# The Informant 2024

# Vol. 1: Empathize with the Federation

# January 15, 2024

Affiliate Zoom Link:

<https://zoom.us/j/9612695221?pwd=dHlxZDNwcVVZbUVTYUM5cEU4cDlndz09>

## From the President:

*Happy New Year and greetings to my Federation friends,*

family, guests, and readers of this newsletter. It is exciting to connect

with you all again. As a reminder, The Informant is the hub for important

chapter and division updates, state committee announcements, national

program news and information about the multiple ways we create opportunities

that empower Michigan's blind. On this day, one that is enshrined in

American history to honor the legacy of one of the most prolific civil

rights activists ever, I am moved to share my favorite quote from Dr. Martin

Luther King Jr. with you all. In an address made during his visit to Cornell

College, Dr. King spoke on the challenge to unity in the American republic

at the time. He theorized, "I am convinced men hate each other because they

fear each other. They fear each other because they do not know each other.

They do not know each other because they do not communicate with each other,

and they do not communicate because they are separated."

On its face, Dr. King's message made the important argument that unity

amongst races in the Jim Crow era of this nation could be accessed through

collaboration. This, many argued, could be achieved through policy changes

in the country. Dr. King's statement, however, also weaved a call for

empathy within its delivery because potential policy changes that would

affect Black people during this era could not realistically attempt to

address the diverse needs of the Black community without an understanding of

their lived experience. This need for empathy is not exclusive within or

across races.

Dr. King's philosophy of equality, unity and civility is similar to that of

the Federation. The programs and actions of the National Federation of the

Blind intend to both educate and empower blind people to live the life they

want, pushing back against the low expectations placed on us at times by

agencies, friends, family, employers, complete strangers and even ourselves.

Whether it is working on student programming or supporting seniors as they

advocate for services they need; each effort you put into the Federation's

mission increase the chances of empathy occurring with parties that don't

always understand us. This work, as well as applying that same empathy

within our community and organization, is the true vehicle to success and

our dreams becoming reality. As we step into 2024 together, I challenge each

of you to embrace empathy within your chapter, division or committee. Try

working on a new project, with a new leader or recruit a new member. Only by

understanding each other can we realize our dreams. I appreciate all of your

hard work and am with you every step of the way. Let's go build the

Federation!

## Important National Updates

### \* The 2024 NFB Washington Seminar takes place January 29- February 1.

If you are not attending Washington Seminar in person, please join us for

the Great Gathering In via Zoom, where our membership and President

Riccobono will begin the advocacy festivities, while providing guidance for

our meetings with elected officials.! our annual seminar. The Great

Gathering In will take place on Monday, January 29 at 5pm. To access the

Zoom link or official seminar schedule in both Word and Html versions, visit

<https://nfb.org/programs-services/advocacy/washington-seminar.>

### \* Registration for the 2024 NFB National Convention is live.

The convention will take place July 3-8 at the Rosen Center Hotel in Orlando,

FL. For information about convention and to register online, visit

[www.nfb.org/convention](http://www.nfb.org/convention)

<<http://www.nfb.org/convention>> .

### \* Applications for the 2024 Kenneth Jernigan Scholarship program is

### live.

The award is designed for first-time attendees of the NFB national

convention and provides financial assistance to those who request.

Applicants must be a member of a local chapter or state division in

Michigan. The application for the Kenneth Jernigan Award can be found at

<https://nfb.org/form/kenneth-jernigan-convention-scho.>

### \* The 2024 NFB National Scholarship program is live.

Every year, the

National Federation of the Blind offers 30 scholarships to students enrolled

in a college, university or other post-secondary educational program.

Graduating high school seniors are also encouraged to apply. Applicants are

required to meet the legal definition of blindness and prepare to attend the

entire national convention in Orlando. The deadline for the scholarship

program is March 31, 2024. To apply for the national scholarship program,

please visit

<[https://scholarships.nfb.org/>.](https://scholarships.nfb.org/%3E.)

## Important State Updates

### \* The NFBMI legislative and advocacy committee thanks all of its

### members and attendees for their efforts and activity.

It's meeting on

January 11 via Zoom included an orientation for our first-time attendees of

Washington Seminar, an update about state advocacy efforts and an

explanation of the national legislative issues that will be discussed on

Capital Hill. The committee meets at 7pm on the second Thursday each month.

