**The Blind Missourian**

 **June 2022**

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2022 Presidential Report

By President Shelia Wright

It is such a wonderful opportunity for the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri to come together in Springfield for our sixtieth annual state convention. How great it feels to be together in person once again. At the same time, we recognize that there are some of our members that would normally be here that are not able to be with us today. We send out our greeting to you as you join us through the stream that is being provided this weekend and hope that you will be able to be with us next year.

Last spring the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri conducted a leadership seminar for chapter and division boards via Zoom. We had approximately thirty-five participants for the seminar. Experienced officers discussed the roles they played in their elected positions and supplied many helpful tips on running a chapter and/or state affiliate. Each participant received a seminar booklet that provided them with documentation on NFB policies, best practices, and samples to aid them as they conduct the work of the NFB at the local chapter and division level. Thank you to everyone who participated.

Our Data Retention Committee, Chaired by Gene Coulter, has done an amazing job of collecting several thousands of files that are now available through Google Drive for Nonprofits. These files tell the history of the NFB of Missouri. They are available to our leaders and members. If you have access to old files that should be maintained and fill in gaps, please share them with the Data Retention Committee. Thank you, Gene Coulter, and our Data Retention Committee, for an outstanding job organizing and getting the bulk of our records uploaded.

Last summer a friend of the Missouri Affiliate nominated the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri as a candidate for a $20,000 grant through the M.R. and Evelyn Hudson Foundation. After receiving an invitation to apply, we submitted an application outlining the challenges that older blind Missourian’s face when they become blind and the limited services that are funded to address the needs of this underserved population. We outlined a program to address the needs of the senior blind that we planned to introduce in the coming months but indicated that our current level of funding was limited. We received a grant of $20,000 and combined it with the $15,000 that our state affiliate had already set aside. We now have $35,000 to work with newly blind persons to help them to develop alternative techniques of blindness and be able to remain independent in their home and community. Yesterday, we kicked off that program by conducting a seminar geared for newly blind persons, especially older blind persons. Later today, Gary Wunder will provide more details about the plans to provide direct services to these Missourians.

Our youth programming continues to grow. We know that the sooner blind youth have an opportunity to network with blind mentors, learn Braille and other nonvisual skills, develop self-advocacy skills, and gain confidence in their skills, the more successful they will be in engaging in mainstream programs that provide social, educational, and vocational growth. I want to mention three National Federation of the Blind Programs providing these opportunities to young blind Missourians.

Our longest standing program is our BELL Academy. BELL stands for Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning. It is designed to serve students from four to twelve years of age. This past summer blind students from Missouri had an opportunity to participate virtually in our At Home Edition where they joined in with students across the country via Zoom. Thank you to Jenny Carmack and Debbie Wunder who served as our coordinators and had contact with our Missouri students and their families throughout BELL. We are excited that BELL will be able to once again be live this July on both sides of the state. You will hear more about this later in the convention.

The NFB of Missouri Cane Drivers is designed for teens ages thirteen through nineteen. Svetlana Ehlers, Chair and Tarah Coccovizzo, Co-chair are the student leaders. These student leaders help to plan and facilitate meetings and/or activities. Thank you to these student leaders and the adult mentors, Debbie Wunder, Jenny Carmack, and Linda Coccovizzo, who provide guidance and supervision to the Cane Drivers. This program provides an opportunity for teens to build meaningful relationships with one another, share their successes and frustrations among their blind peers, introduces these teens to blindness skills that have been proven to be helpful, and provides adult role models that encourage these teens to reach for their dreams.

Last March I announced that Jenny Carmack had been selected as the Coordinator for Mission BEAM (Blindness, Empowerment, Advocacy, and Mentoring). You will hear more about Mission BEAM later today, but I did want to thank Jenny and the Mission BEAM Committee for all their work. Jenny, with the help of the Mission BEAM Committee, has continued to develop goals, materials, policies, and the vision for Mission BEAM. She has been working with Rehabilitation Services for the Blind to develop a contract so that Mission BEAM can be an ongoing resource for transition age students. In conjunction with this program, we have already conducted two workshops which provide group transition services.

