# National Federation of the Blind of Michigan (NFBMI)

## The Informant 2024

## Vol. 6: Taking Pride in the Federation

## June 15, 2024

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

## From the President

Greetings my Federation family, friends, and guests as we welcome you all to an ultra-special edition of “The Informant!” June’s issue of our monthly affiliate newsletter is pivotal, as it commemorates a monumental point of our movement; where we are able to evaluate our progress thus far, determine how many of the goals we set in January have been met and brainstorm on ways we can work towards meeting those we are still working toward. We are also able to develop additional goals to keep up our momentum. Before we do all of this, I want to wish our Michigan Federation family a joyous and celebratory Happy Pride month, for it is the voices of all blind people, including those who identify as LGBTQIA+, who contribute so much to our development, proactivity and ability to continue to work in tandem with the national blind people’s movement. In our printed text that outlines our organization’s history, “Walking Alone and Marching Together,” the message of solidarity of identity is thoroughly described, laying out the premise for the three tenets that are described in the NFB pledge. The first of three tenets “to achieve equality,” can be attributed to not just equality of rights, but of the respect of all blind people regardless of their race, sexual orientation, gender identity or other identifying characteristic. I invite all our members to embrace this interpretation of our pledge and our message, just as our national office does, in incorporating the message of inclusion, love and acceptance of all blind people as an equally welcomed voice in our chapters, divisions and programs; for their active participation brings fresh perspectives and vigor to our membership every day. The Michigan affiliate is a microcosm of a larger, diverse, and robust family that includes different backgrounds, shades, and identities; let’s continue to make sure everyone has a seat at our table.

The month of June is important for a number of reasons. Our membership has the motivation , aside from wonderful weather, to enjoy the sunshine and the company of others; including national doughnut day, trial technology day, national higher education day, national zoo and aquarium month, international yoga day, Father’s Day, and Juneteenth. All of these items boast opportunities for chapters, divisions or groups of Michigan Federationists to get together and celebrate or commemorate the day or season; so whether you are recognizing the freedom of thriving blind black Americans at a picnic or enjoying a day at the aquarium with your father, do so knowing the Federation supports your right to do so. Continue to live the life you want and respect others to do so at your side.

## Important National Updates

* Hotel reservations for the 2024 NFB National Convention are filling quickly. Though the Rosen Center is now booked, there are still opportunities for members that are looking for rooms in the overflow hotels to find them from attendees that have since changed their minds. If interested in these opportunities, please email President@nfbmi.org or visit the NFB Members email list.
* The 2024 NFB of Michigan caucus will take place on July 3 at 9pm at the Rosen Center Hotel in Orlando. This meeting is required for all first-time attendees, Jernigan Award recipients and recipients of our state funding assistance program. The NFBMI Caucus will take place in Salon 7.

**Important State Updates**

* Visitors and members of the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan can now view this issue and past issues of “The Informant” on the NFBMI Webpage. You can access these issues by visiting [www.nfbmi.org/informant](http://www.nfbmi.org/informant).
* The National Federation of the Blind of Michigan is proud to have 39 confirmed registrants for the 2024 National Convention this year. Of this number, 22 are registered for in-person attendance. All are welcome to register for the virtual convention experience for $10, where members can access meetings, the virtual exhibit hall experience, and a variety of other opportunities. To learn about and register for the virtual convention experience, please visit [www.nfb.org/convention](http://www.nfb.org/convention).
* The NFB of Michigan is excited to support our national convention in its first-ever sexual health education open house. This research-supported presentation, which promotes blind-led accessible sex education in a safe space, offers convention attendees opportunities to learn about a variety of developmental topics; including anatomy, biology, identity, physiology, mental health, resources and access. This event, led by Federation leaders and professionals in various fields, takes place July 5 from 4-8pm at the Rosen Center; and we encourage all members of our affiliate to learn about all it offers. Table two, which features accessible information and resources on sexual orientation and gender identity for attendees is led by NFBMI President Robert Parsons and At Large chapter President, Sanho Steele-Louchart.
* The NFB of Michigan is excited to fundraise at the 2024 exhibit hall during our national convention. By visiting table D16, guests will be treated to a taste of Michigan pride with our selection of products, including Wild Cherry Gummi Bears ($9), Cherry Nut Mix ($12), Cherry Barbecue Sauce ($12), and Cherry Salsa ($9). We will also have our Michigan table staples, including assorted whipped body butter ($4) and our popular convention 50/50 raffle ($10). Our table offers mix-and-match options for snacks (Two for $20) and body butters (three for $10). Finally, there is a deal on raffles, with three tickets selling for $20. The NFB of Michigan accepts cash, credit, debit, and all forms of electronic pay options. If you are a virtual attendee of convention, you can also participate in our fundraising and secure your items, simply contact me at President@nfbmi.org or (269) 216-8640 to discuss how you can secure your items. All cherry-themed items are supplied through Cherry Republic, a wholesale partner of the NFB of Michigan.
* The NFB of Michigan exhibit hall table still has two shifts open for volunteers that are interested in assisting in fundraising while in Orlando. If you are interested in this opportunity to fundraise on behalf of our affiliate, please contact Ather Jammoa, exhibit hall coordinator, at Atherjammoa@gmail.com.
* The 2024 NFB of Michigan state scholarship program officially launched on June 1, 2024. If you are a blind student in the state of Michigan that is a high school senior or are attending a college/university, please email scholarships@nfbmi.org or visit [www.nfbmi.org/scholarship](http://www.nfbmi.org/scholarship)24 for more information. The state scholarship program is awarded at our state convention each year and the application deadline is September 15, 2024.
* The 2024 NFBMI Raising Expectations Accessing Life (REAL) program is a dual-track opportunity for youth interested in learning about growing in STEM-related fields. This year, our program has eight registered participants and takes place June 21-23 in the city of Flint. If you are interested in joining the NFBMI REAL volunteers in meeting the students/families and learning about the programs; we encourage you all to join us at the Flint-Genesee chapter’s Blind Equality Gala 2024, held at the Flint Institute of Art on Saturday, June 22. The gala begins at 6pm, the theme is “Formal Masquerade”, and tickets are $75 for general admission/$100 for VIP. A formal proclamation from Governor Gretchen Whitmer will be presented, with an address from Flint Mayor Sheldon Neeley, numerous presentations from dignitaries, performances, and opportunities for blind people to have a great time.
* The National Federation of the Blind of Michigan represented and promoted both the Raising Expectation Accessing Life and scholarship programs at the 2024 VISIONS conference. A huge thank you to members of the Detroit and New Wayne County chapter members and officers for their diligence and networking skills in bringing in interested applicants. Their hard work garnered two new students and a strong interest in establishing an Ann Arbor chapter in the future, potentially growing our affiliate.

