

**The National Federation of The Blind  
Alabama Affiliate**

**2026 Annual Convention**

**Friday, April 17th, 2026 - Sunday, April 19th, 2026**



Live the life you want.

Welcome!

**Embassy Suites Montgomery Hotel & Conference Center**

300 Tallapoosa St  
Montgomery, AL 36104  
Phone: 1.334.269.5055

**Convention Registration:** \$30.00 - \$35.00 onsite

**National Representative:**

Julie Deden, Director  
Colorado Center for The Blind  
Denver, Colorado

**NFB Pledge**

I pledge to participate actively in the effort of the National Federation of the Blind to achieve equality, opportunity, and security for the blind; to support the policies and programs of the Federation; and to abide by its constitution.

**INCLUSIVITY, DIVERSITY, AND SOCIAL CONDUCT**

We are committed to providing a harassment-free environment for everyone. Thank you for cultivating an atmosphere in which participants from diverse backgrounds can learn, network, and share with each other in an environment of mutual respect.

We recognize a shared responsibility to create and uphold that atmosphere for the benefit of all.

The following link will take you to the NFB website:

<https://www.nfbal.org/>

## **NFB of Alabama Officers and Board of Directors 2025-2026**

**President:** Barbara Manuel

**1st Vice President:** Tamika Williams

**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President:** Jill Rossiter

**Secretary:** Grace Anderson

**Treasurer:** Latresa Berry

**Board Seat 1:** Felisha Johnson

**Board Seat 2:** Jeffery Wilson

**Board Seat 3:** Atha Halloway

**Board Seat 4:** Brenda Houston

**Board Seat 5:** Dr. Daryl Rutledge

**Board Seat 6:** Pazater Turner

### **Our Mission:**

The National Federation of the Blind of Alabama is a community of blind Alabamians standing together to raise expectations and create opportunity. We believe blindness does not limit our ability to learn, work, or live the lives we want. Across our state, we advocate, educate the public, and support one another through leadership, mentorship, and service.

Here in Alabama, we are changing what it means to be blind—one action, one voice, and one victory at a time. Join us as we build a stronger, more inclusive future for every blind person in our state.

**Registration Chair:** Latresia Berry

**Door Prize Chair:** Tarmen Siaway

**Scholarship Chair:** Grace Anderson,

**Scholarship Co-Chair:** Jill Rossiter

**Vendor Fair Chair:** Carrissa Ammons

**Entertainment Chair:** Felisha Johnson

## 2026 Annual Convention Schedule: Friday, April 17, 2026

**1:00 PM – 5:00 PM:** Registration

**Location:** Pre-Function Area

**1:00 PM – 6:00 PM:** Inspiring Action, Enabling Choice Vendor Fair

**Location:** Salon A B C

**12:00 PM – 2:00 PM & 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM:** Hospitality

**Location:** Governor's Room

**1:30 PM – 2:00 PM:** Igniting Independence, Building Community – Friday Welcome

**Location:** Salon A B & C

**Welcome:** Barbara Manuel, *President NFB of Alabama*

**Introduction of Vendor Fair Showcase:** Carrissa Ammons, *Legislative Chair*

**Convention Announcements:** Travis Armstrong, *Montgomery Chapter*

**2:00 PM – 3:00 PM:** NFB of Alabama Board of Directors Meeting

**Location:** Salon A B & C

President Barbara Manuel Presiding

**3:00 PM – 4:00 PM:** Living the NFB Philosophy: Independence in Action

**Location:** Salon A B & C

**Facilitator:** Julie Deden, *Director, Colorado Training Center for the Blind, Denver, Colorado*

**4:00 PM – 5:00 PM:** Breakout I: Our Voice, Our Power: Building Community Through Advocacy

**Location:** Salon D

**Facilitator:** Carrissa Ammons, *Legislative Chair, Huntsville, Alabama*

Dan Burke, *Denver Chapter President, Affiliate Legislative Co-Chair, Denver Colorado*

**4:00 PM – 5:00 PM:** Breakout II: Lions in Action: Supporting the Blind Community

**Location:** Salon F

**Facilitator:** Jessica Kyser, *First Vice District Governor for MD 34C Lions, Montgomery, Alabama*

**4:00 PM – 5:00 PM:** Breakout III: Access, learn, thrive, and Empower Independence Through Accessible Library Services.

