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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.

**Announcements**

Our newsletter for June is late this month due to attendance by our staff at our National Federation of the Blind of Florida State Convention. Our July newsletter will also be late due to staff attendance at our National Federation of the Blind National Convention. We will return to our normal schedule in September, combining July and August together.

We are requesting members with access to email to please provide your address so we may add you to our list of newsletter recipients. The more newsletters we email, the easier it becomes to produce it on time. For those of you who are unaware, the newsletter staff meets each month to print, collate and prepare newsletters for mailing through the Post Office. Often, coordinating the schedules of each person to facilitate this can be difficult. The editor wishes to thank Julia Savage and Arlene Naulty for spending hours proofing our newsletter and getting it to the Post Office. We additionally would like to thank John Carey for providing technical assistance when the printer does not wish to cooperate.

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

Anyone needing transportation, please call Maria Rigogliosi, (321) 795-7376, no later than Tuesday, July 10. This is to ensure you are placed on the list for transportation.

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 $15.00, which provides for 10 one-way trips. Please ask for a paratransit bus pass as this is the only pass that may be used for paratransit trips.

Our guest speaker in July will be a representative from the Fire Department who will discuss hurricane preparedness. We will also have a 50/50 raffle, with our last blue tooth speaker as an additional prize. Raffle tickets cost $1 each.

**State Convention Wrap-Up**

The National Federation of the Blind of Florida held its annual convention over Memorial Day weekend, May 25-28, in Tampa, Florida. The Melbourne Space Coast Chapter was represented by six members, three of which were first timers! We feel strongly that state conventions are an important aspect of membership within our organization. Next year’s convention will be in Boca Raton, Florida, at the Embassy Suites. This event is over Memorial Day weekend, in 2019. We hope many more chapter members will attend.

To better understand the importance of state conventions, here is a short recap of the events:

Breakout Sessions: Saturday and Sunday afternoons showcased many breakout sessions and workshops. On Saturday, the Florida Deaf Blind Division and Florida Organization of Parents of Blind Children met. Additionally, the Legislative Concerns Committee, Senior Concerns Committee and a new Technology Session also met. There was a session on stress management. On Sunday, we had a transportation workshop, the Florida Association of Guide Dog Users met, in addition to a new book club discussion group and Newsline Committee. So many informative meetings packed into a long weekend!

* General Session: As information packed as a breakout session can be, the main purpose of our convention is to bring news to our membership about what their state affiliate is doing. During the morning on Saturday and Sunday, we hold General Session. It opens with a call to order and roll call of the board members. We have a pledge of allegiance and a recitation of the NFB pledge, like at a chapter meeting. There are speakers who give short descriptions of what their agency/resource/committee have done and will do in terms of service or business. We heard from members of our affiliate on why they are a Federationist, which is compelling. We also learned about how the National Federation of the Blind has uplifted them, helped them gain independence or accomplished something in their community. This year we were delighted to have our National Rep, Pam Allen speak to us. Ms. Allen is the Director of the Louisiana Center for the Blind, serves as 1st Vice President of the National Federation of the Blind and is President of the National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana. What an honor to have her with us. On the last day of General Session, Monday, May 28, the convention body voted on two Resolutions. Resolutions, once adopted by vote, become policy of the National Federation of the Blind of Florida. Any Resolution adopted at our National Convention becomes policy for all affiliates of the National Federation of the Blind. We adopted a resolution to make vote by mail (once called absentee voting) accessible by utilizing an Electronic Ballot Delivery System (EBDS). A second resolution was adopted regarding the enforcement and prosecution of violators of the Florida Public Access law, 413.08, about access to public accomodations by disabled individuals.
* Elections: On Monday, May 28, we held elections. Each year, an election is held; we stagger our elections so that half of the board is elected at one time. This helps keep continuity. This is one of the most important reasons for attending state convention. You can only exercise your right to vote at a convention and you, the member, picks who will lead our state affiliate, at least until the position is up for re-election.

