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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 July and August 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 until further notice. We will maintain contact with them to find out when we may resume meeting there. However, we will conduct our August meeting via teleconference. Our August chapter meeting will be on August 15 and the instructions will be printed below in this newsletter. 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.**

**Membership Dues**

Membership dues are due by January 31, 2021. If you pay your dues from now through January 31, your dues will be considered paid for the year of 2021. If your membership lapsed in 2020 and you pay dues now, you will not be allowed to vote in our chapter elections held on August 15. Remember, your dues help defray the cost of printing our chapter newsletter, paying for our meeting space (when we can meet in person) and all other sundry expenses a chapter may incur while planning events. Additionally, only current paid members have the right to vote in local, state or national NFB elections, make and second motions or vote on any motions brought to the floor. Only current paid members may run for open board seats or nominate any other members for board seats.

Due to our not meeting in person at this time, please mail your dues to:

MSCC

P.O. Box 120311

Melbourne, FL 32911

Please make checks payable to MSCC.

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

As we follow the path of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), it seems that it will never end. As states re-opened, including Florida, the number of cases has increased exponentially. We are continuing to monitor the situation and hope that we will be able to see each other in person soon. The National Federation of the Blind lifted its previous policy directive cancelling all in person meetings of the organization. Instead, we are allowed to meet, provided we follow local and state guidelines. Considering our normal meeting space, The Fountains, remaining closed to outside visitors at this time, we will not meet in person. 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!

**Chapter Elections**

MSCC will hold elections at our upcoming August chapter meeting. There are three positions up for election: President, Secretary and Board 1. The people in those seats are Camille Tate, Julia Savage and Maria Rigogliosi, respectively. We will hold the election during our chapter meeting conference call. If you are current in your chapter dues, we strongly encourage you to attend the meeting so your voice can be heard.

We will take nominations from the floor for all positions. If you are current in your dues, you may nominate yourself or any other paid member of the chapter for any open position. The election will be held at the end of the agenda at the August meeting. Further details about the election procedure will be announced at the August chapter meeting.

**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 August chapter meeting will be held via teleconference. For some of you, this may be unfamiliar. The teleconference information is below.

Call-in number: 712 770 5505

Access Code: 578702#

Mobile One-Touch: 7127705505,578702#

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. Please return the call one of our board members will make if you need help getting into the conference call. We need to be able to set you up with another member who can bring you into the call. If you do not return our message, you cannot be helped.

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 2020 National Federation of the Blind of Florida State Convention will be held virtually October 2-4. The affiliate board is working out the logistics of gathering all of our members, those who are technologically savvy and those who are not, into one platform. For those members who are not familiar with the Zoom platform, I strongly urge you to attend any future Zoom training session, if offered. There have been numerous training opportunities in recent months, that include not only the technology aspect, but the dialing in part of Zoom. You are able to access Zoom calls using your standard landline telephone, provided you have long distance. Please attend any training we offer.

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**

We had our first ever virtual convention! The National Federation of the Blind’s Anywhere and Everywhere Convention was described roundly as a success! Considering the logistics of moving an in person six-day convention into a five-day virtual whirlwind, the outcome was fantastic.

Many attendees who have been to an in person convention did miss the dancing in the hallways with canes, bumping into old friends (sometimes quite literally) and the excitement and energy of thousands of blind people congregating in one convention center. Ironically enough, the level of exhaustion at the end of the day did not seem to be less even though it was completely online. There were still exciting workshops, an exhibit hall, and a Presidential Suite.

The opening session of the convention was on Thursday, July 16, and President Riccobono gave an uplifting report, filled with emotion along with our accomplishments during the year.

Prepare for National Convention 2021! It was announced during the National Board Meeting that our convention will be held in New Orleans, Louisiana. Details will be released as they become available. We will return to Houston, Texas in 2023 for our 83rd National Convention. We hope the current health crisis will abate so we can see each other in person!

**6th Annual Car, Truck and Bike Show, aka “The Joe 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.

We will hold our car and bike show on October 10, 2020! It will be at the Azan Shriners, located at 1591 W. Eau Gallie Blvd., from 10-2 p.m. Our sponsorship letters have been approved, we have both a radio press release and a longer one for print media. We are pleased to announce that Mayor Meehan and Commissioner Smith have both promised proclamations that will be read at our car show. We are excited to continue to plan our biggest annual fundraiser.

**Electronic Ballot Delivery System and 2020 General Election**

**Tuesday, July 14, the Florida Department of State certified Democracy Live as the electronic ballot delivery system. What does this mean for blind voters? In a settlement released on July 26, Florida will conduct a five-county pilot program using Democracy Live. Those counties are Miami-Dade, Pinellas, Nassau, Volusia and Orange. This settlement is disappointing because 62 counties are not required to have this system in place for the November General Election. Blind voters in the rest of the state will not have the ability to vote from the privacy of their homes.**

**What is Democracy Live? It is an electronic ballot delivery system that uses a computer to mark a voter’s ballot. This is not online voting because you cannot vote online. When you request a mail-in ballot from your Supervisor of Elections, you can then utilize this computer program to mark your choices on the electronic ballot. Then you print the ballot out and put it in an envelope, signing where indicated (possibly over the envelope seal) and mail it in. If the electronic return function has been activated by Florida, you send your ballot in electronically. Once it has been received in the SOE office, they print the ballot so it can be counted, just like those sent in via postal mail. The beauty of this system is that it can be used by anyone. This is not a “blind” or “disabled person” system. You do not have to have a disability to use Democracy Live.**

**Given our current health crisis, it is a simple solution to allow everyone to exercise their right to vote privately and independently and protect themselves from exposure to COVID-19.**

**The affiliate is planning an NFB 411 conference call to discuss Democracy Live and our response to the certification and settlement. We encourage all members to attend and ask questions.**

**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.**