

# E-CONNECTOR

## News from Colorado Parents of Blind Children (CO-POBC)

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### BRAILLE BABY STEPS

Getting ready to read and write is a process that begins long before a child reaches school age. Blind babies and toddlers are no exception. Here are some hints and helps for parents to help prepare a young child for learning Braille:

The Hadley School for the Blind now offers a correspondence course entitled "Braille and Your Baby or Toddler" (Course ID: BBT-201). In four lessons the parent will learn the Braille alphabet and numbers. There are also guidelines for creating a Braille-rich environment in the home and suggested activities for promoting the development of oral language, concepts and motor skills. For course information [click here](#).

Story books with Braille overlays, sometimes called twin vision books, will help make the connection between reading and Braille dots on a page. A

recent partnership between the American Printing House for the Blind and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is making print/Braille books available free of charge for children under 6 years of age. A child is able to receive five free print/Braille books each year. Books are limited and enrollment is on a first come/first serve basis. [Complete and submit the application form here](#).

Seedlings Book Angel Program provides registered children with two free books per year. Sign up by going to their [website](#) (Seedlings.org).

National Braille Press offers a Braille Book Bag to children up to seven years old. This program was written up in detail in the November, 2013 issue (Previous e-Connector issues are posted on the NFB of Colorado [website](#).) Briefly, the bag contains a print/Braille book for the child, a Braille instructional book for parents and some other tactile learning aids. Just [fill out the form](#) to order a free Braille Bag.

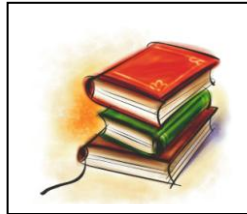
**Editor's Note:** Please feel free to contact us if you have an announcement you would like included in the newsletter or if you would like to add a friend or family member to the e-mail list. Direct all communications to: [copobc.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:copobc.newsletter@gmail.com), attention Julie Hunter, editor.

Fine motor skills and hand strength will be needed when a child is ready to use a pencil, a slate and stylus, and to press the keys on a Braille writer.

Here are some suggestions from [Guidelines and Games for Teaching Efficient Braille Reading](#) by Myrna R. Olson, for building fine motor skills and developing hand strength:

1. Sorting and Stacking: Begin with large familiar objects such as blocks and plastic kitchen ware. When the child is old enough, gradually introduce smaller objects, such as paper clips, coins, nuts and bolts. Collect various sizes of plastic jars with lids for sorting objects.
2. Stringing: Provide beads for stringing, with sizes becoming progressively smaller.
3. "Sewing": Punch holes in heavy paper with a paper punch. Have the child help squeeze the punch. Then "sew" through the holes with yarn.
4. Pinching motion: Have child clip pinch-style clothes pins to a clothes hanger. A chance to practice counting while building hand strength.

Like any new skill, learning Braille is a process and it's never too early to start.



### OFF TO COLLEGE IN 2014? SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

Attention high school seniors! It's time think about applying for a college scholarship!

The NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND national program offers 30 awards, worth from \$3,000 up to \$12,000, plus assistance for the 30 winners to attend the July 2014 Annual Convention in Orlando, Florida. For full information and the online application form, go to [www.nfb.org/scholarships](http://www.nfb.org/scholarships). The deadline for applications is March 31, 2014.

On a state level, the NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF COLORADO distributes a total of up to \$15,000 in scholarships to legally blind Colorado residents. Scholarship winners must also agree to attend the 2014 NFB national convention in July (expenses paid). The application form will be available on the NFBCO.org website in January. For additional information about the scholarship program or the NFBCO state convention, contact Buna Dahal, NFBCO Scholarship Committee Chairperson, at 303-758-1232 or email her at [bunadahal@dynamicbuna.com](mailto:bunadahal@dynamicbuna.com)

The application deadline is not yet posted, but will likely be around April 14, 2014.

SEE THE FUTURE FUND (a foundation supported by donations from medical professionals, educators and others) will be awarding up to \$42,000 to six visually impaired or blind college students under its scholarship program. Applicants must be residents of Colorado. These scholarships based on high academic achievement. The deadline for applications is March 1, 2014. For more information go to: [www.seethefuture.org](http://www.seethefuture.org)



The Colorado Center for the Blind offers a program just for you. The "Success in College" program combines real academic college experience (one or two classes at Arapahoe Community College) with direct support from the Center staff in specific blindness techniques and strategies used to insure success in the college environment. In addition, the student will have the opportunity to increase skill levels in Braille, Technology, Home Management and Orientation and Mobility. The

student may elect to be enrolled for one or two semesters. For more information contact the program director, Dan Burke, [dburke@cocenter.org](mailto:dburke@cocenter.org), 303-778-1130 ext. 213.



### WRITING CONTEST

The Youth Writing Contest (poetry and fiction) is meant to promote Braille literacy and excellence in creative writing. Entries will be judged on creativity and quality of Braille. The contest is divided into three groups, determined by grade level – elementary, middle, and high school. Prizes for contest winners range up to \$30 for each youth category.

All contest winners will be announced the first week in July, at the Writers' Division business meeting during the NFB national convention, held in Orlando, Florida. And shortly after convention, a list of winners will appear on the Writers' Division's Website, <http://writers.nfb.org>. For additional contest details and submission guidelines, go to the website.



### MAUREEN'S CORNER

Here's another snapshot of life as a blind person by Maureen Nietfeld. In this short video, Maureen demonstrates how she uses her long white cane to travel independently. Confidence and self-esteem...Maureen's got it all!

To see Maureen's video, [Click here](#)



### NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR BLIND/VISUALLY IMPAIRED KIDS...AND THEIR MOM'S AND DADS!

Here are some possible New Year goals for kids 5 and older.

"I will learn how to help Mom and Dad with the laundry. I can learn how to sort the clothes, put in the soap, turn the dial to start, and put away clean clothes. Just teach me how!"

(Washers and dryer dials can be marked with tactile clear raised dots, available at a variety of on-line retailers such as [this one](#).)

"I will choose my clothes, get dressed and do all the buttons and zippers myself! Just teach me how!"

(Clothing can be labeled with Braille tags. One good product is a teflon tape without adhesive backing that can be Brailled and pinned into clothing. It can go through the washer. Available [here](#).)

"I will set the table, clear my dishes and help load the dishwasher. Just teach me how!"

(A set of plastic plates, cups and bowls for the kids will preserve the breakable pieces. Give the kids responsibility for the plastic ware, then graduate from there.)

"I will help you prepare some meals. I can make my own sandwich, pour a glass of milk, stir and measure. Just show me how!"

(Practice using a butter knife to spread butter or jelly on toast. With pouring, start with water. A finger tip placed just inside the top edge of the glass will let you know when the glass is almost full. Before showing the child, close your eyes and do the task yourself without looking. This will help you figure out some techniques that will work for the kids.)

### **HAPPY NEW YEAR!**