# National Federation of the Blind of Michigan (NFBMI

**The Informant 2024**

**Vol. 11: Staying Federation Thankful…**

**November 17, 2024**

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

## From the President

As we get closer to it. My favorite day. No, not holiday. You did not read the sentence incorrectly. Yes, I wrote the word, day! I ask you, are you excited? Does your cane magically do an extra tap when you are attempting two-point touch while travelling this month? Do you sometimes consider sliding over to Trader Joe’s to take a cruise through what’s on sale with a shopper or use Aira in Walmart on a random Sunday morning to browse at gravy just for vibes? Ok, that may just be me, but that is because this is truly my favorite time of the year, and I am so grateful for being with you all to share this time with you in the Michigan affiliate. On the heels of a strong, robust, monumental, rambunctious convention; there is no organization I am more thankful for than the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan. Take some time to read through this wonderful report to learn why. While you do so, think about why you are thankful this month and consider how the Federation and our affiliate can or have built a bridge to this. We’d love to continue to make this connection as we build the Federation…

## Important National Program Updates

* The 2024 NFB Ride Share Rally took place on October 15, 2024, from 10am until 3pm PT outside the Uber and LIFT headquarters to educate their leadership on our frustration regarding the ongoing rideshare denials for guide dog handlers. The vent was successful and coincided with our monthly presidential release, where we were updated on the efforts and how we can continue this advocacy. To view or witness President Riccobono’s speech at our 2024 Rideshare Rally, please visit <https://www.youtube.com/live/xphq_PFDdEE?t=461s>.
* The National Federation of the Blind continues to advocate for the promotion of braille literacy for children and adolescents. Please support our initiative of providing braille holiday letters and cards to blind children. If you are interested in learning more about this program, please visit <https://nfb.org/programs-services/early-childhood-initiatives/santa-letters>.
* The 2025 NFB STEM2U national program training will take place at the Jernigan Institute from January 9-12 for all affiliates that plan to bring non-visual STEM curriculum programs for blind adolescents to their states. The NFB of Michigan is proud to be represented by its NFB STEM2U coordinator, Ather Jammoa, who will be attending the training in Baltimore. We look forward to all that the training, and Ather, will bring our STEM2U instructors and students.
* The 2025 NFB Washington Seminar will take place February 3-6 at the Holiday Inn Washington Capital. The Washington Seminar is an annual, national program where all 52 of the Federation affiliates gather to discuss pertinent issues that affect the blind with their elected officials. It is a joyous time for the blind to both advocate and celebrate our power as a collective. To learn more about the enthusiasm, process, and participants of the NFB Washington Seminar; please visit https://nfb.org/programs-services/advocacy/washington-seminar.
* The 2025 NFB national convention will take place at the Marriott Hotel from July 8-13 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Additional information about convention registration and hotel reservations will come shortly. To learn more about our national convention, please visit [www.nfb.org/convention](http://www.nfb.org/convention).

