

TOGETHER WE RISE
WELCOME TO THE 53rd ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF LOUISIANA!

REGISTRATION & INFORMATION – *Le Foyer*

The NFBL Registration Desk will open at 3:00pm on Friday, March 28, 2025, and will remain open at scheduled intervals. All convention participants must register to be eligible for convention meals, door prizes, hotel convention rates, and to participate in all activities. Both print and Braille agendas are available at the Registration Desk. For those who have pre-registered, a separate table will also be located in the Le Foyer where meal tickets and agendas may be obtained.

The onsite registration fee is \$40 for adults. Registration for children six years and under is free. Registration for children between the ages of seven and eleven is \$20, and the cost for children twelve and older is \$40. Banquet tickets are \$40 and may be purchased at the NFBL Registration Desk. Tickets for complimentary meals will be issued to each convention attendee upon registration, and meal tickets must be presented at each meal. A complimentary continental breakfast will be served to attendees between 8:00am and 8:45am on Saturday and Sunday.

All registered, first-time convention participants should sign up at the NFBL Registration Desk to participate in a special drawing on Sunday morning. The first-time attendee, the individual who invited the new member, and the chapter to which the new member belongs will each receive \$100. Attendees must register for the convention in order to receive conference rates at the Baton Rouge Marriott.

CANE TRAVEL INSTRUCTION – *Le Foyer*

If you have questions about basic cane travel, instructors will be available at the NFBL Registration Desk on Friday from 4:00pm to 6:00pm and on Saturday morning from 8:00am to 8:45am.

FAMILY ROOM – *Evangeline/Camellia*

The family room is available for families with children who need a space to stream the general sessions. All children must be accompanied by and supervised by an adult at all times. We appreciate everyone working together to cultivate a calm and welcoming space. It will be available from 8:30am to 5:00pm on Saturday in Evangeline, and 9:00 to 11:30am on Sunday in Camellia.

TALENT SHOWCASE – *Salon III/IV*

Our annual auction, starting at 8:45pm on Friday, will also feature a showcase of talent. If you have any questions or would like to sign up for the showcase, you may contact Kristen Sims.

EXHIBITS – *Napoleon*

Exhibits will be open on Friday from 2:00pm to 8:00pm, as well as from 8:00am to 9:00am and 11:00am to 2:00pm on Saturday.

Exhibitors:

Emerald Coast Vision Aids

Independent distributor for the leading worldwide developers, manufacturers, and marketers of innovative products designed to assist people with low vision and blindness needs.

<https://emeraldcoastvisionaids.com/>

Non-24 Hr. Disorder/Vanda Pharmaceuticals

Education on Non-24 Hr. Disorder

<https://www.non-24.com/>

State Library of Louisiana - Talking Books and Braille Library

Provides Talking Books and access to Braille Library

<https://www.state.lib.la.us/special-services/tbbl>

NFB LITERATURE AND SUPPLIES – *Salon III/IV*

On Saturday and Sunday, there will be an exhibit area at the back of Salon III/IV. Canes, cane tips, slates, and styluses will be available for purchase. NFB literature and information from agencies and service providers will also be available. We will have T-shirts and other braille-themed items for sale at the back of general session in order to raise money for the NFBL BELL[®] Academy and other youth activities. LCB will also have jackets, and hats for sale.

DOOR PRIZES

Shake 'em up! You may be the lucky winner of a fabulous door prize. Names will be drawn throughout the convention general sessions and banquet. To be eligible to win, you must be registered for convention and be present in the room when your name is drawn. All donations of door prizes should be turned in at the NFBL Registration Desk. The door prize chairpersons are Rachel Grider, Lakeria Taylor, and Stephanie Martin.

NOTES:

- **Individual hand sanitizers will be available at the registration desk and at the NFB table at the back of General Sessions. We appreciate everyone working together to maintain the health and well-being of all attendees!**
- **The National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana seeks to provide a convention environment in which diverse participants, including members, speakers, exhibitors, staff, and volunteers, may learn, network, and enjoy the company of friends and colleagues in an environment of mutual respect. As an attendee at our convention, you not only represent yourself but also represent our organization.**

We recognize a shared responsibility to create and uphold a welcoming and harassment-free atmosphere for all!

We are committed to diversity, equity, integrity, and respect in all aspects of our conference.

