

# Imagine

A Future Full of Opportunity



The National Federation of the Blind Jernigan Institute, the first of its kind developed and operated by an organization of blind people, leads the quest to understand the real problems of blindness and to develop innovative education, technologies, products, and services that help the world's blind to achieve independence.



**NFB**

National Federation  
of the Blind

Jernigan Institute

# Programs

## EDUCATION

**National Center for Blind Youth in Science (NCBYS)**—Making science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) real options for blind youth is the goal of the projects of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Jernigan Institute’s NCBYS initiative. Along with inspiring blind youth to pursue careers in the STEM fields, the NCBYS serves as a central clearinghouse for information for parents, teachers, and researchers relative to making STEM education accessible to blind youth. Thanks to our supporting partners NASA, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, the National Science Foundation and other donors, the NCBYS now offers:



- **The new NCBYS Web Portal:** A centralized structure for the retrieval of nonvisual teaching applications—biographical sketches of blind STEM professionals, conference proceedings, educational materials and resources, and access to online networks.
- **The NFB Science Academy:** Summer workshops for blind youth that push them to new heights by inspiring them to pursue careers in STEM through modeling nonvisual exploration of scientific topics under the direction of blind mentors.
- **Excellence through Challenging Exploration and Leadership (EXCEL):** A summer internship program at NASA facilities for blind college freshmen and sophomores that encourages exploration and scientific achievement through the empowering influence of blind mentors.
- **Collaborations:** Joint efforts including the improvement of accessibility of artificial intelligence tutoring software in chemistry and math, the development of tactile books such as *Touch the Earth* and innovative techniques for engaging blind youth in astronomy, and other efforts that will build a stronger community of blind youth interested in and prepared for STEM careers.

**Parent Outreach and Early Childhood**—Building a future full of opportunity for blind youth begins in the early years through the involvement of parents. Along with conducting informative learning experiences for professionals working in the early intervention field, the Institute has developed educational materials for parents of blind children and will soon launch a series of new learning opportunities in the “Parents University.”



**Transition to Independence Club**—This demonstration project, in partnership with the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services and the U.S. Department of Labor’s High School High Tech program, provides blind youth in the Baltimore area with unique learning experiences

facilitated by blind mentors that prepare them for post high school work or higher education. Best practices developed in this project will be shared with NFB state affiliates for the purpose of encouraging the establishment of transition clubs throughout the country.

**Online Education Program**—The Institute offers four online introductory courses for parents, teachers, and technology developers to strengthen their understanding of how to integrate a blind child into a regular classroom, learn the basics of Braille, include accessible features in a new Web application, and become familiar with the access technology now available for blind people.

**National Literary Braille Competency Test (NLBCT)**—In partnership with the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the U.S. Library of Congress and a working group representing many stakeholders, the Jernigan Institute has coordinated the final development and pilot testing of a national exam to measure knowledge of the literary Braille code among teachers of Braille. This is one more step in the promotion of Braille literacy for all blind persons.

## TECHNOLOGY

**International Braille and Technology Center for the Blind (IBTC)**—A comprehensive evaluation, demonstration, and training center, complete with over \$2.5 million worth of nearly all of the tactile and speech output technology now available to the blind, the IBTC has served since its inception in 1990 as a rich resource for vendor-free advice on all aspects of access technology. Staff members of the IBTC consult with individuals, employers, rehabilitation and education professionals, and technology developers, thus better ensuring that the consumer perspective is represented and technology choices are the best for each blind person.



**Kurzweil-National Federation of the Blind Reader**—The first handheld portable reading machine for the blind has been developed through a partnership between Kurzweil Technologies, Inc., and the National Federation of the Blind, making print accessible with the flash of a camera. The reader uses digital camera technology and specially enhanced optical character recognition technology to produce synthetic speech translation of text. Launched at the 2006 NFB convention, this revolutionary technology will make a significant impact on the lives of all people who have difficulty accessing regular print.

**Nonvisual Accessibility Web Certification**—This certification process provides a mechanism for governmental agencies, for-profit companies, and others to ensure that their Web sites are usable by blind individuals who use access technology. Certified to date include companies such as General Electric Company, Wells Fargo, Merck & Co. Inc, HP, and several others.