Last year at our convention, we talked about problems Missourians have had with accessible voting as well as efforts we had met to address voting concerns in Missouri. The convention passed a resolution calling for us to take whatever action is necessary to continue our efforts to assure that blind Missourians can cast a private and independent ballot in all elections throughout Missouri. Melissa Kane, our First Vice President, has been leading the effort as Chair of a special Committee on Accessible Voting. After much work and collaboration with Missouri Protection and Advocacy, the National Federation of the Blind, and the Missouri Council of the Blind, we were able to prepare and submit a Complaint to the Department of Justice. The Complaint was filed on September 30, 2021, and we are waiting for the Complaint to be investigated. A special thank you to Melissa Kane for her leadership and work to take the action needed to follow the direction of the convention.

Upon our request for a proclamation designating October 15 as White Cane Awareness Day, Governor Parson signed a proclamation. In addition, Nick Whitney worked on behalf of the Missouri Association of Guide Dog Users to get Governor Parson to declare the week of October 11-16, 2021, as Missouri Guide Dog Safety Week. Both Jefferson City and St. Louis issued other proclamations.

In October we participated in Blind Equality Achievement Month. Our chapters and state affiliate held several events during the month to increase awareness about the NFB and of our accomplishments. Both our affiliate and chapters utilized social media to provide public education. In October Otto Jesperson, one of our newer members in Jefferson City, interviewed Rita Lynch and created a series of public service announcements for one of the local stations. Thank you to each of you.

We continue to have three representatives and one senator who have cosponsored the Access Technology Affordability Act (H.R. 431 and S. 212). We have not picked up any new cosponsors for the ATAA this year. Our Medical Device Nonvisual Accessibility Bill (H.R. 4853) generated a lot of interest, but so far, we do not have any cosponsors from Missouri. Two other bills discussed were the Twenty-first Century Webpage and Apps Accessibility Act and the Transformation to Competitive Employment Act (H.R. 2373/S. 3238). However, it is important to realize the Washington Seminar is the kickoff each year to our work on federal legislation and there is still time to garner much more support from our congressional delegation. This is an assignment that every member of this affiliate can help with. If you need more information, please contact Dennis Miller, our Legislative Director, or me. Let us do our homework and help move this legislation forward.

Thank you to Roger Crome and the members of our Governmental Affairs Committee for the work done to conduct a successful Jefferson City Seminar. Despite the regrouping that was needed to overcome the legislatures last minute decision to take off for Presidents Day, we were able to make excellent progress toward our legislative priorities. You will hear more about our legislative work tomorrow when Roger Crome gives his Governmental Affairs report.

I do want to report on the BRITE Act Work Group that was formed last spring when the sponsor of the BRITE Act had several concerns raised by educators. These concerns resulted in us deciding to not attempt to go any further with the proposed bill text during the 2021 session. Last April we convened a work group that was made up of stakeholders to address concerns that had been raised, strengthen the bill text, and garner support for the BRITE Act to be introduced this year by Representative Brenda Shields. We believe that the work completed by the work group and shared with stakeholders throughout the state, will give us solid answers when legislators ask us if we have collaborated with educators.

These highlights from the past year in no way recognizes every project and every member that has contributed to a highly successful year for the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri. We are incredibly blessed to have many members that are willing to step up and work on affiliate projects. We have new members here today who were not with us one year ago who have offered to help wherever they are needed, and they already have assignments. We have innovative programs that are beginning to take off and will need more volunteers to make these programs a real success. There are ideas in the works that need to be developed. If you are a part of this affiliate, there is a place where you are needed. Please let your chapter or division presidents and our state affiliate leaders know your interest and willingness to share in the work we do. Let us make sure blind people in Missouri know that blindness does not define them or their future. Let us raise expectations of blind people. We know that low expectations create obstacles between blind people and their dreams. Let us build the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri.

