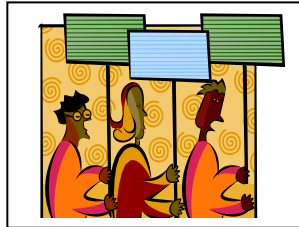


E-CONNECTOR

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

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ALARMING NEWS!

What do the words "Vocational Rehabilitation" mean to you? If your children are young these words may have very little meaning. But pay attention! Kids grow up faster than you think and before you know it you will be very concerned about your teenager's future and what the state Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is supposed to do to help your teen transition successfully to an independent life as an employed person.

First, a brief look at what vocational rehabilitation is all about. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a program that provides supportive services to individuals with disabilities to get and keep jobs compatible with their skills and abilities. The Federal Rehabilitation Act requires that state Vocational Rehabilitation agencies coordinate with the

state education agency to evaluate what transition services are needed so that students with disabilities can move smoothly from high school to employment, or preparation for employment (i.e. college, vocational education, etc.) Assistance may include such things as tuition, computer technology, transportation, books, etc., or it might be a training program to learn skills needed to succeed in college or in a job. There is no set age at which services from VR must begin, but many states offer assistance to teens as young as 14 years old to attend summer skills development programs. The reason the majority of the students in the high school summer programs at the Colorado Center for the Blind are from out of state is that they come from places where DVR pays for teenagers to get training during the summer--training which will help those teens be ready for employment or college when they graduate. Does Colorado DVR provide financial support for teens to get summer training? Almost never! Why? They say the money isn't there.

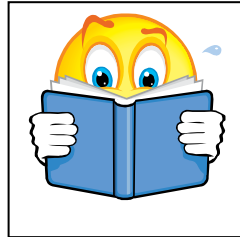
Editor's Note: Please feel free to contact us if you have an announcement you would like included in the newsletter or if you would like to add a friend or family member to the e-mail list. Direct all communications to: copobc.newsletter@gmail.com, attention Julie Hunter, editor.

Money...that's the crux of the current crisis at Colorado DVR.

Here's a very brief outline of what's going on. The Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation underwent a legislative audit in 2013 and some very disturbing practices were uncovered. The director of the agency, Nancy Smith, was relieved of her duties in the middle of the year. The agency was without a director until October, 2013, when Joelle Brouner was appointed to that position. Meanwhile, a plan to resolve the financial issues uncovered in the audit have not been achieved and monies have not be available to provide new client services. Colorado DVR has been under Order of Selection status for months. Order of Selection is when the Division of Rehabilitation Services doesn't have sufficient financial resources to serve all the people who are eligible for services. Currently over 6100 disabled people in Colorado are on the waiting list!

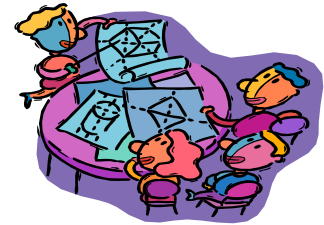
The National Federation of the Blind of Colorado is not standing still for this. President, Scott LaBarre, and other leaders of the Federation are meeting with Reggie Bicha, the director of the Colorado Department of Human Services, Joelle Brouner, director of DVR and several other key players to push for a resolution of the issues. Informing the state

legislators of this crisis situation will be part of the Day at the Capitol on February 28. We cannot stand by and watch as thousands of individuals on the waiting list pay for the mismanagement of the state agency that should be there to help them. Stay tuned for future updates on this situation.



BLIND HEROINE IN NEW BOOK FOR TEENS

The Heart of Applebutter Hill by [Donna Hill](#) is a novel that allows teens with visual impairments to see themselves taking part in an exciting adventure that could have happened to anyone. The heroine of *The Heart of Applebutter Hill* is a 14-year-old shy songwriter who is losing her sight. Abigail has a guide dog named Curly Connor, and she is just starting to learn about Braille and assistive technology. The story is an adventure-mystery with excursions into fantasy as two 14-year-olds make their way in a new land and deal with the consequences of discovering a dangerous secret. The fantasy portion is based on a passage from C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Available from Amazon and Barnes & Noble.



STUDENT CONNECT 2014 WESTERN STATES SEMINAR

Attention all high school and college students! On the weekend of April 11 & 12, students from across the West will gather at the Colorado Center for the Blind for an exciting seminar. You will hear from experts and share ideas on all aspects of getting from high school to college graduation and going on to find a job. From the classroom to the sports field, all the tough questions about how to be a successful college student will be addressed. Don't miss your chance to CONNECT...

Connect to the latest innovations in science, technology and math for blind students.

Connect to scholarships, employment and internship opportunities, and blind professionals.

Connect to the largest network of blind students in the United States!

For those requiring overnight accommodations, a block of rooms has been reserved at the Hampton Inn, Highlands Ranch for a rate of \$89 per night with free shuttle to the CCB. Registration will be \$50 and will

include Friday lunch, Saturday lunch, and Saturday dinner. To REGISTER or get more information contact Antonio Rozier at arozier@cocenter.org. You can also call 404-376-5661.



