**National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut**

**State Board Meeting Minutes**

**April 10, 2021**

**Called to order: 11:05 AM**

**Roll Call:**

**President: Maryanne Melley**

**1st Vice-President: Beth Rival**

**2nd Vice-President: Mary Silverberg**

**Treasurer: Nathanael T. Wales**

**Secretary: Marchele Davis**

**Board Members:**

**Shonda R. Rosetta**

**Deb Reed**

**Veronica Alston**

**Jim McCollum**

**Recite of NFB Pledge:**

**Opening Remarks: None**

**Treasurer’s Report: Nathanael T. Wales**

**No Conversation: Mary made a motion to accept the Treasurer’s Report. It was seconded by Beth, motion passed unanimously.**

**Advisory Board Report: Beth Rival**

**Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS)**

**Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB)**

**Advisory Board for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired**

**Beth reported that BESB continues to be challenged with low vision doctors to sign up with new clients as well as prescribing visual aids. Beth stated that there is a tight budget for persons over the age of 55. The Disability Budget for 2022-2023 looks good. The Child Services budget is slightly higher. The Blind and Deaf services are down for funding. Beth stated that some community services are down due to Covid. This will remain until October. Voc Rehab continues to have funds due to less spending because of Covid. For the most part rehab services remain virtual. Most vendors are closed. However, there may be 2 part-time vendors for the summer. Beth informed the affiliate that individuals can receive bank loans from their private banks if they need accessible technology. BESB will guarantee the loan. However, Beth stated that she is uncertain how eligibility is determined. Stephen Thal from CRIS Radio is inviting anyone to come and speak or be interviewed regarding any events, stories etc. There were two speakers from the CT United Care Workers. The presentation was on the aspects of long-term care for individuals. In addition, supportive services were discussed. For example, home delivered meals, applications for health insurance, senior community employment etc. Kristen raised a question regarding how to get in touch with B.E.S.B. Beth advised Kristen to email both Brian Sigman and Chris Lasson. Maryanne had suggested that Kristen contact CRIS Radio to promote the BELL Academy. Kristen stated that she has reached out to them. However, she has not heard from them regarding any dates as of yet. Edward Shaham had further questions regarding the Bank Loan Accessible Technology program. Beth stated that she would get additional information and send it out on the listserv.**

**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Committee-Deb Reed:**

**Deb reported that the SRC meeting was held March 24, 2021. The Center for Public Policy and Social Research at Central Connecticut State University was unanimously voted in by the council to conduct the Consumer Satisfaction Survey again this year. All agreed that they have done a very professional job, including reaching out to SRC members for their input.**

**VR Success Story!**

**Jesus Betancor, a former member of the Southwest Chapter, was introduced as a vocational rehabilitation success story. He came from Columbia at the age of nine not knowing how to speak English and since then, with the help of BESB, he has learned braille as well as Computer Technology. He is set to graduate from high school this year and has been a mentor to his fellow students. He is planning on continuing his education in Computer Science in college.**

**The Comprehensive Needs Assessment showed that BESB’s VR program is actively engaging youth with blindness, however, it DOES need to provide more equipment and technology training. Some recommendations included that VR should frequently check with clients during the pandemic.**

**VR success stories should be posted on their website; conduct more outreach with eye doctors and community providers to make them aware of BESB services, and to hold more mentoring events with clients to highlight success stories and services. One of the virtual events that they have already held since this recommendation was one in which Kristen Dockendorff presented to parents of blind children and other community providers about our BELL program.**

**BESB Staffing update: A new Rehabilitation Technologist has been hired and will cover the southern part of state. Recruitment is underway to hire a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to cover the South-Central region of the state. In addition, it is their goal to have four orientation and mobility instructors for the state.**

**BESB expenditures were down due to virtual services being less costly than residential and in person training. BESB will receive $315,000 in stimulus money to be used for the Business Enterprise program as the vendors need compensation for their losses.**

**Planned Authorized Contribution Plan (PAC): Len Schlenk**

**Leonard reported two new people had joined the PAC Program. He continued to encourage the CT affiliate and non-members to contribute to this important cause. Leonard stated that he will be contacting chapter presidents and members to request their support.**

**BCAC (Bureau Consumer Advisory Committee) -Barbara Blejewski:**

**NO Report**

**Federationist Report- Briana Rigsbee:**

**Brianna began expressing her gratitude to everyone who submitted articles and participated in the recent issue of the Federationist. Furthermore, she stated how she was very pleased with her first issue. Brianna stated how she does not have a specific topic for the upcoming issue, however, she suggested that anyone is welcome to write on the effects of being blind during the pandemic. She stated that she is hoping to have a more detailed topic in the near future. Maryanne and affiliate members had commended Brianna for an outstanding job. Deb and Mary appreciate the encouragement of cohesion, while getting to know the strengths and successes of our affiliate members. If anyone desires to place issues or articles, feel free to contact Brianna at:**

