

Chasing Your Dreams and Living Courageously

Seventy Second Annual State Convention

National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

Shara Winton

President

Friday, March 14- Sunday, March 16, 2025

Sheraton Springfield –

1 Monarch Place Springfield , MA 01144

(413) 781-1010

Message from our Massachusetts President Happy State Convention!

Greetings to our Federation family, friends, and attendees! After much anticipation, the National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts is thrilled to return to Springfield for another incredible convention. This year's gathering promises an enriching experience filled with dynamic sessions, insightful discussions, and innovative breakouts designed to empower and inspire. As the largest gathering of blind people, organized by BLIND people in Massachusetts, this convention offers invaluable resources and connections to support you in your academic, social, and vocational pursuits. I encourage you to take full advantage of these opportunities and build meaningful networks throughout the weekend.

Our theme this year, “**Chasing Your Dreams and Living Courageously,**” is woven into every aspect of our programming. On Friday afternoon, our breakout sessions will highlight the core principles of the Federation and the essential skills that enable blind individuals to thrive. In his 2023 National Banquet Address, our national president, Mark Riccobono, called for a decisive break from the **Vision Industrial Complex**—a challenge that I now extend to you. I invite each of you, whether a longtime Federationist, guest, or first-time attendee, to embrace the mission of the Federation: securing equality, opportunity, and security for the blind.

By engaging in our breakout and general sessions, making your voice heard as a proud dues-paying member, and advocating alongside us, you become an active force for change in the lives of blind individuals across Massachusetts. As one of 52 affiliates supporting our national movement, we are honored to welcome **Tom Page** as our national representative this year. His wealth of experience, combined with the learning and leadership opportunities available throughout this weekend, fuels my excitement for what we can achieve together in the year ahead.

I look forward to hearing your insights, ideas, and aspirations as we continue to **live the lives we want!**

With Love, Hope and Determination

Shara Winton President

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.

NFB One-Minute Message


The National Federation of the Blind knows 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. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back.


Join Us for a Special Tour of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame!

Did you know that basketball was invented in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1891? Come explore its origins, learn about the man behind the game, and celebrate the incredible milestones in basketball history by joining us for a visit to the **Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame** on **March 16, 2025!**

We're excited to offer a **discounted admission rate of just \$12 per person**—less than half the typical tour price!

Event Details:

 **Time:** Our convention will officially conclude by **noon on Sunday**. Afterward, make your way to the Hall of Fame at **1000 Hall of Fame Avenue, Springfield, MA 01105**—just a short Uber or Lyft ride away. Please arrive by **1:00 PM** to begin the tour.

 **Lunch & Shopping:** Enjoy a meal at one of the Hall of Fame's four dining options, each offering different menu selections and price points. Don't forget to stop by the gift shop for memorabilia! **Tour Duration:** The tour will wrap up between **2:30 and 3:00 PM**, giving you ample time to return to the hotel and catch the group bus back to Cambridge.

Sign Up by March 5!

To reserve your spot, please contact **Shara Winton** at **617-304-0347** or **sharawinton@gmail.com** and let her know how you'd like to pay for your ticket.

Don't miss this fantastic opportunity to experience basketball history up close—**register today!**

NFB Donation Drive

Want to win either \$400 or have your 2026 State Convention hotel and meals covered? Here's your chance!

The National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts is hosting the 2025 NFBMA Convention donation drive. For each \$20 donation, you will get one chance in the Convention drawing. For example, if you donate \$100, you will get five chances.

The winner will have their choice of either \$400 or their 2026 state convention hotel (two nights) and State Convention registration covered by the affiliate. The drawing will take place at the NFBMA banquet on Saturday, March 15, 2025. The winner does not have to be present.

The fundraiser is open through 3PM on Saturday, March 15, 2025.

