2024 October minutes of the Chapter meeting

The National Federation of the Blind of California

San Fernando Valley Chapter

Date: October 12, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 am. We began with the Pledge of Allegiance, the NFB Pledge and the 1 minute message.

**Question of the day:** Do you own a Meta smart glasses? If so, what do you like about them? If not, are you planning to get them?

Attendance:

Julian Vargas, Robert Stigile-President, Joy Stigile, Robin Smith,

Julie Skujins, Jo Anne Seaman, Matthew and Carie Schrieber, Guillermo Robles, Lynne Nishihara, Anthony Melena, Lilia Mares, Candace Luther-Vice President, Lindsay Kerr-Treasurer, Tiffany Johnson, Ron Hilliard - Member-AT-Large, Juanita Herrera, Bill Grosjean, Betsy Estrada, Racquel Decipeda, Sheila Castro-Secretary, Jaymee Castillo, Keith Caballa, Steve Baur-guest, Britney Bates-guest, Karen Elo, Fernando Macias-guest and Randy Lawrence-guest speaker.

Total attendees: 28

25 members, 3 guests.

Announcements:

* Jo Anne announced that she recently went on a tour and visited Helen Keller’s home in Albuquerque.
* Ron announced that the California Sports and Rec will have two upcoming gatherings via Zoom. The first, a General Meeting, will take place on Friday, the 18th of this month, at 6:30 PM, and everyone is welcome to attend. Then, on the 25th, they’ll host a game night featuring Uno, Monopoly, Bingo, and Blackjack. More information will be shared on the listserv.
* Matthew announced that a significant barrier for individuals with blindness has been broken.

He gave a recap from last October: Matthew was invited by a company called HemaCare and Charles River Laboratories for a blood donation screening. When he arrived, they saw him with a white cane and told him, “Sorry, blind people can’t do this. You cannot participate.” Matthew responded by insisting that they could not discriminate against him or the entire blind community. This needed to change. He contacted our State President, Tim Elder, to address the issue.

Now, Matthew is proud to announce that all Federation members are invited to visit hemacare.com. If you’re interested in donating blood products, you can fill out a health questionnaire and will then receive an invitation for a screening. Hopefully, they will treat you well and allow you to participate.

Once you apply and receive an invitation, you’ll attend an interview for the screening and receive $50 in compensation. If you match the type of blood they are looking for, you’ll be asked to stay and wait for further screening, during which time you’ll receive an additional $75 in compensation. Matthew encourages everyone to participate.

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

October 19th: There will be a hike at Malibu Creek. Bus transportation is available with pickup locations in Temple City and at the Balboa Sports Complex, or you can go directly to Malibu Creek. This will be an all-day event. If you're using the provided bus, please watch for a reminder email.

They are also in need of more volunteers for sighted guides. If you're available, please let Racquel know.

October 18th: There will be a tandem bike ride with only three spots left. They are also looking for captains for this ride, which is a collaboration with WayFinder Family Services.

Racquel also mentioned the need for everyone’s support for their upcoming fundraising event. All proceeds will help support their programs and services, including bike riding, hiking, camping, surfing, and mental health services such as individual therapy and support groups.

The fundraising event, Monster Bash, will be held on October 26th at the Foothill Service Club in Glendale from 6 PM to 10 PM. Tickets are $50 for adults and $25 for those 17 and younger. A full dinner will be served. There will be raffle prizes including:

A 42-inch HD Smart TV with Alexa

Pairs of Disneyland Park Hopper tickets (usable at any Disney park worldwide, valued at $300)

A massage certificate from Burke Williams

Plus, many other prizes.

November Activities: Racquel briefly mentioned several upcoming events for November:

November 9th-11th: A 3-day weekend camping trip at Harwood Lodge near Mt. Baldy, including hiking.

Crystal Grove Hike: A hike in Orange County with provided bus transportation.

November 30th: A trip to Catalina Island, with limited spots and a $25 deposit required. More information will be sent out soon.

HFS is looking forward to seeing everyone there!

* **Robert’s announcements are as follows:**

1. **Membership dues** are now payable for the 2025 year, at a rate of $10 per person. Payments can be made via Zelle to **nfbevents@gmail.com**, PayPal to **rstigile@gmail.com**, or Venmo to **Robert Stigile**.
2. The **CAGDU (California Association of Guide Dog Users)** is holding a **fundraising event** from **November 1st through November 30th**, called a “wag-a-thon”

There are two categories to sign up for: walking or running. Participants should track their steps throughout the month, and on **November 30th or December 1st**, submit their total steps to **Tiffany Manaj**.

The entry fee is $20, and there will be three winners per category. Prizes include:

* + **1st Prize**: $100
  + **2nd Prize**: $75
  + **3rd Prize**: $50

Prizes will be awarded in the form of gift cards, with a variety of options available. For more details, check out the email sent via the listserv.