**editor.fedct@gmail.com**

**Phone: (203)751-0199**

**(Report Completed.)**

**Vehicle Donation: Marilyn Wenzel**

**No Report.**

**BELL Academy-Kristen Dockendorff:**

**Kristen reported that she had attended a Zoom conference. She stated that she was slightly disappointed, due to the composition of the meeting. Kristen had informed the affiliate that there was no room of place on the agenda to present or promote the BELL Academy. Furthermore, Kristen stated that for the 2-hour period, there were only 3 people. Kristen says that she continues to move along. She informed the affiliate, that she has been attending the BELL meetings on Zoom. Kristen emphasized how CT is a small state. Therefore, the BELL program may not get that many children as desired. Kristen mentioned while attending the meetings, she learned that some students may not be eligible to participate in the program, due to additional disabilities or academic issues. Kristen stated that she has been experiencing some frustration, in that it has been difficult to find and identify who the children are. However, she stated that she has been sending emails and flyers to promote the program. Unfortunately, there has been no responses. Questions were raised by the affiliate. Kristen responded that efforts are being made for all NFB BELL coordinators to meet, discuss concerns and strategize ideas on the Zoom platform. Kristen liked an idea that was mentioned by Nathanael regarding mentoring. Kristen feels that mentors should be from any state, in order to impact the student’s training. It was mentioned that background checks may be an issue. Marchele mentioned sending out flyers to the Centers for Disability Rights throughout the state. Maryanne empathized with Kristen. Beth reassured Kristen that she will get responses from the parents, it’s just that they haven’t registered yet.**

**Convention Committee-Maryanne Melley:**

**Maryanne reported that the convention committee had met last month, and that sponsorship forms had been sent out. It was also mentioned, how this year will be the 50th year celebration of the convention. Therefore, the theme for this year is: “Fifty Years of Our History!” Two hotels are up for decision. One in Bridgeport, that was found by Jim Cronin, or Rocky Hill which Beth Rival located. The committee is in the process of securing speakers and having BELL students participate in the convention. The Convention will be in hybrid fashion. Audio and video technology will be furnished to accommodate the convention. Maryanne raised a question regarding voting for this year. There are two board positions open this year. Shonda Rosetta and Jim McCollum are the 2 members who will have finished their term. After much discussion from the board and remaining affiliate, Marchele made a motion that the Swift Voting platform be used for the NFB of CT 2021 Convention, Seconded by Mary with huge acceptance.**

**Birdies for Charity-Mary Silverberg:**

**Mary reported that** **The Travelers is the title sponsor again for the PTA Golf Tournament in Cromwell. It was mentioned that The Travelers have committed to be the title sponsor until 2030. Mary stated that they have been with us since 2007. It was revealed that within the next week or two, that weekly chirps will be sent out. In addition, some motivation and information will be included. This initiative will begin 8 weeks prior, so that it brings for a successful and a positive outcome with the support of financial contributions. When you donate, any amount, the Travelers will add 15% to every donation made.  This goes directly to NFBCT. This event will take place June 24-27.   Donations can be paid online. Checks will not be accepted at this time. Nathanael will be assisting Mary with the NFB PayPal Account. Aside from promoting this effort on Facebook, NFB listserv etc. Mary had asked that each of the affiliate members spread this event with our social circles, in hopes that it would expand a larger donorship.**

**Meeting adjourned for a 20-minute recess. Meeting called to order: 1:24PM**

**New Business:**

**Donations to the National Federation of the Blind- Maryanne Melley:**

**After much discussion, $300 will be given to the SUN Fund, $600 to the White Cane Fund, $600 to the Kenneth Jernigan Fund and $500 to the Jacobus tenBroek Fund totaling $2,000.**

**Shonda made a motion to render financial contributions to the funds mentioned above.**

**Veronica seconded and motion passed unanimously.**

**Bequeathed Car:**

**Maryanne reported that the NFB of CT had been given a car. She stated that she was hoping that Carvana would handle the logistics with the car. Maryanne had explained how Carvana wanted her name to be on the title, as stated previously the car is the property of the NFB of CT. Furthermore, she stated that she presented the required documents. Unfortunately, Maryanne stated that she was not able to work with them. It is a 2013 Volkswagen CC luxury car with 29,000 miles on it. The car needs some brake work. Also, it was stated that this type of car is no longer made. It has been appraised at: $6,410.00 which is the value of the car. It was stated that she had received an offer for $4,500. However, she stated that she did not accept it. She stated that she had someone who was interested in the car at the appraised price. Maryanne had informed the affiliate that if someone else is interested, they would have to offer $7,000 or at the least, $6,910 for it. Maryanne had explained how if this was sold at an auction at our convention, it must be bought at a significant amount. Half of the proceeds will go to the NFB headquarters and the other half to the affiliate. There was much discussion. Beth had suggested a 2-week deadline. Shonda and others agreed. Cherri had expressed interest and will speak with Maryanne outside the meeting, to set up time to look at it. Lastly, Maryanne stated that she will share this information on the listserv.**

