, How, What Next? by Steve Handschu

From the beginning, people have struggled to achieve literacy. First to find a way to write what was known so it could be read, so it would not be lost and so it could be shared with others. Humans struggled to write on stone, parchment, and paper and now in cyberspace. As soon as people learned to read and write we struggled to teach others, especially our children.

The struggle for literacy has always been central to all freedom movements. In America, in the 1840's, teaching a black slave to read was against the law and a slave could be put to death for knowing how to read. Even so, slaves learned and taught each other to read in secret. In the 1840's in France, Louis Braille developed the braille system, taught his

students to read and write, and transcribed a small library one dot at a time. Then a new superintendent at the school for the blind, who was sighted, decided that braille was the "work of the devil" and burned the library. Even so Louis Braille and his students kept teaching and developing braille in secret.

There has never been a time when the majority of blind people were taught to read braille. Serious education of blind people in this country began in the 1880's with the founding of the first residential schools for the blind. While there is much debate over the numbers, the best time for braille instruction seems to have been during the 1930's and the 1940's when braille literacy may have been as high as 40 percent. Braille literacy has been falling since the end of World War II. Today only 9 percent of blind children read braille. Literacy has always been an essential tool for human development. Today the inability to read and write at a functional level will bar a person from full participation in the main activities of life. Eighty percent of working age blind people are unemployed or under-employed. With more blind people than ever using "low vision aids" and a 9 percent literacy rate, 90 percent of blind people who are employed use braille. It is not rhetoric or ideology. For blind people, knowing braille is the key to emancipation. Ignorance of braille is the lock of marginalization.

In the 1970's we, in the NFB, started hearing about blind children who were not being taught to read at all; their teachers believed that using a tape recorder instead of reading and writing was "good enough". By the 1980's the anti-braille attack against blind children was the only consistent feature of their education.

We started working with parents, sharing our experiences, mentoring; going to IEPC'S (Individualized Education Planning Committee) with them and advocating for them and their children. Many of us were blind children once and many of us were also denied braille instruction.

He was entering junior high. He had no braille skills and did not use a cane. He got by on his remaining vision and was starting to have trouble keeping up. He had RP. Mom had RP and knew things would only get worse for him. She wanted braille and cane instruction as well as the low vision services which he was already receiving. His teachers said it was cruel to "ruin" the time he still had sight by teaching him braille. And they said, "There is a chance he might not lose any more sight". Mom knew better

and insisted. We won braille and cane training on paper and the teachers kept undermining both.

More and more parents of blind children, who didn't think that "good enough" was good enough for their children, began finding us. At first they came seeking information. They knew there had to be a better way to deal with blindness than their children were being taught. Soon we were creating seminars for parents, at which competent blind adults helped parents learn about the skills of blindness, which we use in our lives.

He was entering the 4th grade. His skills were barely adequate for kindergarten. He couldn't read, had no travel skills, could not dress or groom himself or eat appropriately. Mom was both angry and guilty. How could this have happened? He was in school and had been receiving special education services all his life. With all his lack of training he was a delightful child. He had every radio station memorized and could figure out the controls on any radio which was put in front of him. He lacked neither intelligence nor fine motor coordination. Mom wanted intensive skills training in braille, travel and "skills of daily living". The special education director first blamed mom for any problem there might be and then denied that there was a problem. He said, "The trouble with you people is that your expectations are too high; after all, this child is blind." We were able to force the school to provide better training; but the teachers never believed in this child or their own training and neither they nor the family got past blaming each other.

I need to stop here to acknowledge the many outstanding educators who do their jobs well and often receive little or no recognition. Many of these professionals shared our horror at such behavior. Many teachers sent parents to us, suggesting that their children weren't getting the education that they needed and that perhaps we could help. All too often, however the anti-blind, anti-braille teachers have been allowed to bully the best educators into silence.

In the mid 1980's a group of brave and determined parents joined with us and formed the "Parents of Blind Children Division of the National Federation of the Blind of MI". Our deepest thanks to Delores Hayes, Anne Nelson, Rose Bowman and Sunny and Chuck Emerson for getting us started in those tough early years. We were now holding programs for

parents regularly and advocating for more and more children. We started a summer camp program for blind kids and then a Saturday tutoring program.

She was going into the 6th grade. We had first met her parents when she was one. But we had never advocated for this child before. On the way to the IEPC Mom told me "She is a great kid. She is getting good marks, especially in braille. But something feels wrong. I don't think anything is wrong. But I am worried."

The teacher was glowing. Everyone was happy. All her grades were good. When we got to set goals for the next term her teacher listed part of the grade 2 code that she would learn. How I asked could a child be in the 5th grade and not know grade 2 and get a passing grade in Braille? Her teacher gave us the tired speech about how complicated braille is and therefore how long it takes to teach it. "We set reasonable goals for the next term and if the student meets them than the grades reflect that." Finally the teacher admitted that she was at least 3 years behind her grade level. Mom asked when she would reach grade level. With plenty of concern and not a little pity she said "never".

Understandably, mom lost it. "I thought good grades meant good grades at grade level. Now you tell me that my girl is behind and I never would have known it if I had not brought an advocate today. You have had my daughter in the "center program" for 6 years; 5 blind kids with 1 VI specialist. And she can't read at grade level and you don't think she ever will?" Before we left we set appropriate goals, which would allow her to catch up in 2 years.

More and more blind people and parents of blind children found ourselves saying, "There ought to be a law". Then one day we heard ourselves saying, "We have got to see that there is a law".

We kept talking, probing, trying to find a way to level the playing field. A major break came when Joanne and David Search and Cindy Caldwell invited us to attend the convention of MAER to discuss braille. MAER had never been open to talking with us before. This was a big step. At the convention we had a good discussion. Many months and meetings later we had negotiated a draft law that both groups could support. We all owe Joanne, David and Cindy a lot. They took a big and courageous step.

We needed more allies and we needed a legislative sponsor. We got together with the leadership of the MABVI of Michigan (now the ACBVI of Michigan) and were gratified to gain their support. No one I knew could remember these 3 groups agreeing on anything before.

From the very first draft, literacy law Professor Lou Alonzo Director of the Michigan State University program for Special Educators of the Visually Impaired, gave us her full support and advice. Even when her colleagues acted like a lynch mob, she remained a committed friend and advisor. Thank you Professor Alonzo.

We went to Lansing "en masse" with passion, facts, lots of paper, blind adults, blind children and their parents (some of us knew how to read braille and more of us didn't). We came from all over the state. We were ready to work for years if we needed to. But we had no idea how many marches, meetings, hearings, rallies, leaflets, articles, betrayals and years we would spend working for this braille literacy law.

Representative Bart Stupack agreed to sponsor our draft bill. He was new and young and then they landed on him with both feet. "How can anyone be against teaching braille to blind kids?" "Isn't it already the law for them to teach braille to blind kids?" These were the reactions of most people to our draft literacy law.

But those who were being paid to teach blind kids braille, Directors of Special Education, the Department of Education, and a vocal minority of Special Education teachers of the "visually impaired", overwhelmed Representative Stupack. They fought against teaching braille while on the job, while being paid public money and using public resources that were meant to educate blind kids, to fight against teaching braille to blind kids.

Finally Representative Stupack, trying to satisfy everyone, offered us a bill that was so watered down and had so many loopholes that it was worse than useless. The educators were not satisfied because they were determined that there would be no law. We made the decision that we would not settle for a bill that would promise braille, but not deliver it.

Those who killed our first bill with Representative Stupack kept fighting against braille for blind kids for the next 12 years. During those years we found 4 more legislative sponsors Representative Joe Young Sr., Rep Joe

Young Jr., Rep Allen Cropsy & Senator Sikkema. We got then Senator Engler to support "the concept of a strong braille literacy bill" during his first gubernatorial race. Rep. Joe Young Sr. was so committed that he sponsored our bill even though he was terminally ill. Before his death he arranged to have his son take over for him. Rep. Young Sr. was a true friend and we miss him.

Sponsor after sponsor, draft after draft, hearing after hearing, meeting after meeting, rally after rally, we just kept coming. We kept coming because the kids kept turning up held back, passed over, and left out.

"He can't have braille yet; he is too young." "She can't have braille; she has too much sight. When she has lost more sight, then we will give her braille."

Kathy and David Hilliker, Dawn and Sid Neddow and Brunhilde Adam arrived just in time to bring P.O.B.C.M.I. a new infusion of strength and leadership.

From the beginning every draft we created set standards for competence in braille for teachers of the visually impaired; every draft addressed timely provision of books in braille for blind kids and they all promised that blind children would receive instruction in reading and writing which would enable them to function competitively with sighted people. All these things are addressed in our new law (printed elsewhere in this issue). All of them were fought bitterly by the teachers.

One year it couldn't be done because it was not part of the federal law. The next year it shouldn't be done because it is already covered by federal law, and on and on.

One of the most disgusting episodes in a long line of disgusting episodes occurred when William Bryant chaired the House Education Committee. We worked out an agreement with him on draft language for our bill. We had given up everything that we were willing to give up. He was holding us hostage and would not let the bill go to hearing without these compromises. Before the hearing he met with the educators and wrote a bill with language that was completely unacceptable to us. Because all this was done in secret and all the drafts were in print he introduced his rewrite as if it was the draft we had agreed to. He apparently thought that we wouldn't catch on until it was too late. Thanks to Linda Davis we found out about the secret draft and turned it down flat. Chairman Bryant warned us that if we

didn't accept his bill that we would never get another chance. True to his word, he allowed no literacy bills to come to hearing until he retired.