Please contact Jewel Ardoin or Rosy Carranza if you have concerns or questions.

- **Please be courteous and silence all cell phones during convention meetings and the banquet. If you need to use your phone, please step outside of the meeting room.**

CONVENTION AGENDA
FRIDAY, March 28, 2025

2:30 - 3:00pm STEM2U Family Check-In
Salon II

3:00 - 5:00pm STEM2U
Azalea and Salon IV
Open for participants who pre-registered only.

2:00 - 8:00pm EXHIBITS
Napoleon

3:00 - 7:00pm REGISTRATION – *Le Foyer*

4:00 - 6:00pm CANE TRAVEL INSTRUCTION
NFBL Registration Desk – Le Foyer

6:00 - 9:00pm HOSPITALITY DINNER – Salon III/IV
Enjoy a delicious buffet. Tickets will be required to enter (included in registration packet).

6:00 - 7:00pm RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
Bonaparte
Roland Allen and Lakeria Taylor, Chairpersons

**6:45 - 8:30pm LOUISIANA PARENTS OF BLIND CHILDREN
DIVISION**

Salon II

Sarah Kassim, President

Jessica Turner, Vice President

Krystal Guillory, Secretary/Treasurer

If you are a parent, grandparent, teacher, or individual interested in the education of blind students, please join us.

**6:45 - 8:30pm LOUISIANA ASSOCIATION OF BLIND STUDENTS
MEETING**

Camellia

Lindsey Adair, President

All high school, college, and graduate students are invited to attend this exciting and informative meeting. Share your experiences and get ideas from other successful students.

7:00 – 8:00pm PROFESSIONAL MEET UP

Bonaparte

Kiva Smith, NFBL Board Member

A time to network

7:00 - 8:30pm NFBL MERCHANTS' GROUP MEETING

Magnolia

Shelly LeJeune, Chairperson

All Randolph-Sheppard vendors and persons interested in business enterprises are welcome.

7:00 - 8:30pm NFBL BLIND SENIORS GROUP

Azalea

Wendy Ortego, Coordinator, LCB Techniques for Living Confidently Program

Join us and learn tips and techniques for seniors experiencing vision loss. Losing your vision does not have to mean losing your independence.

8:45pm until... NFBL AUCTION & TALENT SHOWCASE

Salon III/IV

Auction/Talent Showcase Krewe: Rachel Grider, Eric Guillory, and Kristen Sims

Chapter gift baskets, homemade goods, and collectibles along with other surprises. In between items being auctioned, our talented members will entertain you. Join us for a fun way to raise money for our affiliate!

SATURDAY, March 29, 2025

7:00 - 8:00am NFBL STATE BOARD MEETING

Camellia

7:45 - 8:30am SCHOLARSHIP BREAKFAST

Bonaparte

For 2025 NFBL scholarship finalists and committee members.

8:00 - 8:45am COMPLIMENTARY BREAKFAST

Free for convention registrants

Salon III/IV

8:00 - 8:45am REGISTRATION

Le Foyer

8:00 - 8:45am CANE TRAVEL INSTRUCTION

NFBL Registration Desk, Le Foyer

8:00 - 9:00am EXHIBITS

Napoleon

8:00 - 9:00am NFB LITERATURE AND SUPPLIES

Salon III/IV

8:30 - 5:00pm FAMILY ROOM

Evangeline

The family room is available for families with children who need a space to stream the general sessions. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

GENERAL SESSION
Saturday, March 29, 2025
Salon III/IV
9:00am - 11:00am

9:00am

CALL TO ORDER

Pamela Allen, President, NFBL

"HAVE GAVEL WILL TRAVEL"

**Stephanie Martin, President, North
Central Chapter, NFBL**

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Brookelynn Raulerson, LCB student

WELCOME AND NFB PLEDGE

**Diane Legendre, President
Greater Baton Rouge Chapter, NFBL**

9:20 - 10:05am

**Together We Transform: The Power of Our
Collective Action - Our National Perspective**

**Barbara Manuel, Secretary, NFB; President,
NFB of Alabama; and LCB alumnus, Alabama**

10:05 - 10:30am

**Together We Achieve: Partnerships for
Success**

**Kevin Monk, Executive Director, Blind
Services, Louisiana Rehabilitation Services,
Louisiana Workforce Commission, Baton
Rouge**