**$500.00 assistance for technology instruction-Maryanne Melley**

**Maryanne stated that there was a recommendation for giving up to $500 assistance to active members in need with technology and accessibility. It’s noted that it can be very expensive to receive training outside of B.E.S.B. Much discussion had taken place from the board and the affiliate at large. Most of the affiliate thought that it is more beneficial to receive individualized training. Maryanne stated that she would speak with both Stephen Deltatto, who is the owner of Silver Lining Technologies, and Steve Famiglietti from the NEAT Center, to see how much training $500 would buy. It was mutually agreed that this discussion would be tabled until the board meets at a time provided.**

**Covid Issues:**

**If people need vaccinations, Shonda informed the affiliate that if someone wants to register to become vaccinated, Aira is supporting any individual who is needing assistance. Furthermore, it was mentioned that you do not have to be a paid subscriber. For more information, call: (800)835-1934. All members are welcome to take a survey regarding issues related to the Covid-19 on the National for the Blind’s website.**

**Zoom Licenses:**

**Maryanne reported how the national office was generous to give us a free license for 2020. However, it was time to renew the Zoom license. The cost for a new Zoom license is $150.00 for 300 participants at 12 months. Maryanne felt that this was a reasonable expense. In addition, she stated that she had to inform Don, a person from National by April 15, then he in turn will send out invoices. After a very short discussion, Deb made a motion that $150.00 would be spent for the renewing of the Zoom license, Marchele seconded and motion passed with huge acceptance.**

**Register for National Convention:**

**The National Federation of the Blind 2021 Convention registration is free and open all are welcome to register. Donations are also welcome. The NFB 2021 Convention dates: Tuesday, July 6, Seminars and Special Meetings; Wednesday, July 7, Board meetings and Resolutions; Thursday, July 8, Division meetings and Opening Ceremonies; Friday, July 9, Presidential Reports and General Sessions; and Saturday, July 10, Business Sessions and Banquet. All chapters are required to send cash money into Lucia, so that she may submit all funds to National for door prizes. The Student and the Guide Dog Divisions are welcome to have their funds allocated to the same divisions at the national headquarters. It is encouraged that all funds be sent to Lucia as soon as possible.**

**Affiliate Dues:**

**All affiliate dues “must” be paid in January. The dues are carried from January – December. Dues “do not” roll over. Members who have not yet paid, are encouraged to pay to Lucia. All membership dues are accounted at the national office.**

**Chapter News:**

**Jim Cronin, At Large Chapter:**

**Jim reported that at the beginning of the year, they had Marcy Carpenter who is from the Survivor’s Task Force. In February, Liz Bottner who is a goalie for the Hartford Braillers. In addition, she also is employed with the VA Hospital as an instructor teaching the blind vets how to use technology. Jim stated that she was very interesting. March, they had Patty and Rebecca Chang, who is the daughter-in-law. Patty spoke on the Dream Maker Circle. Rebecca spoke on financial literacy. It was mentioned that the At Large Chapter had their first board of directors meeting. Jim acknowledged Jim McCollum for his wise counsel and his performance with assistance with Zoom platform. Also, acknowledgments were given to Chrissy Scrimgeour for her work ethic and Janet Wallans for stepping up as treasurer. Jim stated that Maryanne will be working on establishing their constitution. On April 21, Esther will be their guest speaker. Jim stated that that he feels satisfied and that the team is going to go far. Gratitude was also given to Honorata and Phil for introducing Jim to the NFB.**

**Garry Allen, Hartford Chapter:**

**No report.**

**Shonda R. Rosetta, Shore Line Chapter:**

**No report.**

**Josephina Martinez: Waterbury Chapter:**

**No report.**

**Marchele Davis: Southern Chapter:**

**Marchele reported that February was Black History Month. Therefore, Anil Lewis, who is the Executive Director of Blind Initiatives, was our speaker. In addition, we were delighted to have some of the affiliate guests to join us. In March, we had our very own, Len Schlenk, share information regarding the Preauthorized Contribution Plan (PAC). On April 11th, we had our very own Encole Stewart, share and discuss her topic on health disparities.**

**Deb Reed: Central Chapter:**

**Deb reported that their next meeting will be on April 17th. Kate Webster will be their guest speaker. She is both a former CT scholarship recipient and a member of the Survivors Task Force.**

**Isabel Rosario: Student Division:**

**Isabel reported that at the end of the year, they had a highly successful raffle, where they gave away gift baskets, raising $80.00. She stated that the CT’s Student’s Division are currently in the process of collaborating with New York and New Jersey’s Student’s Division to have a seminar. Isabel stated this gathering is designed to build connections. Furthermore, to have a panel of professional speakers to discuss their challenges, successes and additional experiences. It was also mentioned that Brian Martin had participated in the same event Kristen spoke of in her report. Isabel stated that they have been involved in a lot of outreach projects.**

**Since more and more people are becoming vaccinated, Maryanne and Beth had encouraged that chapters try and have an in-person meeting.**

**Next NFB Board meeting: July 31, 2021**

**Meeting adjourned: 2:39PM**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Marchele Davis**

**National Federation of the Blind of CT Affiliate: Secretary**