Volume 6 Issue 3

May/June 2020

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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 face-to-face chapter meetings for May and June are cancelled due to the current health crisis. Once we can resume chapter meetings in-person, all will be notified. The Fountains of Melbourne will remain closed to outside visitors through June 30. We will maintain contact with them to find out when we may resume meeting there. However, we will conduct our June meeting via teleconference. Please standby for the date, time, and method of joining the call. The information will be posted to our chapter email list and those who do not have access to email will be contacted by telephone. Please bear with us during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**Coronavirus (COVID-19) Policy Update**

The outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic has greatly affected people of all nations, socio-economic status, and all walks of life. These are unprecedented times and we hope for the health, safety, and well-being of everyone. In response to this health crisis, the National Federation of the Blind issued a policy directive to all parts of our organization, cancelling all face-to-face meetings of affiliates, divisions, chapters, committees, and groups through May 31. This date may change as the global and national outlook shifts, sometimes hour-by-hour. We encourage our members to practice social distancing if you must be out in public, maintaining a minimum 6 ft. of distance from others. It is best that if you have no pressing business in the outside world, please stay at home. Refrain from touching the eyes, nose, and mouth. Consistently wash your hands with soap and water. Disinfect the surfaces in your home. Although it may be tough, do not shake hands, kiss or hug others. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) have established precautionary guidelines that everyone should follow. The majority of our membership is in the most vulnerable population devastated by this virus and the health and safety of our members is of utmost importance. We are a family!

Florida is beginning to re-open some non-essential businesses in a three-phase process. Restaurants have been allowed to slowly increase the numbers of patrons allowed into their establishments, provided they follow certain guidelines and maintain safe social distancing. Personal care services like hair and nail salons have also been allowed to open their doors again, also with certain health and safety precautions. Our beaches have been allowed to open in time for the Memorial Day weekend. All of this is predicated on following social distancing practices and wearing face coverings. Unfortunately, our nursing homes, assisted living facilities and long-term care facilities have remained closed to visitors, because they house our most vulnerable populations.

**Chapter Meetings**

We have cancelled our in-person chapter meetings in response to the Coronavirus. All other chapter events are continuing to be planned. In the event of an extension of the requests of not holding large gatherings, we will continue to update all of you of any changes that may occur.

In light of all that is happening, our June chapter meeting will be held via teleconference. For some of you, this may be unfamiliar. We will provide a telephone number (at this time, it is not toll-free) that you must dial, followed by a six-digit access code. For those who use a smart phone, the number can be texted to you and all that is needed is to click on the phone number link; This will dial the number and enter in the access code automatically for you. Members who do not use a smart phone or do not have long distance, someone will be able to bring you into the conference call. We will make arrangements for you.

As some of our members do not have access to email and will have the newsletter read to you, here are the rules of etiquette for conference calls. These rules are to ensure that everyone on the call can hear and no one talks over each other.

* When accessing the call, if you are coming late (i.e. after the listed time the call is supposed to start), please do not announce yourself when prompted. If someone is speaking, then you will be talking over them. The moderator of the call will wait until all talking has ceased before asking you to announce yourself.
* If you are seeking the floor to speak, please wait for whomever is talking to finish before stating your name and wait to be recognized. Again, this is to ensure that no one is talking over anyone else and so others can hear.
* If you are in an area with background noise, please mute yourself. You do this either by hitting \*6 or using the mute function in your phone app (the mute button on the side of the phone does not work if you are using a voice over function). When you want to seek the floor to speak, hit \*6 to unmute. Of course, if we have any difficulty, the moderator can mute everyone and we can proceed from there.

This information will be transmitted again as we come closer to our teleconference meeting date and will be repeated once our call has started.

We thank you for your patience with us as we weather the storm that has gathered across the globe.

**2020 State Convention Update**

The content of the below article has not changed. However, given current events, all information is subject to change. At this time, we are continuing to plan for our 2020 State Convention.

The 2020 State Convention will be held virtually, possibly in the fall. As we plan for this year’s virtual convention, information will be released as it becomes available. Any members who have already registered for the convention and reserved their room, be assured that you are protected. Any room reservations can be refunded up to 48 hours before expected check-in date. If you have registered for the convention and banquet, we will update you regarding your fees as additional information is released.

If you wish to participate in convention planning, there will be open conference calls for members to give their input. Our convention belongs to all of us and we encourage our membership to share their ideas. Please keep an eye on our chapter email list for meeting notices.

**2020 National Convention**

The 2020 National Convention is going virtual! Due to the current pandemic and its aftermath, our National Office has elected to hold our annual convention online. The dates are July 14-18, 2020. The platform that will be used has not yet been determined. However, you must still register for the National Convention to be eligible for door prizes. You must also be a currently paid member of the National Federation of the Blind to be able to vote during the election and on resolutions. The registration deadline is June 15. Please visit nfb.org/convention to register. Registration is free this year. If you need assistance to register please contact Camille Tate, (321) 372-4899, as soon as possible. We must turn in information on those who need help to register to our affiliate President by June 7.

If you have never attended a National Convention, now is the opportune time. Registration is free for this year’s convention.

**6th Annual Car and Bike Show**

The Melbourne Space Coast Chapter is continuing to monitor the situation with the pandemic as it could impact our annual car and bike show. At this time, we are seeking alternative venues to hold our event, in case The Fountains is not available to us this year. Given the current global status as a result of the Coronavirus, we may have to move the date to another time. Please keep an eye on any information in the upcoming weeks. We will keep you posted.

**Legislative Alert!**

As the world has changed, our advocacy work has not. There will be a General Election in November and the pandemic has brought home several obstacles that may impact our ability to vote safely, secretly and independently. Many states are accelerating the Vote by Mail (formerly absentee ballot) procurement and Electronic Ballot Delivery Systems (EBDS). The National Federation of the Blind of Florida is exploring these potential obstacles and are working on a letter to our leadership in Tallahassee. Additionally, because each county Supervisor of Elections can determine what vehicles they use for voting, we will also include them in this campaign.

Voting is both a right and privilege, as is the ability to vote secretly and independently. Florida will be certifying a Vote by Mail system that we must ensure is accessible to the blind and otherwise print disabled. We will be asking each member to participate with us so that all blind people will be able to cast their ballots in August and November.

**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.**