



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,

I am pleased and honored to be able to stay in the blindness field as the incoming Executive Director of the New York State Preferred Source Program for People who are Blind (NYSPSP). I look forward to the opportunity work directly with the agencies for the blind across New York State to grow blind employment. Together, we will work to help more people join the workforce and gain independence.

As the saying goes, you never really leave a job you love. You take part of it with you, and leave part of yourself there.

Over the past 18 years, the team at NABA has changed some, but the mission has remained strong and the management team and staff have grown to become the best in New York. The agency budget has more than doubled in size, we've added programming and territory and diversified our product offerings and revenue sources. Most of all, we have changed the lives of countless people struggling with vision loss. I am very proud of what this agency has accomplished over the years and I leave knowing that NABA is strong and well positioned to continue to grow and make a difference.

Many people have had a hand in NABA's success, from our hard-working and deeply committed staff, to volunteers and board members, to our community partners and supporters. To all of you I would simply like to say thank you for believing in NABA and for your support and guidance. Together we have made a difference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Chris Burke". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue background.

Christopher T. Burke
Executive Director/CEO

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Welcome to NABA!

This summer NABA welcomes our two newest staff members in Rehabilitative Services.



Lauren Sirkin, our new **Employment Specialist**, looks forward to working with people to realize their potential and find meaningful work. Her background in recreation therapy, specialization in inclusive sports, will be an enormous asset in her new roll.

Carmen French, our new **Low Vision Coordinator**, has been helping people "move to a better place" whether it be with food insecurity, vision challenges, or children struggling to read career long. Her advocacy experience and her sincere desire to help others will serve NABA participants well.



Scheduling Low Vision Exams

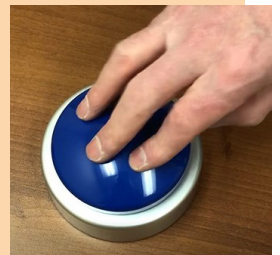
Low vision exams are available by appointment on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at the Harry M. Judge Vision Rehabilitation Center and at the Saratoga Health Center on the last Wednesday of each month.

The Low Vision Store

For in person appointments or to place an order, please call 518-463-1211, ext. 237, Monday through Friday, 8:00AM to 4:00PM.

Appointments are required at this time due to the pandemic and are available on Wednesdays and Thursdays between 1:00 and 2:30PM. Masks and social distancing are required.

Talking clock pictured here:



Please switch me to paperless Brighter Horizons!

Email delivery can improve the experience for our readership with embedded links and accessibility tools and also save NABA significant printing 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.

13TH ANNUAL LOW VISION TECH & WELLNESS FAIRS

Best of both worlds - Double Event!!

Free to the Public!

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

CALL IN BY PHONE 1 929 205 6099 - Come and go as you would like!

OR ONLINE Zoom Meeting ID: 826 6761 7593, Passcode: 399662

8:30 Vendor videos to learn about next week's in-person available technology

9:00 Welcome by NABA Executive Director & NABA's Director of Rehabilitation Services, Keosha Elam Introducing Low Vision Exams & NABA Services

9:30 What Low Vision Is & Today's Treatment - Gregory Pinto, MD
Paul Pinto & Blackstone, MDs, Saratoga

10:15 Vision Rehabilitation Techniques for at Home & Work - Christina Kendall, VRT

10:30 Maintaining Vision with Diabetic Retinopathy - S. Amal Hussnain, MD
Saratoga Ophthalmology, Saratoga

11:15 O&M: Safe & Independent Travel with Vision Loss - Madison Near, CO&M

11:40 Mental Wellness: Ongoing and in the Light of Covid - Nate Modafferi, MSW

Noon De-Stress on the Go - mindfulness-based reduction through breath awareness, meditation, and guided relaxation with Nate

12:30 Finish with Tabled Events information, announcements & vendor videos replay

Meet the Professionals!

Tryout the products in person

TABLED & IN PERSON * 9:00AM to Noon

OCT 19 - Saratoga Senior Center, 5 Williams Street, Saratoga Springs

OCT 20 - Albany Jewish Community Center, 340 Whitehall Road, Albany

OCT 21 - The Greenport, 158 Union Turnpike, Hudson

Check out the equipment first hand! Get your questions answered in person, face to face!



