President’s Update

December 2016

Before we look back at our accomplishments in 2016, we need to look ahead to our upcoming events: our legislative luncheon on January 16 and our state convention March 23-25.

Our legislative luncheon will take place January 16 from 11:30-1:00 at the Crystal Ballroom, 802 W. Bannock. Everyone who is attending needs to contact Jan Gawith and let her know that you will be at the event, and what your menu choice will be. Our menu choices are either a chicken Cesar salad or meatloaf. Lunch will be $25.00. Please call Jan at 208 342-3066. You can send your checks to HARRY Gawith at 410 Ave. H., Boise 83712. This event was one of our great successes of 2016 and we want to be sure we are equally successful in 2017. We already have legislators who have said they will be attending, so we need to do the same. The issues to be discussed are still being determined. Part of the issue is that we will not present items for either IESDB or ICBVI that have not been approved by the governor. The agencies will know soon what the governor’s decision will be. I have met with Beth Cunningham, the administrator of ICBVI, and have been in email contact with Brian Darcy from IESDB. I am beginning to work on fact sheets for the legislature depending on the governor. We will also have a brief presentation on the need for increased funding for public transportation. Although we will not have a specific request, we will talk about the statewide efforts in this regard especially the planning process which will have started with the Idaho Transportation Department. We will also be partnering with other entities to hopefully make a stronger, more definitive statement to our legislature next year. The NFB of Idaho cannot carry the issue of public transportation funding alone. We must work in partnership with others around the state. Our winter board meeting will be held at ICBVI also on January 16. We will begin promptly at 9:00, with a social time from 8:30-9:00. We will have transportation to the luncheon if people need it. The board meeting will continue at 1:30 after we have returned to ICBVI. We should be concluded by 4:00 P.M.

Susan Bradley and I met with Jonathan Ray, director of sales and event services at the Wyndham Garden Hotel, 3300 Vista Ave., which will be the site of our 2017 convention. Jonathan is excited to work with us and help make our convention a success. We discussed our conference space and conference schedule. All conference rooms, including hospitality, will be on the first floor. Jonathan is looking into the availability of a keyboard for our open mic. There is free wifi in the hotel. You can now make your reservations at 208 343-4900. Hotel rates are $83.00 for singles, doubles, triples and quads. There is a %13 tax in addition. A free breakfast buffet is available for all hotel guests. On Saturday morning, we will have separate conference tracks for parents, students, BELL participants, as well as a general session for those who will not be attending the special sessions. President Mark Riccobono will be our national representative, so it will be very important that we all plan to attend and fully participate in this exciting 2017 convention.

Speaking of participating—the Idaho read-a-thon will begin on January 4, the birthday of Louis Braille, and end on March 4. Please complete the form, which has been posted to the Idaho listserv, or contact committee chair Susan Ford at 208 376-1727 for further information. Remember, all participants will receive a cash prize. We welcome people of all ages and reading levels.

Now that I have reminded everyone about current events in our organization, I want to look back at some of our accomplishments in 2016.

In January, we held a highly successful legislative luncheon with seventy-five people in attendance, with half being our legislators and public officials. Our presentation in support of the new positions for IESDB helped to get those positions approved. In April, 85 people attended our NFB convention banquet. This convention was highly successful with great energy and participation. We had 3 BELL programs this year in Boise, Idaho Falls and Coeur d’Alene, with a total of 25 blind children served. We had a Jernigan scholarship winner along with her young blind son attend the national convention. We had the largest number of state scholarship applicants in recent history with 8 students applying. I believe we had more media exposure this year than in the past. We have a great newsletter that we can all be proud of. Finally, we have a new chapter in Pocatello, giving us 8 chapters around the state. If you have other accomplishments for 2016 that are important to you or that I have missed, please celebrate them and post to the Idaho listserv. We have worked hard, but there is much more to do. We will need to strengthen our chapters, get members involved in our legislative luncheon, state convention, and other events. We need to make 2017 even better than 2016.

We know that blindness is not the characteristic that defines us or our future. We must continue to spread our federation message to bring hope to blind people throughout our state. In other words, let’s go build the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho.

Happy New Year.

Dana Ard, President

National Federation of the Blind of Idaho

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