It kept going on like this until this legislative session. Someone must have noticed that we had not given up and must have figured out that we were not going to. This version of our bill, introduced by Sen. Sikkema, passed both houses and went through both hearings without a dissenting vote. Sen. Sikkema, his staff and Lisa Splawn, of the governor's office, deserve recognition for their good work on our behalf.

But as always, we had our moment of truth. Last year we were offered a draft that did not include language guaranteeing instruction intended to teach our children to be competitive. We were all very tired. Some of us were willing to accept the draft as it was. But our parents would not hear of it and kept us honest. They went to the governor's staff and the senator and they did not blink. They won this beautiful new law. Now the question is, what will we do with it?

Surely none of us think that having passed a law will magically turn all those educators who fought us for so long into members of the "Braille Boosters Club". This law is a tool and like any tool it will be no better than those who use it. We will still have to fight for our children one at a time, knowing we will have the law to use in their defense. But the struggle truly never ends. No law is any better than the rules and regulations, which the state creates to enforce it. Brunhilde has already begun working on rule promulgation. Like everything else they won't do it right unless we make them. So we all should feel really good about what we have done and we might even rest while we can. Since to get the rules we need we will all have to be ready to do what ever is necessary when ever it is necessary.

THE DAY AFTER THE BRAILLE LITERACY LAW by Allison Hilliker

Imagine reading for two hours, completing 35 braille pages each and every day - seven days a week, and after all that, still finding yourself reading at a speed barely above 70 words per minute. The average reading speed of a college student is approximately 200-400 wpm. I'm taking time out before beginning college to improve my braille speed, hopefully to 100 wpm, and I know that I'll likely never reach those high speeds of my sighted peers. Yet, I still cling to hope and strive for the elusive goal which many

seem to have and not even realize the enormous beauty of...literacy. The anxieties that I just shared are the result of the lack of braille education that has existed in our state for far too long. I'm sure there are many, many stories similar to the one I have just described - too many in fact, but this one in particular is dear to me because it is my own.

I was not given a chance to learn braille at an early age, and because of this, I will always be struggling to compete on terms of equality with others who were given the literacy opportunities that I never was. I devote great efforts toward improving my reading ability, but it keeps me just a little behind most people. This is why I am so glad to have a braille literacy law here in Michigan now. I am very hopeful that it will help insure that future blind children will be given better opportunities, and no longer have to struggle to obtain literacy.

The passage of the Michigan Braille Literacy Law marks a monumental achievement for the blind in our state. It is a tremendous step towards insuring that the blind of the future will be able to achieve literacy and compete effectively with their sighted counterparts. My thanks are extended to all who worked to see this bill become a reality. Your efforts are greatly appreciated! The years of letters, phone calls, and speeches have finally paid off, and your rewards will come to you tenfold in the form of a new generation of blind persons who are literate, productive members of society. Your efforts truly will make a difference!

It is now stated in a Michigan law that the blind have the same basic right to literacy that their sighted classmates have had for years. It was truly a right worth fighting for, and now the battle has been won. But, just as Dr. Jernigan said that there comes "a day after Civil Rights," when the laws, the court cases, and the confrontations can no longer be our focus, we in Michigan are approaching our day after the Braille Literacy Law. The efforts to obtain the law are not forgotten; rather they lay the foundation on which we build. "Legislation cannot create understanding." We must create the understanding and put our plans into action. Our struggle to gain our rights, and our laws, has come to a close, and it is equally as important for us all to see the laws are implemented in the lives of every blind child - not merely just sit on the books. What I mean by this is not just that we should be certain that the laws are carried out, but we must have an even deeper purpose - to make braille more accepted and understood by all. Work to take away the negative connotations and attitudes, which

can often accompany the use of braille, and lead it to be considered inferior. Braille is often considered to be a last resort, and very undesirable to learn. The professionals often find it slow, and difficult to learn, and do not encourage its use. Many blind persons themselves fall prey to the same misconceptions and shy away from the use of braille.

These are the new obstacles we encounter in our struggle for braille literacy for the blind of our state and across the country. We have not forgotten how to fight for our right to literacy, but the time is upon us to go beyond that and change what it means to read braille. Braille is an alternative technique, not an inferior one. Along with our goal of making it respectable to be blind, we must also make it respectable to use Braille. This is what I mean by saying that we have reached our "day after the Braille Literacy Law," and I am confident that we will reach our goals on this day, and, with determination, all the days to come.

Braille and Visually Impaired Students - What does the law require? Q&A

This article was developed by The National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities in partnership with the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children (NOPBC), a division of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) www.nfb.org/nopbc.htm

This piece is brought to us by Brunhilde Merk Adam

“Passing a law is one thing. Getting it enforced and, more to the point, accepted, is quite another. Laws tend to be a reflection of public opinion, not a creator of it. They give a final nudge to new reality. With respect to Braille, there can be no doubt that the climate of public opinion has changed dramatically during the past decade. Once again, Braille is becoming the centerpiece in the education of blind people, just as print is for sighted people.” —Kenneth Jernigan, *Braille Into the Next Millennium*

Q: You mean that there is a specific provision in the law about Braille instruction for visually impaired students?

A: Yes, that’s right. The “Braille provision” as it is sometimes called, was added when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized in 1997 and was continued in the 2004 reauthorization.

Q: What does it say?

A: Here is the pertinent section from the IDEA reauthorization of 2004:

Section 614 (d)(3)(B)(iii)

(B) Consideration of Special Factors.—

The IEP Team shall—

(iii) in the case of a child who is blind or visually impaired, provide for instruction in braille and the use of braille unless the IEP Team determines, after an evaluation of the child's reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media (including an evaluation of the child's future needs for instruction in braille or the use of braille), that instruction in braille or the use of braille is not appropriate for the child;

Q: Is it significant that this provision uses the word “provide” rather than “consider the need for” Braille instruction?

A: Good observation. Yes, it is significant. It means that the IEP team is obligated to assume—even before an evaluation is conducted—that braille instruction will be a necessary service for the blind or visually impaired child. This is an important shift from past educational practices when it was routinely assumed that children with some usable vision would read print and only be provided with braille instruction as the last resort.

Q: Does this provision apply to every blind or visually impaired child with an IEP?

A: Yes.

Q: Does this mean that visually impaired children who might have sufficient vision to read enlarged print or regular print with magnification shall also be provided with braille instruction and the opportunity to use braille?

A: That's right. Unless, of course (as the provision states), an evaluation that takes into consideration the child's future need for braille literacy demonstrates that braille is not appropriate.

Q: So, this evaluation must be pretty important. What is it called?

A: It is extremely important. Many people in the blindness profession have come to refer to it as a learning media assessment (LMA). In all instances where braille instruction is not provided for children covered under this provision, documentation of a learning media assessment (the evaluation) is required. Furthermore, is it critical that a qualified person conduct the assessment. The National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, including those with Multiple Disabilities,

Goal 6 states “All assessments and evaluations of students will be conducted by and/or in partnership with personnel having expertise in the education of students with visual impairments and their parents.” Huebner, Merk-Adam, Stryker, and Wolfe 2004.

Q: What must the evaluation include?

A: There are many elements in a learning media assessment. The braille provision specifically requires that the following be addressed: skills in reading and writing, reading and writing needs, and future need for braille or braille instruction. The assessment of future needs is important because a number of congenital eye diseases or disorders are degenerative. As we know, the educational system is charged with the responsibility of preparing students for a lifetime of literacy. This provision protects the right of children with visual impairments to be provided with skills in a literacy mode that will also last a life-time, whatever the prognosis might be for their vision.

Q: Are there any learning media assessment tools that an LEA (Local Education Agency) can purchase and use for this evaluation?

A: Yes. The Texas School for the Blind, the American Printing House for the Blind (APH), and others have developed learning media assessment tools. Some state departments of education (SEA), such as Maryland, have also developed specific guidelines that may be used by IEP teams. Information about resources is included at the end of this article.

Q: Some children with blindness or visual impairment also have additional disabilities— such as autism, learning disabilities, developmental delays, cerebral palsy, and so forth. Do learning media assessments need to be conducted for these children? Might these children require braille instruction?

A: Yes, and yes—to both questions. Literacy is the pathway to maximum independence and life satisfaction for every child that has the capacity to learn, including those at the functional reading level. It may take such children longer to learn to read, and/or require additional supports or individualized strategies, but this only highlights the importance of good assessments.

Q: Once the IEP team has conducted a learning media assessment and made a determination about the appropriateness of print and braille instruction, does the team need to review or reconsider that decision during the annual IEP review?

A: That depends. If the child is receiving regular and adequate braille instruction, probably not. However, if the child is not receiving braille instruction, then it would be appropriate and in keeping with the intent of the braille provision for the IEP team to discuss and/or reassess the decision annually.

Q: This sounds like a sensible and educationally sound process. Now what about those resources?

