

NFB Newsline

A free service makes Vermont newspapers accessible to blind and visually impaired Vermonters

The Department of Libraries NFB-NEWSLINE®

Blind and other print-disabled Vermonters will be able to enjoy one of 242 newspapers, including 3 from Vermont over their morning coffee (or any other time they want) through a service called NFB-NEWSLINE®. The service makes content from participating newspapers and magazines accessible by touch-tone phone 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

"One of the first things a person who loses sight misses is the ability to read the newspaper. NFB- NEWSLINE® restores that ability. Whether for study, work, or recreation, NFB-NEWSLINE® will bridge part of the gap between no information and information equality," said Franklin Shiner, president of the National Federation of the Blind of Vermont (NFBVT).

Previously offered in other states, NFB-NEWSLINE ®is newly available in Vermont through a partnership of the National Federation of the Blind of Vermont, the Vermont Department of Libraries and the Vermont Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired. Funding is provided by the State of Vermont.

"We're very pleased to offer NFB-NEWSLINE ®with daily content from the Bennington Banner, Brattleboro Reformer, Burlington Free Press, and the Associated Press of Vermont," said Sybil Brigham McShane, Vermont State Librarian. According to McShane, there are plans to add another major Vermont newspaper to the service in the coming months.

The NFB-NEWSLINE® system reformats the digital transmissions of participating newspapers and converts them to synthetic speech. It then uploads the newspapers, which include the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and USA Today, Christian Science Monitor, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times among many others, including 4 Spanish-language newspapers and varied magazines.

"Staying informed about important issues helps all of us to fully participate at work and in our communities. The NFB-NEWSLINE® service makes it possible for blind and visually impaired Vermonters to have easy access to timely information. It is very empowering to read the same articles at the same time as regular print readers." said Fred Jones, director of the Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

To sign up for the service, individuals should contact Mackenzie Breen at 802-289-0334 or email at mackenzie.breen@vermont.gov Users are given an access code and call a toll-free number to enter the system. They can browse the papers, choosing or skipping articles as they wish. The system reads each article aloud. The menu allows the user to change the speed and voice and to search for a particular word or subject.