The rules for the drawing are as follows:

1. For each \$20 donated, the donor will receive one chance. For example, if the donor contributes \$100, that equates to 5 chances.
2. The donor must expressly state that they wish to have their name placed in the convention drawing.
3. Donations must be made separately from any door prize contributions, convention registration donations, walk donations, or end-of-year sharing contributions.
4. Donations must be received on or before 3PM on March 15, 2025. During the convention, you will need to make any Cash donations to Jeff Wilson .

Whichever way you choose to make your donation, be sure to note that is for the "Convention Donation drive." Individuals may make donations using the PayPal <https://nfbma.org/donate-now> . Or using Zelle treasurerer@nfbma.org (or by mailing checks to:

National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

Shara Winton

29 Ellsworth Terrace


Lynn, MA 01904

If making donations via PayPal or Zelle, please send the receipt or proof of the payment to Jeff Wilson at jeff@wilsonsolutions.biz. Good Luck!!!

NEW OPPORTUNITY

Join us and learn about Blind Cricket! Learn the fundamentals of the sport and take the first step toward trying out for the national men's and women's teams.

 **Date: Friday, March 14**

 **Time: Personal demonstrations available between 1:00 PM – 4:45 PM**

Get a firsthand look at what blind cricket is all about and see if it's a sport you'd love to add to your fitness or recreational routine. If you can't make it on Friday, there will be limited opportunities to connect with organizers and experience additional demonstrations. However, priority appointments will be scheduled for Friday afternoon.

Blind cricket is expanding across the United States, and we're looking for passionate, adventurous individuals to join the national team! With no state teams to navigate, you have the unique opportunity to step directly onto the international stage and represent America. Whether you're an athlete, a sports enthusiast, or simply seeking a new challenge, this is your chance to be part of something incredible!

Secure your spot today! Contact Shara, by March 5 at 617-304-0347 to confirm your personal demonstration. Otherwise take a chance to visit their exhibit table and make an appointment then. But whatever you do, don't miss this exciting opportunity!

Transportation Available from Cambridge to Springfield and back

We have secured a charter bus through First Student Charter. Let's travel together and have some fun! We will be leaving no later than 9:00AM on March 14 from

Citywide Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts avenue, Cambridge, MA02139.

**We will be going directly to the Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place
One Monarch Place
Springfield, MA 01144**

On Sunday, March 16 we will be leaving the hotel no later than 4pm to return to the Citywide Senior Center. The cost will be \$45 per individual. This cost covers your round trip. If you choose to ride only one way or the other, the cost will be the same. Please make this payment via Zelle to treasurer@nfbma.org or via PayPal at <https://nfbma.org/donate-now> . No matter which method you choose, please, write in the memo field that the "payment is for state convention transportation for [name]"

In addition, it is critical that you contact Debbie Malone at 774-786-0177 to confirm your seat. After you have made your payment, please send a copy of the receipt to Debbie Malone at dmalone510@gmail.com You may either call, text or email Debbie with any question you have regarding transportation.

Tell Your Friends

We encourage you to talk about the convention with your friends on social media. Our official hash tag is #NFBMA25.

Convention Registration

We encourage everyone to register for the convention. Everyone who registers for the convention will be eligible to win door prizes that will be given away throughout the weekend. Additionally, current members of a local chapter or state division in Massachusetts will be eligible to vote during resolutions and elections.

Registration is open in the 2nd Floor Atrium on Friday from 12:00 pm to 7:00 pm and Saturday morning from 8:00 am to 8:45 am at our affiliate information table.

Child Care Services

The Massachusetts Parents of Blind Children, MAPBC, is excited to announce the Play, Learn, & Nap Suite at our 2025 state convention. This suite will provide a welcoming space for children of all abilities and a safe and fun environment for kids to play, learn, and connect with peers while parents enjoy convention activities. The playroom will be open during all general sessions and the banquet, equipped with toys, art supplies, and supervised activities led by two adults at all times to ensure safety and fun. Parents are welcome to stay with their children or stop by to meet and connect with members of MAPBC.

For more information, contact:

Hai Nguyen Ly: 305-781-7951

Youme Nguyen Ly: 305-632-4883

We look forward to meeting you and your family at the convention!