RESOURCES

The National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities Websites:

www.tsbvi.edu/agenda/

<http://www.csb-cde.ca.gov/Documents/NationalAgenda.htm>

LEARNING MEDIA ASSESSMENTS

www.lighthouse.org (search term: assessment compendium)

BRAILLE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

American Printing House for the Blind (APH) www.aph.org/products

American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) www.afb.org/store

Braille Too (Grant Wood AEA, Iowa)

www.aea10.k12.ia.us/divlearn/brailletoo.html

Exceptional Teaching Aids, Inc. (Mangold Exclusives)

www.store.exceptionalteaching.net/maex.html

Texas School for the Blind Publications www.tsbvi.edu (go to Curriculum Publications)

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS ABOUT BRAILLE

The World Under My Fingers: Personal Reflections on Braille, Second Edition, National Federation of the Blind www.nfb.org

The Bridge to Braille: Reading and School Success for the Young Blind Child National Organization of Parents of Blind Children
www.nfb.org/nopbc.htm

Braille Into the Next Millennium ISBN 0-8444-021-7 National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped www.loc.gov/nls

The following two pieces are brought to us by Brunhilde Merk Adam. The first provides a basic but thorough understanding of the National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairment, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities. This is a prominent project influencing current thinking among educators of blind children. The second is a similar laying out of the Expanded Core Curriculum which is the current thinking on how to address the specific educational needs of blind children. Both of these programs offer great hope for the further integration of blind folks in our society. Each of these articles is a “part 1” to be followed up in the next issue of The Focus.

Focus On... The National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Additional Disabilities - Part I—What is this National Agenda? By Brunhilde Merk Adam

The National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairment, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities (often simply referred to as the National Agenda or NA) is a national project aimed at identifying and achieving priority goals for improving the quality and quantity of educational services for students with visual impairments, including those with additional disabilities. The National Agenda project has benefited from an unprecedented grass roots effort by parents, professionals and consumers since the fall of 1993. The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children (NOPBC) have endorsed the National Agenda and are represented on the NA Steering committee.

As part of the national project, each state creates a team to identify and address the needs and issues specific to that given state. In Michigan, the team is called the Michigan Response to the National Agenda for Students with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities.

The ten current National Agenda (NA) Goals (with brief explanations) are:

Goal 1: Referral

Students and their families will be referred to an appropriate education program within 30 days of identification of a suspected visual impairment. Teachers of students with visual impairments and orientation and mobility (O&M) instructors will provide appropriate quality services.

Because the medical diagnosis of a visual impairment will have an impact on learning, early referrals for special education services are imperative for the overall development of young children. It is essential that the educational and medical communities develop a system that ensures children and their families access to information about educational service options in a timely manner.

Goal 2: Parent Participation

Policies and procedures will be implemented to ensure the right of all parents to full participation and equal partnership in the education process.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees parents the right to full and equal participation in the education of their children. The fact that no one knows a child better than that child's family has guided the educational plans for students with visual impairments for many years.

It is time for parents and educators to join in a common purpose, namely, the jointly shared responsibility for achieving educational excellence in our schools. When educators appreciate and acknowledge the vital role and input of parents, and when parents are assured equal participation with teachers in educational planning, then, and only then, will students receive the greatest benefits that learning has to offer.

Goal 3: Personnel Preparation

Universities with a minimum of one full-time faculty member in the area of visual impairment will prepare a sufficient number of teachers and orientation and mobility (O&M) specialists for students with visual impairments to meet personnel needs throughout the country.

The challenge is to prepare a sufficient number of educators so that all children who are visually impaired, including those with multiple disabilities, will have the educational services they need. Existing personnel preparation programs in universities must at least double the number of teachers trained within the next five years.

Several important lessons have been learned about university programs in recent years. First, at least one full-time faculty member with experience and expertise in the education of children with visual impairments, or orientation and mobility, or both, is needed if a university is to offer a comprehensive program of teacher preparation. Second, this faculty member must be in a tenure-track position. Third, the program must be given the flexibility to provide learning opportunities in creative ways. Fourth, the university must support low prevalence programs and recognize that size of enrollment cannot be the determining factor as to whether or not a class is offered.

Goal 4: Caseloads

Caseloads will be determined based on the assessed needs of students.

For students to graduate with the skills they need, caseloads must be determined by the needs of students, not by economic constraints or a lack of understanding on the part of administrators regarding the time needed for specific instruction. Most educators would agree that a caseload of more than 15 is not appropriate, because at least some of those students will have intensive needs. Of course, the geographic spread of the students will also affect the size of an appropriate caseload.

National Agenda Goal Statement #8 addresses the need for an expanded core curriculum for visually impaired students including those with multiple disabilities which does not ignore academic content areas but focuses on compensatory skills related to visual impairment. As the profession of the education of visually impaired children becomes more committed to providing instruction in all areas of the expanded core curriculum, teachers will discover they need to spend more time with their students to meet all their needs. In addition, as the profession becomes more knowledgeable of the educational needs of students with low vision, it becomes clear that it is not accurate to make decisions regarding caseloads solely on the basis of the severity of visual impairment.

Goal 5: Array of Services

Local education programs will ensure that all students have access to a full array of service delivery options.

Federal law requires an array of placement options for students with disabilities. This array includes, but is not limited to, such options as

specialized schools, resource room programs, and regular education placement with itinerant services.

Educators of visually impaired children serve an extremely heterogeneous population of students. Wide variations exist regarding such factors as the type and degree of visual impairment, the presence of additional disabilities, the time at which the visual impairment occurred, the urban or rural environment in which the child lives, and the resources of the child's school district. The placement best suited to the student may change throughout the student's school career. Summer or weekend programming at a specialized school or other resource may also need to be considered. School districts cannot meet the educational needs of this heterogeneous population with only one or two placement options.

Goal 6: Assessment

All assessments and evaluations of students will be conducted by or in partnership with personnel having expertise in the education of students with visual impairments and their parents

Careful and comprehensive assessments of students with visual impairments are essential if instructional programs are to meet individual needs. Historically, school psychologists or educational diagnosticians were assigned the task of assessing all students with disabilities. This approach has often resulted in incomplete or inaccurate assessments.

Of particular importance is that assessments be comprehensive. Because students with visual impairments have unique extra-academic needs to learn adaptive skills to compensate for their visual impairment, assessments that measure only academic skills are not appropriate for these students. The assessment that consists of only academics and functional low vision is likewise not acceptable, because other factors, such as emotional readiness, independence, alternative communication modes and adaptive skills, must also be considered. All areas of the expanded core curriculum for students with visual impairments must be assessed. Only when information concerning all areas of the expanded core curriculum is available can responsible, knowledgeable decisions regarding a child's educational program take place.

Quality assessments require that the professional conducting or orchestrating the assessment be someone with a high level of expertise in

the effects of visual impairment on learning. This professional will most often be the teacher of students with visual impairments or the orientation and mobility instructor.

Goal 7: Access to Instructional Materials

Access to developmental and educational services will include an assurance that textbooks and instructional materials are available to students in the appropriate media and at the same time as their sighted peers.

Many students still do not receive the appropriate instructional materials at the same time as their sighted classmates. With the technology available today, there is no valid excuse for this delay. Through a national collaborative effort of stakeholders, systems must be developed to eliminate delays in delivery of textbooks and instructional materials needed for children to access the same learning opportunities as sighted peers. Access to the general education curriculum, as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), must include immediate and equal access to appropriate instructional materials for learning.

Goal 8: Expanded Core Curriculum

All educational goals and instruction will address the academic and expanded core curricula based on the assessed needs of each student with visual impairments.

The curriculum for students with visual impairments consists of two parts. The first parallels that which is provided to sighted peers—this “core curriculum” refers to the body of knowledge that a student is required to master before high school graduation. (Pre-learning, such as developing an understanding of visual concepts involved in a given lesson, and adaptations, such as altering the lesson to provide access by the visually impaired student, are often necessary when presenting academic instruction required of all students.)

The second part of the curriculum, known as the expanded core curriculum, addresses the unique, specialized needs of visually impaired learners. These needs are directly related to the visual impairment and, therefore, are not shared by sighted peers. This specialized part of the core includes, but may not be limited to, the following: Compensatory Skills, such as

Communication Modes; Orientation and Mobility; Social Interaction Skills; Independent Living Skills; Recreation and Leisure Skills; Career Education; Use of Assistive Technology; Visual Efficiency Skills; and Self-Determination.

The student with a visual impairment will need to be assessed in all areas of the curriculum, including the expanded core curriculum, and decisions will have to be made regarding the need for instruction in each area. Partnership with the family is essential in developing these needed skills.

As we further our understanding of how visual impairments impact on learning, we also know that the curriculum will evolve and change.

Goal 9: Transition Services

Transition services will address developmental and educational needs (birth through high school) to assist students and their families in setting goals and implementing strategies through the life continuum commensurate with students' aptitudes, interests, and abilities.

IDEA requires IEP-driven transition services only at age 16 (or younger if determined necessary by the IEP team). Promising practices would require transition services for visually impaired students to be implemented at the early childhood/preschool level as reflected in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP). Transition services are an integral part of all educational aspects of the child's learning.

Successful transition from school to adult life requires assessment and instruction in all areas of the expanded core curriculum content areas as well as an understanding of the vision of both students and families for the students' futures. Collaboration with families, community-based adult agencies and employers is necessary when developing and implementing transition plans.

Goal 10: Ongoing Professional Development

To improve students' learning, service providers will engage in ongoing local, state, and national professional development.

