August, 2024 Minutes of the Chapter meeting

The National Federation of the Blind of California

San Fernando Valley Chapter

Date: August 10, 2024

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

Question of the Day: The 2028 Summer Olympics will be held in Los Angeles. Will you attend, and which sport would you like to see?

Attendance:

John & Nancy Albarran, Terry Almy, Keith Caballa, Jaymee Castillo, Sheila Castro-Secretary, Racquel Decipeda, David and Valerie Delawder, Ron Hilliard - Member-AT-Large, Tiffany Johnson, Lindsay Kerr-Treasurer, Candace Luther-Vice President, Lilia Mares, Jo Anne Seaman, Julie Skujins, Joy Stigile, Robert Stigile-President, Julian Vargas, Karen Elo and Lynne Nishihara.

Total: 21 members

Announcements:

• Lynne has two announcements. First, she is the current President of AIRSLA, as the former President, Richard Burton, passed away a few months ago. Second, she is now an entrepreneur with a business called catpeople4kamala.com. She chose this name because she will be selling t-shirts, with 70% of the proceeds going to Kamala Harris’s campaign. The t-shirts will feature images of her and a cat, with the caption: “He’s not my cat, but he comes by all the time.”

• Racquel, co-founder of Hearts for Sight, shared the following announcements:

1. The California Achieving Better Life Experience (CABLE) Program will hold a webinar this coming Thursday, August 15, at 6 p.m. via Zoom. This program allows individuals who receive public benefits, such as SSI, county benefits, and Medi-Cal, to save money without losing their benefits. For those who are not aware, if you receive any kind of public benefits, you can only have $2,000 in your bank account. The webinar will be presented by representatives from the Treasury’s Office, who administer the program and help people register. Robert or Racquel can send out the information on the listserv for those interested in joining the Zoom meeting. An email will include a registration link for the webinar, and once you register, you will receive a confirmation with the Zoom link.
2. On August 17, there will be a hike at El Dorado Park in Long Beach. This will be a relatively flat 3.7-mile hike with some shaded areas. Racquel also mentioned that if you are concerned about not being able to complete the entire hike, you should inform them if you can only hike a certain distance. They will let you know where you can sit, rest, and wait for the rest of the group to finish the trail and return.
3. On August 23, the legendary Los Angeles Dodgers will play against the dynamic Tampa Bay Rays at Dodger Stadium, 1000 Elysian Park Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90012. Game time will be at 7:10 p.m. Tickets are $50 each. There are still some tickets available, so please let her know if you’re interested.
4. On August 25, there will be an outdoor yoga session at 9:30 a.m., followed by lunch. Please RSVP if you plan to attend. For September, details will be sent out regarding the Siri bike ride, another beach day, and a hike. In October, there will be a surfing day on October 13. Stay tuned for more information.

• Keith was scheduled to have a speaking engagement with Service & Independent Living in Claremont during the week of October 12th, but it was denied. He'll keep us updated on any developments.

• Jo Anne announced that there will be an Access meeting on September 24th via Zoom at 5:30 p.m. She also mentioned that the Olympics are audio-described for the blind and have captions for the deaf.

• Robert’s announcements are as follows:

1. The Pathfinder Chapter is having their picnic on August 17th from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The deadline for payment is today, August 10th. Payments should be sent via Zelle to Arieta Woods at arieta.woods@ATT.net. The picnic will be held at Eucalyptus Park.
2. If any of you have used the MAVI Program through Be My Eyes, which is the Massachusetts Association of Visually Impaired’s program for navigation specific to blindness, please note that this program has been suspended. Sean Welcher, who oversaw the program, has started his own business that offers similar services to what AIRA provides. Stay tuned for more details.
3. Robert highly recommends using the Build AI Program through AIRA if you are not already. You need to sign up through Access AI, and once approved, you will be connected with an AIRA agent and receive 10 free minutes every 30 minutes. If you have any questions about this, you can contact Robert.
4. Regarding Waymo, if you have used or are waiting to use Waymo, please note that they are expanding their service areas to include Marina del Rey, Playa Vista, Chinatown, Hollywood, and parts of Westwood. If you are in these areas, Robert highly recommends trying it out.