**Jamar Ennis, JD, Executive Director,
Governor's Office of Disability Affairs, Baton
Rouge**

**10:30 - 10:45am Together We Thrive: Seniors Embracing
Change and Living Life to the Fullest**

**Wendy Ortego, TLC Coordinator, Breaux
Bridge**

Patrick Flores, TLC Alum, Marksville

**10:45-11:00am Together We Discover: Access to
Information**

**Shelia Coleman, Regional Librarian/
Coordinator of Special Services, Talking
Books and Braille Library, Baton Rouge**

***The following concurrent sessions will provide excellent
information and a chance for participants to share ideas and
learn from blind people about tools and techniques that increase
independence and confidence. Blindness does not hold you back
from living the life you want! Come find out what is possible...***

Exhibits will be open during concurrent sessions.

11:00 – 3:00pm Parent Power Track
Salon II
Parents, grandparents, and teachers of blind children are encouraged to participate in this interactive seminar. Boxed lunch provided to registrants.

11:10 - 12:00pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

SESSION 1: What's App, Doc?

Chuy Vaca, LCB Access Technology Team

Salon III/IV

Come and share your go-to apps that help you get things done in a welcoming setting. Meet people like you that are also getting things done. Suggest things that you want to do with your phone, or come to learn something new. Focus will be on using the VoiceOver and TalkBack screen readers on iPhone or Android devices. On your app, ready, set, go!

SESSION 2: Together We Move

Roland Allen, LCB Cane Travel Instructor

Camellia

Join us for an interactive session to stay fit and keep moving! [Repeats in same location at 2:15pm.]

SESSION 3: Make Your Kitchen Work for You

Cameron Loehr, LCB Home Management Instructor

Azalea

Join us for an engaging breakout session to learn methods that will transform the way you cook and inspire you to want to be in the kitchen. Bring your questions and tips to share, and enjoy valuable insights and inspiration in a lively discussion where we can all learn from each other's experiences and ideas!

SESSION 4: The ABC's of the NFB

Barbara Manuel, Secretary, NFB; President, NFB of Alabama; and LCB alumnus

Magnolia

Live the life you want! Learn about how getting involved in the NFB will make a difference in your life. Raise your expectations and learn about our transformative philosophy.

11:00-2:00pm **EXHIBITS**
Continues in Napoleon

11:00-3:00pm **PARENT POWER TRACK**
Continues in Salon II

12:15 - 1:15pm **COMPLIMENTARY BOX LUNCH**
Salon III/IV (Must have ticket)

12:15–1:45pm Deaf-Blind Division

**Cathy Miller, Coordinator, Lake Area
Chapter**
Bonaparte

**Meeting for those interested in learning
about and discussing issues affecting deaf-
blind individuals. All are welcome. Please
bring your box lunch.**

12:15 - 1:15pm **REGISTRATION – *Le Foyer***

1:30-2:15pm

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

SESSION 1: Smart Glasses and Smart Conversations

Jewel Ardoin, LCB Access Technology Team

Salon III/IV

Explore the exciting world of AI, from Ray-Bans with Meta AI to other wearable tech that is changing the way we access information. Learn how the devices are becoming powerful tools for offering real time assistance, navigation, and more. We will touch on how to speak to AI more effectively to get clearer and more useful results. Learn about the pros and cons and share ideas. [Repeats in same location at 2:15pm]

SESSION 2: Calm, Cool and Collected

**Nabiha Majuhid, Accessible Materials Specialist, Louisiana Special School District
*Camellia***

Interested in learning more about yoga?

Come join us to discover ways to de-stress and find balance.

SESSION 3: Exploring the World: Tips for Independent Travel

Rachel Grider, LCB Cane Travel Instructor
Azalea

Whether you are new to using a cane or have other questions about travel with a cane or guide dog, join us for an interactive discussion about upping your travel game.

SESSION 4: Let's Go Build the Federation

Kristen Sims, NFBL Secretary
Kiva Smith, NFBL Board Member
Magnolia

Bring your questions about building your chapter. Share ideas for creating a welcoming and inclusive meeting. Learn about building your membership profile in the NFB portal.

