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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 will continue to be held virtually 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 chapter meetings via Zoom. The Zoom 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 your membership lapses and you have not become current, you will no longer receive a chapter newsletter until your dues become current. Remember, your dues help defray the cost of printing our chapter newsletter, paying for our meeting space (right now, it is virtually through Zoom) 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.

The chapter now has access to its own PayPal account. If you wish to use PayPal, you will need to have an account with them. The account itself is free, but there may be fees associated with sending or receiving funds. To pay your membership dues using our PayPal account, please follow the below instructions:

Within the app or using your computer, please select to send money. You will send it to Melbourne@NFBFlorida.org (this is our official NFB email address). The amount is $10.

Please make sure you have linked your bank account to PayPal. This is the no fee way. If you link a debit or credit card only, you will incur a fee to send money through PayPal.

When you are ready to send, please make sure to select your payment type to “Sending to friends and family”. This makes sure the chapter receives your full dues amount. If you leave it at “Paying for goods and services”, the chapter will incur a fee, that will come out of the amount of money you send.

If you need help, please feel free to reach out to any board member or a chapter member that may use PayPal. Camille Tate can be reached at 321 372 4899.

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

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. You are encouraged to wear a mask if you are concerned, have a compromised immune system or have any other health issues that could be adversely affected by COVID-19. 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 Meetings and Zoom**

We have cancelled our in-person chapter meetings in response to the Coronavirus.

We have moved to a new platform for our virtual chapter meetings. Zoom has become the most widely used video conferencing software. You do not have to use a computer or smart device to access Zoom and we ask that if you do use such a device, please have your video turned off. This will give you the best connectivity. Zoom is the most accessible conferencing system and is easy to use. You can access a Zoom call using a computer (any operating system), smart device (Apple iPhone or iPad or, any Android phone or tablet) or dialing in (the same way you called in using Free Conference Call). If you need assistance to get into the Zoom call, just ask; there are chapter members that will bring you into a call.

There are a number of phone numbers you can use to call into a Zoom room. You may pick any of those phone numbers. If one is busy or doesn’t connect, use the next one in the list. We suggest you use the New York number (646 area code). You do not need a Zoom account to enter a Zoom call.

If you will use a smart phone or tablet, you may click the link provided or type in the meeting ID number. Below is the procedure if you will use a smart device or computer:

**Using a Computer**

* Click on the link in the invitation email.
* Zoom will download to your computer and open automatically. If you have a microphone on your computer, the waiting room will open up (this is now standard procedure. The host will admit you.).

**Using a Smart Phone or Tablet**

* If you access email on your phone, click the link in the invitation email. Zoom will download automatically and open.
* A screen will pop up asking how you want to connect. Please choose internet audio. If you don’t, we will not be able to hear you if you wish to speak.
* If you do not use email on your phone, go to the app store (or Google Play) and download Zoom. You may be required to sign up. Enter your email address and create a password.
* On the meeting screen, enter the meeting ID only (you do not need the phone number for this).
* Please make sure you select internet audio for your connection on the pop-up screen so we can hear you.

**Dialing In**

* If you are going to dial in, whether it is on your cell phone or landline, just enter in the phone number, then the meeting ID and the pound key (number sign).

All callers will be placed in a waiting room until the host admits you. Do not worry if you cannot hear people at first. It does take time to admit people if there are a lot coming in at once. We are hoping to be able to admit multiple people at once, but not sure if the new update includes that feature.

As always, if you need help, please ask. We will not know unless you speak up. If any members want some training on how to use Zoom, just let us know. We can schedule an hour or so to work with the members. If you are comfortable using a computer or smart device, it will be a little easier and quicker to get the hang of it.

Here are the protocols for our chapter meetings:

* 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 (asterisk 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). If you are using a computer, hit the Alt key and A (this is the mute toggle function; hit it again to unmute). If you used a smart phone or tablet by clicking the link, there is a mute button in the lower left side of the device; you can tap or double tap to toggle mute and unmute. 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.

