

NABANortheastern 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,

The year 2020 is going to be a hard year to forget. We have all been challenged as never before and will continue to be challenged as we look to get through this upheaval and return to a more normal life. I am very proud of the way the staff and leadership at NABA adapted to this difficult situation and never lost sight of our mission to serve those who are blind or visually impaired achieve independence and growth.

NABA's manufacturing operation is considered an essential business given the mix of safety products we offer. From facemasks to disinfectant wipes to reflective safety vests for railroad workers, we are helping New York respond and recover. We have remained open and have adopted the safety guidelines released by the Centers for Disease Control and the Governor's Office. Safety has always been a top priority for NABA and this situation is no different.

On the service side of NABA, we had to suspend in-person visits for a few months, but we never lost touch with our participants, partners and supporters. Our Rehabilitation staff stayed in contact with all of our consumers through telephone sessions and on-line platforms. In June, the Moving towards Work pre-vocational training program was successful transitioning to Zoom sessions for teens. We held our July summer youth program virtually via Zoom with thirteen children attending each of the five days. Both were very different than in previous years, but proved to be a success none the less. Now that we are providing in-person services again at NABA, in homes and in businesses, we are maintaining all required safety precautions necessary to keep our patients, participants and staff safe, and growth and independence are positive.

We are lucky to have strong community support from people and organizations that believe in what we do and are there to help us achieve our mission. I want to thank all of our partners and supporters who have continued to be there for us during this time as we navigate both the interruption in services and the resulting down economy. We will count on everyone's assistance to help us remain strong so we can provide services to people in need to help change their lives for the better. Thank you.

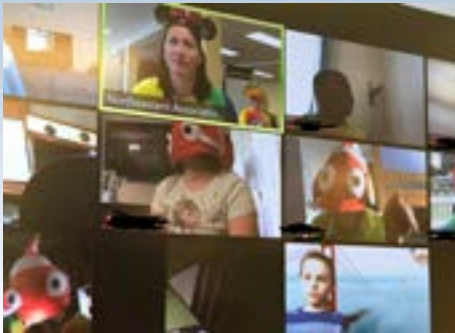
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris Burke', written over a light blue horizontal line.

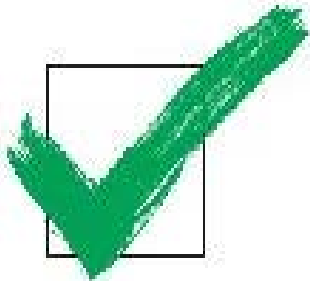
Christopher T. Burke
Executive Director/CEO

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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.

Low Vision Exams
are Now Available

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. To ensure everyone's safety, masks are required.
The Low Vision Store is open, Monday through Friday, 8:00AM to 4:00PM. To ensure social distancing we ask you make an appointment ahead of your visit. Come in and browse or we will ship items to your doorstep! All of our regular merchandise and more . . .
For appointments or to place order, please call 518-463-1211 #237

You are invited to NABA's
VIRTUAL
LOW VISION TECH & HEALTH FAIR
Wednesday, October 14, 2020
9:30AM to 2:30PM

Free to the Public!

Presenting Specialists



Chris Gabriels, MD
Gabriels Eye MDs
Albany
Topic: Glaucoma



Christopher R. Zieker, MD
Zieker Eye
Wilton
Topic: Cataracts



Jonathan Huz, MD
Retina Consultants, PLLC
Slingerlands
Topic: Macular Degeneration

Live presentations include time for questions * Professional demonstrations of the latest in low vision technologies for reading, computers & adaptive vision aids * Adaptive living experts on living successfully with low vision, vision rehabilitation therapy, traveling and what to expect at a low vision exam.

The program will be direct mailed the week before & on our Facebook events page.

Zoom Meeting ID: 851 3508 2353
Passcode: 812644
By phone +1 929 205 6099

How to Zoom
An intro class September 29
10AM for **phone & online**
Meeting ID: 818 0264 2009
Passcode: 000975
By phone 1 929-205-6099

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Questions? Contact Lisa Jordan,
Coordinator of Outreach Services,
ljordan@naba-vision.org or call
518-463-1211 x 241



@Northeasternassociationoftheblindatalbany
under [Events](#) for all updates & event developments!

