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**NFB Pledge**

I pledge to participate actively in the efforts of the National Federation of the Blind to achieve equality, opportunity and security for the blind; to support the policies and programs of the Federation; and to abide by its constitution.

**Meeting Announcements**

Our next meeting is Saturday, April 14, from 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. We meet at The Fountains of Melbourne, 4451 Stack Blvd., Melbourne, FL, 32901.

If you need transportation, please contact Maria Rigogliosi, (321) 795-7376, no later than Monday, April 9. If you are unable to make it to the meeting on the bus, please contact Maria no later than Friday afternoon, April 13, to cancel. Do not wait until Saturday morning to cancel. Be conscientious of the other passengers who may be travelling for hours on the bus to get to the meeting; waiting until the last minute adds time to the trip that is unnecessary.

As a reminder, SCAT charges a fare of $1.50 each way, for a total of $3.00. Drivers are unable to make change. Fare cards may be purchased by contacting SCAT, (321) 635-7815, option 403 or 604. Fare cards cost $15, which provides 10 one-way trips.

We will have a discussion regarding transportation at our meeting. All members are strongly encouraged to attend. There will be a 50/50 raffle, where our last blue tooth speaker will go to the winner, in addition to half of the pot. Each raffle ticket costs $1.

**Transportation**

The Melbourne Space Coast Chapter has come to a serious crossroads with transportation. Our chapter has grown by leaps and bounds. Members are spread throughout Viera, Melbourne and Palm Bay. Our growing pains have caused a dilemma with transportation. We met with Space Coast Area Transit on March 20 to discuss various options.

Since we began, MSCC has scheduled transportation for our members as a courtesy. Due to circumstances beyond our control, we must make some changes to the system. Our members and potential members, are often on the bus for hours. For example, those living in Viera or Satellite Beach may be picked up before six in the morning and not arrive at the meeting until 9:30 or later. This is a minimum seven hours round trip. We have overly stretched the resources of Space Coast Area Transit.

We are trying to find alternative and creative ideas to alleviate the situation. In one area, we are insisting our members come up with an alternative method of arriving at the meeting. SCAT will bring you home, but the trip to The Fountains is becoming increasingly impossible. Note our March meeting, where the bus passengers arrived an hour late. Some of our members were on the bus for five hours. If you have alternative means to get to the meetings please utilize them.

Our last change regards cancellations. The number of same-day cancellations are making travel by bus even longer. Let me explain it this way. The driver, who is volunteering for the overtime trip, receives their manifest when they arrive to start the route. Anyone who has not cancelled by Friday is listed on it. The driver must go to that address. If the person doesn’t come out, the bus must still wait five minutes before it can leave. This can waste 25 minutes or more that could be spent getting to other passengers. This is unacceptable. You must contact Maria by Friday afternoon if you will not be travelling on the bus.

We are keeping track of cancellations. Any member who cancels frequently will no longer be scheduled for bus pick-ups to our chapter meetings. We must be considerate of our fellow members who are riding the bus. If this seems unfair, think about how fair it is to the other riders to ride and sit at the address of the person who either does not cancel or cancels too late.

Transportation to our meetings is a courtesy we provide but is not a condition or requirement of membership. We ask that you adhere to our cancellation policy and understand that our hands are tied in this matter. Please direct questions, comments and concerns to Maria Rigogliosi, (321) 795-7376.

Bus trips for our April meeting will continue as they always have. It will be in May that we must begin culling our bus passenger list. Once again, we apologize for creating new policies, but it has become a necessity. We hope that you all understand the gravity and regret the Melbourne Space Coast Chapter feels in making these difficult decisions.

**Call for Resolutions**

The National Federation of the Blind of Florida has put out a call for resolutions. Resolutions will be voted on during General Session at our state convention, on May 28, 2018. Camille Tate and Merry Shoch are co-chairs of this year’s committee. All written resolutions or ideas are to be submitted by April 30, 2018. Please submit to Resolutions@nfbflorida.org. If you have an idea for a resolution and need help, please submit your idea as soon as possible.

Our members who are new to the National Federation of the Blind and do not know what a resolution is, here is the answer. A resolution is a policy statement by the National Federation of the Blind, FL, that will be policy going forward, unless another resolution is passed that changes it. Each affiliate and our National Office bring resolutions to the convention for vote. A Resolutions Committee is called each year prior to convention (whether it is a state or national convention). The committee meets, usually the first night of a convention, to vote on which resolutions will be brought to the floor for vote at General Session. The convention body (members of the Florida affiliate), will vote. Resolutions brought at our state convention must be appropriate to Florida. If your resolution is for something on a national scale, please submit to our National Resolutions Committee. Any resolutions passed during our National convention become policy for all affiliates, so Florida does not need to have one of its own.

If you have any questions, please see Camille Tate after our April meeting. If you have an idea or have a written resolution, please submit it to Resolutions@nfbflorida.org.