Challenge Creates Strength for Success

By Hana Bekele

You might ask how challenge creates strength for someone to become successful. I have a challenge for each of you. Do you turn the problems or obstacles you face throughout your life into opportunities?

My name is Hana Bekele, and I am from Ethiopia. I have a bachelor’s degree in sociology and a Master of Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis. I am currently working at the Missouri Historical Society as the diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility coordinator.

I have experienced a lot of ups and downs due to my blindness to reach the position that I am in today. I lost my sight at the age of eight due to glaucoma. By the time I lost my sight, I was considered a hopeless dependent who could do nothing for herself or others. It was also impossible for my parents to think that I could go to school, learn, and become as successful as my peers. This was due to the misconception that my blindness was caused by the curse of God, the sin of my parents, or evil spirits. This was so frustrating, not only for me as a child, but also for my parents.

In Ethiopia, many people who are blind are hidden and locked behind a closed door. They never have access to education and other services due to negative attitudes of society and the lack of resources. Therefore, the fate of most blind people is to become beggars or live in a very destitute living condition. There is no government support system for people with disabilities like in the United States and other developed countries. It is up to the person who is blind or their parents to struggle to achieve a better life.

Fortunately, I was able to join the school for the blind with the help of one of my relatives who had more awareness about opportunities for people who are blind. My school life, especially from middle school to university level, was incredibly challenging because of the inaccessibility of the school’s physical environment, lack of audio/Braille materials, absence of assistive devices, and limited finances. However, I never gave up. I was the top student throughout my primary and high school classes; so, I was able to join the university. I was happy for my success, but my happiness did not last very long because the university informed me that I could not study journalism because of my blindness. Journalism had been my only dream since childhood; and I did not even have a plan B. What would you do if you were in my place?

I let it go! All my frustration, disappointment, discrimination, and any other negative feelings, and ended up studying Sociology. I finally found it to be a remarkably interesting field of study.

Ethiopian blind or visually impaired people do not have a lot of study options at the college or university level. Only a few fields of study are allowed for blind students, such as: language and literature, sociology, social work, and law.

After I graduated in 2015, I got a job as a general manager in a disability organization called Ethiopian National Disability Action Network. I did not want to stop there, so I kept looking for a better opportunity to upgrade my personal and professional development. I traveled to different countries to participate in leadership and disability trainings, for example, the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders Initiative at Tulane University in New Orleans.

In 2018, I applied for a competitive scholarship which was announced by Open Society Foundation. Then I was granted full scholarship to pursue a Master of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis. This was a wonderful opportunity, but it was also very stressful because I was going to a location which I had never heard of before and did not know anyone in St. Louis. However, I decided to take the risk and came to St. louis in 2018.

After I arrived in St. Louis, I found far more than I ever expected. The accessibility, the resources available, and the government commitment to support people with disabilities is amazing. It is not even comparable to the life of people with disabilities back home.

There were some challenges which made me frustrated, especially as an international student, such as the language barrier, cultural shock, the food, and the weather conditions. However, these challenges did not stop me from being successful in my education; rather, they shaped me to be open minded and to think out of the box. Every problem is an opportunity to gain experience and to challenge ourselves. So, I always let it go -- the obstacles that get in my way and take the next step for success by changing the difficult situation into another learning moment.

Blessed and Zest

By Julie Dawson

My name is Julie Dawson from the Kansas City Chapter of the National Federation of The Blind of Missouri. I moved to Missouri from Memphis, Tennessee on June 28, 2021 and attended my first NFB of Missouri state convention from March 31 through April 3, 2022.

I checked in to the DoubleTree and received a wonderful, still-warm cookie to set the tone for the convention. The diverse mixture of flavors, warmth and sweetness with batter to bind and strengthen the chocolate chips and nuts into a cohesive whole embodied my convention experience. Throughout I met new people, including Connie Cameron, a sweet lady and first-time attendee, carried on conversations, shared and truly listened to dozens of life stories and points of view.