GET READY FOR BELL 2014!

The BELL Program, a project of the NFB Jernigan Institute, is a two week day camp experience for blind and visually impaired children ages 4-12. Officially the letters B.E.L.L. stand for “Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning”, but for the kids, the letters stand for F.U.N.

Both beginners and more accomplished Braille readers will gain confidence in reading and writing while engaged in games, crafts and exciting outdoor activities. There will be two BELL camps this year. The BELL program in Colorado Springs is being held from July 14-25, 2014 on the campus of Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind (CSDB). The second BELL camp will be held in the Westminster area from July 21 through August 1, 2014 at the Rocky Mountain MS Center, which is located at 8845 Wagner Street.

The programs will be led by certified Braille teachers as well

as others who love Braille and use it every day. There is no cost to attend, but families will be encouraged to volunteer at least one day during the programs. Space is limited, so call soon to request an application. For more information contact program coordinator, Diane McGeorge, at 303-321-4268 or email- rmcgeorge@comcast.net, or Michelle Chacon at mchacon@adams50.org or phone 303-456-9000.

Watch the [NFB of Colorado's BELL program video](#) on Youtube

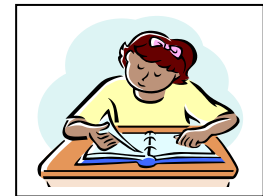


HOW SHOPPING CAN BENEFIT BLIND KIDS

Did you know that you can support the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children every time you make a purchase on Amazon.com? AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support the NFB's parents' organization at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same prices and selection with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to

your favorite charitable organization.

To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device and choose National Organization of Parents of Blind Children.



SEEKING CHILDREN IN GRADES 3-12 FOR A READING STUDY

Laura Bostick, Research Associate at Louisiana Tech University, is conducting a study to measure the impact of the reading mode (large print, Braille,) on a child's desire to read for pleasure. She is looking for children and youth between the ages of 8 and 22 years old who are in grades 3-12. Vision impairment must be the primary disability. The children who volunteer will be videotaped reading for up to one hour. Participants must be on a reading level that is no more than two years below grade level and must be able to read Braille or print for at least ten minutes. The knowledge gained from this study will help in the development of practices for preparing teachers. If you are interested in having your child participate, please contact the Research Associate, Laura Bostick, at lbostick@latech.edu or (318) 257-4554.



SCHOLARSHIP NEWS AND DEADLINES

MICROSOFT SCHOLARSHIP:

Microsoft recently announced its new DisAbility Scholarship targeting high school seniors with disabilities who are interested in a career in the technology industry, business, finance or law. Applicants must be planning to attend a 2 or 4-year college or technical college in the fall of the academic year following high school graduation.

This non-renewable \$5000 scholarship will be paid to the recipient's Financial Aid Office by the Seattle Foundation on behalf of the DisAbility Employee Resource Group (ERG) at Microsoft. The application must be submitted by March 15. [Click here](#) for more information.

OTHER SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINES LOOMING:

The NFB Scholarship Program invites blind students who will attend college in Fall 2014 to apply for a scholarship. The National Federation of the Blind offers 30 awards, worth from \$3,000 up to \$12,000,

plus assistance for the 30 winners to attend the July 2014 Annual Convention in Orlando, Florida. For full information and the online application form, go to www.nfb.org/scholarships. Deadline: March 31.

The NFB of Colorado distributes a total of up to \$15,000 in scholarships to legally blind Colorado residents. Scholarship winners must also agree to attend the 2014 NFB national convention in July (expenses paid). The application form is available on the [NFBCO.org website](http://NFBCO.org). Deadline: April 15



DON'T FORGET! UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

FUN FOR KIDS AGE 5-18!

March 1: FAST Saturday Program ; 10 am -2 pm

We will be focusing on Braille, technology and a fun activity which will include lunch! This is for kids ages 5-18. The kids will be divided into groups based on age and ability. Space is limited so please **RSVP by February 21st**. There is no cost for this event.

FUN FOR FAMILIES

March 21-22: FAST Overnight Family Seminar

Families will arrive at the Center by 5 pm on Friday evening. Parents and siblings will join with blind kids and mentors to participate in a variety of different activities. Following overnight accommodations at the CCB apartments, the seminar will conclude at 8 pm on Saturday evening. There is no cost to this event but space is limited to 4 families so please register your family by contacting Brent Batron at the Center **by March 7th**. There will be lots of fun and learning for all family members.

DAY AT THE CAPITOL--PLEASE BE THERE!

Friday, February 28

Let your senators and representatives know you care about Vocational Rehabilitation Services!!

Join other parents and members of the NFB of Colorado for a "Day at the Capitol" in Denver on Friday, February 28, 2014. Meet at the state Capitol in downtown Denver on the second floor outside the Old Supreme Court Chambers at 8:00 a.m. on February 28th.