Each Step is an Element of the Journey

"Don't let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do." John Wooden

Dylan Rossiter begins his senior year at Emerson College in Boston, studying journalism and minoring in digital media and culture. His position as the Operations Managing Editor at The Berkeley Beacon is his passion and what looks to be one of many substantial building blocks that will make up the foundation for his career, his life. Like other students at Emerson, Dylan has worked hard in school, participated in extracurricular activities and held part-time jobs along the way, but Dylan has succeeded in all of this without the benefit of vision.



During the summer of 2015, Dylan participated in NABA's Work Experience Training (WET) Program while gaining experience at WVCB 88.3, Siena College Radio. The WET Program works with high school and college students to prepare them for interviewing, working and adapting to a work environment to ensure independence and grow into their career choices. As a high school junior, he helped produce weekly segments, pre-recorded overnight shows and enjoyed playing music from the 60's and 70's.

The WET experience was impactful for Dylan, and beyond. After matching his interests with the radio station, his WET job coach made a significant difference serving in the role as bridge between them encouraging him to expand and get as much from the experience as possible. Each fellow co-worker, mostly college students, saw for themselves just what Dylan could accomplish. What surprised his co-workers initially, will become a different perspective and better understanding of adaptability lifelong. For Dylan, the most important lesson learned was how to be out there more – more social, more interactive, more confident.



That grounding and confidence has since served him in working at the Times Union in Albany the next year and expanding the possibilities for the years to come. Dylan is a hardworking student getting ready to get into the world, who happens to be blind. In his own words, it's "Nothing traumatic, just something to deal with." In so many ways, Dylan's unique interests, experiences, challenges and abilities have all come together to orchestrate a path that anything less would not have been able to do so purposefully.

Where to go from here? His goal is "A career aligning financially sound strategies and platforms from which journalist can continue to provide an accurate accounting of historic events." Eighteen months ago, at the time of this writing, Dylan accepted a position as an assignment editor for the news station NBC 10 Boston further expanding his experience in communications mediums. Like air traffic controllers but for a newsroom, he loves sending crews to cover breaking stories - on the spot, ready to redirect at any moment.

All of that experience coupled with adapting to his own personal challenges has distinctly shaped his perspective and goals for making his mark on the world. Being blind has made him far more sensitive to the experience of others and cognizant of the very language we use.

Continued in the next page

Dylan's Journey continued

In many ways the need for auditory technology is an advantage in allowing for perspective and in understanding what life is like with versus without it. There is a growing movement now for audio versions of stories. By the publisher having the software to make the story accessible audibly, everyone can listen without having to purchase the special adaptive aids first. Emerson's Berkeley Beacon is one of the first college papers to partake.

Growing up in a sighted world has also prepared him for this pandemic. In some ways, the changes have made his work easier - working from home in Boston is much easier and less time consuming than taking the bus for the commute. While the sighted adapt to communicating without eye contact or reading body language, he already has lifelong experience there. How quiet it all has been is surreal to him.

NABA looks forward to see the impact Dylan will have as he continues to explore, grow and flourish in the years to come. Every WET participant has an experience as one of a kind to them as they themselves are unique. May all of NABA's alumni have an exceptional year!

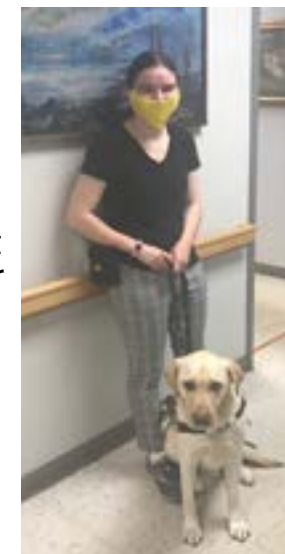
The Unfolding Story

A young woman on the move, Megan Hale is an active college student, runner, writer and avid reader, who also happens to be blind. After graduating from Hudson Valley Community College next year with a degree in physical education she plans to transfer to SUNY Brockport for her bachelors. This summer, NABA is lucky to have her interning in our Development Office, but her Work Experience Training (WET) Program reveals the bigger story here.

For the summer of 2017, Megan worked at the East Greenbush YMCA through the WET Program. Her job coach helped her begin and adapt to the new surroundings, bridged gaps and brought her attention to the things the sighted most often take for granted. That solid base and building her confidence to ask for help were the biggest benefits to Megan of her WET experience.

Collaboration with employers and the NABA Employment Specialist, WETs are tailored to the needs of the participant and the worksite. In turn, WET employers help develop the next generation of employees, shaping the skills and experiences of people entering the workforce in the community. From social responsibility to promoting an interest in a given industry to building awareness in the larger community of different abilities, businesses benefit too.

