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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, January 12, 2019, from 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. We meet at The Fountains of Melbourne, 4451 Stack Blvd., Melbourne, FL, 32901.

Anyone needing transportation, please contact Maria Rigogliosi, (321) 795-7376, no later than Monday, January 7. This is to ensure you are placed on the list for transportation. Space Coast Area Transit provides a bus for our transportation needs.

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’s Administrative line at (321) 635-7815. The phone system has recently changed, so follow the prompts to purchase a card. Each fare card cost $15, which provide 10 one-way trips.

We will have a 50/50 raffle at our next chapter meeting. Each ticket costs $1. The winner receives half of the ticket sales plus additional prizes. In January, we will give away a gift card to Southern Sisters and an NFB lapel pin.

**Membership Dues**

If you have not already done so, please pay your 2019 membership dues at our January meeting. Dues are $10 annually. It covers membership in the Melbourne Space Coast Chapter, National Federation of the Blind and National Federation of the Blind of Florida. As a current paid member, you have the right to vote in elections in the chapter, state and at our national convention. You also have the right to vote on motions at chapter meetings. Your dues help defray the cost of holding our meetings at The Fountains of Melbourne and printing “The Visionary”, our chapter’s newsletter. Please pay your dues either by cash at a meeting or via check mailed to:

Melbourne Space Coast Chapter

P. O. Box 120311

Melbourne, FL 32912

Continue your membership and let us work together to change what it means to be blind.

**State Convention**

The National Federation of the Blind of Florida’s annual convention is over Memorial Day weekend, May 24-27, 2019. The convention is being held at the Embassy Suites, 661 N. W. 53rd Avenue, in Boca Raton, Florida. The hotel is well constructed and easy to navigate. Room rates are $99 per night, plus tax. There is a Manager’s Reception each night from 5:30-7:30 and breakfast is included.

Our annual conventions are vitally important to maintaining our affiliate in Florida. It is at convention that you elect leaders (President, 1st and 2nd Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and the four Board members). Each year, elections are staggered so only a portion of the board is elected at the same time. As a current paid member of the National Federation of the Blind of Florida, you also vote on any resolutions (policy statements of the National Federation of the Blind of Florida). This is the one time each year that divisions may meet face-to-face. You can mix and mingle with other members of the National Federation of the Blind of Florida or the National Federation of the Blind that you otherwise may not see regularly. Renew old acquaintances or make new friends. Taking a walk through the exhibit hall may show you new products available for purchase. Last and certainly not least, come and learn what your affiliate has been doing since the last convention to further the work of the Federation.

If you are planning to attend our state convention, please make your plans as early as possible. To help with the room expenses, find those you are comfortable sharing a room with. Each double hotel room comes with two beds and a roll-a-way bed can be ordered if necessary. If two couples want to share, the double rooms can sleep four.

Registration and banquet fees have not yet been set by the state board. Once they have, we will inform all of you. The MSCC board has not yet decided which fees, if any, we will cover. If you are interested in attending state convention in 2019, please let Camille Tate know and you will be placed on the list. Per board decision, fees will not be paid in advance. If the chapter decides to cover any fees, they will be reimbursed following the convention.

**National Convention**

The National Federation of the Blind will hold its annual convention at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. The dates are Sunday, July 7, through Friday, July 12.

As with state conventions, our national convention is extremely important. Current paid members have the opportunity to hear what our National Office has been doing since the last convention. You will meet new friends in blindness and renew old acquaintances. The exhibit hall is full of vendors, state affiliates and national divisions, all showcasing exciting products, news from their divisions and goodies from each state.

The room rate is $99 per night, plus taxes; the hotel tax is 13.38% and sales tax is 8.25%. You will be required to leave a deposit in the amount of one night’s reservation, with 50% refundable if you cancel by June 1. Call the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino to reserve your room at (877) 632-9001. The resort fee has been waived for the NFB National Convention. Reservations can be made after January 1, 2019. Please make sure to advise the reservationist that you are booking a room for the NFB Convention to ensure you receive the special room rate. It does not matter if you reserve a single, double, triple or quad; the price remains the same.

Registration and banquet fees have not yet been released for the 2019 National Convention. All will be advised once those fee rates are available.

MSCC has not yet decided which fees, if any, will be reimbursed by the chapter. Any that are will be reimbursed following the convention. If you are interested in attending, please let Camille Tate know and you will be placed on the list. Deadlines for registration will be released at a later date.

**Quarterly Plans for MSCC**

As we ring in 2019, the new year will bring exciting things for the Melbourne Space Coast Chapter. We are a chapter on the move, fulfilling the hopes and dreams of our founders to change what it means to be blind in Brevard County. Building our Federation will help bring hope to those blind and low vision people we have yet to meet. They will learn, as we have, that blindness does not and will not hold us back.

The first quarter of the year begins our forward momentum to do the work of the Federation. MSCC hopes to host Dr. Vaschnoff, from the Eye Institute as a guest speaker. We will also have a workshop on Apple/IOS devices, with demonstrations, for our members who are interested in joining the smartphone age or need help understanding their Apple devices. We are looking for anyone who knows how to use Android devices, please let Camille Tate know. That could be a topic for another workshop.

We have also invited Russ Davis, Treasurer of the Greater Jacksonville Chapter and Florida’s NFB Newsline Coordinator to come and speak to us tentatively in April. As Newsline Coordinator, Russ oversees Florida’s Newsline Program. Depending on schedules, please come and hear about this wonderful service from the National Federation of the Blind in April.

NFB Newsline is a free reading service provided by the National Federation of the Blind. It is designed for the blind and otherwise print disabled. You do not have to be a member of the NFB to take part in this program. As an NFB Newsline client, you will receive either a local phone number (in your area code) or an 800 number, to call. Using the prompts on the phone, you can access over 400 newspapers, newsletters, magazines, NFB content, t.v. listings, job postings and some limited ads. It can be accessed by a landline phone (for those without a smart phone), cell phone, tablet device, mobile app and through Alexa. We will have a demonstration on how it works through a cell phone.

Join us as we make 2019 the year of the Melbourne Space Coast Chapter and the National Federation of the Blind of Florida.

**Needs of the Chapter**

At most of our chapter meetings, we have expressed a need for participation from our members. To accomplish many of the goals we want, your help is necessary. It may be something as small as making a phone call or as big as visiting one of our government officials. The chapter is seriously looking for a Program Director, someone who can plan our chapter meetings and work with the board to make everyone’s experiences fulfilling, educational and light the NFB fire within them. We need people who can contact our members to remind them of our meetings, see if they are doing well and what they desire from us. Part of conducting a chapter is communication between the board and chapter members. There are many small areas where assistance would be helpful and graciously accepted. We have a largely elderly membership and volunteers who can assist those at our meetings would be greatly appreciated. While we want to foster an atmosphere of independence, we do not want to make it so difficult that our members will not attend. However, it is important to note and to say that we all should make an effort to do for ourselves. If you would like coffee, please ask where the coffee is located. If you need a place to sit, ask if there is an available chair at the table you have just found. This is a small way in which using a white cane is to your advantage. You can navigate and find many things using the white cane. It gives more freedom of movement and safety.

If you know of anyone who would like to volunteer for an hour at our meetings, please let Camille Tate know.

**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 blind people and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back.**