The knowledge and skills required to educate students with visual impairments is very broad in scope and continually grows and expands. In

order for service providers to deliver effective services and quality instruction in these unique areas, they need to engage in ongoing professional development that provides a knowledge base beyond the beginning knowledge and skills required to teach students.

Skills in areas such as functional low vision assessment, learning media assessment, utilization of low vision devices, instruction in reading and writing braille, use of technology, and instruction in using graphic designs have all gone through recent innovations. Unless professional development is encouraged, or even required, the teacher who was university prepared five years ago is in need of additional knowledge and skills today. Local districts, specialized schools, and state departments of education have a professional responsibility to require and support teachers in remaining up to date in their skills and knowledge and to facilitate in-service training opportunities.

“The impact that the National Agenda has had on services for children and youths who are visually impaired, including those with multiple disabilities, in this country within a single decade has been profound and constitutes a significant achievement in the area of special education. The National Agenda has revolutionized thinking on how students with visual impairments are educated.”

The National Agenda is a grassroots effort, and its principles and activities can be applied on behalf of an individual child as well as in advocacy at the local school district, regional collaborative, state and national level. Readers interested in further information can visit the National Agenda web site (www.tsbvi.edu/agenda) to find examples of state plans, as well as products and publications, that can be downloaded and used by parents, teachers, and administrators.

Commitment to achieve the National Agenda goals has come from the full range of individuals involved in the educational service delivery system, including individuals with visual impairments, parents, educators, and professionals responsible for program administration and personnel preparation. Although much has been accomplished, much remains to be done. The national Focus Goal for this year is Goal 8—Implementing the Expanded Core Curriculum. The Michigan Focus Goal is Goal 9—Meaningful Transition Plans.

For further information or to become more involved with this effort, please leave a message for Brunhilde Merk-Adam (National Agenda Co-Chair and Michigan Co-Chair) at 248 627-2260 or e-mail bmerkadam@gmail.com. [Please join our effort to address the needs of blind Michigan students.](#)

This article is taken from a variety of NA publications including our famous “little purple booklet” The National Agenda for the Education of Children and youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities—Revised by Kathleen Mary Huebner, PhD; Brunhilde Merk-Adam; Donna Stryker; Karen E. Wolfe, PhD. (this document is available in a variety of formats.)

Note: Part II of this Article will focus on the Significant National Off-Shoot Activities of the National Agenda with a focus on the NIMAS-NIMAC. Look for it in the next issue of The Focus.

Focus On ... The Expanded Core Curriculum PART ONE—What is the ECC? By Brunhilde Merk Adam

In the U.S., each state assumes responsibility to establish minimum standards for high school graduation—often called the “core curriculum”. These standards become the foundation for almost all learning, from kindergarten through high school and usually include the following areas: English language arts; other languages; mathematics; science; social studies including US government (civics); health; physical education; fine arts; business education and vocational education.

Dr. Phil Hatlen, recently retired Superintendent of the Texas School for the Blind, wrote: “Some educators of visually impaired students believe that it is true that the child in a regular classroom who has access to all curricular materials is as equally prepared to learn as her sighted classmates. But most professionals hold a strong position that there is an expanded core curriculum for visually impaired students that requires additional areas of learning. There are experiences and concepts casually and incidentally learned by sighted students that must be systematically and sequentially taught to the visually impaired student. The core curriculum for visually impaired students is not the same as for sighted students. Indeed, it is much larger and more complex.”

Hatlen goes on to define the term Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) to be: “the body of knowledge and skills that are needed by students with visual impairments due to their unique disability-specific needs.” He further states: “The ECC should be used as a framework for assessing students, planning individual goals and providing instruction.”

The Expanded Core Curriculum is the area of education which needs the most collaboration between educators, families and the community because skills in the areas of the ECC need practice if they are to be mastered, including significant practice opportunities outside the school environment. Families must support these skills by including them as part of their daily lives at home and in the community. Blind consumers have a role in the ECC as they can volunteer to serve as resources and mentors in assisting students develop these emerging skill sets. Transition Services and the community agencies involved are also integral to the process of addressing the ECC by providing resources, experiences, training and assessment.

Published materials of The National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities include the following descriptions of nine areas of the expanded core curriculum:

Compensatory or Functional Academic Skills, Including Communication Modes (Note: for this area of the expanded core curriculum for blind and visually impaired students, a distinction must be made between compensatory skills and functional skills. Compensatory skills are those needed by blind and visually impaired students in order to access all areas of core curriculum. Mastery of compensatory skills will usually mean that the visually impaired student has access to learning in a manner equal to that of sighted peers. Functional skills refers to the skills that students with multiple disabilities learn that provide them with the opportunity to work, play, socialize, and take care of personal needs to the highest level possible.)

Compensatory and functional skills include such learning experiences as concept development, spatial understanding, study and organizational skills, speaking and listening skills, and adaptations necessary for accessing all areas of the existing core curriculum. Communication needs will vary, depending on degree of functional vision, effects of additional

disabilities, and the task to be done. Children may use braille, large print, print with the use of optical devices, regular print, tactile symbols, a calendar system, sign language, and/or recorded materials to communicate. Regardless, each student will need instruction from a teacher with professional preparation to instruct students with visual impairments in each of the compensatory and functional skills they need to master. These compensatory and functional needs of the visually impaired child are significant, and are not addressed with sufficient specificity in the existing core curriculum.

Orientation and Mobility

As a part of the expanded core curriculum, orientation and mobility is a vital area of learning. Teachers who have been specifically prepared to teach orientation and mobility to blind and visually impaired learners are necessary in the delivery of this curriculum. Students will need to learn about themselves and the environment in which they move - from basic body image to independent travel in rural areas and busy cities. The existing core curriculum does not include provision for this instruction. It has been said that the two primary effects of blindness on the individual are communication and locomotion. The expanded core curriculum must include emphasis on the fundamental need and basic right of visually impaired persons to travel as independently as possible, enjoying and learning from the environment through which they are passing to the greatest extent possible.

Social Interaction Skills

Almost all social skills used by sighted children and adults have been learned by visually observing the environment and other persons, and behaving in socially appropriate ways based on that information. Social interaction skills are not learned casually and incidentally by blind and visually impaired individuals as they are by sighted persons. Social skills must be carefully, consciously, and sequentially taught to blind and visually impaired students. Nothing in the existing core curriculum addresses this critical need in a satisfactory manner. Thus, instruction in social interaction skills becomes a part of the expanded core curriculum as a need so fundamental that it can often mean the difference between social isolation and a satisfying and fulfilling life as an adult.

Independent Living Skills

This area of the expanded core curriculum is often referred to as "daily living skills." It consists of all the tasks and functions persons perform, in accordance with their abilities, in order to lead lives as independently as possible. These curricular needs are varied, as they include skills in personal hygiene, food preparation, money management, time monitoring, organization, etc. Some independent living skills are addressed in the existing core curriculum, but they often are introduced as splinter skills, appearing in learning material, disappearing, and then re-appearing. This approach will not adequately prepare blind and visually impaired students for adult life. Traditional classes in home economics and family life are not enough to meet the learning needs of most visually impaired students, since they assume a basic level of knowledge, acquired incidentally through vision. The skills and knowledge that sighted students acquire by casually and incidentally observing and interacting with their environment are often difficult, if not impossible, for blind and visually impaired students to learn without direct, sequential instruction by knowledgeable persons.

Recreation and Leisure Skills

Skills in recreation and leisure are seldom offered as a part of the existing core curriculum. Rather, physical education in the form of team games and athletics are the usual way in which physical fitness needs are met for sighted students. Many of the activities in physical education are excellent and appropriate for visually impaired students. In addition, however, these students need to develop activities in recreation and leisure that they can enjoy throughout their adult lives. Most often sighted persons select their recreation and leisure activity repertoire by visually observing activities and choosing those in which they wish to participate. The teaching of recreation and leisure skills to blind and visually impaired students must be planned and deliberately taught, and should focus on the development of life-long skills.

Career Education

There is a need for general vocational education, as offered in the traditional core curriculum, as well as the need for career education offered specifically for blind and visually impaired students. Many of the skills and knowledge offered to all students through vocational education can be of value to blind and visually impaired students. They will not be sufficient, however, to prepare students for adult life, since such instruction assumes a basic knowledge of the world of work based on prior visual experiences. Career education in an expanded core curriculum will provide the visually

impaired learner of all ages with the opportunity to learn first-hand the work done by the bank teller, the gardener, the social worker, the artist, etc. It will provide the student opportunities to explore strengths and interests in a systematic, well-planned manner. Once more, the disadvantage facing the visually impaired learner is the lack of information about work and jobs that the sighted student acquires by observation.

Because unemployment and underemployment have been the leading problem facing adult visually impaired persons in the United States, this portion of the expanded core curriculum is vital to students, and should be part of the expanded curriculum for even the youngest of these individuals.

Technology

Technology is a tool to unlock learning and expand the horizons of students. It is not, in reality, a curriculum area. However, it is added to the expanded core curriculum because technology occupies a special place in the education of blind and visually impaired students. Technology can be a great equalizer. For the braille user, it allows the student to provide feedback to teachers by first producing material in braille for personal use, and then in print for the teacher, classmates, and parents. It gives blind persons the capability of storing and retrieving information. It brings the gift of a library under the fingertips of the visually impaired person. Technology enhances communication and learning, as well as expands the world of blind and visually impaired persons in many significant ways. Thus, technology is a tool to master, and is essential as a part of the expanded core curriculum.