I caught up with my roommate, Nellene, whose joy and generosity of spirit is another part of our NFB of Missouri membership. We, along with Gary and Debbie Wunder, experienced “Food Glorious Food” at Houlihan’s. We shared appetizers, laughter and stories. Gary and Debbie reach beyond themselves to serve and work, to welcome and include others, and demonstrate true Federation values.

Through attending wellness and senior seminars with powerful and heartwarming presentations, my in-person convention experience was launched. I learned on Thursday evening in the three-hour Wellness seminar that knowing the position of an attacker’s body through touch and communicating through stance, touch, and verbalization are powerful tools.

On Friday morning after registering, organizing tickets, putting on my name badge, and receiving my Braille agenda, I attended the board meeting. It was a learning experience where I listened to reports and issues relevant to Missouri. Our State President, Shelia Wright, and our National Representative, Kevan Worley, spoke from both state and national perspectives.

On Friday afternoon during the Seniors’ Seminar, meaningful presentations plus helpful “how-tos” were discussed ranging from: independent travel, cooking, matching, and organizing clothes, cleaning house, plus labeling and taking medications properly and safely along with many other topics.

I then wandered the exhibit tables and enjoyed the display of handicrafts and snacks. Thank you, Linda DeWeese for describing patiently and in gorgeous detail the beautiful items. A beautiful floral pillow in pinks and greens and an embroidered hand towel with flowers and kitties found their way home with me along with snacks from our Kansas City Chapter table.

At 4:30 pm, I gained knowledge from the First Timers’ Meeting about how to become more productive and involved on both the chapter and state affiliate level. Later, that evening, I tasted Culvers food, a wonderful fish dinner and got another delightful treat on our way back from Springfield to Kansas City, a butter burger, cheese curds, and chocolate custard with sauce.

More convention highlights include attending the Resolutions Committee Meeting guided by Gary Wunder where finishing, strengthening and finalizing resolutions and bylaw additions for presentation on Saturday along with enjoying Springfield’s Hospitality later in the evening.

On Saturday, there were many wonderful presentations. Meeting and learning about our scholarship candidates, Blake, Jaxon, and Sam, was powerful and provided a glimpse into their hopes and dreams for their and our Federation family’s future. The Fit Breaks along with Svetlana Ehlers and Jane Lansaw, sharing their excitement and determination in their lives and into their love for the Federation was very meaningful. Hearing about Hana Bekele’s story of struggle and success as well as Carrie Ragsdale’s advocacy story touched my heart deeply. Learning about the goals for the Wolfner Library and their commitment to their patrons as well, as hearing the Rehabilitation Services goals and job development was important to me being a new Missourian.

The wealth of information continued to flow as I learned from Jenny Carmack and Debbie Wunder about ways to assist the BELL summer program in St. Louis and Kansas City. Our representative from the National Association of Blind Students remarks along with President Seyoon Choi’s report on our Missouri Association of Blind Students progress and future action plan for the coming year was exciting. Mark and Vicki Hedrick’s business adaptations and moving story about the people they work with is another way we as federationists continue to perform outreach and was an inspiration to me.

The banquet, door prizes, food, speeches, awards, and auction filled Saturday evening. A small Lego piece taped to my chair, won me the black and white sixtieth convention celebration mason jar centerpiece filled with black and white stones and roses in the same colors which has a place of pride in my home now.

The Karaoke Jail was a laugh-and talent-filled time. People were arrested and sang for their freedom including yours truly for wearing too much pink. Shelia, Debbie, Gary, Alyssa and so many others sang, and we laughed and cheered on each jail bird who sang. It is my hope that this fundraiser continues.

The Prayer Breakfast on Sunday morning was humbling. The joy from the Bible enriches our lives and the sharing of it with others is very necessary.

