Volume 8 Issue 1

September 2021-February 2022

**In This Issue**:

**NFB Pledge**

**Meeting Announcements**

**Chapter Meetings and Zoom**

**7th Annual Car and Bike Show Wrap-Up**

**Programs of the National Federation of the Blind**

**State Convention 2021 News and Notes**

**State Convention 2022**

**National Convention 2022-In The Big Easy**

**Philosophy and History of the National Federation of the Blind**

**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**

**We are currently exploring moving into a hybrid model for our chapter meetings. What this means is, some members will be in-person, at a location to be determined and everyone else may be there on Zoom. Some chapter members miss being together, sitting next to each other and sharing stories. While Zoom has and continues to be an effective means to meet, it is clear that coming back together face-to-face is important to the chapter. Once a location has been secured, we will hold our meetings there and still allow members not comfortable being in public to participate using our chapter’s Zoom account. At this time, The Fountains is closed to our chapter, so this temporary circumstance will continue until such time as they re-open to us. For those who wish to participate in meetings through Zoom, nothing changes for you. All access methods to be on our calls will remain in place. For those wishing to be in-person, information will be provided once a location is secured. Anyone needing transportation to the meeting will return to our pre-COVID policy of letting Maria Rigogliosi know you need transportation, providing your address and then waiting to receive your pick-up times.**

**As a note: If you will be coming in-person, there will be protocols to keep all members safe. We will follow all local and state guidelines and combine those protocols with policy of the National Federation of the Blind.**

**Transportation Note: If you receive transportation to and from chapter meetings, you will be required to follow the protocols of Space Coast Area Transit, which may differ from CDC guidelines. We will make sure you are aware of those guidelines prior to booking any transportation. Please note that if you are unable to make the trip for a chapter meeting, you must give sufficient notice to Maria Rigogliosi. This is to ensure that all pick-up times are adhered to; there are others who will be traveling on the scheduled bus and we must be considerate of those passengers.**

**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”**

Wrap-Up Time!!!

We just finished our 7th Annual Joseph B. Naulty Car and Bike Show, aka “The Joe Show”, on October 9. The show went off without a hitch, thanks to the hard work and dedication of Julia Savage, John Carey and Nancy Hollo. We had a report of the financials at our November chapter meeting. The day was beautiful, although there was a serious concern regarding the weather. With only a few little sprinkles here and there, the show had the cooperation of the weather. We also participated in several white cane street crossings, with the assistance of the Brevard County Sherrif’s Office. We were pleased to see more chapter members at our show this year. We would also like to thank The Fountains and Victoria Bloomberg for bringing some of their residents to the show and participating with a door prize.

Why is White Cane Day so important?

October 15, 1964, Congress enacted White Cane Safety Day, now more commonly referred to as White Cane Day. This proclamation is upheld each year around its anniversary. Its intent was to legally recognize the importance of blind people’s need for freedom and independence gained through the use of the white cane. It has come to symbolize our freedom. Most states have a white cane law, which protects blind pedestrians who travel independently in their communities.

Why do we have the show each year?

For our car show, it is important for the public who attend to see blind people attending. This event is not only a fundraiser, but a mechanism to bring blind and sighted people together and possibly open a dialogue so each may better understand each other. We hope to see all of our chapter members attending our car show. After all, it really is about all of us!

**State Convention 2021**

The National Federation of the Blind of Florida held its 51st annual State Convention in Tampa, Florida, this year. We were excited to have this convention in person. Many of the members were leery about travelling and mingling in these uncertain times, but we all missed being together. As great as Zoom conference calls can be, it does not take the place of person-to-person contact. We followed CDC guidelines and had a wonderful time! Despite issues with hotel plumbing and an on-going renovation, we made the best of things.

One important fact that all agreed on was how fantastic and helpful the hotel staff was! The meals were flavorful and the portions large. The banquet dinner was excellent.

The convention was something unexpected when twice the number of members attended than expected. Over the three days, we met, laughed, cried, hugged and had a rollicking time! Of course, we can’t forget the business! Even through the excitement of seeing each other in more than two years, business had to be completed. After all, that is the main goal of having a convention. The highlight of the business was the re-formation of our Florida Association of Blind Students! In addition to earning six scholarships this year, our students pumped new life into our student’s division. The new President of the students is Jannik Pesch. Z’Leah (Vice President), Meliora (Treasurer) and C.C. (Secretary) round out the new board members. We hope to see great things from our amazing students. On a bittersweet moment, we honored a member of our family as her family dedicated a scholarship in the loving memory of Lauren Blum, who left us far too soon. Many of us shed tears as we remembered the times we shared with Lauren and her family. We love and miss you!

This year, there were a lot of affiliate board seats up for election. We had some vacancies that needed to be filled, so instead of five seats to elect, we had seven this time around. First Vice President and Treasurer are for one term, since those were vacated before their terms expired. It was smooth sailing until the last open seat, which had a five-person run-off. I have listed below the results of our elections:

President: Paul Martinez

1st Vice President: Jorge Hernandez

2nd Vice President: Camille Tate

Treasurer: Sylvia Young

Secretary: Jerilyn Higgins

Board 2: Denise Valkema

Board 3: Peggy Fleischer

We look forward to seeing what our newly elected board will do to build the National Federation of the Blind of Florida!

