

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF THE BLIND

Live the life you want.



GETCRUISE

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OF THE BLIND
NFB.ORG

CHALLENGE DRS

WHAT WE BELIEVE

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back.



WHO WE ARE

The National Federation of the Blind, headquartered in Baltimore, defends the rights of blind people of all ages and provides information and support to families with blind children, older Americans who are losing vision, and more. Founded in 1940, the NFB is the transformative membership and advocacy organization of blind Americans—with affiliates, chapters, and divisions in the fifty states, the district of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. We believe in the hopes and dreams of blind people and work together to transform them into reality.

NATIONAL OFFICERS

Mark Riccobono, *President*

Pam Allen, *First Vice President and Board Chair*

Ron Brown, *Second Vice President*

James Gashel, *Secretary*

Jeannie Massay, *Treasurer*

BOARD MEMBERS

Denise Avant

Everette Bacon

Amy Buresh

Shawn Callaway

Marci Carpenter

John Fritz

Ever Lee Hairston

Carla McQuillan

Amy Ruell

Terri Rupp

Tracy Soforenco

Adelmo Vigil



NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF THE BLIND

Live the life you want.

200 E Wells St
Baltimore, MD 21230
410-659-9314

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nfb.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends:

In the National Federation of the Blind, we say that low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. This is not to imply that there are not real barriers that prevent blind people from living full, independent lives. What it does mean is that most of these barriers stem from the low expectations that society has of blind people. One of those low expectations is that we are expected to need caring for, not to care for ourselves and certainly not to care for others.

The pandemic that we have all experienced for the last two years has highlighted and exacerbated a chronic problem: even as more and more Americans care for themselves and their loved ones in the home using advanced medical technology, blind people are unable to do so with complete privacy, safety and independence. That's not because we are incapable of caring for ourselves and our families. It's because the at-home health tests and in-home medical devices that are prevalent today are designed in a manner that assumes the user has sight. At-home health tests often rely on watching a test strip change color in order to know the result. Other devices like blood pressure monitors and home dialysis equipment have touch screens only, with no physical buttons or audio output so that blind users can control them or get information on how they are functioning. In a cruel irony that confronts many blind people every day, diabetes is a leading cause of vision loss, but people who are losing or have lost vision due to this dangerous disease cannot independently operate the glucose meters, insulin pumps, and other medical aids available to help treat it.

Another example: the United States government announced, with much fanfare, that it would combat the coronavirus pandemic by making at-home tests for COVID-19 available, for free, to anyone who wants them. But despite federal laws requiring the government to procure and deploy technology that can be used by people with disabilities, the tests currently being sent to homes



Mark Riccobono

across our nation cannot be used independently by the blind. This means that in order to get tested, blind people must put others at risk, either by getting assistance to take the tests in their homes or by going to public testing sites where they risk exposing themselves or others—assuming transportation to those sites is readily available, which all too often is not the case.

The National Federation of the Blind is committed to eradicating this healthcare inequity. We are partnering with innovative startups and established companies to help them make their at-home tests and devices more accessible. **We engaged with the current administration** on its failure to provide accessible COVID tests, resulting in a new initiative within the National Institutes of Health to spur the development of tests that blind people can use privately and independently. In the meantime, we partnered with Aira, which helps blind people with visual tasks via videoconference through a dedicated smartphone app, to provide free assistance with taking otherwise inaccessible at-home tests. And for the longer term, we support **legislation in Congress** that would give the Food and drug Administration regulatory authority to ensure accessibility of certain home healthcare products and devices. The current barriers that prevent us from caring for ourselves and our loved ones are unnecessary. There have been major accessibility improvements in many other areas of modern technology, and there is no reason there cannot be similar innovations in healthcare. With your continued help and support, we will eliminate this inequity, even as we continue to do all the other work that makes us the transformative membership and advocacy organization of blind Americans. Thank you for all you have done and will do to help all of us live fuller, healthier, and happier lives.

Sincerely,



Mark Riccobono, President
National Federation of the Blind



BUILDING, LEARNING, AND EXPLORING

NFB BELL® ACADEMY

The NFB Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning (BELL) Academy provides blind children with instruction in Braille, cane travel, and the other nonvisual skills they will need to achieve their dreams and live the lives they want. The coronavirus pandemic again presented a challenge in 2021 because it prevented our regular NFB BELL summer day-camp programs across the nation from going forward. But we used our experience from 2020 to again institute NFB BELL In-Home Edition, and 232 students from fifty states, the district of Columbia, and Puerto Rico participated in the virtual program through video lessons, materials shipped directly to their homes, and guided activities that the children could do with their parents.



“

NFB BELL Academy has helped me achieve goals in Braille and discover new things about myself, I didn't even realize. And make new, great friends.