### \* The NFBMI fundraising committee is off to a strong start in our

### Super Bowl fundraiser.

Though there is so much competition and enthusiasm

brewing, it isn't too late to get involved. Talk to your chapter or division

president on how you can get involved or support. Learn more about our

project or contribute by visiting www.nfbmi.org/pool

<<http://www.nfbmi.org/pool>>

The committee meets at 6pm on the first Sunday

each month.

### \* The NFBMI Membership committee needs your help.

Please connect with your local chapter or division membership coordinator to ensure that you are listed as an active member of our affiliate to continue to qualify for national programs, be included in official announcements and support the affiliate in tracking the work and resources being managed. To ensure you are in active status, you must be a dues-paid member. Every chapter and division has a membership coordinator. To find out who is your coordinator, please contact your chapter or division president or elected officer.

### \* The NFBMI Communications committee is actively seeking members to

### help spread the word of the Federation.

Are you a person that is organized?

Are you a guru in social media or drafting emails? If so, you're skills can

be the work that moves the affiliate and the Federation forward. Contact

Rachel Newland, chair, at

 [secretary at nfbmi.org](http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbmi-talk_nfbnet.org) <mailto:[secretary at nfbmi.org](http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbmi-talk_nfbnet.org)>

or Ather Jammoa, co-chair, at

 [Atherjammoa at yahoo.com](http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbmi-talk_nfbnet.org)

<mailto:[Atherjammoa at yahoo.com](http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbmi-talk_nfbnet.org)>

for more information on how to join and play

your part in working towards our goals.

### \* The NFBMI Youth and Family program planning committee thanks all of

### its members and guests for the hard work put into creating the foundation

### for the 2023 Raising Expectations Accessing Life (REAL) program.

The 2024

REAL program will take place June 21-23 in Flint. The committee meets

biweekly. Its meeting on January 12 included creating subcommittees working

on agenda crafting, hotel contract discussions and creating an official

flyer for distribution. If you are interested in supporting in these

efforts, please contact Tara Morgan, committee chair, or join us via Zoom.

### \* The National Federation of the Blind's Braille Enrichment, Literacy

### and Learning (BELL) Academy is an opportunity to instill the importance and

### usefulness of braille in the lives of blind children around the nation.

The 2024 BELL Academy training is a national program for coordinators and

instructors from states that have a passion for braille and what it can

bring to future generations. The training takes place at the Jernigan

Institute, our national headquarters in Baltimore, MD. Future leaders of

affiliates are selected to represent their affiliate in this training with

the intention to both conduct a state BELL Academy and instruct other

volunteers on how to replicate the program as an opportunity for blind

children around the state. Linda Bell (Flint-Genessee chapter) and Alicia

Marques (At Large chapter) will serve as the affiliate program coordinator

and lead instructor at this year's training. We are excited for their

leadership and await the innovation of Michigan BELL 2024.

### \* The National Federation of the Blind of Michigan serves as an active

### member of the Consumer Involvement Committee (CIC) of BSBP.

As chair of this committee, I vow to bring the concerns of our membership to our state agency and work in good faith to secure equal treatment and distribution of services. To do this, I invite you all to the NFBMI Soundboard, a monthly conversation with your CIC delegates to inform the committee of what is occurring and how we can support your local advocacy efforts with BSBP. If

you are a current BSBP customer and have questions about the policies communicated by your local office, challenges to communication with your

counselor or other things you'd like to discuss; we'd be happy to provide

guidance on effective communication and how we can do our part to elevate

these needs. We hope to foster brainstorming on productive ways to address

all challenges, so please be prepared to work with everyone on how we can

continue to improve our relationship with BSBP and hold them to account when

they don't meet the needs of the consumer. The NFBMI Soundboard takes place

on the fourth Friday of the month at 8pm.

### \* The first quarterly board of directors meeting of the National

### Federation of the Blind of Michigan will take place on Saturday, March 2,

2024 at 12pm.

The meeting will take place via Zoom. This is an open meeting,

which means that members are free to listen in for important state updates

or business. As per our constitution, presidents of active chapters and

divisions are required to attend the board meeting to provide updates. To

verify your chapter or division's active status and charter, please contact

me via email or phone. Voting during this meeting is limited to state board

members and chapter/division delegates.