Visual Efficiency Skills

The visual acuity of children diagnosed as being visually impaired varies greatly. Through the use of thorough, systematic training, most students with remaining functional vision can be taught to better and more efficiently utilize their remaining vision. The responsibility for performing a functional vision assessment, planning appropriate learning activities for effective visual utilization, and instructing students in using their functional vision in effective and efficient ways is clearly an area of the expanded core curriculum. Educational responsibility for teaching visual efficiency skills falls to the professionally prepared teacher of visually impaired learners.

Self-Determination

This area of the ECC highlights the importance of believing in oneself, while understanding one's abilities and limitations. Students learn from successes and failures how to achieve one's goals in life. Self-determination is the ability for people to control their lives, reach goals they have set and take part fully in the world around them.

The next Focus will include ECC--Part II: Best practices approach to addressing the ECC.

The following article impressionistically conveys a Camp Tuhshemeta adventure.

Serenity by George Wurtzel Executive Director, Opportunities Unlimited For the Blind

Blind Sailors Sail the Inland Seas

We sail and sail beyond all the world known to us... ---Sarah, blind sailor.

Webster defines it as: The absence of mental stress or anxiety. I define it as: Night watch aboard the schooner Inland Seas. Twenty-four folks from Camp T also experienced this during our July 2007 Adventure Sailing Trip on Lake Michigan. A week of hard work, exercise, and careful planning made us all anxious. Our anxieties turned to joy the moment that Captain Tom Kelly cried out "cast off lines." Three days of bliss was ahead. Inland Seas slowly slipped away from the dock and began transporting us to a place somewhere between reality, dreams, and expectations.

For those who do not really know me, I am blind, tall, and passionate, someone who will persevere and believe that the more experiences you have in life, the richer your character will be and the more interesting you will be to others. I grew up in Traverse City and spent many enjoyable days sailing and playing on Grand Traverse Bay. I am determined to make sure that Camp T creates opportunities that will expand every blind or sighted person's perception of what one can achieve in the world. You cannot know what you love until you have experienced it.

We set out on an adventure to instill a love of the outdoors, science, and sailing; an experience that would stimulate the young minds and souls of the Camp T campers, staff and the crew of the Inland Seas. Our home for

the next three days was a ship; 77 ft from stem to stern with a beam of 17 ft, which carried 22 tons of ballast, and had 2 masts with a sail area of over 1,700 square ft. It would supply our every need. (It also had a little John Deere 6 cylinder diesel engine just in case.) How do you navigate a sailing ship? How do you know how slimy a round goby fish is until you hold one? Is the bottom of Lake Michigan, 400 feet down, sandy or satiny smooth when you run a sample between your fingers? If you filter 1,000 gallons of bay water, how many zooplankton will you get? How fast is the boat going if 5 knots on the chip log line pass through your fingers in 28 seconds? How many midge flies must be flying at once for you to think you are hearing alien space ships? These are just a few of the science questions that we found the answers to while on our voyage. Was it serenity or nirvana?

We took turns each night on deck, anchored off-shore of Power Island, in the middle of Grand Traverse Bay. Our job was to take note of wind direction and speed, whether the anchor is secure, check water depth, wave height, whether there was water in the bilge, check the battery status, and make sure all things ship shape, and then enter the findings into the ships log book. Then the time was ours to contemplate the Heavens, listen to the waves rolling on shore, the rigging creaking in the wind, the occasional surfacing of a fish feeding on bugs, and to let the gentle lull of the boat massage your brain, stimulating dreams and desires. Anything is possible; you could be a movie star, a marine biologist, a teacher, a computer programmer, a doctor, an astronaut, a wife, a husband. The possibilities seem endless, the same way it has been for mariners for thousands of years. In our hustle-bustle world there is always an underlying cacophony of ambient noise. At our anchorage, we were just far enough from the fray of normal life so that the only sounds were of our ship and the sounds of nature. Morning brought a slow but perceptible change from night sounds to day, the low din of crickets and insects on the island giving way to song birds and the first cry of sea gulls winging to flight, the change of dense night air transitioning to the lighter feel of day, the sun warming the side of your face, the ship coming to life with smells of fresh coffee and baking muffins, a new day, like no other, had begun. We would experience things that would shape our hearts, spirits and open our minds to unfathomable possibilities. Happy sailing whatever ship you are on!

In this next piece Fred Wurtzel reviews how technology has changed the manner in which blind students learn. Who would have dreamt... and we are still dreaming.

The Digital Student By Fred J. Wurtzel

Of course, we have not reached the stage in history where there are digital students. Students are still the traditional flesh and blood kind of people despite the Star Trek episodes of battling the Borg. As a life long student, this author has personally witnessed the advent of the digital book and its benefits to us as blind students. Unlike digital students, there truly are digital books that exist as electronic constructs somehow and are reconstituted in a variety of ways including tactile, ink print or sound or, amazingly, a combination of these. There may be some negative outcomes of this revolution, though none come to mind.

Two iconic college experiences have passed on with the proliferation of computers onto the college campus. First and most gratifying is the death of the tortuous manual registration process with its sadistic lines. A student could wait in such a line and be told after an hour of standing that the person ahead of you got the last place in the class. The beleaguered clerk behind the table may suggest that you go over there and stand in that line for the section that meets before dawn and ends at sundown Friday afternoon: there are only 100 people ahead of you. No nostalgia from this quarter about this passing of an institution.

Some nostalgia for the card catalog in the library may be warranted. The fine craftsmanship of these nice pieces of furniture and the dedication and professionalism of the librarians who kept them in such good order was to be admired. Beyond that, though, most blind students, especially this author, appreciate every aspect of online searching and retrieval of books, articles and facts. Only dreamed of in those exasperating old days with hours spent with a reader searching, retrieving, copying and taping each item, no matter its relative value to the project at hand.

As a student in 2007, this author did not miss any of that. It was gratifying to turn on the computer and search BookShare, NLS, Michigan Electronic Library (MEL) and the Capitol Area District Library card catalogs, search engines and databases for relevant material.

For \$50 per year, blind people can subscribe to Bookshare (www.bookshare.org). If you are a student or scan and submit 20 books a year, the subscription is free. Bookshare presently has a library of more than 35,000 books that can be instantly downloaded and read. These books are usually available in either Braille or Daisy formats. Books are scanned by individuals and submitted, so cover a broad range of topics and genres. Bookshare recently received a large federal 5-year grant to add 100,000 books to its collection. It is anticipated that this will mean a lot more text books, since the focus of the grant is to assist schools to serve blind people and others with disabilities that make reading print books impossible or difficult.

The miracle of digital books only begins with improved availability and retrieval. The second miracle is the technology that has been developed to make the books and other materials accessible in a diverse and flexible range of formats. Among these formats is Daisy. Daisy is a way to place various markers in a text or audio book that allow for easy navigation by the reader. The reader can move by letter, word, sentence, line, paragraph page chapter and section. Audio may be synchronized with the text so that the reader can check spelling, formatting, punctuation, etc. Daisy books are flexible and vary greatly from item to item depending on the producer's decisions in preparing the book. For more information, see <http://www.daisy.org>.

Books may be printed on an ordinary ink print printer. In most cases, this may be the least likely action. For a low-vision person who needs to refer to an ink print text for a presentation or speech, this may be the best way of using the material, though it is questionably practical to print out an entire book in large print when it may be viewed or listened to on a computer.

Most Bookshare texts are available for download in a contracted braille format. Again, it is unlikely that the student will emboss the entire book, but may wish to have passages or sections in braille, especially technical information such as math, music, computer programming or language texts. These types of texts do not lend themselves to effective speech output.

Braille formatted material is best used with a note taker with a Braille display such as a Braille Note, Braille Sense or PacMate. These note takers are analogous to Personal Digital Assistants (PDA'S) popular with

sighted people. These note takers may connect to the internet; have word processors, calculators, email, databases and other related functionality. They have various braille displays, from 18 to around 40 characters.

Freestanding braille displays are available to connect to a computer. These may connect via a cable or wirelessly. Some have the capability of controlling some functions on the computer, making it unnecessary to remove hands from the display to scroll text or select certain functions. Braille displays come in various sizes from around 20 characters to 80 or more characters that will display at least an entire line of text from a book or other document.

Note takers and braille displays cost in the thousands of dollars. The electro-mechanical braille displays are allegedly very expensive to manufacture, though the cost of this technology seems extreme.

Another technology has emerged. It is a shirt pocket sized device designed to “play” digital books. One of the first such devices was the Roadrunner from Springer Design. These primarily displayed ASCII text files.

Springer, along with the American Printing House for the Blind, developed the Book Port. This device plays Daisy, MS Word, ASCII text, MP3 and HTML (internet web pages). Unfortunately, to this author’s knowledge, APH is not going to upgrade this device and is phasing it out.