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Local Community Services
NABA Rehabilitation Staff



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Go to @naba-vision to follow us on our event Facebook page for up-to-date additions!

Modern MAPS at NABA

Pop an address in the GPS and find the best way to go from where you are to where you want to be. At NABA, MAPS is the latest new Youth Program initiative, which stands for Mentorship, Advocacy, Public Speaking, and it's broadening people's perspectives about the world of blindness!



Our teens are taught how to tell their personal stories of growth and challenges related to their visual impairment to sighted children in moving and meaningful ways. By encouraging them to share their experiences in their own words, the impact of educating the next generation about the capabilities of people who are blind or visually impaired builds a respectful awareness for differences.

Two staff leaders, Senia Fleming, Coordinator of Youth Services and Nate Modafferi, Social Worker, coupled with college student and former NABA Youth Program student, Megan Hale, met monthly starting in the fall of 2020 with six Youth Program teens. The goal is for our teens to improve their self-advocacy skills, increase their self-esteem, have fun, show pride in their personal achievements and become leaders in their home communities through public speaking.



Each youth reconnected with a favorite teacher from their elementary or middle school to share their stories with younger children in their home school districts this past May and June. One youth was able to present in person. Jimar's 7th grade ELA teacher, Ms. Lauren Surber, looks forward to having him back:

I was lucky enough to have Jimar in my 7th grade class four years ago and genuinely enjoyed having him as a member of our ELA class. I will always remember Jimar as a spirited and enthusiastic learner with a great sense of humor!

During this unprecedented COVID 2021 school year, our school environment was turned upside down and students and teachers alike had to embrace growth mindsets and power through obstacles like never before; however, I think Jimar's story helped us all to put in perspective what it truly means to overcome challenges with a positive attitude.



My students benefited from seeing a peer in their community openly share stories of struggles, successes, adaptations and most importantly, a message of hope. While often kids read stories about individuals surmounting personal difficulties, these stories are rarely shared in such a personal and intimate venue. Jimar was able to speak directly to students and talk to them about his life with visual impairments.

Presenting via Zoom made it possible for the rest of the MAPS teens to tell their stories to their home districts and in the future, hopefully also to local community groups like scout troops. If you would like to have a NABA MAPS speaker share their story with your youth group or classroom, please contact Senia Fleming at sfleming@naba-vision.org for more information.

Raise the Roof for NABA!

If you have ever been to NABA, then you know it's a very busy place. Four floors of work getting done – from low vision exams and accounting to manufacturing and shipping, from intake and rehabilitation services to events planning and development - and most events, development and rehabilitation services are off-site, covering 14 counties. This hive of activity is many people doing a wide variety of different things all to provide quality low vision rehabilitation services and employment opportunities to those who are blind or visually impaired.



Everyone at NABA is incredibly grateful for all of the continued support with our campaigns and your donations to support the services we provide! Thank you! And now the patches on the roof are no longer keeping up with the elements. Just as we have come through the worst of the pandemic and all of the changes required to meet the needs of participants, staff and the community safely, we now have to switch gears to make sure our 50-year-old roof can be replaced, uninterrupted, ideally before the snow flies.

We need to schedule the work for a new roof immediately so we can continue to provide services without interruption. The 2021 Raise the Roof campaign is designed to do just that. From this GoFundMe to individual appeals, and from leadership gifts to a nickel at a time through CLYNK recycling, we are asking you to help us continue to fulfill our mission of helping people who are blind and visually impaired achieve independence and growth.

For more information, visit <https://www.gofundme.com/f/raise-the-roof-naba> or contact Michele O'Hare directly at 518-463-1211 x 241 or mohare@naba-vision.org - and thank you!

As Helen Keller said, "Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence."



NABA Youth and their families, pictured above, had a blast biking the South River Run at Revolution Rail Co. in North Creek on June 27, Helen Keller's birthday! One of the many outings that NABA uses for teaching and socializing our Youth Program members.

Value Added to Across the Ledger

Summer at NABA means interns! One of the big benefits to different departments at NABA is the access to amazing interns. This summer, Michaela Hogan, accounting major at Emmanuel College in Boston and Green Island's Heatley High School class of 2019, brought skills, knowledge and an eagerness to learn to NABA's accounting department.

