

E-CONNECTOR

News from Colorado Parents of Blind Children (CO-POBC)

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"LOW VISION" WAKE UP CALL

[Excerpted from *When Blindness is Seen as the Inability to Learn* by Joanne Laurent, MA, COMS; [Future Reflections](#) Volume 30, number 2]

She Doesn't Need a Cane-- She Just Needs to Look Where She's Going!

Society places a very high value on vision. For centuries blindness has aroused pity and denoted shame, poverty, and incompetence. The stigma of blindness is passed down to children by their parents, teachers, and doctors. Adults continually praise any ability to see a target object. "Can you see that?" "Keep trying!" "That's great, Timmy! You saw it!" Children quickly learn that seeing pleases people and not seeing troubles them. They feign being sighted and get by the best they can.

Visual impairment can easily be overlooked in children who work hard to fit in and appear "normal." I recall performing a vision assessment on a nine-year-old girl. She was crafty about suggesting the best routes for traveling throughout her school. With the congenial demeanor of a hostess, she helped me find my way around during my first visit. She traveled freely and easily without any indication that she needed a cane. However, I soon realized that she was avoiding stairs. When I asked her about my suspicions, she admitted that she was afraid of stairs because of her poor vision. Although it was no secret to the school staff that she was legally blind, her poor travel vision had gone unnoticed. Sometimes she completely missed seeing unexpected drop-offs and surface changes. She was unsafe walking near stairs and drop-offs without a cane.

In class this child could not see the board from her seat. She was expected to keep up with the class by the repetitive action of focusing her monocular on the board, releasing the focus to stop and write a note, and then focusing

Editor's Note: Please feel free to contact us if you have an announcement you would like included in the newsletter or if you would like to add a friend or family member to the e-mail list. Direct all communications to: copobc@gmail.com, attention Julie Hunter, editor

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up on the board again. She could see only a few letters or words at a glance, and her narrow field of vision caused a severe reading hardship. Tragically, her blindness won her the label "slow learner." All she needed in order to thrive were some reasonable accommodations. She needed an advocate to ensure that she could sit closer to the board and get Braille training [and cane travel training] added to her IEP.



BRAILLE OR PRINT??

A new assessment tool to determine the most appropriate reading medium for students who are blind or have low vision was introduced in November by the National Federation of the Blind. The [National Reading Media Assessment \(NRMA\)](#) was designed to help to ensure that a student's reading medium is appropriately identified both for current and future need, and to ensure that student success is not hampered by incorrect identification of literacy needs. Developed and tested over a three-year period in collaboration with the Professional Development and Research Institute on Blindness

at Louisiana Tech University, the NRMA is the first nationally validated assessment of its kind for youth with low vision. This tool will determine whether each child who is assessed should be taught Braille, print, or both. With the NRMA, teachers can evaluate pre-readers and students in grades K-12 who have an identified visual impairment and who have enough visual functioning to identify print letters or shapes by sight. Dr. Edward Bell, principal investigator of the research, said: "The primary findings from our assessment showed 14 percent more youth as needing Braille than prior assessments, and 36 percent more youth as needing Braille than who are actually getting it. Clearly this new approach is sorely needed in order to improve the education of blind children." To learn more or participate in the National Reading Media Assessment, please visit www.nfbnrma.org.

(Taken from NFB Press Release: November 15, 2012)



GIVE WHERE YOU LIVE!

Your Dollars for Our Kids!

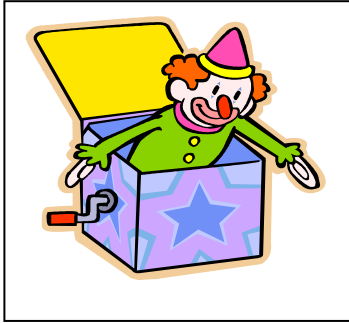
Donate on **Colorado Gives Day**, December 4, to support the Colorado Center for the Blind Youth Programs.

As most of you know, the [Colorado Center for the Blind](#) provides independence skills training programs for blind and visually impaired individuals...adults and children. The Center is dedicated to developing a positive philosophy of blindness, non-visual skill mastery and opportunities for the blind to live a full and independent life. Your gift will be dedicated to the youth programs at the Center, such as the Blind Link mentoring program; challenge recreation activities; Braille literacy programs; summer skills camps; vocational exploration opportunities; STEM enrichment activities family seminars and more.

Why give on December 4, 2012?

To boost charitable giving to non-profit organizations like the Colorado Center for the Blind, FirstBank has put together an incentive gift to the organizations. The Center will receive 100% of your giving plus a percentage of that incentive gift. It's simple! Just go to www.givingfirst.org/cocenter/overview, and click on the "Donate Now"

button. You don't even have to wait until the 4th. You can visit the site any time between now and December 4th and mark your gift for Colorado Gives Day. If you do it right now, you won't forget! Thank you for supporting the CCB!



GIFT IDEAS

The holidays are upon us! Here are some ideas for the visually impaired/blind person in your house:

Jewelry: Elegant Insights creates hand crafted Braille accented bracelets, charms, earrings, etc. made from brass, copper, stainless steel and sterling silver. The unique feature of this jeweler is that the designer will customize the Braille on the piece just for you!

www.elegantinsightsjewelry.com.

Toys, Games and Puzzles:

Puzzles:

Go to www.flaghouse.com and put tactile puzzle in the search box.

A Jungle themed Tactile Puzzle is available at the [Learning House web site](http://LearningHouse.com).

Many games and puzzles are available from the Braille Book Store.

www.braillebookstore.com

Coloring Books: Tactile Vision, Inc. offers a series of raised-line coloring books, as well as other raised line picture books with Braille descriptions.

www.tactilevisioninc.com.

Find raised line coloring books and other toys from www.LSSproducts.com click on children's products.

Markers with Braille labels and coloring books are available from www.Playabilitytoys.com

For more toys and games take a look at these websites: www.blindmicemart.com, www.squidoo.com, and www.specialneedstoys.com.



FREE BRAILLE BOOKS FOR KIDS

Temple Beth El Sisterhood Braille Bindery, a volunteer organization located in Michigan, will ship, for free, to a child's home or school any of 1200 children's books in Braille. Many age levels are included, and you can view the complete list by following the link below. For an order form, contact Barbara Mandelbaum at 248-542-7736 or email asmandel1@sbcglobal.net. All

books are free and there is no limit to the number that may be selected.

[Click this link to visit the TBE Braille Bindery website.](#)

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS



December 8

We are pleased to invite you to a party hosted by the National Federation of the Blind of Denver and the Colorado Parents of Blind Children. Bring the kids and celebrate the season. There will be sandwiches, snacks and desserts, craft activities for the kids, cookie decorating and a visit from Santa Claus! We look forward to seeing everyone there. (An optional adult gift exchange will also take place. If you wish to participate, bring a gift valued at \$15 or less. Contributions of desserts to share are also welcomed.)

What: NFB of Denver and CO-POBC Holiday Party

When: Saturday, December 8, 2012

Time: 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Where: Colorado Center for the Blind
2233 W. Sheppard Avenue
Littleton, CO 80120