A NABA Employment Specialist works with the employer to identify accommodations, if needed, in addition to covering insurance and workers' compensation for the participant. All wages are provided from the NYS Commission of the Blind by sponsoring participants. Our participants also illuminate the people they work with, too. During her work at the YMCA, Megan assisted in improving the traffic flow at check-in by scanning incoming members. She helped with cleaning the exercise machines and enjoyed shadowing instructors during fitness classes, even when keeping up with Silver Sneakers Zumba wasn't easy.



Continued in the next page

Megan's Journey continued



Many teens get their driver's permit for their 16th birthday, but Megan, "got a 'Labor-ghini' named Hero." Hero, a four-year-old, yellow Labrador is a specially trained running guide dog from Guiding Eyes for the Blind, a training school for guide dogs. Working dogs are matched with their new owners for speed and personality. In order to be qualified for a guide dog one must be at least 16 years old and have excellent cane skills.

Megan remarked, "Hero is 100% me in dog form." Hero even joined Megan on her high school track team for 100-, 200-, 300- and 400-yard races and practices. Guiding her with ease around the track, Hero provided her the freedom to not have to rely on teammates for guidance. At the YMCA staff and even the youngest of campers learned about dogs like Hero and the work they do. Hearing a 4-year-old tell their parent not to pet the dog, and why, was definitely a high point.

Megan had both experience with NABA and working before she started with the WET Program. She came to NABA Youth Services when she was 7 to develop skills and in turn, built friendships to last a lifetime. Many of the skills she has learned about the workplace comes from working at her family's store, Bob's Rental Center in West Sand Lake. These skills and expectations helped her confidently enter the workplace at the YMCA and here at NABA.



Like most students with a disability Megan spent much of her time participating in gym class on the sidelines. So much so, she assumed that was the way it was supposed to be. First a camper and later, on staff at Camp Abilities in Saratoga, she learned she wasn't alone. She now knows that, "Fitness should be for everyone, no matter what." Finding her calling at camp she switched her career choice from fitness instructor to adapted physical education teacher.

When asked what she does for fun, she's a self-proclaimed bookworm. A reader and a writer, Megan has just finished writing her first book, *Lonely World*. A historical fiction set in the beginning of the nineteenth century tells the story of Cristal who starts out as just your average ten-year-old girl. After a school field trip that flips her world on its head, she develops into the leader of a movement that would eventually become the disability movement.

In the reality of the pandemic today, Megan has been frustrated that she cannot drive, going to the store for herself or her family. However, because of her visual impairment she has always had to re-adjust and quickly adapt to new situations in the sighted world. As the majority of society has struggled and is adapting to working online, being unable to see faces, read body language and switch gears technically, her technology and adaptive skill set continue to serve her well.

In telling her story in this article, to the staff and students at the East Greenbush YMCA, her book and beyond, Megan continues to flourish and teach others to see the world in a very different way. If you would like to find out more about becoming a WET Employer Partner, please call NABA at (518) 463-1211 and ask for Kyrá TePaske or Mikala Bennett.

NABA partners with employers in Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer, Greene, Saratoga, Columbia, Schoharie, Warren, Washington, Ulster and Dutchess Counties. WETs typically are 6-8 weeks in duration, working 15-20 hours per week, with flexibility for worksite and participant needs.

Summertime's the Best Time

Summer Youth Program remains the highpoint of the season at NABA. This year it all had to completely change in order to stay the same. Thanks to our staff, our youth, their parents and the generosity of our many friends a pandemic's worth of challenges were met and surmounted with enthusiasm and perseverance. For the first time ever, NABA made the decision to run our July week program virtually to best meet state safety guidelines and social distancing.

When developing programming for the week, the primary goal of NABA staff was to create fun opportunities to learn. The summer experience packs multifaceted lessons for students to grow interpersonally and individually. Activities specifically prompt the youth to express themselves and share their thoughts with their peers, listen and learn more about their friends, laugh and discover. Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) areas of potential growth were also incorporated in planning activities. The resulting improved social interactions and camaraderie was observed for all students over the course of the week.

Once the decision to go virtual was set, the creativity and professionalism of our full staff was engaged to meet this new challenge. A new grant equipped our youth center with a camera and SMART board thereby making it possible to run activities remotely and observe the daily participation of all students. Prior to the start of the program, parents were contacted to assess what devices and online meeting platforms they were familiar with and had been using for remote schooling. New iPads purchased and owned by NABA were lent to students.