**Amazing Trio Bundle**

The National Federation of the Blind of Florida is holding a raffle at the 2018 National Convention. At our February meeting, envelopes were handed out to members, containing raffle tickets. Each member received five tickets to sell in each envelope. The tickets are $5 each. The prizes are as follows: First Prize: an iPad Pro or cash value (worth $800); Second Prize: an Uber or Lyft travel voucher or cash value (worth $500); or Third Prize: a travel voucher or cash value (worth $200). All ticket stubs, monies collected and unsold tickets must be returned to the chapter by our June meeting. Please contact Camille Tate, (321) 372-4899 with questions.

**The Collective Power of the NFB**

Many of our chapter meeting agendas talk about the National Federation of the Blind and its objectives and goals for blind Americans. We advocate for ourselves and each other. Often it has been through the efforts of our organization that many of us are able to live as independently as we wish. On March 27, the Melbourne Space Coast Chapter exhibited this power within our own county and was successful. Camille Tate, our President, visited the district office of our Congressman, William Posey, at the Viera Government Center. Camille was accompanied by Julia Savage, Secretary; Joseph Naulty, Treasurer; Maria Rigogliosi, Board Member; and Arlene Naulty, Board Member. We brought with us a folder containing two of the legislative priorities from our 2018 Washington Seminar; Accessible Instructional Materials in Higher Education Act (AIM He) and Access Technology Affordability Act (ATAA). Each attendee spoke eloquently and concisely, answered any questions Congressman Posey had and ended up spending more time than anticipated, but in a good way. We are pleased to announce that this effort paid off. On Thursday, March 29, President Tate received notification that Congressman Posey signed on as a co-sponsor to both bills. The more we get to co-sponsor, the more likely it will come to a vote on the House of Representatives floor. It is for this reason that we have exhorted our membership to get involved in some of our activities. It is often difficult to go back and fix a problem if you ignored it before it became a problem. Thank you to the members of MSCC that took part in legislation that can and will affect the blind in Brevard.

**Space Coast Area Transit – A Fun Ride!**

Mark your calendars! On Tuesday, May 15, 2018, those using SCAT (and those who may be thinking about enrolling in the service) will have the unique opportunity to ride the bus and communicate with Transportation Director, Jim Liesenfelt. There are still seats available…so get on the bus!

Interested riders can sign up on line using computer or smart phone access. The web address is SCAT.com\ridewithjim. Be sure to provide your name, address and phone number. If you only have a telephone, please call Carmen Baez at SCAT, (321) 633-1878, extension 201.

It is important to note every rider must get to the Melbourne Square Mall to catch the bus for “Ride with Jim”. SCAT ParaTransit will provide that service. It is recommended to call SCAT and secure a ride to the Melbourne Square Mall; the address is 1700 West New Haven Avenue, West Melbourne, Florida, 32904. Please make ParaTransit arrangements by Monday, May 7.

Jim will be on the bus to meet with riders, listen to comments or suggestions and hear about experiences which may need improvement. The bus will leave the Melbourne Square Mall at 9 a.m.; it will proceed west on 192 to Wickham Road; north on Wickham into Suntree, where it will stop at Bagels 13. Everyone on board the bus will receive a free bagel and coffee. Finally, the bus will return to the Melbourne Mall.

There will be other County officials making this trip. This is a very important opportunity to speak and be heard. Space Coast Area Transit wants to hear from us; there have been upgrades in the service, but SCAT recognizes there is always room for change and innovation. This will be a fun day with lots of contact. Meet others using the service and interact with County officials who can help us make change and improvements.

**Space Coast Area Transit Identification Cards**

For those who are currently using SCAT and those who are planning to start riding, there is a need to register for an I.D. card with your photo for identification. These identification cards are standard procedure across Florida and the United States. The most important reason is to identify you as a qualified ADA paratransit passenger for fixed route services or if you travel out of your home area and wish to utilize paratransit elsewhere.

Many of our members have gone through this easy process…but there are some chapter members who will be required to have a SCAT I.D. Please call M.S.C.C.’s Transportation Chair, Maria Rigogliosi, (321) 795-7376 to get more information. You may also call Carmen Baez at SCAT to set up an appointment; the phone number is (321) 633-1878, Ext. 201.

**State Convention**

The National Federation of the Blind of Florida will hold its annual convention through Memorial Day weekend, May 25-28, 2018. This year’s event will be at the Hilton Westshore Airport, 2225 N. Lois Ave., Tampa, FL, 33607. The Melbourne Space Coast Chapter will pay the registration and banquet fees for any chapter members who wish to attend. The deadline to inform the chapter of your attendance is April 14. Please be advised that if MSCC advances any funds on your behalf, you will be required to attend at least one day of convention. If you later do not attend the convention, you will be required to return any monies advanced on your behalf. If you decide to come to our convention after May 8, MSCC will not cover any fees. Additionally, both registration and banquet fees increase by $5 each at convention. Please see Camille Tate at our next chapter meeting, April 14, to be placed on the list.