”

564 children and families in Braille Reading Pals

898 winter celebration and Santa letters **sent to young blind children**

615 participants in Early Explorers

EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES

The **early childhood initiatives** of the National Federation of the Blind provide young blind children and their families with support and guidance to master the fundamental skills of literacy and independent travel. The Braille Reading Pals Club introduces young blind children and their families to literacy through Braille. The program fosters positive attitudes about Braille and helps sighted family members promote a love of reading through the shared reading of print/Braille books with their blind children. The Early Explorers program introduces young blind children and their families to the long white cane so that the children will become more independent, confident, and curious travelers throughout life. As part of our early childhood initiatives, we also continued our holiday tradition of providing Braille letters from Santa—or winter celebration letters as part of our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts—to 898 blind children under the age of ten.



“

When I think of inclusion, I automatically think of NFB! Offering winter celebration letters in addition to letters from Santa is yet another example of how NFB honors and celebrates diversity! My students hail from all over Chicagoland and come from a variety of cultures. The winter celebration letters will warm hearts and put smiles on faces as students eagerly practice reading Braille. Thank you, NFB! – Paula

”



“The Teachers of Tomorrow cohort program has been such an enriching program, allowing us access to experienced professionals and individuals in the field. The sessions left us always with so much information, ideas and thoughts and enlightened us about all the different support groups and services we can connect through by joining the National Federation of the Blind.”
– Teacher of blind students

TEACHERS OF TOMORROW PROGRAM

Teachers of Tomorrow is an immersive, professional-development program that connects teachers of blind and low-vision students to the lived experiences of blind people. The program, which is free to participants, equips them with knowledge of the skills and attitudes that can help blind students thrive in school and beyond.

22 teachers of blind students in Teachers of Tomorrow

SECURING INDEPENDENCE & INFORMATION

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND FREE WHITE CANE PROGRAM

The National Federation of the Blind believes that the long white cane is a means to independence for the blind. The white cane has proved a useful tool to millions of blind people in navigating their environments with confidence and safety. It is a tool that allows blind people to travel where and when they want and, as such, promotes independence and self-sufficiency. Each year, we celebrate **White Cane Awareness Day** to increase public understanding of the positive effect this simple tool has on the lives of blind people.

5,321 people received free white canes

We believe that independence and freedom to travel are so critical to the quality of life of blind people that every blind person should have a cane, regardless of ability to pay. That is why the National Federation of the Blind offers free fiberglass canes to blind users through its Free White Cane Program. Since we began the program over a decade ago, over seventy thousand free white canes have been distributed.



NFB-NEWSLINE®

A distinct log in to NFB-NEWSLINE every **17.6 seconds**

126,823 subscribers served by telephone, mobile access points, and internet

Adults who are losing vision often tell us that the first thing they miss when reading becomes difficult is perusing the newspaper each day. To support them, and to allow all blind and low-vision people to be well-informed citizens, we created NFB-NEWSLINE. This unique, free-to-users service provides access to over five hundred national and international daily newspapers, magazines, and online news sources.

The service can be accessed via touchtone telephone, computer, mobile app, or smart speakers that use Amazon Alexa. To learn more about the service, visit nfbnewslineonline.org.

“

Please know that I simply could not live very well at this time in our nation's history, without this complement to my daily life.

– NFB-NEWSLINE subscriber

”



RECOGNIZING INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE

DR. JACOB BOLOTIN AWARDS

Dr. Jacob Bolotin (1888-1924) was the first physician in history who was born blind. His passion and tireless advocacy for the rights and independence of blind people helped to change entrenched but incorrect attitudes toward blindness. Each year, the National Federation of the Blind awards individuals, initiatives, and innovations that are a positive force in the lives of blind people with a monetary award in his name. Winners of the prestigious award continue Dr. Bolotin's legacy by breaking down barriers, changing negative perceptions of blindness, and inspiring blind people to achieve new heights. In 2021, awards of five thousand dollars each went to Darnell Booker, coach and general manager of the four-time beep baseball world-champion Indianapolis Thunder, and Krishna Washburn, founder and artistic director of Darkroom Ballet, for teaching dance to blind and low-vision performers. Awards of ten thousand dollars each went to Davis Technical College, for its program to train blind aerospace machinists and make the related equipment and software accessible; Independence Science, creators of innovative products to make STEM education and careers accessible to the blind; and Dr. Natalie Shaheen, an assistant professor at Illinois State University, for her efforts to advance equity and accessibility in K-12 education for blind students. The top award of twenty thousand dollars went to Eye Learn, a blindness skills training program for people in the Detroit area who are blind or losing vision, which notably continued and even expanded its efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. You can learn more about the awards and past recipients at nfb.org/bolotin.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Our annual [scholarship program](#) is the largest of its kind in the nation. In 2021, we awarded more than \$120,000 to blind scholars across the fifty states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico in recognition of their achievements and professional aspirations. [These are the thirty outstanding scholars we recognized.](#)

DISTINGUISHED EDUCATOR OF BLIND STUDENTS AWARD

Every year, the [Distinguished Educator of Blind Students Award](#) recognizes an outstanding teacher of blind students. The 2021 recipient was Jordana M. Elgebretsen of Post Falls, Idaho.