Humanware has entered this market with the Victor Stream. For around \$300.00 this device does most of what the Bookport did plus will play the new Digital Books from the National Library Service Talking Books program. The Victor has only been on the market for a few months and Humanware seems to be working hard on firmware and software updates. Experience has shown the Victor to be more difficult to use than the Bookport and has less functionality. For instance, the process of retrieving and placing files on the Victor is cumbersome and time consuming compared with the Bookport’s one-step process from the PC keyboard. There is no clock in the Victor and the Victor will not serve as a Braille note taker as the Bookport did. The Victor does not automatically connect to the internet, as did the Book Port to update firmware and software, again, making it more cumbersome to use in comparison.

On the other hand, the Victor has a built in speaker that makes it more convenient for quick use. The recorder in the Victor is many times better quality than the Book Port. The Victor has anticipated the student with its book marking functions. The user may select a section of text as a bookmark to be used in the same way a sighted person would use a highlighter to mark a section of text to be reviewed in the future. The user can use the recorder to insert a recorded bookmark that is similar to a margin note in a print book.

These devices are amazingly great values. One can carry very large quantities of material, from audio books to music, to textbooks, magazine articles, newspapers and web content. Literally thousands of pages of text in a shirt pocket or purse. These devices have, especially when coupled with online content and an optical scanner, liberated blind people from 95% of our dependency on human readers. There is still handwritten or oddly printed material that will continue, for the foreseeable future, to require a sighted reader.

The NFB has been in the forefront of this digital revolution. In 1994, the NFB began Newline with the USA Today newspaper in the Washington D.C. area. This service has expanded to where there are more than 250 newspapers and magazines available nationwide at no cost to the user. With an ordinary pushbutton phone, a blind person can select today's paper, select a section and article and read it by listening. The proliferation and expansion of Newline has revolutionized our ability to have access to current events from the local poetry reading or high school sporting event to world events of international importance. The NFB is moving aggressively to make our world accessible.

Raymond Kurzweil, along with the National Federation of the Blind, has developed hand-held reading technology. In July of 2006 the first version of the reader was introduced. It is a digital camera attached to a PDA and can easily be held in the hand and is small and quite portable. The user holds the camera above the material to be read and snaps a picture. The PDA recognizes the text and converts it to speech for the user.

In January of 2008, Kurzweil and the NFB introduced the next generation reader. It is contained in a cell phone. With money identification, improved recognition and the addition of a wide variety of functions found in high end cell phones, such as GPS the KNFB Reader allows blind people to have

access to random printed material encountered during ordinary daily activities such as restaurant menus, package directions, items like coffee and shampoo containers in hotel rooms and so on into infinity.

Happily, the price of the KNFB Reader has dropped by more than 1/3 from \$3500 to \$2,100.00. Given this large reduction in a mere 18 months, one may expect further reductions in the future.

It has been said that the first blind astronaut has been born. The NFB is creating technology, opportunities and through our Jernigan Institute programs that will reach blind and sighted people to change what it means to be blind. Education is the key to success. Our organization will continue to lead the digital revolution for students directly through either the invention or deployment of new technology or indirectly by advocacy and education about blindness.

It is a wonderful time to live as a blind person. Technology has brought many tasks, formerly unobtainable, within reach. One may think that this will reduce the pressure on rehabilitation agencies. On the contrary, for most blind people, the rehabilitation system is the key to access to this expensive and valuable technology... At a time when the possibilities are greater than ever, ironically, it seems that the rehabilitation system is becoming more inaccessible. Simple things like callbacks from staff, refusal to provide training and equipment and a reduction in the understanding of the societal view of blindness has thwarted progress of blind people to fully benefit from these incredible opportunities. We intend to continue to enlighten the very people who are charged with helping close this gap. The NFB will make it happen and all blind people will benefit.

And now, Marcus Simmons shares his story from which we all can learn.
Blind Man's Bluff By Marcus Simmons

I am a product of the Detroit School System. I attended the Day School for the Deaf and upon completion wanted to go to Cass Technical High School, a premier college prep high school. No student has been able to accomplish this before; therefore the administration refused to help. It seems some better-equipped students tried this in the past and had to drop out. When it was apparent that Marcus was not going to give up, the administration agreed and I was admitted. This was the first challenge.

The Detroit Day School for the Deaf taught you how to get along in society, not how to be prepared for college. He was in with the big boys now. My grades went from A's and B's to D's and E's during those first semesters. Better study habits were acquired, fast. I graduated in 1963 in the automotive curriculum.

In 1965, I purchased a brand new high performance Mustang convertible. I took delivery on my twenty-first birthday. Next, in 1966 I got a job at Bendix Industrial Controls on the drafting board. This prepared me to produce blueprints.

A few years later in 1967, I started to design my first drag race vehicle. When I ventured into racing I had a 1960 Falcon with a powerful V-8 engine. This vehicle was appropriately named "BLUE MAGOO". In 15 meets I only lost twice and both times, to the same car, A 1965 Mustang called "COBRA II" driven by Bob Corn. One year he showed up running the quarter mile a whole second quicker, so I asked him what he changed. Bob said it was a new BOSS 302 engine, to be released for 1969. My second new car was a 1970 BOSS 302 Mustang ordered in November of 1969 for \$3258. I was so excited about taking delivery; I was at the dealership less than two hours after it arrived off the transporter. A bribe of a 6-pack convinced the dealership mechanic to stay over time and we both prepped the car for delivery that evening.

On one date with my girlfriend, whom was already in college, I mentioned that I also, was going back to school. Now my focus was on getting a degree and keeping my word, so I went back to school. On my first attempt to enter Wayne State, I was informed that I was not college material. My best decision was to complete a junior college and then reapply. In 1969 I entered Wayne County Community College. After one year and a 3.75 GPA, I was allowed to enroll at Wayne State to pursue a degree in engineering. This also presented itself as a greater challenge. Academic probation meant that more effective study habits were required. Attending school was a part time proposition at this point, because I still had a full-time job at Bendix on the drafting board.

In 1971 I was laid-off from Bendix and I then found employment with Fords Engine Electrical and Engineering buildings Diagnostic Lab to make every thing "super". The head of engineering stated Ford would plan my work

around my classes. Apparently, this message didn't filter down to my supervisor. In the next few years, after trying to get rid of me several times, he approached me again. This time the question was, "What is your focus? Wayne State or Ford Motor Company? It has to be one or the other and not both." Of course, I picked the third option, an educational leave from Ford and a full time load at Wayne State. Graduation from Wayne State and a B.S.M.E. came in 1977 another goal accomplished.

At this time, the BOSS was a street cruiser. In 1972 I rebuilt the engine for more performance. Soon after the rebuild I broke-in the engine on the complete route 66, start (Chicago) to finish (Los Angeles). On the return trip, I soloed from L.A. to Detroit in 33 hours; however, I was still late for work by one day. After my employment with Ford, I moved to GM Truck and Coach in 1975 because they had a project engineer's position available, whereas, Ford did not. This job lasted until 1980, when there was a massive layoff at GM and I was furloughed. Up until this time, I was driving to work on 50% of what I could see, 25% on what I remembered and 25% on lady luck. This was a perfect time to quit. I gave up driving in 1980 because of failing eyesight from retinitis pigmentosa. This should have been the end of my story, but this is where it gets interesting.

The next goal was to use the degree and build a car from scratch. I did. I chose a replica 1965 427 Cobra, researched it for a year, and began the work. Work started. A frame was welded together and a fiberglass shell was attached. I decided to use my old Boss 302 Mustang motor and transmission. A Gale Banks twin turbocharger was included and I added a suspension system that allowed using wire wheels like the original Cobra. The vehicle was designed to "win" on the show car circuit, not to "compete". I had my first place trophy. The other competitors in the class could fight for second, third and fourth place. On the circuit I got first place in twenty events and missed the mark only three times. That feat earned me the class championship in "Hand-built Sports in the Great Lakes Division of the International Show Car Association (ISCA). My successes in this class prompted others to copy my strategies. It got so bad with many others building Cobras and entering them into the Detroit's Autorama; they created a special class for them.

In 1985, I gained employment with the General Motors Technical Center in Warren Michigan. This position was procured strictly on the strength of my resume. My first job at Truck was as a sighted engineer. This time I came

to work as a blind engineer. GM did not know that I was blind, however they did find out when I reported to work, white cane and all! The position opened up rather unexpectedly, the Federal compliance coordinator developed a heart attack and had to retire immediately. This caused some concern with GM because a replacement was needed in a hurry. There was no one available who had the specialized knowledge except me, at the time. The boss of the department didn't know the job. The other workers didn't know how to do the job either. So I came in the door, tapping with my long white cane.

Shortly after that feat, a Detroit businessman contacted me to build a 1931 Chevrolet sedan for the ISCA show car circuit. Construction took 3 years, working at night, and this vehicle was also a winner and not a competitor. We won every class we entered, finishing 25th in the nation. We traveled to shows from Chicago to Texas to London Ontario and to Oklahoma.

The next project I was involved in was the Boss Mustang. The Mustang was stripped completely down to bare shell, all rust panels replaced and modified for very large rear tires. I had decided to return to drag racing again. The Mustang now sported a 560 horsepower "Ford Motorsports crate" motor. Best time to date is the standing quarter mile 10.73 seconds @ 126 Miles Per Hour at the end of the quarter.

I decided to open an engineering agency called Simmons BOSS CREATIONS, where I provide services to the show car, street rod and drag race community. Presently, I travel to the local schools with one of my vehicles and put on presentations on topics such as goal setting and careers in the motorsports field. The Mustang has now been upgraded to a Pro-Streeter. It carries all of the required appendages, windshield wipers, turn signals and a 3 and a half-inch diameter exhaust system terminating under the rear valence panel.

