State President’s Update for January, 2016

The topics for January are legislation and convention planning.

On January 18, the NFB of Idaho held a legislative luncheon at the Crystal Ballroom in Boise. Although we have done evening banquets and legislative breakfasts in the past, this was our first luncheon. Seventy-five people attended, with about half being our members and the other half legislators, our Lieutenant Governor Brad Little, members of the Idaho Commission for the Blind board, and the new ICBVI director Beth Cunningham. I appreciate the hard work and coordination of committee chair and MC Jan Gawith, Harry Gawith who prepared the invitations and follow-up correspondence and collected the money from those attending, Larry Bateman who assembled packets, and assisted with greeting and seating legislators, along with Ray Halverson and Mary Syms-Pollot. Sandy Streeter, Earl Hoover, Mike Gibson, and Ramona Walhof spoke about our issues. Ramona and I prepared fact sheets for the legislators, and Ramona provided the copies of both the fact sheets and the NFB accomplishments letter. The three topics included support for the IESDB budget request, discussion of services offered by the Idaho Commission for the Blind and the eventual need for additional funds, and the need to begin to plan for contributing state funds toward public transportation. We received positive feedback from legislators, and we will probably plan legislative luncheons in the future.

The other legislative effort was the Washington seminar held January 25-28. Sandy Streeter and I attended and were able to meet with congressional and senate staffers for all of the offices. Due to the severe storm, which preceded the event, Sandy was not able to attend the legislative director’s seminar. Our four issues included the Transitioning to Integrated and Meaningful Employment Act (TIME Act) hr188 and s2001, the Accessible Instructional Materials in Higher Education (AIM HE) act, Space Available, which would allow100% disabled veterans prior to 1996 to travel on militarytransport, and the Marrakesh treaty, which still needs to have the ratification package sent from the White House. Sandy and I will be following up with our legislative staffers to be sure that our issues are given to our congressman and senators.

With our state NFBI convention a little more than two and a half months away, it’s time to get your hotel reservations made. The cut-off date is March 22. Room rates are $89.00 for singles, doubles, triples, and quads. There is an 8.00% tax as well. Contact the Red Lion hotel at (208) 799-1000, or (800) 232-6730. I need to let everyone know that if you use a debit card when you check in, the hotel will put an authorization hold on the card of $25.00 for each night of your stay. In other words, if you are staying three nights, $75.00 will be held on your card until you check out. Those held funds will be released back to your card within 7 business days. A credit card is not charged in the same way, and I suggest you use accredit card if at all possible.

Chapters need to get door prizes for the convention. These need to be items that would be useful to others, and since many of us will be traveling with limited luggage space, they should not be too large to transport. Judy Jones, from the Central Idaho chapter, is door prize chair. Please contact her with any questions and to let her know what door prizes you will be bringing. Her contact information is phone (208) 316-7008, email sonshine59@gmail.com.

The hospitality room is a very important part of the convention. Since most of us will be traveling with limited space to bring bulky items for hospitality, I hope that our Palouse Empire and Pan Handle chapters can get donated some of the more bulky items like soft drinks, and perishable items. Coke and Pepsi often give donations, and grocery stores donate as well, although sometimes, they have procedures for doing this that take some time. Sharon Henderson is hospitality room chair. Please contact her at (208)3696889. Assigning a specific chapter member to coordinate your chapter’s contributions is often a helpful approach. The hospitality room will provide lunches on Friday and sack lunches on Sunday for those traveling. The hotel provides free full breakfasts for those staying there, and we probably will purchase sack lunches from the hotel for Saturday. We need items like fruits, vegies, bread for sandwiches, meat and cheese for sandwiches, cookies, chips and other snacks. We will be able to do some shopping on Friday morning for items we need and don’t have.

Our Saturday night auction has become a convention tradition. Chapters can make theme baskets or provide single items that would be of interest in an auction. Sometimes we are fortunate to get a high value item like a Victor Stream donated which brings a good price and lots of excitement. Vickie and Larry Bateman Aare auction co-chairs. There number is (208) 357-7403.Let them know what you are bringing for auction and ask any questions you may have.

Our Friday evening is an open mic talent show. Please plan to share something on the open mic with fellow federationists. Chris Jones is the chair. Please contact him at (208) 308-8876.His email is clj53787@gmail.com.

Conventions are very expensive to put on. We have a sponsor letter that you can use with businesses to raise funds for the convention. You can modify this letter to fit your chapter’s needs. If you need a copy, please contact Ramona Walhof at (208) 338-1595 or walhoframona@gmail.com. Larry and Sue Sebranek will match donations raised for the convention up to $5000.00. This includes money raised through business donations as well as personal contributions. Pledges will be accepted, but they will need to be paid by June 15. Funds raised at the auction are exempt from this challenge. This convention fundraising activity will be included as an agenda item.

I will send more information about the convention as I get it. I hope to have the agenda up within a month of the convention, and will have the registration form available as soon as I lock down the prices. I do know that the hotel has free wyfi, and the convention rates extend through April 24, in the event

Dana Ard, President

National Federation of the aBlind of Idahothat people wish to stay over. Also we will be able to rent a piano for the open mic if we need to.