2:15-3:00pm

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

SESSION 1: Smart Glasses and Smart Conversations

Jewel Ardoin, LCB Access Technology Team

Salon III/IV

Explore the exciting world of AI, from Ray-Bans with Meta AI to other wearable tech that is changing the way we access information. Learn how the devices are

becoming powerful tools for offering real time assistance, navigation, and more. We will touch on how to speak to AI more effectively to get clearer and more useful results. Learn about the pros and cons and share ideas.

SESSION 2: Together We Move

Roland Allen, LCB Cane Travel Instructor

Camellia

Join us for an interactive session to stay fit and keep moving!

SESSION 3: Braille Rocks!

April Leachman, LCB Home Management Instructor

Azalea

Whether you're looking for a way to label items and be more organized, need an efficient way to take notes, or want to read (or write) the next great American novel, braille can play an essential role in your everyday life. Braille is easier to learn than you might think, and its uses are almost limitless. Join us to learn more about how you can make the code work for you.

SESSION 4: Blind Parent Meet-Up

Cameron Loehr and Kia Vaca

Magnolia

**Here is a great chance to connect with
blind parents, guardians, and grandparents
to share ideas and learn about resources.**

We can't wait to welcome you!

GENERAL SESSION
Saturday, March 29, 2025
Salon III/IV
3:00 - 5:00pm

3:00 – 3:20pm **Together We Dream: The Road to the 2028 Paralympics**

Ethan Kunes, LCB Student, Member of US Men's Paralympic Soccer Team

3:20 - 4:10pm **Together We Innovate: Shaping the Future of Education and Rehabilitation**

Kristen Sims, Assistant Director, Professional Development and Research Institute on Blindness, La. Tech University, Monroe

Casey Robertson Ed.S., Teacher of Blind and Visually Impaired, Faculty at Professional Development and Research Institute on Blindness, La. Tech University, Mississippi

Kayla Deason, Program Manager, Professional Development and Research Institute on Blindness, La. Tech University, Dubach

Jackson Schwoebel, La. Tech University Graduate Student in Orientation & Mobility, Ruston

Brian Breen, NFB 2025 Teacher of Tomorrow, Baton Rouge

4:10 – 4:25pm Together We Create: Fostering Collaboration

Dr. David Martin, Superintendent, Louisiana Special School District, Baton Rouge

Susan Covington, Executive Director, Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired, Baton Rouge

4:25 – 5:00pm Together We Empower: Celebrating Achievement and Building Future Leaders Through Braille Literacy and Mentoring, Braille Readers are Leaders, NFBL BELL Academy, Braille Book Club, and Braille Challenge

Krystal Guillory, NFB BELL® Academy Coordinator, Ruston

5:15pm NOMINATING COMMITTEE

7:00pm

BANQUET

Salon I/II

Master of Ceremonies – Roland Allen

Keynote Address

Scholarships and Special Presentations

Following the Banquet,

Dance and DJ in Salon I/II

Bingo in Azalea (\$10 admission)

SUNDAY – March 30, 2025

8:00 – 8:45am **COMPLIMENTARY BREAKFAST**
Salon III/IV

8:00 - 8:45am **NFB LITERATURE AND SUPPLIES**
Salon III/IV

8:15 – 8:45am **DEVOTIONS**
Brenda Gardner, President, Morehouse
Chapter, Bastrop
Camellia

9:00 - 11:30am **FAMILY ROOM**
Camellia
The family room is available for families with children who need a space to stream the general sessions. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

GENERAL BUSINESS SESSION

Sunday, March 30, 2025

Salon III/IV

9:00am - 11:30am

9:00am

CALL TO ORDER

Pamela Allen, President

9:10 - 9:40am

Together We Belong: The Power of Being Part of Something Bigger

Alberta Robinson, President, Greater Ouachita Chapter, Monroe

Taylor Valenzuela, Vice President, Louisiana Association of Blind Students, Baton Rouge

Chuy Vaca, LCB Access Technology Team, Ruston

9:40 - 9:55am

Together We Succeed: Reflecting on Our Journey and Building Our Future

Pam Allen, President of NFBL and Vice President of NFB, Executive Director of Louisiana Center for the Blind, Ruston

9:55 - 10:40am **Together We Build: Taking Care of Business**
Secretary's Report, Kristen Sims
Treasurer's Report, Krystal Guillory
Committee updates
Chapter and Division reports
Fundraising presentations

10:40 -11:10am **Together We Lead and Serve: Nominating**
Committee Report and Elections

11:10- 11:30am **Together We Celebrate: Final Reflections**
and Calls to Action

Countdown to New Orleans

"Have Gavel Will Travel" Award
Convention Announcements

ADJOURNMENT

The National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana seeks to provide a convention environment in which participants, including members, speakers, exhibitors, staff, and volunteers, may learn, network, and enjoy the company of friends and colleagues in an environment of mutual respect. As an attendee at our convention, you not only represent yourself but also represent our organization.

