June, 2024 minutes of the Chapter meeting

National Federation of the Blind of California

San Fernando Valley Chapter

Date: June 1, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 am. We start with the Pledge of Allegiance, the NFB Pledge and the 1 minute message.

Question of the day: Will you be interested in flying in an all-electric 747 airplane or would it scare you?

Attendance:

John Albarran, Terry Almy, Keith Caballa, Jaymee Castillo, Sheila Castro-Secretary, Racquel Decipeda, David and Valerie Delawder, Bill Grosjean, Ron Hilliard - Member-AT-Large, Tiffany Johnson,

Lindsay Kerr-Treasurer, Candace Luther-Vice President, Lilia Mares, Jo Anne Seaman, Julie Skujins, Robin Smith, Joy Stigile, Robert Stigile-President, Jane Suh, Julian Vargas, Nancy Albarran, Betsy Estrada, Feliz Thompson, Matthew & Carie Schrieber.

Total: 26

Announcements:

Racquel, co-founder of Hearts For Sight (HFS), shared the following announcements:

* On Saturday, June 15, there will be a Nature Walk at the Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanic Garden. The address is 301 N. Baldwin Ave., Arcadia, CA 91007. The event starts at 9:30 a.m. and ends at 2:00 p.m. Only 50 tickets are available, and they will be shared with the Foundation Fighting Blindness. To join, please click the provided link to be added to the list. If you plan to bring a guest, be sure to include their names and contact information.
* The next event is a Surrey Bike Ride at Lake Balboa Park in Van Nuys on Sunday, June 30, 2024.
* In July, there will be a summer beach day at Will Rogers State Beach in Pacific Palisades, located just northwest of Santa Monica along Pacific Coast Highway. This event is scheduled for Sunday, July 21, 2024.
* Racquel also inquired whether everyone had received information about the support groups for friends and family members of individuals with visual impairments or blindness, which will start next Thursday at 6:00 p.m. If you know anyone who is interested, please have them sign up.
* There will be an upcoming lecture on community gardening on Friday, June 7. You can join either via Zoom or in person. More information will be sent via email.
* Looking ahead to August, HFS will host a fishing trip on August 9, 2024. Be sure to get your fishing license to save $20.
* Other August events include a Dodgers game on August 23, a yoga session on August 25, and a BBQ/swimming event at a lake on August 31. Details for these events will be sent out soon, so stay tuned.

Robert followed up with a reminder for those who have not yet sent their payment for the Dodgers game. If you are still interested, please send your payment soon, as only 10 tickets are left. Tickets are $50 per person.

\* Matthew announced that today, June 1st, marks his 40th year in the piano tuning business.

\* Robert announced that there will be no Chapter meeting in July due to our National convention. The next meeting will be on August 10, 2024.

On June 8, Saturday, Guide Dogs of America will hold an open house from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The address is 13479 Glenoaks Blvd., Sylmar, CA.

Robert also mentioned that if you are planning to attend the National convention, please let him know if you can work at the California table, which has several time slots available on July 4th and 5th, as well as lunchtime and evening shifts on July 6th (Saturday). Let him know if you can assist during these times. Additionally, this year the Affiliate is not collecting banquet tickets, so everyone will need to make their own arrangements. If you want to sit with him and Joy at their table, you need to give him your banquet ticket by Friday morning.

Robert also informed everyone that a few years ago, the National Office changed their membership process. Previously, they compiled all members' information into a spreadsheet, which was updated annually and submitted to the State Office. This has now been replaced by a membership portal. The National Office updates the membership status of returning members from expired to current or active each year. Robert asked Lindsay to manage this process.

Some members, such as Keith Caballa, are not yet in the portal despite being long-term members. If you are not in the portal, you will receive a new membership package from the National Office. For those who have recently joined, like Feliz, Jennifer Hawn, and Linda Crawford, we need your information, including mailing address, birthday, and email. Lindsay will contact you to gather this information so you can receive a new membership package. Members who are not in the portal may face issues such as not being able to vote or participate in necessary activities related to the National convention.

