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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 will be Saturday, March 9, 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 call Maria Rigogliosi, (321) 795-7376, no later than Tuesday, March 5. This is to ensure you are placed on the list for transportation.

As a reminder, Space Coast Area Transit 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 at (321) 635-7815. The phone menu options have changed, so please follow the prompts. Fare cards cost $15.00, which provide 10 one-way trips.

Our next meeting is not to be missed. MSCC is having a workshop on Apple iPhone. Please bring your Apple devices so you can follow along. If you have earbuds or a headset you use with your phone, please bring them as well. We will have a 50/50 raffle at our next meeting. Each ticket costs $1.

**Legislative Alert**

The National Federation of the Blind has issued a legislative alert to all its members. For some time, we have been working to end the practice of sub-minimum wage employment. In 1938, the Department of Labor began issuing 14© certifications, which allowed employers to pay disabled workers less than minimum wage. This is more commonly known as a federally sheltered workspace. This program was designed to give gainful employment to the disabled and transition them into meaningful employment, providing dignity and upward mobility. However, these workspaces have failed to do so. In reality, disabled employees are often trapped in these jobs, with no upward mobility, training for better paying positions or higher wages. There is now new hope to ending this practice and gaining at least a prevailing minimum wage to those employees.

The Transition into Competitive Employment Act, H.R.873, S.260 was introduced in late January. Senators Casey and VanHollin, along with Congresswoman McMorris-Rogers and Chairman Scott introduced this bill in both the House and Senate. We are asking the members of the Melbourne Space Coast Chapter to call our House and Senate members and ask them to co-sponsor this legislation which, if passed, will end the disgraceful and demeaning practice of paying disabled employees sub-minimum wages.

**What does this bill do?** The short answer is that it ends the long-standing practice of paying employees below minimum wage. It prevents new certificates for sheltered workspaces and eliminates the program completely in six years. This legislation will restore dignity to disabled workers and allow them to transition into more competitive employment.

Please contact our House and Senate members and ask them to support and co-sponsor this bill. Brevard County’s representative is Bill Posey, District 8-FL. Florida’s Senators are Senator Rubio and Scott. To speak to their offices in Washington, D.C., call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 225-3121. Ask the operator to transfer you to Bill Posey and Senators Rubio and Scott. This will require three phone calls, since you can not be transferred to all three at the same time. You may also email them (please contact Camille Tate for that information) or visit them in a district office. Bill Posey’s district office is located in the Viera Government Center, Building C (he will not be in Florida until Congress is on a break). Please contact Camille Tate, (321) 372-4899, for more information.

**2019 5th Annual Car and Bike Show**

The Melbourne Space Coast Chapter is hosting its Fifth Annual Car and Bike Show on October 12, 2019. This is our biggest fundraiser and chance to educate the public about blindness. Each year, we hold a show to celebrate White Cane Day, which is observed on October 15. In 1964, Congress passed the White Cane Awareness Day Act. The white cane is our most ubitquitous symbol of freedom and independence. We expect our members to attend with their white canes and be visible to our sighted peers in the community.

Anyone wishing to help plan our fundraiser, please contact Joe Naulty, (321) 768-9500.

**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, 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 state 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. Each hotel room, whether king-sized or double, comes with a pull-out couch. If two couples want to share, the double rooms can sleep four, plus an additional person on the pull-out sofa.

Registration and banquet fees are $25 and $40, respectively. This year, pre-registration can be completed either over the phone or online. Once the registration form is available, it will be posted to the chapter’s list serv. The MSCC board has decided we will cover registration fees only at this time. 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. 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. 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. Everyone will be advised once those rates are available. Pre-registration online should be available March 1. There may be updates at our March 9 meeting or a post to our chapter’s list serv.

The MSCC board has decided we will reimburse members for registration fees only at this time. Attendees 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.

**Chapter List Serv**

As discussed at our February meeting, the chapter now has its own list serv. This is an email blog system that allows for faster and easier communication to members with an email address. You may use this mechanism to talk and share amongst each other. It is here that you will receive most breaking information from our affiliate or National Office. For those who have received their welcome email from the list serv, please do not unsubscribe yourselves. Our chapter newsletter will be posted there and you do not want to miss any of the news from the chapter, affiliate or National Office. If you normally receive your newsletter via email and have not been added to the list, please first check your junk or SPAM folder. If you still do not see your subscription email, please contact Camille Tate.

**The National Federation of the Blind knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Everyday 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.**