

PERSPECTIVES

A Newsletter of the Parents of Blind Children of New York

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Introduction

Greetings and Welcome from The Parents of Blind Children of New York.

The POBCNY is a parent advocacy and support group working to improve the lives of blind children throughout the state of New York. It is our mission to elevate the quality of education for blind children, to affect our children's access to services, to create opportunities in theatre and the arts, in sports and recreation and to raise the level of expectation that the community at large has of our children. To that end we have been conducting seminars and conferences in New York State for five years. Through this outreach process we have begun to share our vision for the future of blind and visually impaired children with families facing similar challenges. The children we serve come from all socio-economic backgrounds, races and age groups. They vary in their degree of visual impairment and many have additional disabilities.



We believe in our children and in their future and are working to provide them the necessary skills to achieve true success and independence in adulthood. We feel strongly that the influence of successful blind role models is critical to our children's development. This may be the area that most clearly distinguishes us from other groups working within the blind community. Because of our relationship with the National Federation of the Blind and the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children we are able to provide blind mentors who serve as an invaluable resource for our parents, and provide true inspiration to our children. Our recent seminars and conferences have included the following topics; Assistive Technology, Emergency Preparedness, Literacy and Braille as well as Orientation and Mobility to name a few.

We have worked in collaboration with The NY State Commission for the Blind, The National Braille Press, Parent to Parent of NYS, UCP, YAI, The NYC Fire Department EMS Academy, The Brooklyn Public Library and local Lions Clubs among many others.

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We currently have no paid staff, full-time or part-time. All of our work to date has been accomplished through the generous donations of time and resources provided by a core group of parents and volunteers as well as limited agency sponsorship.

We are parents just like you, reaching out to help ourselves and each other. We hope you will join us.

To fully represent the entire state we need parent representatives from every area. You too can become your area's POBCNY representative!

Our Kids

This section is dedicated to all of our children.

Please send a brief description of your child preferably with a photo (jpeg or gif format if possible). The children are also encouraged to write in. Tell us about your experiences or share a story maybe a poem, or tell us about a cool project for. Send your submission to us via email at pobcny@verizon.net or call 212 222-1705.

It is our great pleasure to profile the children of some of our board members in this, our first issue.



My name is **Kate Lawson**. I am a 16 year old, visually impaired student living in Manhattan. One of the many things I love about New York City is there are many unique opportunities for the blind and visually impaired. In the summer of 2005 I took part in a month long independence program. My peers and I focused on developing professional skills at the Lighthouse, took trips to fun and interesting locations in the heart of the city and lodged at Columbia University.

It really was great learning and socializing with other visually impaired students.

Another opportunity I took advantage of was one on one personalized SAT tutoring. I committed myself to over five hours of studying a week at the Lighthouse with Mr. Stanley Hirschberg. It was hard work but it did pay off in the end. I'm sure my scores will help me get into the college of my choice when I apply this December.

In June 2007 I and four other blind and visually impaired teens crossed the Atlantic into the wondrous countryside of Southeast France. L'Occitane en Provence, a company that produces high quality, natural body care products, sponsored the four day trip. While I was there I took a tour of the L'Occitane factory, including the laboratory where chemists work on getting the combinations just right. I also attended seminars about plants, how to identify them and how to extract the essential oil within, the literal essence of the plant or flower. All of this was based on scent and touch, no vision required, which I thought was extraordinary. I highly encourage other blind or visually impaired teens between the ages of 14-16 to apply. It was truly one of the best experiences of my life.

Meet **Christina Roman**, the coolest teenager in the universe according to her mother, Dalila Oquendo. Christina was born with multiple congenital abnormalities which caused her disabilities such as blindness, Cognitive Impairment & Cerebral Palsy. Chrissie is sweet, loving and feisty just like any other 13 yr old. She's very outspoken in her own way and will let you know immediately what she likes & dislikes. She is often playful & mischievous & can sometimes drive us crazy just like a teen should. She may not be able to physically do what others can but she is certainly able to show her love and appreciation towards our family.