\* Julian’s Tech Corner announcements are as follows:

* The L.A. County Freedom Taxi Program, which provides a limited number of free taxi rides (up to 4 trips or within 40 miles per month) for elderly individuals and those with disabilities, has been put on hold again. Julian will notify everyone when the program is reactivated.
* On a related note, Julian finds Waymo's autonomous vehicles to be a wonderful development.
* Regarding AI, Julian highlighted the latest improvement in ChatGPT, known as GPT-4. This new version allows for more natural conversational interactions, and it's part of a technology called Large Language Models (LLMs).
* For Apple enthusiasts, the Worldwide Developers Conference will take place on June 10, 2024, at 10 a.m. PST. Apple will unveil new features and updates, including the latest version of iOS 18, which will incorporate advanced AI.
* As mentioned last month, the internet portal connectivity program has ended. However, there are other discount programs available. For example, Spectrum offers a $25 per month plan with 50 megabits for a single or two-person household, and AT&T has a $30 offer. Contact your internet service provider to inquire about discount programs that could save you money.
* Lastly, since Julian is relocating, he has a portable air conditioner and a CCTV unit that he is giving away. If you’re interested, please contact him to arrange pickup.
* Julian is also planning to hold the Breaking Blindness Barrier (BBB) support group sometime in June or July.
* **Secretary’s Report**
* There were corrections needed, such as the omission of Juanita’s last name and some inaccuracies in Julian’s Tech Corner announcements. Joy made a motion to accept the May minutes as corrected. Tiffany seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Treasurer’s Report

Lindsay sent the Treasurer’s Report on May 30, 2024 in the list serve.

Fundraising

Robin announced our fundraising event with Poppin Popcorn and encouraged everyone to spread the word. Joy mentioned that there are various items available, including flower seeds, jalapeño seeds, and basil seeds for growing plants. Additionally, they offer sausages, cookies, candy, and popcorn in flavors such as cinnamon toast, ranch, and birthday cake.

Next, Robert spoke with Eddie Salcido about a potential pizza place for our events and will follow up with them soon. Eddie also discussed community events with the Jazz Place management, who are open to hosting non-profit fundraisers. Eddie will gather more information and provide it to Robert.

**Adopt a Child Program**

The members handling this program are Candace, Tiffany, Lindsay, and Robin. Robin has started an email group to facilitate communication among them.

**Presidential Release**

Tiffany played Presidential Release #539. For more information about the Presidential Release, please contact Robert.

Robert also added a few points not mentioned in the release:

* There have been issues with Sono speakers. The NFB is working with the manufacturer to resolve these problems. Improvements are expected once updates are made to the speakers.
* Over the years, we’ve discussed legislation aimed at eliminating subminimum wage. California has already eliminated subminimum wage, and efforts are underway to address this at the national level. Recent legislation in Congress seeks to completely abolish it. The Presidential Release mentioned that a company previously opposed to eliminating the subminimum wage certificate has now signed a letter to Congress expressing support for the NFB's position. More updates on this will be provided in future releases.
* Section 14(c) allows companies with disabled employees to obtain a certificate enabling them to pay disabled employees the minimum wage.

 **BELLE Program**: The Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning (BELLE) program will start in California in July at the San Francisco Lighthouse Camp. If you’re interested in volunteering, please contact Robert for more information. This program is designed for children ages 4 to 12 and includes a 2-week onsite program at enchanted Hills camp, which is owned by the San Francisco lighthouse.

 **STEM Program**: The STEM Program stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. This program is intended for high school students.

Lastly, Robert discussed an event that took place a week ago involving Waymo cars and autonomous vehicles. Everyone from our chapter who signed up attended the event. For those who were present, you will receive an email or a WhatsApp message from Robert with a code to enter into the Waymo app. This code will allow you to use Waymo whenever you are in the Santa Monica area or parts of Los Angeles. The code does not expire, and once entered, the app will send you a text message with another code to verify your identity. This verification code is unique to each individual. Additionally, Robert, Julian, Lindsay, Ron, and Keith shared their experiences and insights from the event with the group.

Candace made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Bill. The meeting was adjourn at 12 noon.

Respectfully submitted:

Sheila Marie B.C.

Cell: 818-404-7646

Chapter Secretary

NFB.SFV