**Location:** Salon E

**Facilitator:** Rhonda Napier, *Librarian, Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled, Montgomery, AL*

**5:00 PM – 6:00 PM: NFB of Alabama Seniors Division**

**Location:** Salon F

**Facilitator:** *Zelda Kitchens, President*

**5:00 PM – 6:00 PM: National Association of Blind Merchants**

**Location:** *Salon E*

**Facilitator:** *Tracy Watts, President*

**5:00 PM – 6:00 PM: At Large Chapter Meeting**

**Location:** Salon D

**Facilitator:** *Jill Rossiter, President*

**5:00 PM – 6:00 PM: NFBAL Student Group Meeting**

**Location:** State Board Room

**Facilitator:** *Jonesti Averitte, Chairperson*

**5:00 PM – 7:00 PM: Break**

**7:00 PM – 11:00 PM: NFB Reception (*Southern Traditional Dining*)**

**8:00 PM – 11:00 PM: Sneaker Ball**

"Lace up and step out for the Sneaker Ball—where style meets comfort. Rock your best kicks with a formal fit and dance the night away in high-energy fun."

**Location:** Salon A B C

**Facilitator:** *Felisha Johnson, Presiding, Vice President, Tuscaloosa Chapter*

**8:00 PM – 11:00 PM: Bingo Night**

"Shout it loud, win it proud—join our Bingo night for prizes and fun!"

**Location:** Capitol Room

**Facilitator:** *Atha Holloway, Presiding, Vice President, Montgomery Chapter*

**2026 Annual Convention Schedule: Saturday, April 18, 2026**

**7:45 AM – 8:30 AM: Registration**

**Location:** Pre-function Area

**9:00 AM – 12:00 PM: General**

**Session Location:** Embassy 1

**9:00 AM – 9:30 AM:**

**Call to Order:** .....Barbara Manuel, *President, NFB of Alabama*

**Opening Ceremonies**

**Welcome:** ..... Tabaris Brown, *President Montgomery Chapter*

**Invocation:** ..... Randy Robinson, *Montgomery Chapter*

**NFB Pledge:**.....Tarmen Siaway, *Montgomery Chapter*

**Presentation of Colors** .....Percy Julian High School, *Montgomery Alabama*

**National Anthem:**.....Catresa Crews, *Montgomery Chapter Secretary*

**Greetings**

**Reading of Proclamation:**..... **Jan Crews, Montgomery Chapter**

**9:30 AM – 10:10 AM: 2026 National Report**

**Facilitator:** Julie Deden, *Director, Colorado Center for the Blind, Denver Colorado*

**10:10 AM – 10:30 AM: The ADA in Action: Inspiring Independence, Strengthening Community**

**Facilitator:** Sylvia Bowen, *Director, Alabama Office on Disability, Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services Montgomery, Alabama*

**10:30 AM – 10:50 AM: From Learning to Living Independently**

**Facilitator:** Dennis A. Gilliam, Ed.D., *President Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, Talladega, AL*

**10:50 AM – 11:10 AM: Independence Through Opportunity**

**Facilitator:** W. Ashley Townsend, MA, CRC, *Assistant Commissioner Blind and Deaf Services, Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, Montgomery, AL*

**11:10 AM – 11:30 AM: Strengthening Communities Through Independent Living Services**

**Facilitator:** Kent Crenshaw, *Director, Independent Living Center, Montgomery, AL*

**11:30 AM – 11:55 AM: Strengthening Community, Inspiring Independence: A Year of Purposeful Impact**

*National Federation of the Blind of Alabama Affiliate Report*

**Facilitator:** Barbara Manuel, *NFB of Alabama President, Mobile, AL*

**11:55 AM – 12:00 PM: Convention Announcements**

**Facilitator:** Tamika Williams, *1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Mobile, AL*

**12:00 PM – 2:00 PM: Lunch Break**

*South of the Border Buffet*

**Location:** Embassy 1

**12:00 PM – 1:30 PM: Inspiring Action, Enabling Choice Vendor Fair**

**Location:** Salon A B C

**12:30 PM – 1:30 PM: Hospitality**

**Location:** Governor's Room

**2:00 PM – 3:00 PM: Breakout I: Inspiring Independence Through Assistive Technology and APH Programs**

**Location:** Salon D

**Facilitator:** Donte Little, *Assistant Director, Special Projects, Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, Talladega, AL*