HOW YOU CAN HELP

We could not do this critical work without our many generous supporters. We are grateful for the contributions of our 2021 donors. Here are some ways that you can help us continue to help blind people live the lives they want:

GIVE ONLINE

Contributions by credit card may be given at one time or made on a recurring basis. A one-time or recurring credit card contribution can be made online at nfb.org/donate. To make a recurring contribution, please call our accounting department at 410-659-9314, extension 2213.

CONTRIBUTE BY MAIL

Checks should be made out to the “National Federation of the Blind” and mailed to the National Federation of the Blind, attention Outreach, at 200 East Wells Street at *Jernigan Place*, Baltimore, Maryland 21230.

DONATE A VEHICLE

You can donate a vehicle to the National Federation of the Blind by calling 855-659-9314 or by visiting nfb.org/vehicledonations.

DONATE CLOTHING

If you live in Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, or Virginia, you can donate clothing and other household items to the NFB. You may take your items to a GreenDrop collection site or call 888-610-4632 for home pickup. Learn more by visiting <https://www.gogreendrop.com/nfb>.

PLANNED GIVING

Including the National Federation of the Blind in your estate plans is a thoughtful way to transform dreams into reality for the next generation. Learn more at nfb.org/planned-giving.

The Dream Makers Circle honors friends of the National Federation of the Blind who are helping build a successful future through their commitment of a legacy gift to the organization.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES

Year Ended December 31, 2021

REVENUE AND GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT

Public Support	
Contributions	\$16,821,920
Donated Services	5,442,809
Government Grants and Contracted Services	1,730,180
 Total Public Support	 23,994,909
 Revenue	
Sales - Independence Products and Publications	340,128
Net Investment Income (loss)	2,501,986
 Total Revenue	 2,842,114
 Total Revenue and Gains and Other Support	 \$26,837,023

EXPENSES

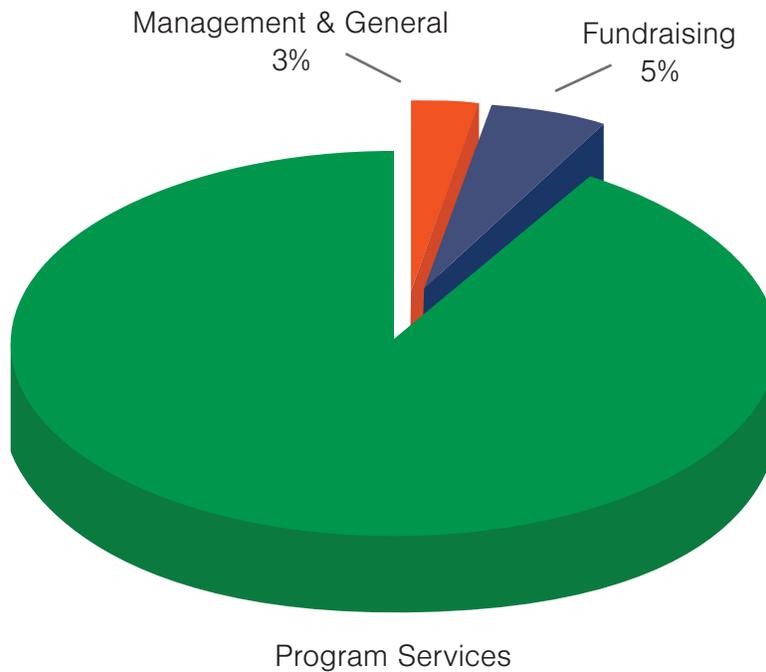
Program Services	
Blindness Integration	\$10,079,673
Civil Rights, Advocacy, and Self-Organization	7,212,286
Nonvisual Access Technology, Methods and Systems	5,354,531
 Total Program Services	 22,646,490
 Supporting Services	
Management and General	694,487
Fundraising	1,241,897
 Total Supporting Services	 1,936,384
 Total Expenses	 \$24,582,874

Changes in Net Assets	\$2,254,149
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	\$31,910,180
Net Assets - End of Year	\$34,164,329



The National Federation of the Blind meets the rigorous Standards for Charity Accountability set forth by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance. The NFB maintains a GuideStar Exchange Gold Participant status and is an approved charity participant in the Combined Federal Campaign.

MANAGEMENT & GENERAL AND FUNDRAISING EXPENSES AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL PUBLIC SUPPORT



Financial statements presented have been audited by Rosen, Sapperstein and Friedlander, LLC. Complete audited statements with accompanying notes for the National Federation of the Blind can be obtained at <https://nfb.org/about-us/annual-report-and-financials> or by contacting the offices of the National Federation of the Blind, 200 East Wells Street at *Jernigan Place*, Baltimore, Maryland 21230, 410-659-9314.

The National Federation of the Blind, a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, is eligible to receive contributions that are deductible for computing income and estate taxes. Donors should consult their attorney or financial advisor to discuss the tax implications of any donation they make or contemplate making to the National Federation of the Blind.