Michaela loves accounting. A self-claimed numbers-based person from the start: "Math is always in large print. Learning numbers before words, I was doing 7th grade algebra in 3rd grade but still couldn't read." She has excelled in both, since. Diagnosed with a degenerative nerve disorder at 6 months old that will progressively worsen as UV rays further impair her vision, she was declared legally blind at 16, "I'm a normal person that just can't see much."

Dave Barron, NABA's Chief Financial Officer has found that, "Disabilities are overcome by technology and the character of the individual. As Michaela accurately completes tasks and projects, I cannot tell that she even has a disability. Anytime an accounting department can get caught up with a WET intern, it is great. These few weeks with Michaela helping us, we've completed all reconciliations and populated all auditor requested data on their website."



Her distinction is in forensic accounting (fraud investigation) and management minor bring a focus and troubleshooting perspective to a very busy department where jumping into the flow of things is not a simple matter. Her first Work Experience Training (WET) was right out of high school at Scott Stockrowe, CPA where two years of AP classes and her internship set her on the audit path rather than taxes which are "super inaccessible to blind people."

Since then, as president of her college accounting club they run budgeting seminars and bring in guest speakers to give students a variety of career options beyond CPAs. At NABA, she has been able to apply every college accounting class she has taken and learned a new accounting program, too. She truly appreciates the open door to any questions and the ability to work with accounting on paper, not just a screen.

Advice to an employer pondering becoming a WET intern site:

Dave: "Accept the WET intern and treat and train them as if there is no disability. This added resource is very welcome. As her supervisor, it is nice to see her learn and develop her accounting skills and the sense of accomplishment Michaela gets when she completes tasks timely and accurately.

Michaela: "Able body people see working hard and accomplishing a lot as inspiring – if I wasn't disabled, how would you look at me? I'm impressive whether I'm blind or not."

Everyone at NABA wishes her all the best as she moves forward in her goal of becoming a Travel Accountant for the Department of Defense.

To find out more about becoming a WET intern site please go to our website at <https://naba-vision.org/employment-services/> or call (518) 463-1211 and ask for our Employment Specialists.



Thank you to NABA's Tech Fair Sponsors!



LOW VISION TECHNOLOGY

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OWNER



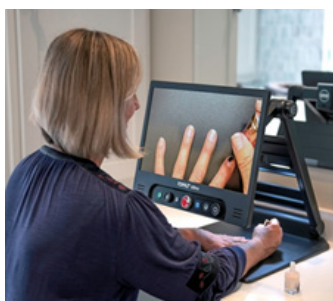
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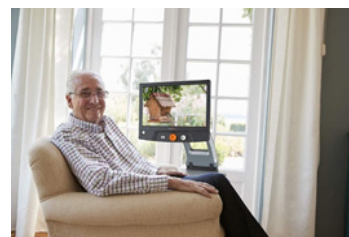
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Focus on the Future

September welcomes the cooler days, the shift back into the rhythm of routines and preparations for the days and even years ahead when children are involved. Throughout the pandemic, NABA staff have met the needs of our rehabilitation recipients valiantly. By phone early on, then back out in the community for site visits, and low vision exams in Albany and Saratoga, innovatively working with the Youth Program and adults. Anyone with school aged or younger children has experienced this crisis all around differently.

NABA is very grateful to Kathryn Miklowitz, LPN for her many years of dedicated service as our KidSight Coordinator and wish her all of the best in her recent retirement! In the year before the shut-down, NABA's KidSight program screened almost 6,000 children between 18 months and 6 years old at preschools, early learning centers and day care sites. Early screening can result in a lifetime of normal vision as the first three years of life have been found to be the most important in developing good vision.

This summer, NABA was able to screen at a few sites including the Early Learning Program (ELP) at the Schenectady Community Action Program (SCAP). Denise Daugherty RN, SCAP's Health and Nutrition Coordinator wrote: "KidSight has provided a valuable service for our community. Their vision screenings have provided early detection of vision concerns for children who are not yet able to read or recognize numbers or letters. This service has enabled ELP children to participate fully in their early learning program educational experience."