Inclusivity, Diversity, and Code of Conduct

We are committed to providing a welcoming, safe, and healthy environment for everyone. Thank you for cultivating an atmosphere of mutual respect where participants from diverse backgrounds can learn, network, and share with each other. We are committed to diversity, equity, and the free expression of ideas. These principles have been outlined in our Code of Conduct found at <https://nfb.org/codeofconduct>.

We recognize a shared responsibility to create and uphold an inclusive atmosphere for the benefit of all. Prohibited behaviors include harassment, sexual misconduct, and inappropriate use of the NFB virtual convention platform. Prohibited behavior or misuse of the platform will not be tolerated and may result in removal from the convention and other consequences.

For assistance or to report an incident at the convention, please call

(410) 659-9314, extension 2475, or email code@nfb.org. All reports will be fully investigated according to the steps outlined in our code of conduct. Thank you for doing your part to contribute to our community and the high expectations we strive to maintain at all our events.

Door Prizes

Door prizes will be drawn periodically throughout the convention during all general session and our banquet. Anyone is eligible to win a door prize if they are registered for the convention and are present in the room when their name is called. If you are hoping to donate a door prize at convention, please locate Carol Maurice ,door-prize chair and Springfield Chapter secretary,

Friday, March 14, 2025

12:00 PM -7:00 PM Convention registration and packet pick-ups—Second Floor Atrium

1:00 pm – 6:00 pm Exhibit Hall–2nd Floor Atrium

Stop by our exhibit hall, where a variety of chapters, divisions, exhibitors and vendors will be eager to share their latest products and services with you. While networking with vendors; learn about options for access technology, services that may benefit you, and purchase some great products.

1:00 PM -4:45 Pm Blind Cricket!!! Highland Room

What is Blind Cricket? Get a hands-on demonstration or just come in and watch. This is a great opportunity to learn about an accessible sport for the blind. It is also a chance to meet the organizers of the first U.S.A. Olympic Cricket Team! Don't miss this opportunity. If you have not signed up for a demonstration, please go to the Blind Cricket Table at the Exhibit Hall to sign up for your personal demonstration.

1:00Pm – 3::00 PM Get Creative-Stephanie Valdes

Join us for a fun time decorating your cane, drawing & painting with puff paint, and trying out the art of origami while mingling with old friends and making new ones. Everyone is welcome to this event! comma adults, children, students, and anybody who wants to engage in one or more of these activities. The materials will be provided, all you need to do is show up and have fun. We look forward to welcoming you and having fun together.

1:00 pm – 1:55 pm Blindness Skills Training 101 – Charles Room

Coady Bear , Treasurer , National Federation of the Blind of Colorado

Kinshuk Tella, Cambridge Chapter member and Scholarship committee
National federation of the Blind

Representative from the Carol Center for the Blind

The National Federation of the Blind believes in the potential of blind people. Often our expectations can be lowered due to misconceptions of blindness. Receiving skills training has proven to be a positive effect on the confidence, independence and exploration of the blind. Join NFB leaders in this informational seminar that outlines different areas of training that can benefit blind people. While there, take advantage of the information about state and national resources for training.

2:00 pm – 2:55 pm Federation Philosophy: The X Factor—Charles Room

Tom Page, President, NFB of Kansas and Board member, National Federation of the Blind

Kyra Sweeney, Board member, National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts and Attorney, Health Law Advocates

Al Ilya, Board Member, National Association of Guide Dog Users and Senior Staff Attorney at Disability Law United

The approach of members of the National Federation of the Blind differs from that of other organizations. Our unique philosophical stance has proven successful in achieving our goals and ensuring equality for blind people nationwide. Take some time to join this session and learn how our philosophy works in tandem with our programs and how you can use it in real-world situations.