In the morning session, Governmental Affairs, Treasurer’s and Audit Reports by Carol Coulter and Gene Fleeman, plus the Ways and Means Report covered by Jeff Giffen were exciting for me as they demonstrated more ways to become immersed in the NFB of Missouri. Another high point was the panel with Gary Wunder, Robin House, and Daniel Garcia about building community, which was demonstrated through interactions, life lessons, and stories throughout the convention, and will be carried beyond the convention. Gary, Robin, Daniel, and Shelia personalize and extend a generosity of spirit, strength, and kindness which characterizes this affiliate. Sunday’s session concluded with Constitutional amendments, old and new business, and elections were held; congratulations to the new board members with pride for all who strove for board positions.

In conclusion, I want to thank the Rittgers Committee for making it possible for me to attend my first NFB of Missouri convention, Shelia and Jeff who have been so generous with their transportation, patience, and kindness when answering my myriad of questions, along with sharing wisdom and background about our affiliate. I am enjoying the work of the committees where I have been asked to serve. Shelia your graciousness, humor, work ethic, and knowledge continue to be an inspiration to me.

Another delight I experienced was my traveling companions. Alice Hebert from Louisiana, whom I met through Shelia, is energetic, smart, and competent. Willa Patterson is a member of my chapter with much NFB of Missouri history and knowledge to share, and I experienced her thoughtfulness, wisdom, and warmth.

I am blessed to have had the opportunity to be a part of the convention and to participate in my chapter and affiliate. The zest for living independently, working to realize Federation Family goals, and caring about each other along with building bridges and friendships is what I experienced and will carry forward beyond this convention into my life as a blind Missourian.

BRITE Act Testimony—submitted online

By Russell Dorn

My name is Russell Dorn. I am eight years old, and I live in Kansas City. I wanted to come talk to you in person today, but my parents had to go to work, and I had to go to school. I use Braille as my second language of sorts because I have a special eye condition called oculocutaneous albinism type 1B (my parents helped me spell that.) I am legally blind, and my preschool teachers thought I would need to learn Braille because I need my print blown up so big it is hard to read fast, and my eyes get tired during the day, and it gets harder to read print for more than a few minutes in the afternoon. But my school didn’t think I needed Braille and so I got a lawyer to help me. When I started learning Braille, it was very hard because I only got to learn it three hours a week, but I got print reading 90 minutes every day. This bill would help say that kids who are learning Braille need enough teaching so they can read just like other kids.

2022 Resolutions

National Federation of the Blind of Missouri

Shelia B Wright, President

7928 Milrey Drive

Kansas City, MO 64114

Dear members of the General Assembly:

Below are resolutions passed by the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri in its convention held on the first weekend in April. They concern two pieces of legislation that are of significant concern to blind people, and we hope that you can act affirmatively on each.

Thank you for your service to Missourians, and especially to those of us who are blind.

Sincerely,

Shelia Wright, President

National Federation of the Blind of Missouri

 Resolution 2022-01

Regarding THE BRITE ACT, HB 2150

WHEREAS, education is the foundation for success in today’s information age; and

WHEREAS, HB 2150, also known as the BRITE Act, consolidates and clarifies the obligations of elementary and secondary schools in Missouri to provide instruction and services to each blind student; and

WHEREAS, this bill makes it clear that none of these services may be denied to a legally blind student simply because they may have some remaining vision; and

WHEREAS, this bill represents the work of consumers, teachers, school administrators, and specialists working in school districts across the state and represents unity that too seldom accompanies proposals before the Missouri General Assembly: Now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri in convention assembled this third day of April, 2022, in the City of Springfield, Missouri, that this organization urge the Missouri General Assembly to pass this bill, for the governor to sign it, and for all parties to perform the necessary oversight to see that both the letter and the spirit of the law are carried out for the betterment of Missouri’s blind students as they move toward leading fulfilling and productive lives along with their sighted peers.