## 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).
* We encourage all chapters, divisions and members that are considering ways they can support our organization more to join the Pre-Authorized Contribution (PAC) plan for as little as $5 per month. To learn more about the PAC plan and how it benefits members and programs of the National Federation of the Blind, please visit [www.nfb.org/pac](http://www.nfb.org/pac).
* The 2024 state convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan took place at the Radisson Plaza from October 31- November 3; reaching historical milestones for our affiliate in a number of ways.
* The 2024 state convention offered the largest exhibit hall we've ever had on Friday, November 1, from 11 AM to 6 PM. With over 30 vendor tables of exhibitors and sponsors eager to meet blind attendees; it was an exciting opportunity for our membership and the community at large.
* The 2024 NFBMI Dots with Distance fundraising campaign began October 1, 2024; supporting the exhibit hall attendance through its “Braille Readers Brigade” passport initiative, attendees were encouraged to visit every table and engage with vendors to learn about the services they offered. Vendors were provided code words that came together to create a phrase, entering a participant into a prize drawing at our convention banquet. We thank all members who participated in the passport program that supports our 2025 Braille Enrichment Literacy and Learning (BELL) program and congratulations to Pat Pyle, our Senior division president for her win.
* The National Federation of the Blind of Michigan thanks NFB Second Vice President Everette Bacon for his leadership as our 2024 national representative. His guidance, patience and approachability were refreshing and made convention invigorating. We look forward to continuing work with him and additional members of our national board of directors in the future.
* The National Federation of the Blind of Michigan thanks our immediate past first vice president and long-time Federation leader, Jason (Jay J) Meddaugh for his tireless work for the Michigan affiliate. Though his last official task as first vice and convention coordinator included our 2024 state convention, Jay J has held a multitude of hats in our affiliate for over a decade. This includes coordinating our exhibit hall at our state convention, coordinating meetings for our Washinton Seminar each year, assisting in transportation to meetings while in our nation’s capital for our delegation, supporting our affiliate with sound during events, supporting members that are new transplants to Michigan, connecting with students that are adjusting to blindness in our state and creating innovative ways to make our Federation philosophy speak to all backgrounds ang ages. As a supporter of Jay J’s, his business endeavors and all that he continues to accomplish; I would be absent-minded to say that he does not inspire me every day to strive for more. We thank him for his service and for his promise to continue to support our affiliate as a member in our future programs.
* The 2024 NFBMI state convention returned to its roots with its live auction on November 2, 2024. The live auction occurred during our convention banquet, was hosted by the Blind Michigan Seniors Advocating for Seniors and our auctioneer extraordinaire, Michael Powell. The auction was an overwhelming success, raising $2815. We thank all exhibitors, sponsors, chapters, divisions, members, and attendees that donated items and bids to make this the most successful auction in affiliate history.
* The 2024 NFBMI Federation Fire Challenge was the affiliate’s take on the popular You Tube sensation “Hot Ones.” This hot chicken wing challenge fundraiser combined Federation trivia and hot food with social media competition to great results. With representatives from every active chapter and division in tow, the Federation Fire challenge was a success with $877 raised over the weekend and the challenge being shared via both Facebook and You Tube. To connect to the Federation Fire Challenge and watch your favorite representatives from your chapter beat the heat, visit Facebook, and look for the post by finding the search bard and inserting #NFBMI24.
* The National Federation of the Blind of Michigan congratulates its 2024 scholarship class: Felecia Bradford, Tiaira Mays, Calliandra Bowman-Tomlinson, and Oguzcan Saygili; for their accomplishments this year, persistence to excellence and stories for students like them wishing to pursue their dreams. We wish them well on their journey through academia on the way toward their respective goal. The affiliate also congratulates the 2024 scholarship committee and its chair, Sabrina Rice, on a wonderful job.
* The National Federation of the Blind of Michigan is excited to announce that our work toward creating a blind parents division has begun. At our 2024 state convention, a breakout session, facilitated by Deborah Wellington, was held on November 2, to gage interest. This meeting was well attended and with the needs of both blind parents and parents of blind children being a priority of the Federation; we’d like to hear from you. If you are a blind parent interested in creating a blind parents division, please contact your chapter president and let them know of your interest before December 1, 2024. We appreciate your service and thank Debbie for her leadership at state convention to talk about her concerns and experiences as a blind parent.
* The state fundraising committee is grateful for the efforts and suggestions of so many of our members during the convention weekend. Each year, the committee is actively considering what new, exciting activities it can incorporate into its quarterly plans. If you are interested in representing your local chapter or division in the state fundraising committee, please inform your chapter or division president before December 1. We look forward to having all chapters and divisions represented in the planning process as we move into the new year to build the Federation together.
* The National Federation of the Blind of Michigan congratulates its newly elected officers and special elect board members from the 2024 state convention: Sheila Fulmore (First Vice President), Sanho Steele-Louchart (Second Vice President), Mark Eagle (Treasurer), Maryann Murad (Secretary) and Donna Posont (Board Member One). It is an honor to serve with each of you and I am overly confident our membership excitedly awaits the leadership provided during your term.

