



Northeastern Association of the Blind at Albany
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The Visionary | Fall 2025

Assisting Blind and Visually Impaired Individuals to Achieve Independence & Growth!

Dear Friends,

It has been very busy at NABA, and I'm thrilled to share with you some of the latest updates and happenings. Our focus remains on helping blind or visually impaired individuals of all ages achieve independence and growth. We are pleased to accomplish this in many different ways. Thanks to our numerous partners and donors.

I'd like to give a very special thanks to the Dake Foundation for Children for their generous contribution to the goalball program, as well as our goalball partners, Christian Brothers Academy, Albany Police Athletic League, and Colonie Recreation Center. As a result of their support, we've expanded valuable opportunities for our teens to develop skills and integrate with their sighted peers. Additionally, we are very pleased to have introduced a monthly Game Night! This social activity at NABA offers people chances to interact with their friends while enjoying a fun evening out.

NABA's employment specialists have been hard at work and have been very successful in finding jobs for teens and adults who are eager to enter the workforce. Many of our blind or visually impaired friends have found meaningful work in their communities and have hit the ground running! NABA is always seeking new employment partners, so let us know if you're hiring.

I'm happy to announce that beginning in August, Dr. Monica Casey-Gee extended her availability to increase our capacity for low vision screenings. If you or someone you know is interested in an exam, please be sure to reach out to NABA to discuss eligibility.

NABA prides itself in providing competitive-paying jobs to those who are blind or visually impaired in our state-of-the-art manufacturing center. The manufacturing team has been hard at work, and I'm delighted to report that in 2024, direct blind labor for federal products was 83.5% and for state products was 77%.

I want to acknowledge and thank the talented and dedicated staff at NABA who work hard every day to ensure we remain mission-focused. Team NABA is like no other, with passion and a drive to serve that is incredible. I'm proud and grateful to be working with this team.

NABA is a special place. We would not be able to do what we do without generous donations and contributions. To all who support our mission of helping blind or visually impaired individuals achieve independence, THANK YOU!

Sincerely,

Laura Zeliger,
 Executive Director and
 Chief Executive Officer
 at NABA



Thank you to our sponsors and supporters who helped make NABA's 26th Annual Visionary Golf Tournament a success.

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NYS Preferred Source Program's 2025 Employee of the Year!



We're pleased to announce that Entsar Al Khazrajy, a production worker in NABA's Manufacturing Center, has been selected as the New York State Preferred Source Program's 2025 Employee of the Year!

Born legally blind in Hillah, a city located in central Iraq, Entsar was only able to complete the sixth grade due to educational limitations and acceptance of individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Her inability to receive resources and accommodations to earn an education made it difficult for Entsar to achieve independence.

Upon arriving in the United States in 2010, Entsar was connected with various resources to assist

with her blindness and speak English. She was introduced to NABA, completed a full vocational rehabilitation program, achieved complete independence, and became a U.S. citizen.

Entsar joined the NABA family as a production worker in the manufacturing center. Today, she is part of a team of blind and visually impaired peers who are responsible for creating, producing, or packaging several products for the federal government, State of New York, and various local municipalities.

NABA produces over 50,000 reflective safety vests annually for the New York City Transit Authority, Metro North Railroad, and other government contracts.

Entsar plays a vital role in the production by using a programmable sewing machine to attach reflective panels. Please join us in congratulating Entsar on her well-deserved recognition

NABA Supports Staff Member Eager to Grow Professionally and Earn Certification in Orientation and Mobility

Orientation & Mobility Specialists, or O&Ms, teach blind or visually impaired people how to navigate safely and independently by using various techniques, such as a white cane or other assistive devices. O&M training is vital for organizations like NABA to ensure that consumers can safely and independently get around the community.

However, there is a nationwide shortage of certified O&M's which is impacting how many blind or visually impaired people can be served. Due to several factors, including lack of certification courses, lack of awareness about the profession, and the demands of the work, there simply aren't enough O&Ms to meet the demand. The shortage leads to long waiting lists for services, delayed or inadequate training, and a greater reliance on family members or caregivers for mobility assistance.

Understanding this nationwide issue, NABA is ahead of the curve in ensuring our blind and visually impaired community can obtain services. We are thrilled to support NABA's Senior Employment Specialist Lauren Sirkin in her education at Hunter College, where she is currently earning her master's degree to become an Orientation & Mobility Specialist.

Lauren is well on her way to earning her certification in this well-regarded program. As part of her ongoing O&M education, Lauren attended hands-on training sponsored by the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf/Blind Youths and Adults in New York City, where she was blindfolded and learned more about outdoor mobility—specifically, learning cane techniques, understanding traffic patterns, crossing streets, and accessing public transportation. Please join us in congratulating Lauren on this crucial next step toward her goal of becoming a certified O&M!



Congratulations Kathleen Lather! Please join us in congratulating Kathleen Lather, Director of Administration who just completed her 40th year as an employee at NABA!

Employee Appreciation

On July 10th, our hard working staff enjoyed food prepared by 2 Shea Catering and a fun day of camaraderie during our annual staff picnic at Cook Park in Colonie!

On July 21st, we celebrated National Ice Cream day with Mr Ding-a-Ling's ice cream truck at NABA's facility in Albany. Staff enjoyed a sweet treat, perfect for a summer day. And yes, even our guiding-eye furry friends got to enjoy some pup-friendly ice cream.



Kids Learn, Socialize, and Have Tons of Fun During NABA's Youth Program Socialization Week

From Monday, July 14th to Friday, July 18th, a group of blind or visually impaired kids celebrated "Kids Week" with staff and their peers while learning from each other and building life-long friendships. Throughout the week, the kids took part in arts and crafts, rehabilitation, training, working in the kitchen, a nature walk, a visit to Magic Forest, a day at the beach, and much, much more!

NABA's mission of helping blind or visually impaired individuals achieve independence is deeply rooted in our ability to start working with our youth to build confidence, necessary life skills, and friendships with those experiencing similar challenges.

