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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 meetings are the second Saturday of each month. Because our newsletters will be every other month, here is our next two meetings: January 11 and February 8. We will meet from 9:30 a.m.-noon at The Fountains of Melbourne, 4451 Stack Blvd., Melbourne, Florida, 32901.

Anyone needing transportation, please contact Maria Rigogliosi, (321) 795-7376, no later than the Monday prior to the meeting date, to ensure you are placed on the list for transportation. 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. Please listen to the phone options as they have changed. Fare cards costs $15.00.

We will have a 50/50 raffle at our chapter meeting. Each ticket costs $1.00 and the winner takes home half of the money collected. We have no guest speaker for our January meeting, but will have a representative from Vanda Pharmaceuticals for February.

**Membership Dues**

It is that time of year again! We will begin collecting membership dues for 2020 until January 31. Dues are $10 and may be paid via cash or check. Make checks payable to MSCC. You may mail your dues to:

Melbourne Space Coast Chapter

P. O. Box 120311

Melbourne, FL 32911

Remember, your dues maintain membership in the Melbourne Space Coast Chapter, the National Federation of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind of Florida. Additionally, your dues help defray the cost of printing our newsletter, meetings held at The Fountains of Melbourne and other costs associated with running our chapter. Any member delinquent in their dues will not receive a chapter newsletter until payment is collected.

**2020 State Convention**

The 2020 State Convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Florida will be held at the Embassy Suites USF in Tampa, Florida. The date will be over Memorial Day weekend, May 22-25, 2020. It will be a big year for us because we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Florida affiliate! Room rates are $104 per night, plus applicable taxes and you are encouraged to start saving to attend. Activities and agendas will be provided as they become available. Registration and banquet fees have not yet been set but will be published upon availability.

Remember, the Embassy Suites rooms can accommodate 3-5 people, depending on how comfortable all parties are with one another. Each suite has a pull-out sofa bed, refrigerator and microwave. Additionally, breakfast and a Manager’s Reception are included in the room rate; the reception is held daily from 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m. More details will follow as they become available.

**2020 National Convention**

The annual convention of the National Federation of the Blind has been announced! The convention will be at the Hilton Americas in Houston, Texas. The hotel address is:

Hilton Americas

1600 Lamar Street

Houston, TX 77010

(800) 236-2905

Mark your calendars for July 14-19. Next year will be the 80th anniversary of the National Federation of the Blind! The room rate will be $105 per night, plus applicable taxes and reservations can be made beginning January 1, 2020. Registration and banquet fees have not yet been set. Online registration will open on March 1. This is advance notice for any members who wish to attend the convention.

If you have never attended a National Convention, there may be assistance provided, via application, for first-timers. Standby for further information. All members are encouraged to attend our national conventions. Additional details will be provided upon availability.

**Newsletter Distribution**

The chapter newsletter is changing its distribution schedule effective January 2020. In order to accommodate the schedules of those who participate in printing our newsletter, we will move from one issue a month to one every two months. This procedure will begin in January. Instead of 12 issues annually, there will now be six. Our affiliate publishes a newsletter every two months, on the even month, so there will be access to news throughout the year. If we find this procedure does not work, we will return to a monthly issue.

**Washington Seminar**

**The National Federation of** the blind will be walking the halls of Congress in February 2020. Each year, we work on selected priorities to advance the goal of bringing blind Americans into equal, first-class citizenship. Each affiliate will send delegates to represent the interest of the blind with Representatives and Senators. This year, the National Federation of the Blind of Florida is sending thirteen delegates to Washington, D.C. Our 2020 delegation is as follows:

President Denise Valkema

State Treasurer Merry Schoch

State Board Member Camille Tate

Miami Chapter: Diana Oliveira

Broward: Nehemiah Douglas

Palm Beach: Tekesha Saffold

Central Florida: Tanya Dawson

Tampa: Yvonne Rosanelli

Daytona: Bill Outtman

Jacksonville: Russ Davis

Tallahassee: Doug Ingram

Statewide: Debbie Malone

The National Federation of the Blind of Florida will be asking all members to support our delegates as they represent us the week of February 10, by contacting their Representatives and Senators. This can be accomplished by calling (202) 225-3121, asking to be connected to their legislator’s office and requesting they support our legislative priorities.

Our legislative priorities for 2020 are as follows:

* Access Technology Affordability Act (ATAA), 2086/S.815: A bill to provide a refundable tax credit of up to $2000, to be used over a three-year period.
* Greater Access and Independence Through Non-Visual Access Technology (GAIN), H.R.3929: A bill to make home access medical equipment, fitness equipment and home appliances accessible.
* Accessible Instructional Materials in Higher Education (AIM HI), H.R.5312/S.3095: A bill to make digital classroom materials accessible to blind students.

These are priorities we have worked on previously and will continue to work on until we achieve success! Join us while our delegation walks the halls of Congress. Support us by contacting our House of Representatives member, Bill Posey and our Senators, Marco Rubio and Rick Scott.

**Movie Schedule at the Cocoa Talking Book Library**

The Melbourne Space Coast Chapter goes to the movies at the Cocoa Talking Book Library. All movies are in audio description format. This means that when there is no dialogue, the action is described by a narrator. Audio description makes movies accessible for the blind and low vision. Our Transportation Chair, Maria Rigogliosi, schedules SCAT for those members who sign up to go to the movies. The movies have been so successful, the library has moved from a quarterly showing to monthly. The schedule is below:

Tuesday, January 21; Wednesday, February 19; Tuesday, March 24; Tuesday, April 21; Tuesday, May 19; Tuesday, June 13; Wednesday, July 22; Tuesday, August 18; Tuesday, September 22; Wednesday, October 21; Tuesday, November 17; and Tuesday, December 15

Please contact Maria if you would like to attend the movies at the library. Announcements will be made during chapter meetings and notices will be published in some of our newsletter issues.

**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.**