## Chapter/Division Updates

* **At Large Chapter:** We are grateful for co-hosting the 2024 state convention with the senior division. We encourage all chapter and interested affiliate members to join our monthly philosophy meeting to learn more about how you can strengthen your connection to Federation history and values. Our next chapter meeting on December 3 will discuss our first quarterly in-person outing, hoping to bridge our connection further.
* **Detroit Chapter: We hosted both a public informational table at the Department of Elections' big October 19th Get Out the Vote Block Party, and an October 23rd presentation on Addressing the Challenges of Accessible Voting conducted at Eye Learn by Detroit's Department of Elections. We rescheduled our Chapter's Double-Good Popcorn Fund Raiser now to occur during the first week of this coming December. We established our own Zoom Line via which we will virtually host our regular Chapter Meetings and some programs/activities, of course you may contact any of our Chapter or Board Members to attain the link/phone numbers necessary to participate with us at any time; And. We are so proud to have assisted Eye Learn Cares, the only blindness rehabilitation agency in our state that trains utilizing NFB's classic philosophy of structured discovery, in successfully winning a $45,000 grant from a local nonprofit to create a unique training program for the blind that some of our Chapter Members will participate in both as instructors and students.**
* **Flint-Genesee Chapter:** 19 members attended the 2024 state convention, where we had a wonderful time connecting with our leadership team, federation family and participating in all of the sessions. **Our chapter is proud that two members are well-deserved scholarship finalists, representing our chapter throughout the weekend with poise and discernment. We also recognize Shaun Williams, our chapter board member and member of the 2024 state resolutions committee, for his excellent work on co-writing two of the 2024 resolutions that passed committee and convention floor vote addressing both BSBP’s accessibility with intake documents and Mott Community College’s accommodations interactions with blind students.**
* **Michigan Association of Blind Students (MIABS):** MIABS held its election during the 2024 NFBMI state convention and elected a full board of officers and directors: Jerusalem Crawley (President), Tiaira Mays (Vice President), Hayley Laskowski (Treasurer), Stephen Crouch (Secretary), Shaneice Milledge (Board Member One) and Oguzcan Saygili (Board Member Two). The division also connected with its National Association of **Blind Students (NABS) liaison, to discuss members applying for the NABS Washington Seminar funding program, which is open until November 22. MIABS will meet biweekly on Friday evening using the Michigan affiliate Zoom line at 8pm until Washington Seminar to plan our upcoming fundraising activity, which will be officially announced shortly.**
* **Michigan Seniors Advocating for Seniors (BMISAFS): We had a great group of enthusiastic seniors in Kalamazoo for the 2024 State Convention! We had 9 members attend our in-person meeting. Beth Philson is our newest member! She joined our division at the convention! I’d like to thank those that helped with the Hospitality Suite. A huge shout out to Mark Eagle for all his support and supplies. Also, thank you to  Donna Posont for providing tea and peanut butter cookies; Faye Chenault-Johnson for supplying the decaf coffee bags and serving as hostess! Bob and Steve were early morning troopers coming to greet guests. We enjoyed this addition to convention. Our newest member, Beth, drove several of us to Kalamazoo along with lots of stuff. We couldn’t have done it without her. Thank you to those of you that supported the Fire Challenge. We raised close to $200.  Good job Seniors. Thank you to Everitt Bacon for taking my place eating hot wings! He’s a good sport and hung in there almost to the 10th sauce!  The Seniors are looking forward to the coming year. Happy Thanksgiving!**
* **New Wayne County Chapter: The New Wayne County chapter will meet for its monthly chapter meeting at the Henry Ford Centennial Library on December 7. We encourage any interested members and guests to join us at Leo’s Coney Island for our holiday celebration on December 13, 2024, from 5-8pm. The address is 17150 W. Eight Mile Rd., Detroit, MI, 48235.**

With Love, Hope and Determination,