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National Federation of the Blind of Arkansas

Central Arkansas Chapter

Meeting Minutes

May 7, 2022

Opening: The regular meeting of the Central Arkansas Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind (NFBCAC) was called to order at 11:00 A.M., via Zoom, by President Cindy Scott-Huisman, who welcomed the membership and guests, along with requesting that all participants mute when listening and identify themselves when speaking, to facilitate communications and recording of the minutes.

Chapter Members Present: President Cindy Scott-Huisman, Vice President Virginia “Ginger” Robertson, Secretary Kyle Kiper, Treasurer Bettye Johnson, Board Member Cynthia Kiper, Board Member Brent Philpot, Federationists Joshua Goolsby, Tawnya Philpot, and Mollie Hernandez.

Guests Present: Telecommunications Access Program Director (TAP) Sydney Washington, National Federation of the Blind (NFBAR) Board Member Donavan Cavender, Jimmy Sparks, and Melanie Thornton.

Guest Speaker: President Cindy Scott-Huisman announced that the Roll Call and chapter meeting would follow a presentation by Sidney Washington. President Huisman thanked Vice President Ginger Robertson, for inviting Ms. Washington, and introduced the guest speaker, and Ms. Washington was then presented with the floor.

Telecommunications Access Program Director Sidney Washington introduced herself, and thanked the chapter for welcoming her to speak. She provided a history, of her agency, which included its beginning, in 1995, as a service solely tasked with distributing telecommunications devices to people who were Deaf and Hard of Hearing. She described the evolution of their services, during several expansions, chiefly in 2001 when individuals with all disabilities were added. TAP was described as providing whatever communications devices were necessary, from landline telephones, adaptive devices, like sets with large buttons and/or Braille, to modern wireless devices, like smart phones and tablets. Ms. Washington listed the eligibility requirements as being an Arkansas Resident, having documentation of a qualifying disability, and earning less than $50,000 per year, although a slide scale for participant cost sharing could be used for those earning a higher income. She added that all confirmed DeafBlind applicants are referred to NFBCAC past speaker ICAN Connect, for specialized services. Each provided device remains the property of the state, for 2 years. During that time, she explained, that defects and upgrades could be worked out, between the participants and TAP. In addition, she noted that no disability certification is required, for follow-up applications if services, if it was recorded during the first service provision phase. Wireless products are restricted to one device per participant, with landline technology including one device, with up to four accessories. Ms. Washington entertained several comments and questions, including an answer which detailed that provided devices include Apple and Android phones and iPads and Galaxy tablets. Before ending her presentation, Ms. Washington added that she would be glad to return, and would be interested in being a vendor and presenter, at the NFBAR 2023 State Convention. President Huisman, once again, thanked the speaker, and confirmed that she would be following up with her, for telephone numbers and website addresses, for the mid-month email, and about the next convention.

Roll Call: Board Member Brent Philpot led all participants in an alphabetical roll call, providing an opportunity for all present to identify and introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes: President Scott-Huisman advised the membership that minutes of the April meeting were emailed to all members and inquired whether anyone had any comments or requests for corrections. Vice President Ginger Robertson made a motion to accept the previous minutes. A voice vote was held, and the motion carried.

Treasurer’s Report: President Scott-Huisman advised the chapter that the Treasurer’s Reports, for March and April, had been emailed to all members. She asked for any comments or corrections. Vice President Ginger Robertson made a motion to accept the report. A voice vote was held, and the motion carried.

Continuing Business: President Scott-Huisman updated members on signing up for the NFBAR, and other, ListServes. She added that this email based communications is a great way to stay up to date, on what is going on within the state.

President Scott-Huisman updated the membership on guest speakers, and advised that the Speaker Committee has several upcoming guests lined up, but that any suggestions would be appreciated, and should be provided to Vice President Robertson, who added that the June Guest Speaker will be Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind Business Engagement Coordinator Stephen Partridge.

Advocacy and Outreach: Vice President Robertson provided information, on a new Support Group for Blind Individuals, which is being facilitated by Reverend Trinette Barnes, who herself is Blind. She added that several local Blind individuals took part in the first session, and that it may be a great opportunity for the chapter to introduce itself to potential members. The group is sponsored, through the United Methodist Church. She added that Reverend Barnes is planning on becoming a member of the National Federation of the Blind.

Take Five for Philosophy: Secretary Kyle Kiper facilitated the segment of every chapter meeting, dedicated to discussing a dilemma contrasted with the concept of Federation Philosophy. A discussion took place, related to the question of whether individuals, who run into web usage barriers like overlays, take the time to contact sponsoring companies or web developers, or if they find they do not have the time and decide to just use competing sites, which may be more accessible. He asked what philosophies members would apply toward their personal decisions, or opinions on this dilemma. A positive, and interactive, debate ensued, allowing multiple members to express their personal feelings and testimonials. After 5 minutes, President Scott-Huisman called time, and the meeting continued.,

New Business: President Scott-Huisman announced, for those who did not already know, that the NFBAR 2023 State Convention will take place in Little Rock, and will be hosted by the Central Arkansas Chapter. She advised that an initial convention planning meeting, for just the NFBCAC Board, would take place, on Monday, May 9th, to discuss potential sites, committees, activities, etc. She added that there are jobs for all members, and that this is only the first of many meetings.