A week before the program began, our staff drove all around the Capital Region delivering iPads and a Student Kit filled with many cool items to all 13 youth to participate in our fun, virtual program. Each Student Kit included: a schedule for the week, a list of Zoom etiquette rules for students and parents to review together, a rainbow tie-dye t-shirt, a large exercise ball, a yoga mat, a set of 1-lb. hand weights, wooden drumsticks, a bucket, a 60-p. box of magnetic tiles, a silly clownfish hat, the book *Everybody Plays* about children with visual impairments participating in various sports (in large print or Braille), a craft baggie with art materials (plastic plate, sponge, Magic Nuudles), a dessert-making baggie with various ingredients for making trail mix, a music CD with four different songs of the day and accompanying lyrics sheets (in large print or Braille), and a taste-testing challenge baggie with five different types of cereal for our final day party.



Best Time continued

All thirteen students logged on each day via Zoom to participate in fun and educational activities that were designed to provide opportunities for peer socialization and strengthen peer relationships.

The first hour of the day consisted of welcome activities, question of the day, song of the day, and trivia games. Mid-week, two teen volunteers came in the assist with programming. One of the volunteers read aloud the chapter about Helen Keller’s life from the children’s book, *Kid Activists: True Tales of Childhood* from *Champions of Change* by Robin Stevenson. The other volunteer was a former NABA Youth who recently graduated from high school. Volunteering as a mentor to the other students included her briefly describing her own experience with NABA, her plans for college and what she plans to study.



The second hour of each day consisted of a specialized NABA staff-led lesson:



- Drumming led by Nate Modafferi, Social Worker (LMSW)
- Dessert-Making led by Christina Kendall, Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist (CVRT)
- Crafting & Building Structures led by Senia Fleming, Coordinator of Youth Services
- Stretching & Strength Training led by Samantha Gartland, Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist (COMS)
- Growth Mindset & Personal Goal Setting led by Heather Horan, Social Worker (LMSW)

The last fifteen minutes of each day concluded with jokes of the day, mystery summer item of the day, and in language of the day, students learned to say three phrases (hello, how are you? and goodbye) in Japanese, Italian, French, German and Spanish.

On the final day of program, in lieu of our usual ice cream party and talent show, students enjoyed participating in a cereal taste-testing challenge while everyone wore silly hats. Memories were made and we all had tons of fun and laughs with this awesome bunch!

Great job everyone!



Success is . . .

Success is Knowledge, Independence, and Lifelong Learning for Students (SKILLS) is NABA’s pre-vocational program that focuses on employment skills for students from 13 to 19 years old. For the first time we hosted our two groups in virtual half days.



SKILLS 1 introduces the foundational etiquette, ideas and behaviors students will need to know to move into the workforce down the road. SKILLS 2 builds on that foundation and adds career exploration similar to what any adolescent would be considering along with aspects any future employee with vision loss would need to have.

Rehab and Employment staff wove in a mixture of instruction, hands on skill building and guest speakers. Bringing lessons alive with real

experiences and lessons learned along the way impacts learning and retention for years to come. The four SKILLS 1 students covered basic etiquette for virtual meetings, employment soft skills, resume basics including what kind of experiences they will need to think about to lay a groundwork for their careers and the resources available to aid their search moving forward.

The eight SKILLS 2 students leveled up in professionalism, understanding transportation, non-driver ID’s and workplace technology. Mentorship, basic budgeting and the importance of thank you notes only begin here. The students of SKILLS 2020 had an amazing glimpse of the world of work yet to come. Staff brought knowledge, wisdom and enthusiasm to a very challenging set of circumstances exemplifying adaptation in action. We are proud of our staff and students for their flexibility and dedication in these unique times!



Shields Up! Heroes Continue the Battle Against COVID-19

On the front lines and behind the scenes many are stepping up in a united front against the coronavirus locally and around the world.

Brian Lemanski at the ophthalmology office of Mabel Cheng, MD and Nicole Lemanski, MD has provided NABA and many other local and out of state hospitals and front liners with face shields. They have also committed the off hours of their computers to move us closer to a cure.

"As it became clear COVID was becoming worse globally, and with the surprising lack of PPE available, we decided to start producing 3D printed face shields," Brian explained. Using a small 3D printer at the office in Latham, by July 1 almost 3,000 face shields have been given, at no cost, to the Albany Veterans Administration (VA), homeless shelters, free health clinics, first responders, food banks and soup kitchens, independent nonprofits, community centers, small medical practices and medical transportation groups locally and hospitals in New York and Florida.

