President’s Update

August-September, 2016

As your president, I have the responsibility of keeping current on national issues that need attention from our affiliate. We have several right now that need immediate action. We need to get comments to the Department of Justice regarding their supplemental advanced notice of proposed Rulemaking on web accessibility. Comments must be submitted by October 7. The web address is [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). You must include CRT docket 128 in the subject line and include your full name and address. Relate 1 positive or negative experience on web accessibility. We need to send our comments so the DOJ knows that the public cares about web accessibility. If you wish to write your letter, you can send it to Disability Rights Section, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice, and Post Office Box 2885, Fairfax, Va. 22031-0885. Remember these comments are due October 7.

We have also been asked to contact our senators and representatives about cosponsoring the TIME Act (transitioning to integrated and meaningful employment) HR188, and S2001. I have done this, but our senators and representatives have not responded. We now have a bill number, HR6122, for our AIMHE act. This stands for Accessible Instructional Materials in Higher Education. This bill would establish an independent commission to draft guidelines for institutions of higher education to plan a more accessible educational environment for blind students. We need to call our representatives and ask them to cosponsor this bill, as it will eliminate barriers in the classroom. The phone number to use to reach your senators and representatives is area code 202 224-2131. We need to get this done before congress goes on recess for the rest of the year.

We are also working to combat the negative stereotypes of blindness, which are happening as a part of the Foundation Fighting Blindness fundraising campaign. In this campaign, sighted people are blindfolded and then videotaped attempting to do such things as paying for a meal with an unknown amount of cash, trying to care for their child for a minute while under blindfold etc. The NFB has no problem with funding research to prevent blindness, but we will not allow it to be done on the backs of blind people. We have been asked to take a short video of ourselves doing an ordinary activity. I had one done as I called my Toastmasters meeting to order and read our inspiration for the day in braille. These videos should be sent to hashtag #howeyeseeit. Note the “eye” in the hashtag is not “I” like I thought it was. We can also send an email to howeyeseeit@blindness.org and state our views and include a link to our video if we have one and can do this. Some of our members are putting them on Facebook. Videos should also be sent to Kevin Pirnie for the website. His email is kpirnie77@gmail.com. Kevin appreciates a phone call letting him know you have sent the email, but if you can’t do this; just cc me your message for Kevin and I’ll let him know.

 As we all know, October is Meet the Blind Month. The Snake river Valley chapter is having a book fair at Barnes and Noble in Idaho Falls tomorrow, October 1. They will receive a percentage of the sale of books ordered tomorrow either at the store or on line and for 5 days after for on-line orders. For online orders go to bn.com/book fairs and use the code 11954898. Panhandle chapter will be getting together for some Halloween fun at a corn maze tomorrow, as their event. Treasure Valley chapter is organizing a speaker’s bureau and hopes to do presentations about blindness to schools, college classes, and technology training programs, churches, scout troops, civic organizations and other venues where we can share our message. If other chapters have activities, please share them on the Idaho discussion list.

Our fall board meeting will be held October 8, at 9:00 A.M. at the ICBVI conference room on the 2nd floor. Refreshments and social time will begin at 8:30 and the meeting will begin promptly at 9:00.

Our convention committee has been meeting monthly to plan the convention, which will be held March 23-25 at the Wyndham Gardens Hotel, 3300 Vista, phone 208 343-4900. Room rates are $83.0with a 13% tax. At present a reception is being planned for the evening of the 23rd with the actual meetings to begin on the 24th.We plan to have some concurrent sessions at the convention, so there should be something of interest for everyone.

Our legislative luncheon will be held at the Crystal Ballroom on January 16. I am contacting IESDB, ICBVI and the Idaho Commission for Libraries to see what issues may require our help. I’m sure partly as a result of our efforts, IESDB got the budget they requested for their additional personnel.

I have taken two short seminars through the Boise State University Center for Professional Development, and offered through the Boise Chamber of Commerce. The first was on business communications, and the second was on the intergenerational workforce. Both of these, I believe, will help me better serve the affiliate as your President.

On September 10, members of the Snake River Valley chapter, Ramona Walhof, and I met with Garren Aubrey and others interested in forming a new chapter in Pocatello. They will meet on October 15, at 1:30 at the LIFE building 636 Pershing Ave. in Pocatello, to draft a constitution and elect officers. Please spread the word to anyone you know in the Pocatello area who might be interested. What a great meet the Blind Month activity, and what a way to build the Federation!

Please contact me if you have news or concerns or if there is anything I can do to be helpful. I am here for you. We are all here to spread the word that “Blindness is not the characteristic that defines us or our future. We can live the life we want. Blindness is not what holds us back.”

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