We recognize a shared responsibility to create and uphold that atmosphere for the benefit of all.

We are committed to diversity, equity, integrity, and respect in all aspects of our conference. Our Code of Conduct can be found at <https://nfb.org/about-us/history-and-governance/code-conduct>.

Please contact Jewel Ardoin or Rosy Carranza if you have concerns or questions. Thank you for your help to make our community safe and welcoming for all!

A Heartfelt Thank You from the state president:

“We rise by lifting others.” – Sarah Breedlove

To our host chapter: Your hospitality and enthusiasm are so appreciated! Thanks for making this convention memorable!

To Barbara Manuel, our national representative: Your warmth, approachability, dedication, and leadership are evident in your words and actions! Thank you for exemplifying our core values and leading with wisdom and love! You encourage us to dream big!

To our convention attendees: Your presence, engagement, and commitment to our mission made this event a remarkable success. It is your passion for creating positive change that inspires our work!

To members of the NFB of Louisiana: Your dedication, hard work, and tireless support are critical to our mission! I am so grateful for your unwavering commitment to our cause.

To our first-time convention attendees: Your ideas and energy are so appreciated! Welcome to our community where we believe in blind people! Remember, you are part of something bigger!

To the hotel staff: Thank you for providing excellent service and support. Your attention to detail, flexibility, and dedication to making this event run smoothly have not gone unnoticed.

To our speakers and exhibitors: Your insights, expertise, and willingness to share your knowledge have enriched us all. Thank you for contributing to a dynamic and engaging program.

To everyone who helped with logistics at every stage of convention planning and execution: Your behind-the-scenes efforts ensured everything ran seamlessly. No detail was left unattended. Your diligence made all the difference!

To chapter, division, and state officers and group and committee chairs: Your leadership and passion continue to motivate us all! Thank you for your guidance, sacrifice, and support in accomplishing our priorities and shaping our future!

To those who contributed with financial support, door prize and auction donations, PAC contributions, playing Bingo, purchasing items, and giving lovingly of your time: Your generosity helps make our work possible! Thank you for supporting our work through your selflessness and commitment!

To LCB and PDRIB students, staff, and alumni: Your dedication to learning and growing are celebrated and valued! Because of you, lives are changed, and expectations are raised.

To everyone involved in this journey: We have helped create a space where we can come together, learn, and collaborate, paving the way for a brighter, more inclusive future for blind people. I encourage us all to lean on each other and continue this momentum and carry the lessons and inspiration from this weekend to our chapters and local communities!

Together, we rise, and together, we will continue to build a better tomorrow. Thank you for your loving commitment to each other and to our work! Let's go build the National Federation of the Blind!

With loving appreciation, Pam Allen

Live the Life You Want

**Tune and lyrics by J.P. Williams, James Brown,
Richie Flores, and J.J. Meddaugh**

**Live the life you want
nobody can stop you,
Shoot for the sun,
break on through,
So you're blind, you'll be fine, we've got good news,
you can live the life you want
we know the truth.**

**Grab a cane, get trained, gotta get moving.
Make a change, earn a wage, that's what we're doing.**

**Come with me,
to live the life you want,
nobody can stop you,
Shoot for the sun,
break on through,
So you're blind, you'll be fine, we've got good news,
you can live the life you want
we know the truth.**

**You and me, NFB
let's dream together,
NFB, you and me
lives on forever,
you will see.**

**You can live the life you want, nothing can stop you.
Shoot for the sun, break on through,
So you're blind, you'll be fine, we've got good news,
you can live the life you want,
'cause we know the truth.
you can live the life you want,
'cause we know the truth.**

NFB PLEDGE

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.

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The National Federation of the Blind advances the lives of its members and all blind people in the United States.

We know 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. Our collective power, determination, and diversity achieve the aspirations of all blind people. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back!