Resolution 2022-02

Removal of the Certified Mail Requirement for the Missouri Blind Pension

WHEREAS, each blind Missourian who receives the Blind Pension or Supplemental Aid to the Blind is required to be evaluated annually to see if they still qualify for the assistance provided through these programs; and

WHEREAS, concerns about the receipt of the paperwork to do this recertification prompted legislation mandating that these materials be sent by certified mail; and

WHEREAS, the seeming good will and commonsense of this legislation was and still is evident, the results have not been as expected, and the certified mail requirement has led to extra expense on the part of the state, to blind recipients, and has added to the difficulty in filing for recertification in a timely manner: Now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri in convention assembled this third day of April, 2022, in the City of Springfield, Missouri, that this organization urge the Missouri General Assembly to remove the requirement that these materials be sent by certified mail; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge the adoption of an automated system to alert recipients that materials for their recertification will soon appear in their mailboxes and to explain when these materials must be returned to the Family Support Division.

 Resolution 2022-03

Commending Brenda Shields

WHEREAS, very often members of the legislature will either introduce or cosponsor a piece of legislation at the behest of their constituents merely to show support, but they do little or no follow-up, thereby allowing the issue to languish; and

WHEREAS, Representative Brenda Shields has worked diligently on the BRITE Act for over a year, including numerous meetings with stakeholders and fellow legislators, leading to her introduction of HB 2150; and

WHEREAS, she continues to push for passage of this vital piece of legislation through the daunting legislative process: Now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri in convention assembled this third day of April, 2022, in Springfield, Missouri, that we highly commend Representative Shields for her efforts on behalf of the blind and visually impaired children of Missouri.

 Resolution 2022-04

Regarding Voting by Blind Missourians

WHEREAS, the right to vote is one of the most sacred rights of being an American citizen, and the right to do so privately and independently is crucial if one's vote is to be cast free from tampering and intimidation; and

WHEREAS, a number of bills currently before the Missouri Legislature are concerned with voting procedures, seeking either to change the law or to strengthen the public's confidence in the system we use; and

WHEREAS, in this process the need for blind people to be able to vote privately and independently gets lost in the discussion about voter fraud and breaches of security; and

WHEREAS, we know that systems exist that will let a blind person vote without the involvement of a third party to observe or in any way alter this vote and that many of our counties currently have such systems: Now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri in convention assembled this first day of April, 2022, in the City of Springfield, Missouri, that this organization urge the Missouri General Assembly to preserve the right of blind Missourians to vote privately and independently by ensuring that ballot-marking devices are made available for every election and at every voting location in the state and that poll workers receive adequate instruction to setup and assist the blind user in casting their vote.

A BRITE Future for Blind Kids

By Eugene Coulter

For sixty years it has been the job of the Missouri Affiliate to make life better for blind persons in this state and provide for a better future for succeeding generations. In that time, we have worked on dozens of pieces of legislation, and almost all of them have taken several years to become law. However, this year our efforts paid off in a huge way, ensuring a brighter future for the blind children of this state.

In our first full year of working on the BRITE Act, it now is waiting on the Governor’s desk where it will certainly be signed. With the challenging work of a special committee, over several months, after consulting with other stake holders, Representative Brenda Shields introduced HB 2150 which in the later days of the legislative session was swept into SB 681.

This vital piece of legislation provides a clear path for when visually impaired and blind children will get the instruction appropriate to them in Braille, Orientation and Mobility, and be provided appropriate technology to thrive in school.

This law which takes effect on August 28, maybe the most important piece of legislation that we have brought to the legislature since SB 12, the White Cane Law, passed in 1977. We should be proud as we wrote the law, consulted with other groups, got an enthusiastic sponsor, and worked hard in Jefferson City to educate the legislature.

Unfortunately, our other piece of legislation which would have removed the requirement that Blind Pension reviews be sent by certified mail did not fare so well. The bill passed 144-0 in the House, but was waiting in the Senate when the upper body adjourned a day early. As they say in baseball, “there is always next year.”