As you can see, conventions are brimming with education, information and opportunities to network with fellow Federationists in Florida. We sincerely hope you decide to attend our state convention next year in Boca Raton!

**Amazing Trio Bundle**

For those members who still have their raffle tickets, please contact Camille Tate, (321) 372-4899, to make arrangements to pick them up. All ticket stubs, monies collected and unsold tickets were to be returned at our June 9 chapter meeting. These items must be turned in to the state affiliate by July 8, during National Convention. Camille Tate will be leaving Melbourne to attend the convention on July 2. Please contact her with questions.

**Reaching Out to County Commissioners**

**Rising cost of fuel and regulatory standards will affect TD/ADA transportation in Brevard. Those who currently use TD/ADA transportation, here in Brevard County, should step up and get involved in the funding crisis which controls all aspects of SCAT’s service. Those who do not use the service at this time, must support the system. Some members have private transportation for medical, shopping and social appointments, but in time, that private transportation may become non-existent. We all need to think to the future and be protective of our rights.**

**Some members are having reasonably good service without**

**issues. Others are experiencing delays at the call center and inability to get a needed ride. Current Brevard County funding for Space Coast Area Transit is 80% lower**

**than Volusia County’s funding for similar special needs**

**transportation. Brevard County is 72 miles long; that explains the need to have three zones in the SCAT system. However, travelling between those zones is difficult using the current paratransit system.**

**With all that said, each of our members must understand every issue comes down to MONEY. Our Brevard County Commissioners control the budget process…including TD/ADA transportation funding. This is a critical time of the year because the Commissioners will be participating in budget workshops. Brevard is the ONLY county in Florida with a Charter Cap which limits tax revenues and restricts the amount of spending to be applied to transportation.**

**Every chapter member, every family member and every friend needs to raise an awareness of this transportation crisis. Increases in the price of gas, equipment, repairs, driver budgets and daily operational costs are driving the need for increased funds supporting SCAT’s operation. Budgets are controlled by the Brevard County Commissioners…every call made and every letter will help.**

**Please bear in mind there are countless other organizations and programs calling upon the County Commissioners to**

**provide increased funding. The Melbourne Space Coast**

**Chapter, National Federation of the Blind, Florida must make sure SCAT gets the money it needs to match grant funding,**

**hire more drivers and purchase needed equipment.**

**Every Chapter member is asked to make contact with their Brevard County Commissioner and have a discussion on**

**how transportation affects their medical needs and their ability to independently provide for their everyday living requirements. Included in this June newsletter is information on all five Brevard County Commissioners. We have provided names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses. If a chapter member is unsure of their district number and the correct commissioner to contact, call the Governmental Center phone (321) 633-2000 and ask.**

**Communication with individual County Commissioners will ensure there is a focus on these important issues. Please step up and make it happen.**

**Community Meetings**

We have met with the Commissioners in their offices as well as spoken on the floor of public meetings. We need the voice and might of our membership behind us. Even if you do not speak, just being there with your white canes will make an impact. As of the writing of this newsletter, the dates for the budget workshop that will reflect on our transit needs has not been published. As soon as the date is announced, we will make every effort to contact each member to let them know. Ironically, it is the difficulty in travelling to a Commissioner meeting that makes it hard for us to quickly establish a trip; unfortunately, you cannot take paratransit to your own seat of power at the Viera Government Center. This is only one way in which we are struggling with transportation issues.

August 6, at 10:15 a.m., on the second floor of the Viera Government Center, is the date for the Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged. Even as an ADA paratransit client, TD paratransit is extremely important to us. Some of our paratransit trips can be classified as a TD trip, for which SCAT will receive monies. ADA paratransit is not reimbursable because it is a civil right.