## Chapter/Division Updates

* **At Large Chapter:** We are excited to have six members attending our national convention this year in Orlando. We encourage members to continue to attend our monthly meetings, which take place the first Tuesday of each month at 8pm, and our philosophy discussions on the third Tuesday of each month at 8pm. In observation of national convention, the At Large chapter will not meet for its monthly meeting but will resume meeting for its monthly philosophy discussion on Tuesday, July 16 at 8pm. We look forward to connecting then and continuing to develop ways we can get activated as cohosts of this year’s state convention in Kalamazoo this November.
* **Capital Region Chapter:** We are excited to invite all blind people in the Greater Lansing area and across the state of Michigan interested in learning more about the Federation, its programs and the message of the blind people’s movement to the first NFBMI Open House; being held on July 15, 2024 from 5-7pm at the Foster Community Center, 200 N. Foster Ave., Lansing, MI 48912. This program, in partnership with our affiliate, is a great way to learn about our work to promote the potential of blind people around the nation, the way we empower our membership and how the Federation can cultivate your skills. Light refreshments will be provided, presentations from local program vendors and employers will also be present. We look forward to connecting with all and encourage interested parties to participate.
* **Detroit Chapter:** Over the past month, the Detroit Chapter engaged with others at the Visions Conference, Had a guest speaker from Alabama present a brand new Alexa based accessible application for blind homebuyers program currently launching in Detroit and Ann Arbor, Had a guest speaker from Council Woman Mary Waters' Office explain the role of Detroit's newly created Tenants Rights Commission, Advocated at the Great Lakes Water Authority Board Meeting for the Implementation of a Blind Peoples Water Rights Agenda, And Continued work on developing the concept of a quad county (Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne) paratransit ride share program.
* **Flint-Genesee Chapter:** We are excited to have four active members attending our national convention in Orlando in July. One of our members is a Jernigan awardee. Our chapter is hard at work preparing to host the NFBMI REAL program June 21-23, which includes our annual gala held at the Flint Institute of Art. We are also excitedly preparing for our annual chapter picnic to be held in July, with date and location to be announced. Our members have been hard at work promoting Federation programming, including advertising these programs on local and regional radio, news networks and podcasts. Please visit the NFB of Michigan Facebook page to view clips of our membership and leaders as they discuss our local initiatives, state programs and the journeys of our individual members as they live the life they want.
* **New Wayne County Chapter:** Four members of our chapter are headed to Orlando where we will be selling chocolate covered cherries. We have returned our monthly chapter meetings to the Henry Ford Centennial library in Dearborn. On August 3 we will have a guest from Washtenaw/Monroe Disability Network. We have moved our picnic to August 31 with the location to be determined.

## Important State Affiliate Dates

* 06/17/24 NFBMI Capital Region Chapter Meeting (7pm)
* 06/18/24: NFBMI AT Large Philosophy Discussion (8pm)
* 06/21/24: NFBMI Raising Expectation Accessing Life (REAL) Program
* 06/22/24: NFBMI Flint-Genesee Gala (6pm)
* 06/28/24: NFBMI Soundboard (8pm)
* 06/29/24: Michigan Association of Blind Students Meeting (6:30pm)
* 07/03/24: NFB National Convention
* 07/15/24: NFBMI Capital Region Open House (5pm)