



Northeastern Association
of the Blind at Albany

B r i g h t e r H o r i z o n s

A publication of the Northeastern Association of the Blind at Albany



Dear Friends of NABA,

At last, spring is on the way! It's been a long winter, but spring is a time for new beginnings.

Whether you realize it or not, NABA has helped many people begin their lives again.

Our Licensed Master Social Workers (LMSW) help people of all ages adjust to their vision loss. Whether it's the day-to-day challenges of taking care of a family, looking for employment, or finding housing, food and other support services, the team at NABA can help.

Helping people manage the emotional effects of vision loss is always difficult, but the pandemic has made our job even more challenging. NABA's team has had to find creative ways to work with clients remotely and ways to conduct one-on-one visits. Safety is our number one priority – and that includes helping our consumers stay safe in their homes and communities. Our social workers pay attention to the whole person and their overall wellbeing, so our consumers can build the skills they need to live, cook, work or travel safely and independently.

NABA has earned a reputation for helping individuals who are blind achieve independence. It's not uncommon to see a person with a red and white cane or a guide dog at an office, on the bus or in our neighborhoods.

Each day, NABA helps people who are blind find new ways to achieve independence and growth. With your support and partnership, we are changing lives every day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Chris Burke". The signature is fluid and stylized.

Christopher T. Burke
Executive Director/CEO

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Welcome Keosha Elam - New Director of Rehabilitation Services!

The Director of Rehabilitation Services oversees all department programs, which consist of Vision Rehabilitation Therapy, Orientation and Mobility, Employment, Social Work, Low Vision, Assistive Technology, Information and Referral, and Youth Services. This position provides leadership and direction to the staff and actively participates in the annual and long-range planning for the department as it relates to the agency's mission.



Scheduling Low Vision Exams

On Tuesdays and Wednesdays at the Harry M. Judge Vision Rehabilitation Center and on the last Wednesday of the month at the Saratoga Health Center, low vision exams are available by appointment.

The Low Vision Store You can place orders by phone, 518-463-1211, please ask for the Low Vision Coordinator, Monday through Friday, 8:00AM to 4:00PM for mail orders. Or in person, by appointment ONLY at this time due to the pandemic: Wednesdays and Thursdays 1:00 - 2:30PM.

To ensure everyone's safety, masks and social distancing are required. For appointments or to place order, please call 518-463-1211 ext. 237.



Please switch me to paperless Brighter Horizons!

By delivering our newsletter electronically, NABA can improve the experience for our readership and save significantly on print and mailing costs.

Please email Gail Hessney at ghessney@naba-vision.org, with Brighter Horizons in the subject line and your full name and mailing address in the email.



NABA's 2021

Visionary Gala

June 10, 2021

Franklin Plaza Ballroom
Fourth and Grand Streets, Troy NY

★ Cocktails ★ Dinner ★ Live
Auction ★ Silent Auction ★ Salute
to NABA's Award Recipients ★



*A hybrid
event!*

Participate from Home

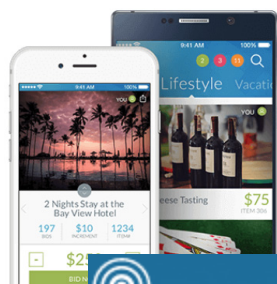
★ Plan your personal celebration ★ Bidder
logins for all of your guests to participate in
the auctions watch the show! ★



*Honoring
2020
&
2021*

David Hollander, Volunteer of the Year
Jitka Zobal-Ratner, M.D. Professional of the Year
Walter S. Borisenok Family Foundation
Corporate Partner of the Year

Brian Lemanski, Volunteer of the Year
Edward J. Wladis, M.D. Professional of the Year
Saratoga Hospital and Saratoga Community Health Center,
Corporate Partner of the Year

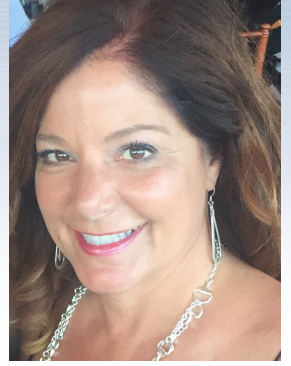


NABA staff is collaborating with our venue and vendors to provide you with a safe and lovely gala experience. The auction bidding this year will be utilizing the Handbid app that you can keep a competitive edge on your bids whether you join us at the Franklin Plaza or if you choose to join us from a more intimate gathering at your place.