Missouri Association of Blind Students Elections

By Seyoon Choi

Our student division had a terrific annual business meeting at the convention Friday evening, and I wanted to express my gratitude for your participation and attendance despite our late-night meeting. Now, it's time to formally announce our newly elected board members, officers remained the same and will be up for election next calendar year.

President: Seyoon Choi, Vice President: Aida Talic, Secretary: Sam Doman,
Treasurer: Nancy Aguilera, Board member 1: Cory McMahon
Board member 2: Sarah Coccovizzo

Congratulations to all! We are building our student division and our federation, together

Diana Aubuchon: A True Survivor

By Carol Coulter and friends

Diana Aubuchon was a sighted member of the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri. She was very active in the 80’s and 90’s and was a member of the Columbia Chapter while attending the University of Missouri. I am not sure who brought whom to the NFB, but Diana and June Homan would form a life long friendship. Diana then moved to Kansas City where she was a member of the Kansas City Chapter and later the Jackson County Chapter. She was also a recipient of the tenBroek Award in 1986. The other organization that had a special place in her heart was the Boys Scouts. She served as a Den Leader for many years.

Diana endured a lot of hardship in her life, but never did I hear her complain. She suffered the loss of two infants; a daughter, Charlotte, who died before most, if any of us knew her and a son, Mark, her last child. She had two other children, Peter and Paul--who was a special needs child. Diana had to deal with her husband being shot and how the effects of that on him ended up with them getting a divorce. Diana lived in such poverty that many of us couldn’t even imagine. In spite of all of this, she always had a positive outlook on life. She never gave up. Below are some remarks from a few more members who knew and loved Diana.

Dave Hutchins:

I met Diana in late 1981, at an NFB function in downtown Kansas City. I joined the Kansas City Chapter in February of 1982; Diana was secretary and Roy Zuvers was president. Diana helped with building the NFB float for the American Royal Parade for several years. Diana and I went to two chapter car washes in the 80’s when she was staying with Melvin Lewis for the summer. Diana joined the Jackson County Chapter, but we kept in touch at conventions. She did her best to attended almost every state convention until her health and finances kept her from coming.

We went to dinner many times, and I also babysat Peter and Paul for her when they were younger. Diana also had a third son, Mark, who died as an infant in 1987. This of course devastated Diana and her husband Bill. Tragedy hit again when Bill was shot in 1990 waiting for the bank to open. He was a security guard for the bank. Because of the location of the bullet, they could not remove it, and Bill was never the same after that.,

Diana would stay with me at times and cook for me; she was one great cook. We also had several Thanksgiving dinners together. We may have had a misunderstanding or two, but we always seem to work it out. I will cherish her friendship always. She helped me through some bad times when I was married and helped me get back my life and confidence to do for myself. I will miss her greatly.

 Dick Morris:

I met Diana in 1980 at an NFB seminar put on by the Springfield Chapter.
She was staying with Joan Davis and I drove both of them to the seminar
(yes, I drove--don't ask). She was a member of the Jackson County Chapter
at the time. She was good friends with June Homan of the Columbia Chapter; in fact, it could be said they were joined at the hip.

Most old-timers in the affiliate know about Dianna's (note the different
spelling) and my two special needs sons and their issues. Diana Aubuchon
would ask about them every time she saw one of us, and she wouldn't let
us get away with a short answer; she wanted details. You also know that
she lost her son Mark shortly after birth and her next son, Paul, has
special needs, although I don't remember the details on that.

The obituary calls her "generous", which is an understatement. She would
give the shirt off her back to someone in need, even if it was the last
shirt she owned.