**2:00 PM – 3:00 PM: Breakout II: Employment Without Limits: Success and Inclusion Today**

**Location:** Salon E

**Facilitator:** Latresia Berry, *Director, Human Resources, Family Guidance Center of Alabama, Montgomery, AL*

Dr. Tarman Siaway, *Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselor  
Central Alabama Veteran Health Care System, Montgomery, AL*

**2:00 PM – 3:00 PM: Breakout III: Tools to Inspire Independence and Strengthen Community with ADA**

**Location:** Salon F

**Facilitator:** Sylvia Bowen, *Director, Alabama Office on Disability, Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services Montgomery, AL*

**3:00 PM – 4:00 PM: Breakout I: Game On: Empowerment Through Adaptive Athletics**

**Location:** Salon D

**Facilitator:** David L. Kyle, Ed.D., CAPE, *Director, The University of Alabama, Huntsville, AL*

**3:00 PM – 4:00 PM: Breakout II: Strengthening Community Through Innovation, Support, and Engagement**

**Location:** Salon E

**Facilitator:** Vicki Preddy, MSN, RN, *Nurse Educator, Southeast Vanda Pharmaceuticals, Inc. Washington DC*

**3:00 PM – 4:00 PM: Breakout III: Know Your Rights: Practical Self-Advocacy in Action**

**Location:** Salon F

**Facilitator:** Tammy Blue, *Case Advocate, Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP)*

**4:00 PM – 5:00 PM: Breakout I: Smart Tech, Bold Moves: Navigating the World Your Way**

**Location:** Salon D

**Facilitator:** Damashe Thomas, *Technology specialist, A T Guys, Tuscaloosa, AL*

**4:00 PM – 5:00 PM: Breakout II: Supporting Families, Strengthening Independence**

**Location:** Salon E

**Facilitator:** Teresa Moulton, *PTI Training Coordinator, Alabama Parent Education Center, Montgomery, AL*

**4:00 PM – 5:00 PM: Breakout III: “ABLE Accounts: Inspiring Independence and Securing the Future”**

**Location:** Salon F

**Facilitator:** Anita Kelley, *Savings Director, State of Alabama Treasurer’s Office, Montgomery, AL*

**Adjourn**

**5:30 PM – 6:30 PM: Hospitality**

**Location:** Governor Room

**7:00 PM – 9:00 PM:** 2026 NFB of Alabama Affiliate Banquet  
**Location:** Embassy 1

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**2026 NFB of Alabama Affiliate Banquet: “Inspiring Independence; Strengthening Community Convention”**

**Entertainment** ..... Tony Nixon, *Tuscaloosa Chapter*

**Presider**..... Tamika Williams, *NFB of Alabama First Vice President*

**Invocation:** .....Angela Stough, *President Dothan Chapter*

**Musical Selections**

**Dinner Served**

**Introduction of National Representative** ..... Tamika Williams, *First Vice President*

**Banquet Address:**.... Julie Deedan, *Director, Colorado Center for the Blind, Denver, CO*

**Scholarship Awards** ..... Grace Anderson & Jill Rossiter

**Pre-Authorization Contribution (PAC):** ..... Jill Rossiter & Dan Burke

**2026 NFBAL Affiliate Auction**

*Everyone is encouraged to join in our fun and engaging auction, where your participation plays a vital role in helping our affiliate raise essential funds to further our mission.*

**Adjourn**

## Julie Deden Biography



Julie Deden is the Executive Director of the Colorado Center for the Blind; a nationally recognized training center affiliated with the National Federation of the Blind. She has served in this role since 1999, leading the growth of the Center and expanding programs that serve blind individuals across the country.

Blind since birth, she brings both personal experience and professional expertise to her work. She previously worked for more than ten years as a rehabilitation counselor and holds a master's degree in counseling.

Under her leadership, the Center has developed strong training programs focused on independence, confidence, and high expectations, serving adults, seniors, and youth. Julie Deden is widely respected for her commitment to empowering blind individuals to live full and independent lives.

We extend our sincere thanks to Julie Deden for serving as our National Federation of the Blind national representative during our 2026 annual convention. Your presence, leadership, and willingness to share your knowledge and perspective greatly enrich our gathering and inspire our members across Alabama. We are truly grateful for your time, your dedication, and your continued commitment to advancing opportunities for blind individuals.