"We felt that it was important that community outreach organizations and healthcare/first responders be shielded to help mitigate COVID exposure as losing these groups to COVID would prevent these organizations from helping others that rely on these critical services." The designs were released for free under a creative commons license to the National Institute of Health (NIH) print exchange - anyone is free to use them. You can find the designs at: <https://3dprint.nih.gov/users/bcplemanski>

In the interim period, Brian and his colleagues conducted a quick analysis of their spare computational power in an effort to assist with Folding@home, the Stanford lead distributed computing project that utilizes idle computers to perform protein folding simulations. The Stanford team has been working to simulate drug gable targets in the virus to help speed up the time it takes to find a suitable treatment or cure for COVID-19.

"Our office started doing these simulations somewhere around April by setting up computers to run after hours. After approximately 1-year worth of computational time expended between our computers, we are in the top 0.5% out of 2.7 million contributors globally based on 'points' (a ranking system that the folding home team helps foster beneficial competition)."

You can follow their folding efforts at: <https://stats.foldingathome.org/donor/MabelMPChengMDPLLC>

"We are more than happy to provide shields to any organization that needs it. If history is our guide, then the fall has a much greater potential to cause a problem versus the present. We therefore need to all pull together to mitigate current COVID exposures and prevent a future COVID exposure that is potentially much larger than present rates." You can reach Brian at brian.lemanski@gmail.com.

Thank you for protecting NABA staff and the many we serve!



As Simple as a Click or a Call

When the day comes that one more repair just isn't worth it, there is an easy solution at your fingertips: Donate your car, truck, motorcycle, RV, ATV, trailer or boat to NABA. Your donation helps NABA to provide our services when there is a gap not covered by grants and insurance. NABA receives the maximum amount of money for each vehicle donation through Charitable Adult Rides and Services (CARS), a 501c3 nonprofit, and their extensive network of sales locations and auction houses.

Don loved his Volvo. For thousands of miles he and his family trusted it to get them to all of their daily errands, special life events and everything in between. Recently, the day came when the cost of repairs and upkeep outweighed the value and probable life span of the car. Within a week of one phone call to CARS, he was able to donate his car to NABA.

"The whole process from phone call to pick up was easy and actually fun. The representative I spoke with was a delight" Don Strachan.



Trade-in or Donate? Most trade-ins over 5 years old are sold at wholesale auctions by the auto dealers. The CARS program sells at the same auctions without the dealership's overhead. All expenses are deducted from the gross sales price, CARS covering any costs that surpass the price: there is no cost to you or to NABA. You will receive a tax receipt of the value of your donation, or the value of the saleprice if it is over \$500, with 30 days.

What's the Catch? – There isn't one. Any kind of vehicle: cars, trucks, motorcycles, RV's, boats, airplanes, heavy equipment, farm machinery, etc. is accepted. With over 3,500 contracted tow companies, pick-up can happen anywhere in the U.S. and almost all title issues are as easily solvable. "CARS' core value for both donor and partner solely revolves around gratitude. All donations are considered a "heartfelt" gift that contributes to CARS nonprofit partner's valuable missions – any vehicle, anywhere, running or not." <https://careasy.org/about>



To donate your vehicle to NABA today, please call Gail Hessney at 518-463-1211 ext. 201 or Michele O'Hare at 518-463-1211 ext. 241 for assistance or for further information.

You can go directly to <https://careasy.org/nonprofit/Northeastern-Association-of-the-Blind-at-Albany-Inc> to complete the form on line and CARS will reach out to you to arrange the pick-up of your vehicle donation, at no cost to you. Please indicate to CARS that you are donating your vehicle to Northeastern Association of the Blind at Albany.

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Thank you 2020 Visionary Golf Sponsors!

It is with deep gratitude that we thank all of our Visionary Golf Tournament sponsors for their continued support of NABA this summer. Highlights and pictures of the event will be featured in the next issue of Brighter Horizons but with the big day just around the corner, we know who to thank!