Easy to follow instructions and more details to come in the invitations and on our website, www.naba-vision.org.

An Interview of Heart: Mary Lentini

Mary how did you get involved with NABA? I first got involved with NABA by attending their annual Tulip Ball dinner at Wolferts Roost Country Club in 2010. Having been in the Junior League in Albany since 1992, I have a weakness for fundraising and community events. I heard from some of NABA's wonderful volunteers at the event and about the services, they provide. In addition, I had an opportunity to have a discussion with Michele Puleo O'Hare, NABA's Director of Communications, Outreach, and Development and she talked to me about the programs and services NABA offers to people of all ages who are visually impaired and blind. I had no idea of the need or that NABA served 14 counties. She told me that there was a need to raise funds so that these services can be provided to everyone and she knew I love to support new fundraising ideas for causes I believe in. Not one to say no to the very persuasive Mrs. O'Hare, I agreed to a tour of NABA to see what they were all about. My family was in manufacturing in the fashion industry for 3 generations and what I saw at NABA's manufacturing operation impressed me enough to agree to be on the Foundation Board. . . This was the beginning of my love for NABA.



In what areas did you volunteer at NABA? I was first appointed to the NABA Foundation Board and then I served as a member of NABA's Board of Directors. But being on the boards wasn't enough for me. I really wanted to make a difference. Manufacturing was a big part of my family and NABA's manufacturing department impressed me. The department is fully-integrated, not a sheltered workshop, providing employment to the visually impaired, blind and to many immigrants, too. NABA's manufacturing is staffed with individuals who are blind working alongside individuals with other disabilities or no disability at all, producing many items for state and federal government customers.

I really wanted to help with something and the Youth Summer Program really touched my heart. I wanted to help create a new event to appeal to a different type of donor – younger donors. We decided that a Casino Night would be a more casual fund raiser that could attract new people to have a great time, but most importantly volunteer and donate to NABA's Youth Program. We hosted the event for eight years and it was very successful.

Who influenced you to become a volunteer and assist in forming your philosophy of giving back? My Grandmother was one of the greatest influences that shaped my life. From a young age, she instilled in me a desire and passion to better the community you live in. When I moved from NYC to Albany, I joined the Junior League of Albany. They train young women to develop their potential as leaders and volunteers. I have spent several years trying to make a difference by volunteering and donating to many organizations in the Capital Region.

Why did you decide to make a bequest to NABA? Having been involved in so many incredible organizations and having had the honor to serve on several community boards making a bequest to one organization may have seemed a difficult decision, but seeing the needs and potential for growth of NABA's year-round Youth Programs and the important services the staff offer made my decision simple.

What would you say to someone to encourage someone to make a planned gift and join you in becoming a member of the NABA Frank Frost Society? NABA's mission is to assist individuals who are blind or visually impaired achieve independence and growth. This is accomplished by providing services and support that are responsive and flexible to each person's unique needs. NABA provides services and programs that help the visually impaired achieve, maintain, and enhance independence and growth is integral to our community and I felt it important to do what I could do insure NABA continues into the next generation. I decided to bequeath a percentage of my estate to help to continue to fund their programs that are so essential to those in need of services.

Orientation & Mobility Go for the Gold!

Autumn of 2020 was a great time for all involved in the [MS Soundscape](#) Trail Orienteering Project. Microsoft teamed with NABA and Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI), headquartered in Utica, NY, to help the developers better understand the barriers and user perspective to this new artificial intelligence (AI) tool that is anticipated to open doors for those who are blind and visually impaired.

The project began as an idea at Microsoft that would empower those with limited or no vision to become more aware of the layout and navigability of their surroundings making travel much easier. Using 3D audio cues rather than the step-by-step navigation apps, the researchers at MS Soundscape are creating a “rich ambient awareness and providing a new way to relate to” an unseen environment.

Over the summer, NABA's Orientation and Mobility Specialist, Samantha Gartland, broke ground with the MS Soundscape Trail Orienteering app. Her effort and input made a huge difference for the team by providing them a game changing “ah-ha moment.”



“Play is the work of childhood” that gives children the opportunity to develop skills they will use lifelong. Games and sports give everyone a fun way to stay in shape, improve abilities, build confidence and instill resilience. This initiative expects to improve the participation in sports for the 70% of those with vision loss and blindness who currently never participate. Assisting Microsoft with this project gave youth and adults alike the opportunity to lead rather than being led in a new endeavor.