**7th Annual Car, Truck and Bike Show, aka “The Joe Show”**

We are in the planning stages of our 7th Annual Joseph B. Naulty Car and Bike Show, AKA “The Joe Show”, presented by the Melbourne Space Coast Chapter, National Federation of the Blind of Florida. We hope to build on last year’s success! The next show is scheduled for Saturday, October 9, 2021. We are excited to bring back our chapter’s largest fundraiser and community awareness project to Brevard County.

**Chapter Elections**

We are holding chapter elections in August. Each year, several board positions terms expire and we must fill those seats with chapter members. This year, the following seats are up for election:

Vice President (currently held by Joyce Taylor)

Treasurer (currently held by Nancy Hollo)

Board Seat 2 (currently held by Teresa Cruz)

Board Seat 3 (currently held by Joe Naulty)

Any member current in their dues may run for any of these seats, be nominated by another currently paid member and vote during the elections. If you have not paid your dues for 2021 yet, you are strongly encouraged to do so. We will not accept any dues on election day until after elections are completed. Please reference the article in this newsletter on how to submit your dues.

Although any member may hold an office on the chapter board, there are some expectations involved in these positions. While it is not required that you be able to access email, it is strongly encouraged. We communicate with each other electronically and may vote on urgent business via email. As a member of the chapter board, you are expected to attend regular board meetings (normally held each month prior to a chapter meeting) and chapter meetings. We must maintain a quorum to conduct any business that requires voting. Our board has seven members, so at least four must be present at board and chapter meetings. Here is a quick synopsis of position responsibilities for the board seats up for election in August:

Vice President: supports the President in any capacity necessary to ensure the chapter’s business is completed; may be called upon to conduct a meeting in the absence of the President; may serve as interim President in the event the President becomes incapacitated or otherwise unable to perform their duties; helps keep the President on track. Note: the affiliate holds a quarterly Presidents Committee meeting and this is open to the Vice President.

Treasurer: perhaps the most important board position, other than Secretary. The Treasurer keeps the books of the chapter and conducts any financial obligations of the chapter (upon authorization of the President); disburses funds from the chapter; maintains accurate and up-to-date financial records of the chapter; completes and submits an annual financial report to the affiliate.

Board: supports the board and chapter in any projects. While this seat does not bear an executive title, it is just as important as any other position on the board. No matter what title we hold, every one of us are members.

**Constitutional Review Committee**

The Melbourne Space Coast Chapter will be reviewing its constitution in a few months. Our National Office released an updated model constitution for chapters, divisions and affiliates. It has been a few years since we dusted ours off and took a good look at it. It is generally a good idea to review a constitution occasionally to keep it moving with the times.

The chapter’s review committee will consist of five members, four chapter members and myself. We will carefully review and discuss the model constitution for chapters and then compare to our chapter constitution. This is and should be a careful process, because amending a constitution should not be done lightly. Once the chapter’s review committee completes the amendment process, we will email the revised document to the chapter members and have our first reading at a subsequent chapter meeting. This is your opportunity to ask questions about the changes, discuss the pros and cons of each amendment and suggest corrections. There will be a second reading, if no changes are made at the first reading and the chapter will vote to adopt the amended constitution. At that time, it will be forwarded to the affiliate constitutional review committee. Based on the outcome of that final step, we have completed the process and only await approval from the affiliate board and President Riccobono.

All questions regarding our chapter’s constitution can be directed to Camille Tate, 321 372 4899 or ctate2076@att.net.

**State Convention 2021**

The National Federation of the Blind of Florida will hold its annual convention October 1-3, 2021, at the Embassy Suites USF/Busch Gardens in Tampa, Florida. Our convention this year will be in-person. Registration and banquet fees are $25 and $45, respectively. Registration will open in July and close September 6. Information about registering and reserving your room will follow as those details are released, including the code to use in order to receive the NFBF convention room rate of $110 (there are taxes on top of that in the amount of $14.55%).