## Chapter/Division Announcements

### \* At Large Chapter:

The NFBMI At-Large Chapter has elected a new board

for 2024. Sanho Steele-Louchart is President, Victor Marques is Vice

President, and Alicia Marques is secretary/treasurer. The chapter meets the

first Tuesday of the month at 8pm in the Michigan Zoom Room and hosts a

monthly NFB philosophy discussion the third Tuesday of the month at 8pm in

the same place. Finally, the chapter is interested in coordinating a monthly

open house wherein the monthly presidential address can be played, questions

can be answered, and fellowship can be had. Please email

 [Sanho817 at gmail.com](http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbmi-talk_nfbnet.org)

<mailto:[Sanho817 at gmail.com](http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbmi-talk_nfbnet.org)>

with any questions.

### \* Flint-Genessee Chapter:

The 2024 Flint-Genessee chapter Elections

will take place Thursday, January 18, 2024. We congratulate our student

member Nicole Smith for her nomination to the Newman Civic Fellowship. The

Flint/Genesee Chapter meets monthly on the 3rd Thursday of the month at the

Flint Public Library from 5:30 PM - 6:30 pm. For additional information

about the chapter, including meeting information, please contact President

Sheila Fulmore at 810-241-6124 or

 [spfulmore0402 at gmail.com](http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbmi-talk_nfbnet.org)

<mailto:[spfulmore0402 at gmail.com](http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbmi-talk_nfbnet.org)>

### \* New Wayne County Chapter:

On Saturday, January 6, our chapter met

and held our annual elections. Following are the newly elected officers;

President Donna Posont, Vice President Deborah Wellington, Secretary Sam

Raue, Treasurer Faith Meadows, Board member Munzer Abukarsa, Board member

Ahmed Jaafil, Board member Tyrone Hamilton, and Board member Marcus Simmons.

Typically we meet on the first Saturday of each month, however, in February

we have an new date and location. We will meet February 10 at the Henry Ford

Centennial Library in Dearborn from noon to 3p m. We have arranged for

another Sense-sational tactile tour which will be held at the Henry Ford

museum on March 16, 2024. For more information about our chapter happenings

please contact Donna Posont, [Donnabutterfly50 at gmail.com](http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbmi-talk_nfbnet.org)

<mailto:[Donnabutterfly50 at gmail.com](http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbmi-talk_nfbnet.org)>

or 313-220-8140.

### \* Michigan Blind Seniors Advocating for Seniors (BSAS):

Hello Michigan

Seniors! I want to welcome all seniors to our monthly meeting that will

take place via the Michigan ZOOM room on the 4th Monday of each month at

8:00 PM. We will begin 2024 by electing our officers and discussing our

goals. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

My email address is [patriciajpyle11 at gmail.com](http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbmi-talk_nfbnet.org)

<mailto:[patriciajpyle11 at gmail.com](http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbmi-talk_nfbnet.org)>

### \* Michigan Association of Blind Students (MIABS):

The student division

of the NFB of Michigan is happy to announce that we have three members

attending the 2024 NFB Washington Seminar. Two of our members' are attending

for the first time and we look forward to learning and growing as a reformed

division of the affiliate. We held a meeting on January 7, where we

discussed our first potential fundraiser, things to expect at seminar and

getting prepared for the NFB Midwest Regional Student seminar, hosted by the

national student division and the NFB of Illinois in Chicago. If interested

in joining our division or becoming a student, please contact Jerusalem

Crawley, president, at [Crawleyjerusalem at gmail.com](http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbmi-talk_nfbnet.org)

<mailto:[Crawleyjerusalem at gmail.com](http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/nfbmi-talk_nfbnet.org)> .

## Important State Affiliate Dates

### \* 01/26/24: NFBMI January Soundboard

### \* 02/09/24: BSBP Consumer Involvement Committee Meeting

\* 03/02/24: NFBMI State Board Meeting

Respectfully,

Robert Parsons, Jr., M. A., CRC, CVRT, LLPC

President, National Federation of the Blind of Michigan

(269) 216- 8640

www.nfbmi.org <[http://www.nfbmi.org](http://www.nfbmi.org/)>

"Without struggle, there is no progress." - Frederick Douglas