In October, the Capital Region Nordic Alliance, Inc. (CRNA) and NABA co-hosted an extremely successful VI/Blind trail Orienteering event in Albany's Washington Park. With beautiful weather 10 adults actively participated. They were able to navigate the 1.5k course, mostly independently, with confidence both with and without the associated Bose frames. It was a perfect 10 event for all involved.



The goals for this project are for the individual and society: providing participants the opportunity further develop the mobility skills once learned at NABA and CABVI, enabling safe navigation in any environment, and bringing together communities as virtual orienteering can be hosted by both blind and sighted enthusiasts.



Ultimately, collaboration is underway for it to become a Paralympic sport with the International Orienteering Federation and International Paralympic Committee.

Financial Empowerment Day

The desire of gold is not for gold. It is for the means of freedom and benefit.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Seven teens learned key advice for financial independence after participating in NABA’s first ever Financial Empowerment Day this past Veterans Day. With a day off from school, students did a great job logging on virtually via Zoom for a day of learning and fun! All teens who completed the day received a \$25 VISA gift card, a talking calculator and a certificate of recognition.

Feedback from students indicated that the favorite part of the day for many was hearing from our guest speaker/mentor, who is visually impaired and lives and works in Boston. They enjoyed practical and heartfelt advice about essential considerations and research they should do related to cost of living, transportation and accessibility, before choosing a city to go to college in or move to as a young adult who is legally blind.

Additionally, students discussed some of the most accessible U.S. cities to live and what makes them ideal for people with visual impairments. Students were surprised to learn about some the top cities, such as Louisville, Kentucky, that were not originally on their radar.

Kate Morris from the Lavelle Fund for the Blind Scholarship Program provided information about available scholarships for teens who are blind or visually impaired to consider before they start their college search process. More information can also be found here: <https://lavellefund.org/scholarship-program/>



Teens and NABA staff also reviewed money identification and the free EyeNote app. If you haven’t tried it, we encourage you to check it out: <https://www.eyenote.gov/>

In addition to reviewing a basic starter budget, teens also gained practical knowledge about big banks, local banks, credit unions, checking & savings accounts, credit scores, debt, charitable giving and the importance of accessible banking. Students ended the day with some famous financial quotes.

Special thanks to James Watkinson & RBC Wealth Management for the grant funding to run this important program!

Jim Watkinson
First Vice President – Branch Director



Wealth
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A division of RBC Capital Markets, LLC,
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2:35-3:00	Topic: Scholarships available for students who are legally blind Guest Speaker: Kate Morris, Scholarship Program Coordinator @ Lavelle Fund for the Blind
3:00-3:30	Trivia Game: Banking & Budgeting -Famous financial quotes -Presentation of certificates & \$25 VISA gift cards

Thank you to Key Bank and the Seymour Fox Foundation

A very special thank you to **Key Bank** and the **Seymour Fox Foundation**. There are instances when timing could not have been better planned, when one gift extends well beyond original intentions. Both apply here. Staff and services adapted to fulfill our mission in daunting times that would not have been possible without the support of grants and our donors. NABA is proud that our services have continued throughout the current global health crisis.

In 2019, Key Bank's grant purchased SMART boards and cameras for NABA's employment and Work Readiness programs. The Assistive Technology team swung into high gear to provide in-home technology and access to all of our students for remote classes, kindergarten to college. The demand and challenges were as great as their time-frame short.

Collaborating with the NYS Commission for the Blind vocational rehabilitation staff, three program curricula were recreated to run remotely in spring of 2020. Employment Specialists Kyra Te Paske and Mikala Bennett presented the Moving Towards Work pre-vocational training preparing six teens to work their first summer job. In August, Youth Services Coordinator Senia Fleming presented Success is Knowledge, Independence and Life-long Learning for Students (SKILLS) with students from the Hudson Valley and the North Country attending together for the first time. Without the great distances exacerbating travel to Albany, twelve attendees made it our largest SKILLS class to date.

Students in the week-long recreational program were loaned iPads funded by a generous donation from the **Seymour Fox Foundation**. (See the Fall, 2020 issue of *Brighter Horizons* for the full article highlighting the summer program.) The foundation responded with generosity and prudence to NABA's request reallocating funds from transportation costs for in-person programs to iPads, cases and screen savers necessary for remote programming. The devices were also lent to participants in the Work Readiness class and continue to be passed along. The equipment has enabled NABA to reach more participants and help provide a professional connection during this change in programming.