**Consumer Electronics**—Finding a washer, stove, or dishwasher that a blind person can operate using nonvisual techniques is a challenging task but one that many face. The Institute has launched this initiative to:

- Provide an online location for up-to-date information on what is out there that works for the blind. For details see our Web site at [www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org).
- Conduct discussions with consumer appliance and electronics producers that will encourage the development of usable products for the blind. The Whirlpool Corporation is actively involved with the Institute in identifying usable products and improving the design of future models.
- Establish the Accessible Home exhibit each year at the NFB national convention and a permanent exhibit at the national headquarters of the National Federation of the Blind in Baltimore.



**Access Technology Training**—With the generous help of HP, Microsoft, Freedom Scientific and others, the first fully accessible technology training lab, located in the Jernigan Institute, has been established. This lab will train blind individuals, educators, rehabilitation providers, and technologists on a full range of access technology and related issues.

**NFB Nonvisual Election Technology Project**—The primary objective of this project, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is to educate voting officials and protection and advocacy state agencies about accessible electronic voting technology. Training material located on the NFB Web site will familiarize state officials with voice driven electronic voting machines now available and provide objective evaluations of all features, thus better ensuring that this new technology will truly make a secret ballot available to the blind.

## REHABILITATION/EMPLOYMENT



**National Center for Mentoring Excellence**—A five-year project to establish the structure and evaluation procedures for a model mentoring program has started with groups of blind mentors and mentees from Nebraska and Louisiana. These transition age youth (16 to 26) will be exposed to learning experiences designed to encourage their growth, with special emphasis on adjustment to blindness issues. Beginning in 2007, this program will be expanded to four additional states.

**Career Fair**—Sixty-five blind youth, as well as teachers and parents, attended the Institute's first Career Fair. This demonstration project created a stimulating atmosphere where blind teens were inspired by positive blind role models from a variety of careers. The planning process, organizational structure, and resources utilized will be shared with NFB affiliates and other organizations with the goal of replicating this model Career Fair throughout the country.



**Seniors Fair**—For the past four years the Jernigan Institute has sponsored the Possibilities Fair for seniors with low vision or blindness. Kaiser Permanente and many area nonprofit organizations help to make the event, which hosts over 400 seniors, a big success. The emphasis is on presenting helpful information within the context of exposure to successful blind role models. Demonstrations of nonvisual techniques and equipment are available to participants along with informational tables featuring service organizations. Members of the NFB from around the

country have attended with the goal of learning how to conduct such a fair in their home communities; to date Possibilities Fairs have been conducted in New Mexico, Colorado, and Idaho.

## JACOBUS tenBROEK LIBRARY

This library, named in honor of the founder of the National Federation of the Blind, will include extensive collections of material dealing with blind people. The collection will chronicle the history of the organized blind, blind authors, materials written for the blind (both historical and contemporary), and the papers of Dr. Jacobus tenBroek. Dr. tenBroek was a distinguished blind professor at Berkeley in the 1940s and 50s, well known for his writings promoting immigrant rights and his perspective on blindness, which has become the philosophical underpinning of the NFB. The



library will also have the complete collection of the extensive writings of Kenneth Jernigan, President of the NFB from 1968 to 1986 and active until his death in 1998, including many original speeches and video footage of civil rights actions in the 1970s and 80s.

The Independence Market will be housed in the tenBroek Library, featuring numerous aids and appliances for purchase by blind and low vision individuals and their friends and families. Also the extensive free literature collection will be displayed for visitors in alternative formats—large print, Braille, and cassette.

The historical archive of the NFB is now being organized, and a fully accessible library management system will make both the digital and hard copy resources available from this library dedicated to telling the story of blindness from the perspective of blind people.

# About the National Federation of the Blind

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) is the largest organization of the blind in this country. Founded in 1940, the Federation's purpose is to serve as a vehicle for collective action by the blind and as a mechanism to help blind people achieve self-confidence, self-respect, and self-determination. Our goal is the complete integration of the blind into society on a basis of equality.

With more than fifty thousand members from over seven hundred local and state affiliates covering all fifty states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, the Federation is truly the voice of the nation's blind.

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