Gary Wunder:

I remember some things about Diana that I hope people will take as compliments rather than stereotypical feelings that men have about women. Diana was innocent in the best sense of the word. If you said a thing, she believed you. If you needed something, she didn't ask why you needed it but how she might help you get it. I remember hiring her as a reader. She read quite well, but she was also a single mother who had a child. For all that Peter has become, he was quite a pain when it came to his behavior during a reading session. If he wanted to talk, he talked. If he wanted to yell, he yelled. The only way we could gain some semblance of an environment conducive to reading and concentration was to give Peter junk mail and let him tear it up. Had he been a little younger, we could easily have said we were giving him a toddler's Christmas, but he was old enough that I feared there was some intellectual disability. Thank goodness he has proven me wrong.

Diana was fun to be around. I thought that her firstborn was a daughter, not a son. There were times when she would get very depressed about losing her, but most of the time she was unfailingly optimistic, cheery, and almost dancing on a cloud and asking you to join her. As I started to climb the ladder to a greater salary at the University, there were times when things became difficult. I remember inviting her to tour my new house and she remarking that my bedroom closet was bigger than her living room. That said much more about her living room than it did my closet.

It was tough to stay in touch with Diana. Sometimes she had a cell phone, but in my experience, most of the time she didn't. Sometimes she would call while at work, her supervisor letting that be one of the benefits to compensate for her relatively low salary. It was always good to hear from her, but seldom did I have a way to reach out and get a hold of her.

I know that all of us are the better for having known her, and, like many of you, I wish we had had a better chance to say goodbye and to tell her that we loved her.

Calendar of events and meetings

Special Events:

July 5-10 National Convention; New Orleans, Louisiana

July 18-29 [**Missouri BELL Academy**](https://nfbmo.org/BELL)

September 16 -18 Sports & Recreation Float Trip

October 1 NFB of Missouri Board Meeting; Columbia, Missouri

April 13-16, 2023 NFB of Missouri State Convention: Airport Hilton Hotel St. Louis, Missouri

Reoccurring Meetings

**Sundays**

Every Sunday at 7:00 p.m. - Mission BEAM Committee.

**Mondays**

2nd. Monday of every month at 6:30 p.m. - Show Me Chapter.

3rd. Monday of every month at 7:00 p.m. - Website Committee.

**Tuesdays**

1st. Tuesday of every month at 8:00 pm - Sports & Recreation Committee.

2nd. Tuesday of every month, 6:30 pm to 8:30 p.m. - Jefferson City Chapter.

3rd. Tuesday of every month, 7:00 p.m. - Pedestrian Safety Committee.

**Wednesdays**

1st. Wednesday of every month, 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Mineral Area Chapter.

2nd. Wednesday of every month at 8:00 pm - Governmental Affairs Committee.

3rd. Wednesday of every month, 8:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. - Data Retention Committee

4th. Wednesday of every month at 7:00 pm - Guide Dog Division.

**Thursdays**

1st. Thursday of every month at 7:00 p.m. - Missouri Association of Blind Students.

2nd. Thursday of every month at 7:00 p.m. - Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee

3rd. Thursday of every month at 8:00 p.m. - Journey Through Blindness.

4th. Thursday of every month at 8:00 p.m. - Membership Committee.

**Fridays**

2nd. Friday of every month at 8:00 p.m. - Missouri Cane Drivers.

**Saturdays**

2nd. Saturday of every month, 12:45 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. - Springfield Chapter.

2nd. Saturday of every month, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. - Lewis & Clark Chapter.

2nd. Saturday of every month, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. - Old Drum Chapter.

3rd. Saturday of every month, 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. - Columbia Chapter.

3rd. Saturday of every month, 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. - Kansas City Chapter.

4th. Saturday of every month, 12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. - Ivanhoe Chapter.

Pledge of the

National Federation of the Blind

I pledge to participate actively in the efforts of the National Federation of the Blind to achieve equality, opportunity, and security for the blind; to support the policies and programs of the Federation; and to abide by its Constitution.

One Minute Message

The National Federation of the Blind 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.

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### FREE MATTER FOR THE

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### NFB of Missouri

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**Columbia, MO 65202**