At the cusp of the pandemic's second year, we continue to meet the challenges of sighted and blind people working well together, building on lessons learned with new technologies and innovations. Practicing virtual job interviews utilizing the new equipment is immensely beneficial to participants in the Work Readiness classes. Employment Specialists coach expressing themselves to sighted interviewers effectively, using their device's camera while demonstrating how they use their adaptive software such as JAWS (text to voice) or magnifiers and other tools. For example, should a participant decide to disclose they utilize their peripheral vision, they can explain that they must turn their head sideways in order to see the screen and align their vision to the position of the camera to maintain eye contact, while helping the interviewer understand it may not be perceived as eye contact. The candidate can further explain how they use adaptive technology such as an iPad or a cell phone or magnifier or bump dots or take notes on a Braille note taker, to do job tasks efficiently and productively. Working with each participant to address personal presentation in a virtual world takes practice and an awareness of available technologies.

No matter the challenges and adaptations, "I love being that person who helps others achieve their goals. How many of us could have benefited from a mentor at times in our careers? In a pandemic, getting heard above the additional noise is much harder. And connecting visually for our participants can be daunting. I simply love working directly with our clients," stated Ms. Te Paske. Referrals for the employment program at NABA come from the NYS Commission for the Blind.



Spark Therapeutics is committed to increasing information and knowledge about the diagnosis of a broad range of inherited retinal diseases. The only way to confirm that your patient has an inherited retinal disease (IRD) is with a genetic test. Through the ID YOUR IRD gene testing initiative, Spark Therapeutics supports people living with certain IRDs by providing genetic information that can empower their decisions. The ID YOUR IRD panel tests for mutations in approximately 300 genes that are associated with IRDs.

For more information, please visit www.IDYourIRD.com.



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evan.cannon@orcam.com or 631.766.0016.**

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Meals on Demand by LifePath

Delivering convenient and affordable meals to adults of an age with a smile!

Navigating day to day issues in life can be overwhelming...Meals on Demand by LifePath can help!

Our friendly, professional, and well-trained staff will shop, prepare, cook, and deliver an affordable, healthy home-cooked meal right to your door!

Meals on Demand by LifePath is the solution for adults of any age who would benefit from a fresh, nutritious, fully prepared home-delivered meal allowing for more time to enjoy the important things in life.

- ★ Monthly menus are developed by a Registered Dietician to ensure meals are balanced and nutritious
- ★ Each meal is complete, including meat/protein, vegetable, carbs/grain, bread, milk, and dessert
- ★ Meals are varied, low in sodium, and perfectly portioned for the nutritional needs of adults of all ages
- ★ Meals are traditionally delivered between 10:30am and 12:30pm, Monday - Friday
- ★ A second lighter (cold) meal is available daily and frozen meals are available for weekends or anytime

Hot meals start at just \$8.25 with a second, lighter (cold) meal and/or frozen weekend meal that may be added at an additional cost.

For more information and/or to enroll in Meals on Demand by LifePath, contact:

★ LifePath Administrative Office, 518-465-3322 x 100, info@seniorservicesofalbany.com ★

"My wife and I really appreciate the home delivered meals from Meals on Demand by LifePath. This has been a lifesaver for us since my wife became ill, as it saves us from grocery shopping and cooking. The food is good and we are happy knowing that we're getting a well-balanced meal each day. Thank you." Jim, client

★ Administrative Offices | 28 Colvin Ave., Suite 2 | Albany, NY 12206 | P: 518-465-3322 | F: 518-465-6188 ★
info@seniorservicesofalbany.com | www.lifepathny.com

It Doesn't Get Any More NABA Than This . . .

Let me introduce myself to you. My name is Patrick Taylor and I want to tell you my story about an invaluable gift I received– the gift of independence all made possible through the services and programs at NABA. NABA changed my life!

My wife, Diane and I had moved from the Capital Region to start our life in Florida in 2007. In 2013, as I was leaving work and crossing the street everything went black. I was in total darkness. We went immediately to my doctor who told us that was nothing further he could do for me. I was facing an emotional roller coaster. I felt sadness, grief, anger, and other powerful emotions. My vision loss inevitably resulted in many lifestyle changes and had an impact upon the lives of my family members and friends.