**2026 Annual Convention Schedule: Sunday, April 19, 2026**

**8:30 AM – 9:30 AM - Devotion**

**Location:** Salon A B C

**Facilitator:** Jill Rossiter, Presiding, Second Vice President

**9:30 AM - 12:00 PM - Alabama Affiliate Annual Business Meeting**

**Location:** Salon A B C

**Call to Order:** ..... Barbara Manuel, *NFB of Alabama President*

**Invocation:** ..... Atha Holloway, *First Vice President Montgomery Chapter*

**Reading of Minutes** ..... Grace Anderson, *NFB of Alabama Secretary*

**Treasurer Report** ..... Latresia Berry, *NFB of Alabama Treasurer*

**Nominating Committee Report:** ..... Jill Rossiter, *Chairperson*

**Open Positions:**

- Board Position 2 – Jeff Wilson
- Board Position 4 – Brenda Houston
- Board Position 6 - Pazater Turner

**Elections**

**Appointment of 2026 Delegate and Alternate for National Convention**

**Affiliate Grants to National**

**Chapter Highlights**

**Old Business**

**New Business**

**Adjourn**

## **NFB of Alabama Chapters/Divisions**

At Large Chapter: Jill Rossiter, *President*  
[Atlargechapter@NFBAL.org](mailto:Atlargechapter@NFBAL.org)

Birmingham Chapter: Jeff Wilson, *President*  
[Chapter@NFBAL.org](mailto:Chapter@NFBAL.org)

Dothan Chapter: Angela Stough, *President*  
[DothanChapter@NFBAL.org](mailto:DothanChapter@NFBAL.org)

Huntsville Chapter: Chris Misterka, *President*  
Huntsville [Chapter@NFBAL.org](mailto:Chapter@NFBAL.org)

Mobile Chapter: Tamika Williams, *President*  
Mobile [Chapter@NFBAL.org](mailto:Chapter@NFBAL.org)

Montgomery Chapter: Tabaris Brown, *President*  
Montgomerychapter@NFBAL.org

Talladega Chapter: Pazater Turner, *President*  
[Talladegachapter@NFBAL.org](mailto:Talladegachapter@NFBAL.org)

Tuscaloosa Chapter: Brenda Houston, *President*  
Tuscaloosa [Chapter@NFBAL.org](mailto:Chapter@NFBAL.org)

Merchants Division: Tracy Watts, *President*  
[ketta29@bellsouth.net](mailto:ketta29@bellsouth.net)

Senior Division: Zelda Kitchen, *President*  
[Zyk1908@gmail.com](mailto:Zyk1908@gmail.com)

NFBAL Student Group: Jonesti Averitte  
[Steele.jonesti@gmail.com](mailto:Steele.jonesti@gmail.com)

## **2026 NFBAL Convention Planning Committee**

Latresia Berry, *Chair*

Felisha Johnson, *Tuscaloosa Chapter*

Carrissa Ammons, *Huntsville Chapter*

Tamika Williams, *Mobile Chapter*

## **NFBAL 2026 Scholarship Committee**

Grace Anderson, *Chair*

Jill Rossiter, *Co-Chair*

Jennifer Reeves, *At-Large Chapter*

Atha Holloway, *Montgomery Chapter*

Tamika Williams, *Mobile Chapter*

### **Special Thanks:**

Thank You to Our ASL Interpreters for your dedication and for ensuring access and inclusion for all.

Special thanks to the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind for providing large print, Braille agendas, transportation for members to attend the convention and other helpful contributions which make our event accessible to all.

### **To our 2026 Attendees:**

The National Federation of the Blind of Alabama, extends our deepest gratitude to each of you. Your presence, energy, and commitment to advocating for equality and independence is what makes this event truly special.

We will continue striving for a future where blind and low-vision individuals have equal opportunities and rights.

Thank you once again for being a part of our mission and for making this convention a success. We look forward to working alongside you to build a brighter future for all."

### **Service Animal Relief:**

Exit the 1st-floor elevator, turn right toward sales, then immediately left into the hallway between sales and Commerce. Continue to the double doors to exit. Service animals may relieve here—please use waste bags. Re-enter with your room key.