The SPOT™ digital camera immediately detects the indication of many different vision problems, perfect for children who are not yet able to read. In just seconds, SPOT provides a comprehensive, reliable analysis that identifies the need for a visit to the doctor. The pandemic has exacerbated the challenges of screenings where already 62% of preschoolers go without eye exams of any kind. It is quick, easy, painless and no eye drops are used. By the beginning of the 2021-22 school year, NABA expects to have our new KidSight Coordinator ready to focus on the next generation of children.

NABA conducts free vision screenings at daycare facilities, preschools, religious organizations, and social events in Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Schenectady, Schoharie, Saratoga and Montgomery counties.

For more information contact Michele O'Hare at 518-463-1211 x 241 or mohare@naba-vision.org.



Digital images taken with the SPOT Vision Screener detect early signs of possible vision problems.



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**Contact Evan Cannon at OrCam for any
questions or to schedule a demo, at
evan.cannon@orcam.com or 631.766.0016**

Giving Hearts by the Bagful

Wow – out of the clear blue, NABA was approached by Ellie Leszczynski, local 8th grader and USA Junior Teen Spirit, who had started a Clynk bag collection for NABA!

What does that even mean, you ask? The CLYNK to Give program is providing NABA with special account-specific tags and bags. Fill a bag, and return it to a nearby Hannaford redemption center or CLYNK bottle return kiosk. When the bottles are processed, the funds go right to NABA's CLYNK account. Donation revenue accumulates year-round and provides invaluable support to NABA!

Who thinks of such things, one wonders? Ellie does. Ellie also collected over 1,000 pairs of glasses to donate to Saratoga Springs Lions Club. Her Virtual Fashion Show raised over \$500 to cover supplies for NABA's Youth Program and between early July and mid-August, the Clynk Bag Program raised \$112.50 from 2,250 containers so far!

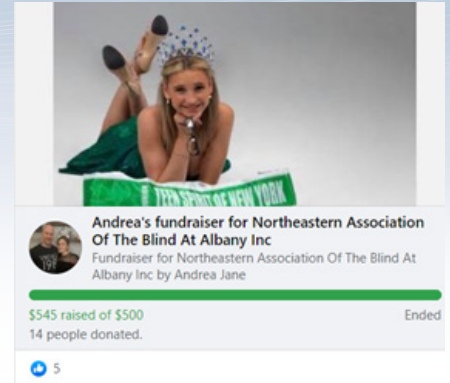
Why? Beautiful inside and out, Ellie has been performing and competing where service and thinking of others are highly valued. Ellie was familiar with NABA because her grandmother received rehabilitation services here years ago and heard firsthand how life changing they were.

Where does something this amazing even take place? Collect containers you use in your own home or office, or organize a bottle drive in your community!

What can YOU do to be a part of this program? Contact us to let us know you are interested in helping and how many bags you would like to start:

Michele O'Hare mohare@naba-vision.org or 518-463-1211 x 241
Gail Hessney ghessney@naba-vision.org or 518-463-1211 x 201

When? Right now - start with ordering your bags, drop them off to any Hannaford in the area or the local Clynk bottle return when it's full!



Stewart's Shops

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It's time to order your new Large Print Calendar

\$18 includes the calendar, tax and shipping

Place orders by phone by calling Gail Hessney at 518-463-1211 ext. 201, Monday through Friday, 8:00AM to 4:00PM for mail orders.

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- 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.

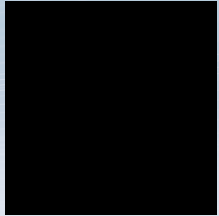
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**Northeastern Association
of the Blind at Albany**

301 Washington Ave.
Albany, NY 12206



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

Visionary Golf Tournament *Sept 13th*,

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

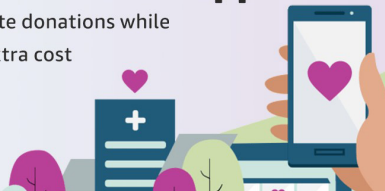
Visionary Gala *April 1, 2022*

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1. Open the Amazon app on your phone, select main menu
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4. Follow the on-screen instructions to activate

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Working together to keep those who are blind employed.