3:00 pm – 3:55 pm Find your confidence through unlocking your style - fashion is a lot more of a science than you may think!—Charles Room

Kinshuk Tella, Cambridge Chapter member

Manahil Jafri, First Vice President, National Association of Blind Students

Whether you are preparing for a job interview or attending your first day of classes, the way a person presents themselves in public can influence the way they are considered by others. Join leaders of the NFB as we highlight tips on how blind people can effectively represent themselves in public. There are many hobbies that can appear incredibly vision dominant at first—driving, tennis, marksmanship, and more—one such topic is fashion. For blind people, fashion can be a difficult idea to understand, leading to immense insecurity and struggle with how one presents themselves. As blind people, it is especially important that we present ourselves as respectable as possible, because how we dress is a nonverbal communication to others around us. Finding your style can also be a great source of confidence.

Here, we will explore the theory of fashion, and break it down to the fundamental rules, the science of it. If one can grasp the scientific theory of fashion, which stems from human psychology, one can approach developing their own style with much more ease.

We will discuss both masculine and feminine style. We also discuss the different levels of style and the difference between fashion trends and real style. It is not as subjective as you might believe.

5:00 PM Welcome from the Mayor of Springfield, Domenic Sarno.

Worthy Room-Please join us to hear a welcome from the Springfield Mayor and let's all be there to show him the love and energy of the federation. Please don't miss this event!

5:30 – 6:30 PM Massachusetts Parents of Blind Children Business meeting- Stonehaven Room

Join the Massachusetts Parents of Blind Children for an engaging and interactive meeting! This event is open to everyone—whether you're a parent, caregiver, family member, educator, or simply passionate about empowering blind children.

During the meeting, we'll:

- Discuss important updates and plans for our organization
- Hold elections for our leadership team
- Enjoy a fun and interactive icebreaker activity designed for all attendees

Come connect with others who share your commitment to creating opportunities for blind children.

6:00 PM Nominating Committee- Board Room

Only members of the nominating committee are to attend this meeting. If you are not sure, then you are not on the nominating committee. Questions? Call Shara Winton

7:00 pm – 11:00 pm Bring it on Massachusetts! Welcome, dinner and fun activities

– Mahogany Room

Join the Massachusetts Association of Blind Students as they host the Welcome reception and hospitality event. Support blind students as they encourage blind people across our great Commonwealth with an atmosphere that shows our Federation family at its finest. This welcome and hospitality event offers attendees great entertainment, dinner, door prizes, games, karaoke and a cash bar ! The doors for this event will open at 7:00pm and attendees must show their name badge upon arrival.

Saturday, March 14, 2025

7:00 Am- 8:30 am Breakfast—must be registered and have your name badge. This is open to all Convention registrants.

7:30 AM – 8:30 AM Scholarship Breakfast- Stonehaven Room

Important! Invitation Only Breakfast

Kyra Sweeney, Scholarship Chair, National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

8:00 Am -9:00 AM Wake up! Stretch and Shine!!- Highland Room

Join us for a wake-up stretch and yoga eye-opener. If there is time there might even be a short meditation to get your head in the game for the day!

8:00 am – 9:00 am Registration –Mahogany Room Foyer

We encourage everyone to register for the convention. You must be registered to have your meals with us including Banquet. Registering also makes you eligible for door prizes. The Cost of registration, after March 5, is \$120, which includes all meals.

If you would like to join use virtually for all Saturday, March 15 and Sunday, March 16 general sessions use the following Zoom details:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://nfb-org.zoom.us/j/96463049478?pwd=DgL489PZmKS9Rhd87dbvbn1W4c7EhJ.1>

Meeting ID: 964 6304 9478

Passcode: 2025

Dial by your location

- +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)
- +1 305 224 1968 US

General Sessions

9:15 am – 12:00 pm Opening General Session –Mahogany Room

9:15 am Call to Order and Welcoming Remarks, Shara Winton, President, National Federation of the blind of Massachusetts

9:20 Am Invocation

Lorna Des Roses, Member, National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

9:23 NFB Pledge-

Allen Larkin

At-Large Member, National federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