The chapter board has not determined what type of assistance we will provide for members to attend the state convention. However, the chapter did discuss some transportation concerns at our June meeting. So we are all on the same page, transportation into and out of Brevard County is limited and has been for a long time, if you do not have access to private transportation. The pandemic has exacerbated this condition. If you are interested in attending the state convention, you are strongly urged to take part in deciding how members will get to Tampa. We have suggested a group of volunteers who would be willing to drive (either their own vehicle or a rental) as many as they can fit into the vehicle. There will be compensation for those volunteers and the details must be discussed as a chapter before we ask someone to commit to such help. Our treasury is healthy and we will have a successful car show; we also sold candy to raise money for convention last year, so it is an achievable goal.

Additional details will follow as they become available.

**National Convention 2021**

The National Convention will be virtual again in 2021. Have no fear, we expect to be eating shrimp etouffee and beignets in New Orleans in 2022!

The dates for National Convention are Tuesday, July 6 through Saturday, July 10. It will be held via Zoom, just like last year. The deadline to register so you will be eligible to vote has passed. You may still register for the convention, but will no longer be eligible for door prizes or voting. Please visit nfb.org/convention and follow the links to reach the registration form. Registration is free of charge, but you can make a donation to the National Federation of the Blind if you choose.

If you have not paid your chapter’s 2021 dues as of yet, please do so as soon as possible. Any member whose dues are delinquent will not be eligible to vote at the National Convention. Please see the article earlier in this newsletter on how to pay your dues.

**Brevard’s Blind Spotlight-Tanveer Syed**

One of our newest members is Tanveer Syed. Tanveer has low vision and is currently a full-time doctoral student at the Florida Institute of Technology. In this short period of a young life, Tanveer’s quest for learning has taken him across three continents and through many prestigious halls of learning.

While Tanveer’s family roots are in Bangladesh, he was born in Abu Dhabi to parents with strong commitments to high levels of education. Tanveer’s father is now a retired civil engineer. His mom, who recently passed away, was a medical doctor. Tanveer has one brother Muntaser Syed who is also here in the United States pursuing a doctorate degree in Computer & Electrical Engineering.

In his formative years, Tanveer and his family vigorously pursued assistive reading equipment and the best blind student educational resources. After an arduous path to gain a high school diploma in Abu Dhabi, Tanveer traveled to the United Kingdom where he earned a Bachelor’s degree (Honors) from the University of Leeds in Human Physiology and a Master’s degree in Biomedical Sciences from the University of Bradford.

Next, Tanveer came to the United States to earn a second Master’s degree from The George Washington University (Washington, DC). That degree was a Master’s of Arts in Education and Human Development.

Currently, Tanveer is enrolled at the Florida Institute of Technology working on his Doctorate in Science Education.

Obviously, Tanveer’s education and living expenses require funding. To accomplish his goals, Tanveer has been working as a Florida Tech Student Fundraiser. As Florida Tech has expanded its curriculum and support of multiple sciences on the Space Coast, fundraising is an essential focus for the University. Tanveer is a star fundraiser and has earned “Student Employee of the Year.” Add to that a GPA of 4.0 and another award as Florida Tech’s “Student of the Year”.

Once the Doctorate in Science Education is earned at Florida Tech, Tanveer aims to focus on working towards much needed improvements to innovatively support low vision learners of science, eventually generating more interest and motivation for low vision learners to study science subjects effectively. Grades 6 through 12 will be the initial focus, with other student populations intended to follow, building upon the findings of the initial endeavor. Virtual learning for the blind offers unlimited potential. Clearly this is on Tanveer’s agenda.

As a student with severe vision loss and developed skills in cutting edge technology, Tanveer keeps pushing boundaries and working to “Live The Life He Wants to Live”.

**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.**