Several members of the chapter will be attending a Transportation Planning Organization meeting on June 18. This is a closed meeting that we have been invited to attend, so we must limit the number of members we bring. The TPO is the body that controls when and where bus stops are placed, the width and breadth of sidewalks (important for those of us who use a cane to walk the public streets), placement of traffic signals and the input of audible traffic signals. As most of us are aware, the sidewalks are extremely narrow in places and crossing certain intersections is like playing Russian roulette with our lives.

MSCC is also meeting with the North Brevard Fire Chief, whose Firefighters’ Union is currently in litigation with Brevard County over the crippling charter cap. This is yet another obstacle and stumbling block to getting more funding for transit.

Please consider your role in our fight for your transit freedom. Too often it has been only four representatives of the chapter (always the same four) who go before our county leaders to ask for more transit. We have asked and printed information in previous newsletters. We hope you will all heed our request for assistance. It is our collective voice that will win the day. We often tell our leaders that Brevard has approximately 11,000 blind or low vision persons (this number is nearly three years old). Our chapter has at least 46 of them, yet only four ever stand before our county leaders. Let’s change that!

**Hearing the Good News in the Florida Affiliate**

The Melbourne Space Coast Chapter recognizes an information gap between our affiliate and chapter members. Often there are conference calls going on throughout the month, where various activities, requests for assistance with projects or overall sharing of news from member to member happens. Many times, this information sharing becomes outdated or lost in the workings of a chapter meeting and the chapter members miss out. MSCC meets once a month, but affiliate conference calls sometimes go on each week. To stay on top of the issues burning up the information superhighway, we suggest that our members who have an accessible computer, smart phone or other smart device, sign up for the Florida list.

We bet you are wondering what the Florida list is? Well, it is similar to a blog, where registered participants receive messages that are posted by other registrants to the list. For example, our President, Camille Tate co-chairs Legislation for Florida. There is a meeting of the Legislative Concerns Committee on June 19. Camille will post a reminder of the meeting, along with the date, time and call-in information. She only sends out one message, but it reaches every single person who is subscribed to the Florida list. Hopefully, this generates interest in the members who are in Florida or subscribed to the list and they come to the meeting.

Not all the posts are about meetings. Sometimes a member in one part of the state is ill and it is posted to the list. Since we consider ourselves one big family, this person will receive well wishes from their sister or brother in the Federation. Items of interest to the blind are posted by members of the list as well as news of importance by leaders throughout Florida.

This important tool can be accessed by going to nfbnet.org and scrolling until you come to NFB of Florida or National Federation of the Blind of Florida. Click to subscribe. You are now a member of the Florida list! You may also find lists of other activities in which you are interested. For example, there is a list for Blind Parents, Lawyers, Braille users, webmasters and so many more.

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

**BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA – CONTACT INFORMATION**

EFFECTIVE JUNE 5, 2018

General Information: Brevard County Government Complex

 2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way

 Viera, Florida 32940

 321-633-2000

District One Commissioner

 Rita Pritchett

 Second Floor

 2000 South Washington Avenue

 Titusville, Florida 32780

 (321) 607-6901

 D1.Commissioner@BrevardFL.gov

District Two Commissioner

 Jim Barfield

 Suite 200

 Merritt Island Service Complex

 2575 North Courtenay Parkway

 Merritt Island, Florida 32953

 (321) 454-6601

 D2.Commissioner@BrevardFL.gov

District Three Commissioner

 John Tobia

 Suite 4

 2539 Palm Bay Road, N.E.

 Palm Bay, Florida 32905

 (321) 633-2075

 D3.Commissioner@BrevardFL.gov

District Four Commissioner

 Curt Smith

 Building C – Suite 214

 2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way

 Viera, Florida 32940

 (321) 633-2044

 D4.Commissioner@BrevardFL.gov

District Five Commissioner

 Kristine Isnardi

 Suite 175

 490 Centre Lake Drive

 Palm Bay, Florida 32907

 (321) 253-6611

 D5.Commissioner@BrevardFL.gov