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NABA Back to School Challenge

Each day, through WET and our other programs like WET, NABA can help someone take the first step on the journey of the rest of their lives. Help support NABA by contributing to our Back to School Challenge by September 30th!

www.tinyurl.com/NABA-BackToSchool



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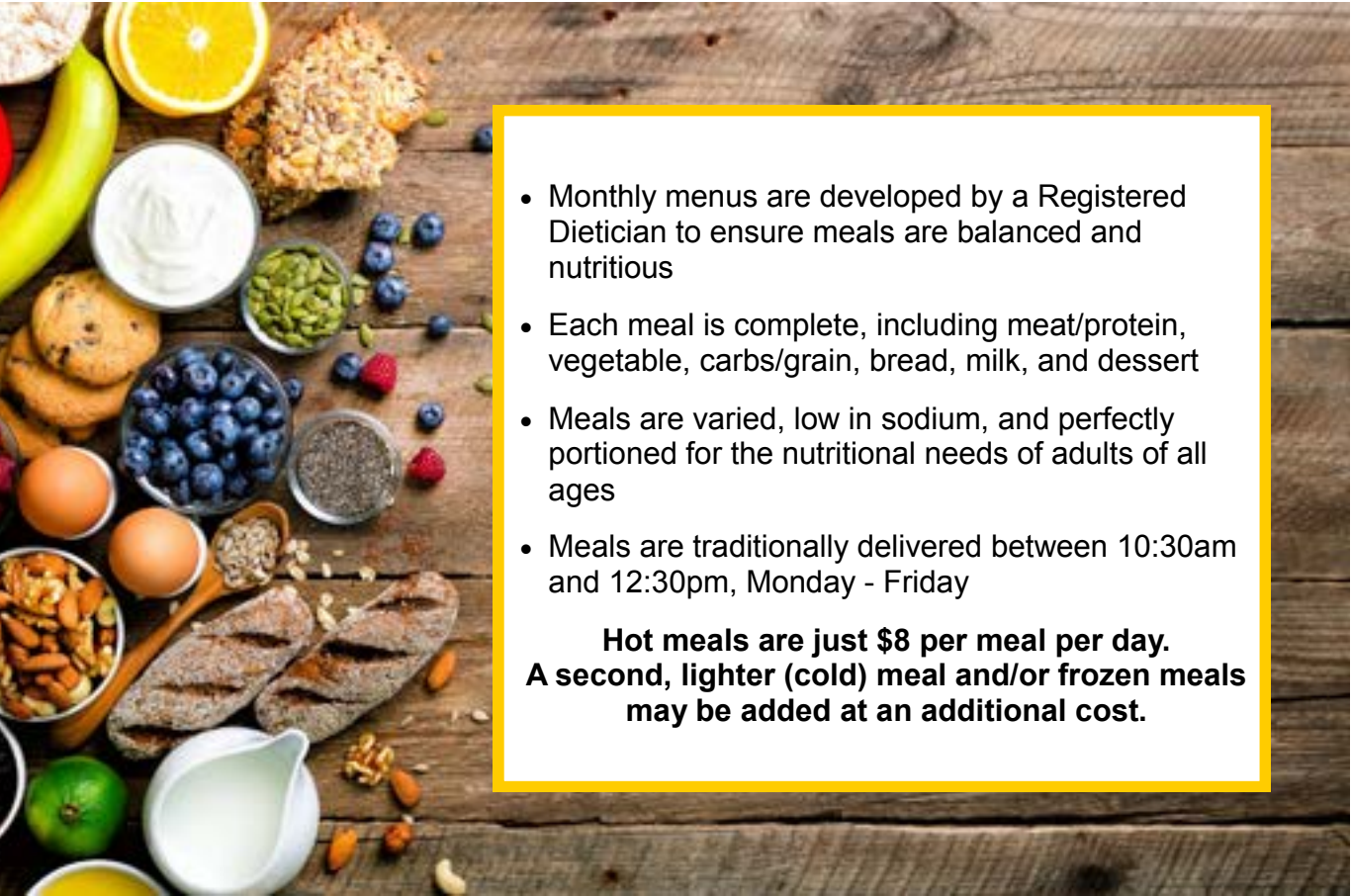
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Mark your calendar for **Wednesday, October 14, 2020**, more on page 3!

VIRTUAL LOW VISION TECH & HEALTH FAIR

Confidential Information Safely Disposed

Confidential shredding now available at NABA for only \$9.00 a box, approximately 30 lb/box. Support the workers who are blind: All papers are shredded by blind employees in a secure dedicated shredding area. Papers can have staples and paper clips. A letter of destruction can be provided.

Please contact or drop your papers off to Michele Puleo O'Hare at 518-463-1211 x 241 or mohare@naba-vision.org.



Brighter Horizon available in braille

To get your newsletter in braille, please contact Kathleen Lather at klather@naba-vision.org
(518) 463-1211 x 231