9:25am A Welcome from our Host, Theadora Williams , Greater Springfield Chapter President, National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

9:35 am A Message from Our National Office, Tom Page , Board Member , National Federation of the Blind and President, National Federation of the Blind of Kansas

9:55 am NABS Report, Manahil Jafri , First vice president , National Association of Blind Students

10:10AM-Parents Division Update, Carol Castellano
, Secretary, National Organization of Parents of Blind Children
Stephanie Valdes, President, Parents of Blind Children, National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

10:30 AM Perkins Library Update, Kim Charleson, Director, Perkins Library for the Blind

11:00 AM Reading of Resolutions, Kyra Sweeney Legislative Chair,
National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

11:30AM Blind Cricket- Abigail Finklea and Drew Finklea, Sibling duo embarking on developing Cricket for the Blind Their journey is a testament to resilience, passion, and the unifying power of sports, proving that blind cricket has no boundaries — it is a game of determination, skill, and unwavering spirit.

12:00 pm Adjourn for Lunch

12:00 PM- 12:50PM MABS Business meeting. Students, please pick up your lunches and go to the Stonehaven Room.

Are you a blind high school or college student looking to network with others on aspects of student life? Join the Massachusetts Association of Blind Students for their in-person business meeting where they will discuss important programs, accept new members through collecting dues and hold elections to determine leaders of our organization.

Christopher Suplice, President, Massachusetts Association of Blind Students

Manahil Jafri, vice-president, National Association of Blind Students

12:00 PM Boxed Lunch – 2nd Floor atrium, just outside of the Mahogany Ball room. If you registered and chose a boxed lunch, you will be able to pick up your lunch with your lunch ticket. You must have your ticket. Your lunch Must have been purchased during registration before March 5th.

Afternoon General Session: Mahogany Ballroom

1:15pm – 1:40 pm Access Technology with Smart Glasses and AI–

Learn the latest in 2025 on developments in AI, Smart glasses, and practical ways you can use these tools in everyday life. Resources will also be shared on how to keep track of this rapidly evolving technology.

Mika Pyyhkala, First Vice President, National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

Cullen Gallagher, Secretary, National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

1:42 PM -

Transportation and You-Debbie Malone, Second Vice-President National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

Debbie has a passion for improving mobility and accessible transportation options for individuals who are blind or low vision. She represents the NFB by being an active participant in two key organizations focused on enhancing accessibility and public transportation services in Massachusetts: the Massachusetts Association of Regional Transit Authorities (MARTA) ADA Working Group and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) Rider's Transportation Access Group (RTAG).

1:50 Uber, Lift and other ride share services and our guide dogs. Debbie Malone, Second Vice-President, National Federation of the blind of Massachusetts
Isabell Rosario, Secretary, Massachusetts Association of Blind Students

Al Ilya, Board member, National Association of Guide Dog users and Senior Staff Attorney at Disability Law United

2:10 PM NFB Legal Update- Al Ilya-Board member, National Association of Guide Dog users and Senior Staff Attorney at Disability Law United

2:30PM Don't be a Victim of scams— Dr Barbara J Hopkinson, founder of A Butterfly's Journey™, Author, Award - Winning Greif and empowerment change-maker.

3:00 Are you ready for a Major emergency? Learn how to prepare for what Mother Nature may bring your way.

Tyrone A. Denson, District Chief of Emergency Preparedness, Springfield Fire Department

Basil Maurice, Member, Greater Springfield Chapter, member Springfield Emergency preparedness Team and Emergency Manager for Springfield 's Center for Independent Living

3:30 PM What can the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind do for me?
John Olivera, commissioner, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

What can the MCB do and what are they doing that you might not even know

4:00 PM Bell Academy 2025-Stephanie Valdes, Bell coordinator, National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

4:15 General Sessions Adjourned

4:30 Plett's get Legal—Board Room –

Al Ilya, Senior Staff Attorney at Disability Law United

Al will be available to talk with a few individuals about any disability related legal issues.