Vice President Robertson reported that she, NFBAR President Nena Chadwick, NFBAR Events Coordinator Tawnya Philpot, and NFBCAC President Scott-Huisman, met with Patti Chang, from the NFB National Office, to discuss fundraising strategies and organization. She shared that the meeting concluded with the establishment of a plan to develop a NFBAR Budget Committee, to be followed by the NFBAR Fundraising Committee, in order to identify current available assets, identify areas in need of fundraising, and purposes for individual fundraising drives.

President Scott-Huisman shared that the NFBAR Chapter Presidents met, to develop a more uniform and streamlined process for onboarding new members. Four steps were defined.

1. Potential member must attend 2 chapter meetings before asking to join.

2. A welcoming ceremony will take place, with questions and a vote will be held.

3. Dues will be paid either to the Chapter Treasurer or online, and

4. The Chapter President will ensure that a New Member Questionnaire is completed, and submitted to the membership portal.

President Scott-Huisman expressed her regret, that several members joined, but their information was not processed and they were not welcomed in this manner, and that this is an effort to prevent that happening in the future.

Secretary Kiper suggested a concept, copying NFBAR President Chadwick’s recent development of liaisons, from the chapters to the state board, that chapter members, who are already members of other organizations, or involved in other businesses or agencies, become liaisons between the chapter and those entities, in order to share info from both directions, and possibly build advocacy, outreach, and membership.

President Scott-Huisman expressed the chapter’s wishes of congratulations, to NFBCAC Federationist Joshua Goolsby, and his wife Emily, on the recent birth of their daughter, Madelyn Goolsby. The membership all shared in the sentiment, and welcomed the newest member of the National Federation of the Blind of Arkansas.

President Scott-Huisman asked the membership to consider door prize and fund donations, for the national convention. Vice President Robertson made a motion, that $100 be donated, from the NFBCAC, with an equal $25 donation to each of the 4 NFB National Funds. A short discussion ensued, and a voice vote was held. The motion carried. Federationist Tawnya Philpot suggested that the chapter donate $50, divided into 5 $10 gift cards. A discussion took place, and the result was her $50 donation idea, but divided into two $25 Amazon cards. Board Member Brent Philpot made a motion, supporting this decision, a voice vote was held, and the motion carried. Secretary Kiper added that the chapter should be noted, in all donations, which will be submitted through the affiliate, but should recognize the chapter.

State Affiliate Announcements: NFBAR Board Member Donavan Cavender advised the chapter that President Chadwic has developed several committees, and is requesting members volunteer to serve. He gave an example, that he is chairing a Lions Club Committee, to help build a relationship between members of that service organization and the NFBAR. He then reminded members of the upcoming National Convention, and that he will be attending, along with President Chadwick and her husband.

Welcoming Ceremony: Board member Cynthia Kiper welcomed incoming chapter member Melanie Thornton, and asked her to introduce herself, and to share how she wishes to serve the Federation. Ms. Thornton introduced herself, and expressed her excitement at joining the Federation. She expressed her excitement at being welcomed into the chapter, in such a manner, and said that she had never joined anywhere where the welcome was so nice. She expressed her interest in focusing on digital access, as it is her passion, including advocacy for those who are the most impacted by access barriers, such as the Blind. A short synopsis of what it means to be committed to the Federation was read, by Cynthia Kiper, and then she led the incoming members, and the attendees, in the NFB Pledge, and the 1 Minute Message, before asking Ms. Thornton if she wished to join the National Federation of the Blind, making a motion to accept her as a member, which was seconded by President Cindy Scott-Huisman. A voice vote was held, and the motion carried. The new Federationist was welcomed by the membership.

Presidential Release: Secretary Kyle Kiper played a condensed audio recording, of the

May Presidential Release, allowing chapter members to hear from the national leadership.

Additional Announcements: President Scott-Huisman expressed her excitement over an excellent chapter meeting. She reminded members that the next meeting will be on Saturday June 11th, at 11:00, via Zoom. She added that all members and guests should watch for her email, which will come out between this and the next meeting.

Adjournment: Board Member Brent Philpot made a motion to adjourn. A voice vote was held, and the motion carried at 12:30 P.M.

Minutes submitted on May, 25th, 2022 by Kyle Kiper, Secretary

Minutes reviewed on May 28, 2022 by Cindy Scott-Huisman, President