• Julian’s tech corner updates are as follows:

1. Julian first mentioned that he will entertain any comments and questions at the end of the chapter meeting. He then warned everyone to be cautious of people attempting to scam you in person, particularly with pickpocketing. He recounted an incident on the Metro where someone tried to deceive him. While he was waiting, he felt a tap on his shoulder and noticed something in one of the outside pockets of his bag. Upon checking, he found a strange rectangular-shaped object. Julian suspects that the person intended to place a heavy object in his bag, hoping he wouldn’t notice while they stole something. He advised everyone to be aware of their surroundings in similar situations.
2. Next, Julian discussed the DoorDash app. For those who use this app and have difficulties, there is now a toll-free number available for placing orders from various restaurants and grocery stores. By calling 855-300-8985, an agent can assist by reading the items on the app, adding them to your cart, and placing the order. The agent can also help you register if you haven’t already.
3. Julian also mentioned the Meta smart glasses he is testing, which he finds impressive. These glasses, powered by Meta AI, can assist with various tasks, such as describing objects in front of you, identifying colors, performing spot readings of text, and reading bus stop signs or posters. The price is $299, which is relatively low compared to other blindness-specific products.
4. AIRA will soon launch a pilot program using these glasses, allowing you to connect with an AIRA agent through the Meta smart glasses. In the meantime, you can use WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger to video call a trusted person who can act as your AIRA agent with the glasses without any air minute charges.
5. Julian also announced that Apple will release iOS 18 in less than a month. Additionally, his BBB podcast has just been released through AIRSLA. He expressed gratitude to AIRSLA for posting and sharing it with the world. It is available at airsla.org.
6. Lastly, for those interested in joining the Breaking Blindness Barrier discussion group, please send an email to help@techjv.com with the subject line: “Interested BBB Group,” and include your email address in the message body.

Secretary’s Report

Joy made a motion to approve the June minutes, seconded by Terry and the motion carries.

Treasurer’s Report

Lindsay sent out the July Treasurer’s Report in the list serve on August 8, 2024.

Committee Report

Activities

We have three activities listed for upcoming events:

1. **Round 1 in Burbank**: This venue offers bowling lanes, an arcade, a restaurant, and a bar, providing a great place to hang out during the day.
2. **A shooting range in Sylmar**: We need to confirm whether the fee is $20 per lane or per person.
3. **Rectacular in Sylmar**: This location is set up in a forest and features a petting zoo and a restaurant.

Racquel suggested doing #2 first, followed by #1, and then #3 last. Progress updates and more information will be sent out soon.

**Holiday Party**

An email has already been sent to the manager of Magnolia Grill in North Hollywood, where we held our Holiday Party last year. Our Holiday Party is scheduled for December 14, 2024, which falls on the second Saturday of the month. We will use the same menu as last year. We will first ask the management to approve the party time. Joy also wants to clarify with the restaurant’s management about the charges for additional orders to ensure that the prices remain the same and to avoid any confusion on the night of the event.

Adopt A Child Program

Candace updated the form. So far, she’s been told by Tiffany and Lindsay that we might have 2 twins, 2 boys and 2 girls. Tiffany met the 2 girls a couple weeks ago in the Valley. A meeting will be set on August 23rd for the committee to talk about the planning for the “Adopt A Child Program”.

Fundraising.

Robin, Candace and Joy are handling fundraisers. Joy tried to get something planned for Bob’s Big Boy in Burbank on a weekend. A meeting will be set up for the committee to talk and plan about ideas for fundraisers.

**State Convention**

The State Convention is scheduled for March, most likely on the 14th, 15th, and 16th, which is the weekend following the CSUN conference. The event will be held at the DoubleTree Hotel, located down the street from the Marriott Hotel.

The CSUN conference will take place from March 10th to March 14th, with exhibits running from the 12th to the 14th.

**National Convention**

The National Convention will be held in New Orleans from July 8th to July 13th, 2025. The main event will take place at the Marriott Hotel, the same venue as in 2022, while the exhibit halls will be across the street at the Sheraton Hotel.

In 2026, the convention will move to Austin, Texas, from July 3rd to July 8th. The following year, 2027, the convention will again be held in Austin. For 2028 and 2029, the convention will take place in Chicago, Illinois.

This advance notice is unprecedented; since 1990, the NFB has never announced the National Convention schedule this far in advance. This early planning allows us to make arrangements and set aside funds accordingly. One reason for the stability in locations is the increasing difficulty in finding hotels that offer favorable rates.

The next topic Robert discussed was the Glide robot, which he had the opportunity to try and test at the convention in Orlando last year. The Glide robot is still in its early development stages and is expected to take another year before it becomes available to the public. The robot is about waist-height and features a handle that users can hold onto.

Robert demonstrated how the robot navigates through an area with tables and chairs, helping him maneuver around obstacles. The robot's battery lasts for up to 8 hours. Terry also shared her experience testing the Glide robot.

Robert emphasized that, regardless of whether you purchase the robot or not, he believes it should not replace your orientation and mobility (O&M) skills with a white cane or guide dog.

The group also discussed various smart glasses, including those equipped with AI and other programs.

Candace made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Terry. The meeting was adjourned at12:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Marie B.C.

Chapter Secretary

Cell: 818-404-7646

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