**National Convention**

The National Federation of the Blind will hold its annual convention for the final time in Florida. The event will be from Tuesday, July 3, through Sunday, July 8. This last convention in Florida is at the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort, 9939 Universal Blvd., Orlando, FL, 33829. To make reservations, please call (866) 996-6338. Reservations require a $100 deposit, of which half is refundable if you cancel before June 1. Any cancellations subsequent to that will receive no refunds. Room rates are as follows: singles and doubles, $88 per night; triples and quads, $93 per night. Children under 17 are free unless an extra bed is requested.

The Melbourne Space Coast Chapter will pay your registration fee of $25 if you wish to attend. MSCC has not yet determined if we will pay banquet fees, which are $65, at this time. If MSCC pays any fees on your behalf, you are required to attend at least one day of convention. If you do not attend and we have advanced any monies on your behalf, you will be required to reimburse the chapter. Please let Camille Tate know of your intention to attend National Convention by May 15. If you wish to attend after the May 31 deadline, MSCC will not pay any fees and the price increases by $5 each. Please let Camille know if you wish to attend.

**Technology Tidbits**

By Camille Tate

Many of our chapter members are unfamiliar with smart technology and all the tech gadgets out there that can make life a little easier. We have, in the past, posted articles and information in this newsletter about different technology out there that is accessible to the blind and low vision. Some of it has been very technical to many. Here is a simplified article about the more common and easy to learn smart tech for those uncomfortable with our increasingly digitized world.

IOS: I start with Apple and IOS devices. Mostly because I am familiar with them and they seem popular amongst many blind people. I have two IOS or Apple devices. I have found that the voiceover and Siri work best for me. I use both an iPhone and iPad. Of course, the iPhone is a smart phone that can accomplish many activities normally done on a computer. I can talk, send text messages, surf the internet and listen to various media. I also use it heavily for email. I use the apps (applications) to bank, shop and listen to media (like music and videos). You can take photos or videos on your phone, write notes and create documents.

Additionally, I use an iPad. This IOS device is a tablet. It functions like the iPhone, except you can’t make phone calls or text. The same apps used on an iPhone are also available for an iPad. The voiceover and Siri work the same. When I travel for short periods of time, I prefer to use the tablet instead of lugging around my laptop. To make typing notes and emails easier with the iPad, I have paired it with an external blue tooth keyboard. This is only for convenience, since there is a keyboard on the device screen.

Prices for both devices can be expensive, but financing options are available through the carriers you choose.

Android: The other type of smart technology is android. Android has more versatility, but I find it more difficult to use. Android has their own version of voiceover, called “talkback”. Android can be more versatile in that its apps and operating system can be used on a variety of different devices, the opportunity to use it in a myriad of ways makes it quite popular. This also drives down the cost of devices because those companies that are Android driven are not exclusive to only one type of phone or tablet. I do find IOS easier to learn and use, but Android is wider spread.

Screen readers: Screen reader technology is by far the most useful program out there for the blind and low vision. The most popular, is JAWS. It interfaces with your computer and can read text, most websites and even pictures (depending on how the graphic is captioned). It is also the most expensive. Gaining access to JAWS can be a financial hurdle for many of us. However, it may be possible to get a home use version for a steep discount at National Convention. If you are a client of Division of Blind Services and are trying to go to work or school, they will provide it to you. Center for the Visually Impaired will train you on how to use the software. The National Federation of the Blind is working on a bill that would make it possible to receive a tax credit for purchasing this technology, for the blind.

There are also some other screen readers out there. NVDA is currently a free software program that is available for those who need it but can not afford to purchase JAWS. While there are still some bugs to work out and it is not as good as JAWS, it nevertheless opens up your computer for you to use.

ZoomText: This program is most effective for those of us who have some usable vision. You can enlarge or magnify your screen to be able to read the text. Within this program, you can make contrasting colors to make text more visible, among other functions. ZoomText even has an audible command, which can function similar to a screen reader. In fact, the company that used to own ZoomText, AI Squared, was bought by the same company that purchased JAWS. The new corporation name is VFO.

Blue Tooth: Blue tooth is a setting on your smart device that can enhance your ability to use extra equipment. For example, on my iPhone, I have blue tooth enabled. This means that I am able to use a blue tooth headset with my phone; I can answer and hang up calls, access Siri and many other things. One of the best advantages to the headset is that I no longer have to keep my phone up to my ear when on a call. The phone can be on my desk while I am having a conversation in the kitchen. I also use blue tooth on my iPad. For this device, I use a blue tooth keyboard. With blue tooth enabled, I can type on the keyboard (it looks like a smaller version of a desktop keyboard) and the text appears on the tablet screen.

Blue tooth is especially helpful to those who have a hearing impairment. The hearing aids used by those with hearing loss use blue tooth technology to hear their devices directly in the hearing aid. This has allowed many with severe hearing loss to better use their phones and other devices.

While this article is relatively short in terms of the amount of technology available today, I hope it gives all of you some insight in layman’s terms to understanding the value of smart technology. Our society is increasingly dependent on this tech and many of our other methods of accessing information or even talking on the phone is becoming obsolete.

**The National Federation of the Blind knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise expectations, because low expectations create obstacles between the blind and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back.**