4:30 pm -6:30 PM Blind Cricket—Highland Room

What is Blind Cricket? Get a hands-on demonstration or just come in and watch. This is a great opportunity to learn about an accessible sport for the blind. It is also a chance to meet the organizers of the first U's Olympic Cricket Team! Don't miss this opportunity. If you have not signed up for a demonstration, please go to the Blind Cricket Table at the Exhibit Hall to sign up for your personal demonstration.

5:00 – 6:00 PM At-Large Chapter meet up- Stonehaven Room-

Debbie Malone, President At-Large Chapter, National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

7:00 pm –11:00 pm Banquet General Session – Mahogany Ball room

Basket Raffle Drawings

Auction –John Oliviera and Shannon Cantan

INTRODUCTIONS-John Olivera

Keynote Address, Tom Page, President, National Federation of the Blind of Kansas

Special Gift Presentation- Dimitris Kouniaris-Member, National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

50/50 Raffle Drawing

Investing in Our Future with NFBMA – Speaker TBA

Auction-John Olivera and Shannon Cantan

Scholarship Awards Presentation, Kyra Sweeney, Scholarship Chair, National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts

NFBMA Donation Drive Drawing

Sunday, March 16, 2025

:7:00 AM- 8:30 Am Breakfast- Mahogany Ball room

Open to all convention Registrants. Must have name badge for entry.

8:00 Am -9:00 AM Wake up! Stretch and Shine!!- Highland Room

Join us for a wake-up stretch and yoga eye-opener. If there is time there might even be a short meditation to get your head in the game for the day!

9:15 AM General Sessions- Mahogany Ball room

9:20 am – 9:55 AM Resilience, Empowerment, and Creativity- Erika Tremaine Watson, originally from Memphis, Tennessee, and now living in San Antonio, Texas, is a proud mother of two daughters and a passionate advocate for the blind community. She briefly lived in Missouri before making her home in Texas. Tremaine is currently pursuing a degree in education with the goal of becoming a teacher for visually impaired students, blending her lived experiences with her professional aspirations.

As a writer and poet, her work reflects her journey of resilience, empowerment, and creativity. Tremaine's poems, such as the semifinalist piece "57 Days," resonate deeply with themes of transformation, love, and community upliftment.

Tremaine is also a talented singer who uses her voice to connect with and inspire others. Her advocacy work is deeply personal, having faced challenges in regaining custody of her eldest daughter. She credits the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) with helping her navigate those obstacles, and she now shares her story to inspire other parents and showcase the profound impact of the NFB.

Whether writing, singing, or speaking, Tremaine seeks to uplift and empower those around her with humor, authenticity, and spirituality.

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM - Business General Session – Mahogany Ballroom

President's Report –Shara Winton

Secretary's report – Cullen Gallagher

Treasurer's Report – Kobena Bonney

Nominating Committee Report-Shannon Cantan

Convention Voting Logistics

Election of President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and 3 board positions.

Resolutions Committee Report – Kinshuk Tella

Voting on Resolutions

Announcement of 2026 NFB of Massachusetts Convention
: Chapter Reports: At-Large, Cambridge, and Greater Springfield
National Convention 2025
Old and new business
Adjourn

Thank You!

Thank you for participating in the National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts 2025 state convention. We hope to see you again next year at the 2026 state convention, and at your next local chapter or division meeting.

R THANKS

Thanks to our board, chapters, divisions, members and exhibitors for generously donating door prizes and auction items.

Thanks to Everyone who appeared on the agenda or served on committees or helped in any way!

Thanks to Carol and Basil Maurice for their great job with the door prizes.

A big thanks to John Oliveira and Shannon Cantan for being our auctioneers and Mc's for our banquet.

Thanks to Mark Paquette and Dimitris Kouniaris for all of our sound.

We wish to thank Tom Page, for leadership and dedication to the National Federation of the Blind. We truly appreciate your attendance at our 2025 Convention. The national perspective you bring to us and your leadership is so important to our achievement of equality, security, and opportunity.