Elora Garcia is a 10 year old in 5th grade who is a Braille reader and loves school. She is bright, sassy, fiercely independent and very outspoken. Elora has an exceptionally generous heart and is a good and loyal friend. This summer she participated in a Sailing & Seamanship Project through City Access NY. The program included a week at the South Street Seaport on a working schooner and a week at a boat building camp in the South Bronx. Her innate attributes combined with solid programs and an education that provides true access to the skills of blindness are all essential to her future success and independence as a blind woman.

The NFB New York State Convention 2007

The National Federation of the Blind of New York State will hold its 51st annual convention from November 2-4, 2007 at the Clarion Hotel, in Albany, New York.

Each year has seen a larger attendance than the previous year, a more diverse group of attendees and a greater number of private and public officials coming to speak and listen to the voice of New York State's blind. This year promises to continue the trend. A wide cross-section of professionals will assemble in Albany to plan with the blind of our state the programs which will enable us all to achieve first-class citizenship.

Our weekend will begin with an all day seminar on Friday, November 2nd for parents of blind children. This seminar has grown over the years to become the focal point for planning the future advances in the education of our children. Our Parent's Division will be hosting this event and the energy and enthusiasm of its leaders promises to make this the best event ever. For more information, contact Maria Garcia at 212-222-1705 or pobcny@verizon.net.

In addition, on Friday, there will be a technology fair for everyone where we will exhibit and demonstrate many and varied items which benefit blind people in the areas of note-taking, internet access, non-visual access to computer screens and much more. For more information, or to participate as a demonstrator in this fair, contact Mindy Jacobsen at 212-255-6688 or mindyjoy@nyc.rr.com. There will be breakfast meetings for blind merchants and parents of blind children as well as luncheon meetings for guide dog users and students.

The program on Saturday and Sunday will include items for Randolph-Sheppard members, guide dog users, students and blind people of every age and interest. We will hear from elected officials, government administrators, private agency executives, National Representative Anil Lewis of Georgia, as well as each other. The scope of our organization's influence will be best understood through the participation of these leaders.

To aid us in planning, we are asking that you register by October 15, 2007. To do so call the POBCNY office at 212 222-1705. Hotel reservations should be made directly with the Clarion Hotel at 518-438-8431. Rates are \$78 per night. See you there.

Cordially,

Carl Jacobsen

President of the National Federation of the Blind of NY State

Our Website POBCNY.ORG

It is our goal to host a website that will be the definitive resource for parents and educators of blind and visually impaired children across the state of New York.

Imagine having one site that will provide whatever you need either directly or through links to services, providers or articles of interest. You will be able to search by topic or by the type of service you're looking for or by your county of residence. We plan to list Physicians, Therapists, Schools, recreational programs, respite programs, cultural programs, technology resources, non-visual games and toys, reimbursement resources, braille tutors and blind mentors. Need a low vision provider? How about a learning media assessment or support with and IEP? Need an Early Intervention specialist or a Medicaid waiver? Looking for Braille books, audio or large print books, social opportunities for your child? Worried about your teen and dating? Socializing in general? How about a support group for yourself or your blind child or his/her sibling? We will have these resources and many more at your fingertips.

Over the coming year we will be adding as many resources to our website as we can find. To accomplish this goal we need to hear from you. What resources have you found that you would like to share? What is of interest in your community? Give us your recommendations. We will contact the source and create the link. Please add whatever you have found necessary for your child that was not listed above. Include resources that you wanted and did not find. We also intend to add a resource list for children with additional disabilities as well as parent matching services so that you can connect with other parents and children with similar issues. We are looking forward to your submissions. **With your help our POBCNY website will be the absolute all in one parent directory for the state of New York.**



Logo created by Dalila Oquendo

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