* **Julian’s Tech Corner topics are as follows:**

He began by asking everyone to hold their comments and questions until the end of the meeting, at which point he would answer them. Here are his topics:

* **Spectrum-Free Speed Boost**: To improve your internet speed, simply reboot your modem.
* **Meta Smart Glasses**: Check with your vision insurance to see if your prescription is covered for use with the Meta smart glasses.
* **Be My Eyes with the Meta Smart Glasses**: This will be supported directly within the glasses, so there’s no need to launch another app.
* **AIRA Integration with Meta Smart Glasses**: AIRA has started integrating with the Meta glasses, allowing for hands-free use.
* **Upcoming Elections**: Julian reminded everyone to mail in their ballots. For those who are blind or visually impaired, he shared a few voting options:

All polling places in L.A. County should have accessible voting terminals, which allow you to cast your vote independently.

Alternatively, you can vote from the comfort of your home. Visit **isb.lavote.gov** from either a computer or smartphone to access the online voting options. For more information, check out **lavote.gov**.

**Julian's BBB Podcast**: He also mentioned his podcast, which features a discussion all about Apple. You can listen at **airsla.org**. for all of Julian’s tech corner’s announcements, feel free to contact him for the details.

**Secretary’s Report**  
Joy made a motion to approve the September minutes, which was seconded by Juanita. The motion carried.

**Treasurer’s Report**  
Lindsay sent the September Treasurer’s Report on **October 11, 2024**, via the listserv.

**National News**  
The most important update in National News is the rally on **October 15th (Tuesday)**. The **NFB** will be at **Uber's headquarters** in San Francisco from **10:00 AM to 11:30 AM**, and at **Lyft's headquarters** from **1:00 PM or 1:30 PM to 3:00 PM**. The purpose of the rally is to send a clear message that current policies and practices are not working and need to change. There is a zero-tolerance policy for drivers refusing to transport people with disabilities and service animals. If you have any personal stories of being denied service, please share them.

**Washington Seminar**  
The **Washington Seminar** will take place from **February 3rd through 6th**. The State Affiliates will likely offer some grants, but this year, they plan to try something new by asking Chapters to match the grant. For example, instead of providing $1,000 to the Affiliate, they may give $500 and ask Chapters to match it, or contribute whatever they can. The Washington Seminar is a great opportunity to get involved in the legislative process. If you're interested, please let Robert know.

**State Convention**  
The **State Convention** will be held from **March 14th through 16th, 2025**, starting Friday evening and ending Sunday morning. The venue will be the **DoubleTree Anaheim**, with room rates at **$159 per night plus tax**. Hotel rooms will be available from **March 10th through the weekend**. If you'd like to stay at the **DoubleTree** under the NFB of California’s rate and also attend the **CSUN conference**, you are welcome to do so. You can make accessible reservations directly with the hotel. Robert will send out the links and additional information through our Chapter’s listserv. Let’s encourage everyone to attend!

**Committee Report**

**Holiday Party**   
Robert provided an update on our **Holiday Party**, which has already been discussed. Everyone should know that it will take place on **Saturday, December 14th**. Full details will be shared next month.

**Adopt A Child Program**  
The application for the **Adopt A Child Program** is now available. We need to gather to discuss the next steps.

**Fundraising**  
Joy presented an idea for a fundraising event at **Bob’s Big Boy** in **November**. Dates were discussed with the members, and Robert suggested that Joy work with the Fundraising Committee to finalize the details.

**Robert introduced our guest speaker, Randy**, a retired law enforcement officer who specialized in high-tech crime. Randy is now with the **Identity Theft Resource Center**, which has partnered with the National Federation of the Blind. The Center offers live chat, a toll-free hotline, and is a national nonprofit organization based in **San Diego, California**, since 1999. They specifically assist victims of identity theft.

Randy began his presentation by explaining what the Center does and the resources they provide. He then discussed **identity theft** and how you can protect yourself. Their primary role is to assist victims of all types of identity theft. Randy covered topics such as account takeovers, financial fraud, social media scams, and criminal misuse of personal information. He emphasized that while identity theft is not a violent crime, it can have a severe impact on victims, leading to financial crises and significant distress in their lives.

After the presentation, Randy opened the floor for a **Q&A session**, during which attendees such as **Jo Anne, Matthew, Robert, Julian, Anthony, Lilia, Guillermo, and Carie** participated.

**Lastly, Robert then opened the floor to new members** who were interested in joining the chapter. **Steve** and **Fernando** expressed interest in becoming members.

**Joy made a motion** to accept **Steve** and **Fernando** as new members, which was seconded by **Juanita**.

**Racquel made a motion** to adjourn the meeting, seconded by **Ron**. The meeting was adjourned at **12:16 PM**.

Respectfully submitted:

Sheila Marie B.C.

Cell: 818-404-7646

Chapter Secretary

NFB.SFV