To give back to the community, I and a group of businessmen from the Motown Automotive Professionals car club, are constructing a 501(C)(3), public charity, to be called Motown Automotive Professionals nonprofit (MAPn). This is an automotive vocational training facility to provide a route for the economically and socially deprived youth as they leave the public school system, a way to become a productive member of society. This facility will provide training for the youth to obtain the skills of an Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) nationally certified technician. To make this

happen, I have been charged with the job as prime fund raiser for MAPn. To do this job however, required some adaptive devices so I can venture out into the corporate world in a quest for operating expenses.

In 2004, I approached the Michigan Commission for the Blind for these adaptive devices. After 3 years of negotiations, a deal was struck, granting me the equipment needed so I can proceed. There are two reasons I stuck to my position. One is I need those adaptive devices to perform my duties as chief fundraiser for MAPn. The second reason is to instill upon the Michigan Commission for the Blind that the Federal regulations provide certain services be rendered to the blind community. And as a member of the NFB we will not accept it any other way. If the law says yes, we will persist until the desired results are obtained. We will not give up just because some administration continues to drag their collective feet. It was my assumption that the Commission position was to deny me those devices and all they had to do is stall long enough. However, by persisting and pointing out the contents of their own policy manual, that their objective was to make me independent, they were obliged to provide equipment.

Richard Drake member of our Detroit and Western Wayne chapters offers this diabetic recipe for our enjoyment.

Are you diabetic? Do you know somebody who is a diabetic? Well here is an answer to a good meal enjoyed by all diabetics and people who are not diabetic.

Spiced Chicken Vegetable Soup

Ingredients;

- 1 pound of skinless boneless chicken thighs
- 3/4 cup of red skinned potatoes
- 1 1/2 cups of frozen kernel corn or other frozen vegetable
- 1/2 cup chopped onion medium size
- 1/2 cup of celery stalk
- 3 tablespoons of Dijon -style mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon of black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon of garlic powder
- 2 1/2 cups of vegetable juice
- 1 14 Oz to 16 Oz of low sodium or no sodium chicken broth

Preparation

Cut chicken into small bite size pieces

Add chicken and all ingredients to a slow cooker and simmer on low 8 hrs to 10 hrs while stirring once or cook on high for 4 hrs to 5 hrs on high stirring once. "Enjoy"

This recipe came from www.dlife.com by Ms Jill Karlya RD

The next five pieces will be updates on affiliate, chapter and division activities.

Washington Seminar 2008 By J.J. Meddaugh

If you heard lots of screaming and yelling out your window, it was perhaps the Michigan delegation at this year's Washington Seminar. Once again, we made our presence known as a combination of about ten parents, students, and state leaders. We made the trek to our nation's capitol by bus, plane, and train.

This year, our focus was on three important issues. First up, we discussed the importance of a minimum sound standard for quiet cars. This was an unfamiliar issue for many who we talked to and a new item for the federation as well. Many of our representatives seemed very receptive to our concerns and we hope to see legislation move forward in the coming months.

Second, we asked for restoration of funding for the National Library Service talking book program as they convert thousands of books to a digital format. This process has already begun, but a \$7 million funding shortfall from 2007 has threatened to delay the launch of the program. If this money is not restored, it will take longer for people in Michigan to receive the free digital players necessary to listen to these books. This issue was of special interest to Sharon Darga, mother of Austin Darga, who both attended and highlighted the importance of this appropriation because of the importance of accessible books for children.

Finally, we revisited a longstanding inequity involving the social security earnings limit. Our goal is to increase this limit for the blind and make the

path towards employment more stable and worry-free. Both House and Senate bills have been introduced, and we will be working to add Michigan representatives as cosponsors in the coming months.

While Washington Seminar was a fun and rewarding experience, the real work is what happens afterwards. It is important for us as federationists to follow up with our representatives to ensure they are responding to the needs and issues we care so much about. Hopefully, with a persistent attitude, we will be able to report on successes in Washington very soon.

Detroit Chapter News By John Scott

On January 26, 2008 elections were held. The officers are the following: John C. Scott, President; Sarah Norwood, Vice President; Denise Cole, Secretary; Shayna Smith, Treasurer; Leonard Gross, board member; and Daniel Perron, Board Member.

These are some of the activities we have scheduled. In February we are having a dietician from Detroit Receiving Hospital come to our meeting to instruct the members on the variety, nature, and quality of foods to purchase, the best way to prepare it, and economical ways of purchasing foods. In March we have a speaker planned to discuss social security matters. In April we plan to have instruction by an elections commission official on using an accessible voting machine, with hands-on training. In May we will discuss guardianships, independent living, and how the two impact on financial control of assets and beliefs by the blind.

Kalamazoo Chapter Update By J.J. Meddaugh

The Kalamazoo Chapter is starting out 2008 with some new ideas and exciting projects. First, we are strengthening our relationship with the Michigan Commission for the Blind by holding presentations for students at the training center. Those at the center will be able to learn about what the NFB has to offer and ask questions of current chapter members. We hope this will help to bridge the gap between the MCB and our chapter and lead to increased membership.

Though spring is barely around the corner, we are already looking ahead to Meet the Blind Month, an opportunity to spread awareness about blindness and independence. This will be our chapter's first year participating in these events, and we look forward to spreading some positive philosophy amongst our community and beyond.

The Kalamazoo chapter meets on the second Monday of each month at 7:00 P.M. at the First Presbyterian Church of Kalamazoo. The address is 321 W South St., Kalamazoo, MI. 49007. Meetings are held in room 301.

Whether you live in the area or just happen to be in town or at the training center, we'd love to see you. Please contact me if you have any questions or want more information at 989-284-7915 or at www.BlindBargains.com

What's new in Western Wayne County Chapter? By Peter Zaremba, Secretary

Have you heard the news? The Western Wayne County chapter is growing! Blind people from across the county are learning about the NFB from a major mailing we conducted last fall and our presence at several local town festivals. New prospective members have been showing up for months at each chapter meeting to learn about our NFB philosophy.

In combination with our new member efforts we have been reaching out to other groups in the community. Last fall our chapter president Donna Posont and board member Regina (Reggie) Alvarado, made several visits to the senior citizens low vision support group at Oakwood Commons Retirement Community in Dearborn. This was an excellent opportunity for our chapter to reach out to another group that had been isolated from the larger blindness community. Most of the Oakwood Commons support group members are seniors dealing with loss of vision from macular degeneration, along with the other health issues commonly associated with aging. The group was not familiar with our NFB philosophy, that through collective action, we are able to "Change what it means to be Blind." Donna and Reggie shared how the impact of this philosophy is easy to recognize when witnessed in large displays like the "March for Independence" (held last summer in Atlanta) or in smaller settings such as local chapter meetings. The simple gesture of one chapter member explaining to another fellow member how to wash a window without leaving

streaks or successfully barbecue without burning yourself or your meal can have a major impact on someone's life.

The messages shared by Donna and Reggie were well received by the Dearborn group, and prompted many questions concerning daily living skills. The questions ranged from "How do you pick out your clothes?" to "How do you know when a car is coming down the street?" One woman asked Donna "How do you make coffee without spilling any water." Donna said "I thought I knew the best answer to this one, as I have been making coffee since I was a teenager, but before I could answer, another participant spoke up and said, that she takes the spray hose from her sink and uses it to fill the coffeemaker."

It is this exchange of ideas and support that symbolizes how important the community element of the NFB is to promoting independence and ultimately changing what it means to be blind. These exchanges are common at NFB chapter meetings and illustrate that people who have been blind their entire lives can still learn new skills from others and it is through the support of the blindness community, in combination with our positive NFB philosophy, that many of the issues associated with blindness can be reduced to mere nuisances.

We invited all of the Oakwood Commons senior group members to visit our chapter, but many of them have multiple health challenges that make traveling difficult. In March Donna and Reggie will be visiting the group again to provide them news and support from the NFB. Reggie said "I am sure the group will once again have wisdom that Donna and I will be able to bring back and share with the chapter."

Our chapter continues to meet on the first Saturday of each month at 1:00 P.M. Meetings are held at the Senate Coney Island Restaurant, 3345 Greenfield Rd, Dearborn, MI. 48120. The restaurant is located three blocks south of the Amtrak station at Michigan and Rotunda. We would love to see you there! For additional information about meetings or information on our fund raiser with the Body Shop health and beauty products please contact Donna Posont at (313) 220-8140.

National Association of Blind Merchants of Michigan Report By Larry Ball,
President

It has been an up and down year for the Michigan Association of Blind Merchants. As president of the state chapter, it is my responsibility to put forth our yearly assessment.

We have had some successes and are still working on ongoing projects. Our fundraising was not as good as expected, but we will continue to find new ways to raise money in 2008. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please call me, Larry Ball, at 517-488-4220.

I wish to thank our Vice President, Sharon Kingsbury; our Treasurer, Joe Sontag, and of course things would have been much more difficult if it wasn't for our secretary, Mary Ball. Mr. Sontag is stepping aside as treasurer, but he will continue to be our best source for intelligent and forthright advice. Joe's services for 2007 are greatly appreciated.

For the upcoming year, our ongoing focus will be to make sure that the licensing agency and their staff, who provide services to the blind and visually impaired, treat all of us with fairness, dignity and respect.