In 2014, we moved back to Schenectady to be near our family. For five years, I was alone and isolated in my home, afraid to leave the only place I felt safe. I depended on Diane for everything. I needed someone to drive me everywhere. I needed help paying my bills, safely finding my way around, and crossing streets. What I felt was my darkest moment turned out to be a blessing in disguise. This came in the form of an organization called NABA.

After a call with our friend, Diane Sherwood, my life changed. She contacted NABA for me. David, a Rehabilitation Instructor, introduced me to adaptive living devices available to people with visual impairments, a talking watch, a large print phone, a special alarm clock, etc. My daily household tasks became easier. He was patient with me during our lessons. I now have the skills and confidence to do tasks independently.

I was scared to go outside, to cross the street, but Samantha, the NABA Orientation Mobility Specialist, calmed me down. My ability to travel safely has been restored. She is my angel who has helped me to be confident in traveling in the world. I now feel secure as I travel up and down stairs, take the bus on my own, etc. I no longer feel frightened as I travel alone or with others.

NABA helped me deal with the emotional adjustment of vision loss. Nate, a Social Worker, was especially helpful. His assistance was a lifesaver for me as I came to terms with my vision loss. Prior to vision loss I fished every day. With the help of Nate, I returned to my favorite pastime. The people in Galway can't believe that I can fish on my own with no vision.

Nate and Heather formed a support group made of individuals who are visually impaired and blind. They lead the group at first by suggesting topics for us to discuss, got us organized and now the members meet independently as a group every Monday for an hour.

I am just one story in NABA's long and impressive history. If there is any way that you can give a tax-deductible gift to NABA, your money will be well spent by giving people the chance to live independent and productive lives.

Also, I urge everyone to get their eyes examined regularly, even if you have no obvious symptoms. Thank you for your time and generosity.

Sincerely,

Patrick Taylor

Mark your Calendar and Save the Dates

13TH ANNUAL LOW VISION TECH & WELLNESS FAIRS

Double Event!!

Free to the Public!

October 14, 2021 * 9:00AM to 1:00PM

CALL IN BY PHONE OR ONLINE

Presentation Topics

Eye health with local doctors * New local
Sports & Leisure opportunities for adults *
Experts on low vision equipment, emotional
self care techniques and more * Previews
of the equipment to try out in person the
following week ...

9:00AM to Noon TABLED & IN PERSON

Oct 19 Saratoga Senior Center,

Oct 20 Albany JCC & Oct 21 The Falls, Hudson

Meet the Professionals

Low Vision Technology Experts
Local Community Services
NABA Rehabilitation Staff
Try out the equipment first hand! Get your
questions answered in person, face to face!

Best of both worlds . . .

This year's event has been designed with your safety our first priority, very closely followed by providing the access to information, services and products you may need. We hope you will enjoy the presentations and engage with our presenters from the comfort of your home over the phone or by joining virtually.

The tabled events will only be different from one to the next with regard to local service resources. We hope you will come and experience the many technologies on hand to assist with low vision and receive current information from available services, ever changing in response to the pandemic.

NYS Department of Health protocol will be followed at the tabled events to ensure your safety. Details and updates coming in the September's *Brighter Horizons*!

Follow us on our event Facebook page for up-to-date additions!



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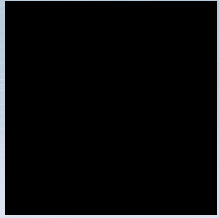
Ex-Officio NABA Executive Director

Christopher T. Burke



**Northeastern Association
of the Blind at Albany**

301 Washington Ave.
Albany, NY 12206



Save the Dates!! - Spring event details inside this issue!!

Visionary Gala *June 10th*

Visionary Golf Tournament *Sept 13th,*

Low Vision Tech & Wellness Fair in *October 14th & 19-21st*

& new this year: Saratoga Social *TBD*



Thank you for continuing to include NABA through the Amazon Smile program for all of your holiday purchases and throughout the pandemic!

<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/14-1338302>

Shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charity of your choice.

Safely Dispose of Confidential Information

Confidential shredding \$9.00 a box (approximately 30lb box). Papers can be stapled, paper clipped. All shredding by blind employees in a secure dedicated shredding area. Letter of destruction available upon request. Please contact Michele Puleo O'Hare at 518-463-1211 x 241 or mohare@naba-vision.org. Boxes marked attention Michele O'Hare. *Working together to keep those who are blind employed.*