Overall 2007 was a good year and we will work hard to make 2008 and beyond great years for the blind and visually impaired merchants of Michigan

Our membership is continuing to grow and on April 11th, between 5 and 9 pm, when we have our annual meeting, we are sure that we will pick up some new members.

See you there. Have a great two thousand and eight.

For the last item I have saved the first installment of a suspense thriller by a budding new novelist. He ends this installment in a way that leaves us craving more.

BLINKY By John Scott

The light from the moon diffused into the very large master bedroom. It gave an eerie refulgence to the large brass bed in the room. There were two sleeping forms lying under the ornate comforter and sheet. The

comforter had an African motif. It was a pastoral scene. Woven intricately into the fabric was the vista of Mount Kilimanjaro in the background. In the foreground was a dark brown skinned man with his wife and two children. The woman was bare breasted. She wore a double strand of white beads around her neck which contrasted with her dark skin and looked remarkably real. Around her waist was a very colorful skirt that hung just below her knees. She had a large smile and eyes that seemed to twinkle. On her head was a woven straw hat. The man was tall, and appeared lean and sinewy. He wore a loin cloth and held a long spear in his hand.

DA da da, the alarm began to sound. A manicured brown hand darted out from under the covers and tapped the shut off button. He turned from his side to his back. He listened. He heard the quiet breathing of his wife. The alarm did not disturb her. He threw back the covers and laid there, for a moment. Soon he drifted back to sleep. Ten minutes later he woke up with a shiver. The chill of the room woke him up. He slid his feet out from the sheet and comforter, which were the only parts of his body still covered. With one fluid motion, he placed his feet on the floor, turned around facing the bed, and bent down and pulled the covers up. He pulled off his nightshirt, folded it, and put it under his pillow. He quietly fluffed the pillow. He slid his feet into his slippers and turned his body away from the bed. He started his stretching exercises. First, he reached to the ceiling stretching and momentarily rising up onto his toes. He placed his feet at shoulder width. He began to rotate his head around his shoulders. Twenty times clockwise, then twenty times counter clockwise. He stretched his arms out from his sides and started rotating his arms in the same fashion. Twenty times each way. He placed his right hand onto his right hip and began to lean to the right with his left arm arched slightly over his head. He did this twenty times and reversed to the other side. In this way he stretched the lateral muscles along each side of his body. Next he bent down and lightly touched the palms of his hands first to the top of his slippers, then to the floor twenty times. After the stretches he left his bedroom and went downstairs. At the foot of the stairs, he started karate exercises. After he completed them, he went into the kitchen and turned on the teapot. His body had a light sheen of moisture from his exertions. He left the kitchen and quickly went upstairs into his bedroom. He hurriedly entered the unheated walk-in closet and turned on the built in heater as he passed through. He stepped into the cold exercise room, turned on the wall heater, and started pulling on his sweat clothes.

It was winter. The neighborhood he lived in was in an area of Detroit called "Sherwood Forest". The houses were referred to as "Mini mansions". His particular home was entered from the west. After you crossed the vestibule and hung your garments into the closet, you would enter into the main portion of the house through a glass door. Just off to the left was his book lined study, where he sometimes interviewed clients. Beyond the study was a staircase leading to the second floor. The house had four bedrooms, three and one half baths, a formal dining room, with a Florida room on the first floor, and a walk in closet with a dressing area above it. He used the dressing room as an exercise room. It held his weights, a storage area, and a counter the length of the room containing a television and radio. The weight lifting bench was the only furniture in the room. In the basement was a wet bar, a large recreation area, a very large storage area with wall to ceiling cabinets, and a very large laundry room. There were three entrances into the room. One was from a full shower and bath located just off the northwest corner of the room, and of course was the laundry area in the middle. It had the usual washer, laundry tub, and dryer. There were two large tables a few feet away. The room was approximately twelve feet by fifteen feet. Just off the southeast corner was the furnace room. The third entrance was from the family room. The family room was carpeted in green. It had a full size slate pool table left by the last occupants. In one corner spreading across the wall to the staircase was a wet bar.

After quickly pulling on his workout clothes, socks and shoes, he dashed from the cold room. He closed the sliding panel covering its entrance and quickly walked through the walk-in closet area. He closed the closet door entering back into his bedroom. After being in the workout room, the bedroom felt positively toasty. He quickly walked downstairs and approached the kitchen. The tea kettle was just beginning to whistle. He poured the water into his mug. He had taken the top off the honey jar and simply spooned a large tablespoon of honey into the cup. He dipped the spoon into the boiled water and stirred. He next took the tea bopper filled with tea and sat it into the cup, so it could steep. He carried the mug to the kitchen table, sat it down, and walked to the counter and turned on the TV. He listened to the news for about five minutes, then he sat at the table, removed the bopper and began to sip his tea. After he had sipped about a quarter of it, he turned off the TV and went back upstairs carrying his tea. He entered into his exercise room. He set the tea down, put on his hat and gloves and started his weight lifting program.

The weights consisted of a long bar, two fifty pound rings, two twenty pound rings, and two five pound rings. The bar, ring blocks and locks added another fifteen pounds. In total the weights weighed one hundred and sixty-five pounds. He weighed one hundred and seventy-five pounds. He bent down and gripped the bar tightly. He stood up and lifted the weights keeping his arms extended. He stood holding the weights for a moment, then he pulled the bar up until it touched his chin. He did this twenty times and lowered the bar to the floor. He rested a moment, then he bent down again and gripped the weights. He jerked the bar up, swung it towards himself, and bent his arms allowing the weights to come to rest at shoulder height. He squatted down a few inches, then he pushed upward. At the same time as he pushed upwards, he pushed his arms upward and raised the bar above his head and behind his head. He lowered the weights to his neck and shoulders. He stood with the weights for a moment; then he began to do his squats. He lowered himself to a sitting position and stood back up. He did this twenty times; then he made a bouncing motion. He raised the weights over his head and sat them on the floor. He was beginning to sweat. He walked over to the electric wall heater and turned it down. He walked back to his bench and sat a few minutes to catch his breath. The early morning News was still on. He returned to his weights. He picked them up with his palms in the up position and leaned back slightly with his arms fully extended. He started curling the weights up to his chest. He continued doing this with a bit of a rolling motion, until he had done it twenty times. Next he picked up the weights and placed them onto the cradle of the bench. He laid down onto the bench and positioned himself. He lifted the weights off the cradle and did twenty presses. He continued the same routine three times. By this time the room felt quite warm, and he was perspiring profusely. He had discarded the hat and gloves after doing the first set of his routine. He rested for a few minutes; then he began to do warming down exercises. They consisted of principally the same ones he did when he first got out of bed.

He removed and placed his work out clothes on the cradle of the bench, turned off the heater and TV. He slid his feet into his slippers, returned to the bedroom after turning off the closet heater, and he went into the bathroom to shower.

After showering he dressed. His shirts, ties, and suits were already lined up for the week, so there was no need to ponder what to wear. He went

downstairs, and joined his wife. "Are you ready to eat?" "Yes," he replied. Breakfast consisted of oatmeal, nuts, dried fruit, brown sugar, and milk.

His wife dropped him off to work. He went into the courthouse where he worked and notice the festive atmosphere. It was the last day of work before Christmas. Courthouse employees were going floor to floor singing Christmas carols. He entered his office and waited for the rest of the staff to arrive. He did not have to wait long. First came the receptionist, then the secretaries. Twenty minutes later several of the other prosecutors arrived. He was already out of the office and checking into his courtroom. The judge's clerk gave him the count for the day. It was a light schedule. He knew a trial was unlikely, because he was feeling generous. After all it was nearly Christmas. There were several Christmas parties happening downtown and around the city. He decided to go to one in the downtown area, because he had promised some friends he would go. He called and reminded his wife of his plans and waited for the days work to end.

It was 11:00 P.M. He decided he better go, because he was catching a bus. He left the club and walked to the bus stop. He was lucky. He only had to wait twenty minutes for the Hamilton bus. He was a bit tipsy, but he knew he would be fine by the time the bus got to the far side of Warrington and Seven Mile Road, where he would get off the bus. Thirty minutes later he disembarked from the bus. He was not afraid, but he was cautious. He had two and one-half blocks to walk. There was no one on the streets or in the area that he could hear. He walked very quickly with his cane fully extended. It was sixty-one inches in length, and light in weight. He was very familiar with the area, so he was moving rapidly.

He heard someone approaching him, from the front. He did not slow down. He simply listened as intently as possible, and continued on at the same rate of speed. The person approaching did not speak to him, nor did he speak to the person. He could tell he moved to the inside edge of the sidewalk, and he continued walking rapidly near the outer edge closest to the street. The stranger did not slow down either. They passed one another without saying a word. Then it happened. The person stopped after passing him by several steps, turned and started walking rapidly behind him. Blinky muttered an expletive under his breath. He continued on at the same pace and waited for the person to catch up. At the moment the person seemed to be only about three feet behind him, he spun around. He swung his cane so rapidly that it whistled. As soon as it connected with

the stranger, he knew exactly where he was. He took one step forward and quickly lifted his left leg until his knee was chest high. He did all of this with split second precision and in one continuous motion in preparation to deliver a kick with all the speed and force he could muster.

To Be Continued