The exhibit hall was packed as people were eager to get out and see what offerings could make their lives accessible and vendors were eager to get out and sell those products. We had raffles and drawings, CCTVs and magnifiers, leather goods and all sorts of different items.

The auction was fun! Having a pajama party was a good idea and no one wore inappropriate clothing! Our chapters and divisions worked hard to create baskets people wanted to bid on, including one with a Coach bag! The affiliate made money to support our scholarships and we all had a fun time!

Our National Representative this year was Norma Crosby, Secretary of the National Federation of the Blind and President of the National Federation of the Blind of Texas. She and her husband Glenn spent the weekend with us, sharing news and information from our National Center and words from President Mark Riccobono.

**State Convention 2022**

The National Federation of the Blind of Florida is excited to announce our 2022 State Convention! The Greater Jacksonville Chapter and Greater Daytona Chapter will co-host our state convention in the River City…Jacksonville! This year’s convention will be over the Columbus Day weekend, October 7-9, 2022. The location is the South Bank Hotel, a Marriott property, in Jacksonville, FL. The room rate is $115 per night, plus taxes. Details regarding hotel address, room rate, convention code and other pertinent details was released by the affiliate and posted to the chapter’s email list. Those details will be shared again at our March chapter meeting and moving forward.

Registration and banquet fees have not been set by the National Federation of the Blind of Florida Board of Directors. Once that information has been determined, it will be shared to all affiliate members. The Melbourne Chapter has not yet determined what assistance, if any, will be provided to chapter members to attend state convention nor, has the affiliate board determined what assistance, if any, will be provided for affiliate members to attend the convention. Please keep an eye on our chapter list serv for any details that are released between chapter newsletters.

The Florida affiliate holds an open convention planning meeting on the first Sunday of each month at 8 p.m. Our conventions do not belong to the host chapters or affiliate board, but to all members. We encourage all Florida affiliate members to attend these open meetings to suggest guest speakers, workshops of interest or any other activities you wish to have at our convention. Be part of the planning process! All meeting notices are forwarded to the chapter’s email list once posted to the general Florida list, so keep an eye out for that.

We encourage all members to attend our state convention. This is where we conduct the business of the National Federation of the Blind of Florda. You, the members, determine what direction our affiliate will move in. It is also where you, the members, elect those leaders that you feel will best serve us as blind Floridians.

**National Convention 2022**

The National Federation of the Blind is moving back to an in-person convention! We are excited to announce our 82nd National Convention in New Orleans, LA. The convention takes place July 5-10 in The Big Easy! After having our last two conventions virtually, we can’t wait to return to a face-to-face convention! There will be two hotels for this year’s event. The Marriott, 555 Canal Street and the Sheraton, located across the street, are the two locations for our convention. The bulk of the activities will take place in the Marriott and the Sheraton will function as our overflow hotel and hold our exhibit hall. Other activities are in the works for the overflow hotel and information will be shared as it is released. The room rate for the convention is $109 per night, plus taxes and a $3 Occupancy fee, per night.

Registration is now open for National Convention. Registration is $25 and banquet is $75 if you pre-register. These prices will be in effect until May 31. Once pre-registration ends after May 31, you will have to register at the convention in July and fees increase by $5 each.

If you are a first-timer to a National Convention, assistance may be available through the Kenneth Jernigan Scholarship. Please ask Camille Tate for how you can apply for this scholarship to attend National Convention. Apply as soon as possible! Here are some things to know about this scholarship. If you have never attended an in-person national convention, you are eligible to apply; if your first national convention was virtual, you still qualify. Applicants are going to be interviewed prior to the completion of their application. If you are awarded a scholarship, you must attend all days of the convention, July 5-10, including the banquet on July 10.

**Philosophy of the National Federation of the Blind**

In an effort to spread the philosophy of the National Federation of the Blind, the next few newsletters will highlight some of the key aspects of our organization. This will include programs, events and sharing experiences and speeches of our leaders. We feel it is important for every member to know our organization and hopefully catch NFB fever! In this issue, we will break down and discuss some of our philosophy to better understand who we are as an organization and why membership in the National Federation of the Blind is vital to blind people.

Our History

In 1940, blind people from different parts of the country came together in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania to bring forward a dream. The dream was all the hopes and aspirations of blind people to be equal, first-class citizens in society. Our founding president, Jacobus ten Broek, blind since childhood, led us from our founding in 1940 until 1967. Our legacy lived on with our next long-term president, Dr. Kenneth Jernigan, through Dr. Marc Mauer to our current president, Mark Riccobono. We have been going strong for 81 years and will continue our efforts to bring equality to all blind people well into the future.

Our Pledge

Why do we say the NFB pledge at chapter meetings? What is so important about our pledge?

The pledge is our commitment to the National Federation of the Blind. It is not taken lightly and is a powerful statement by all members. Each issue of the newsletter contains the pledge at the beginning and all members are encouraged to learn it. The first clause of our pledge is a statement of what we do as an organization, because it takes all of us working together to accomplish our tasks. “I pledge to participate actively in the efforts of the National Federation of the Blind to achieve equality, opportunity and security for the blind…”. Without our membership taking an active role in bringing equality, opportunity and security for all blind people, the tasks become more difficult. It is not only our elected leaders that work to achieve those goals for us. It takes us in a concerted effort. Even something as simple as making a two-minute phone call to advance our legislative priorities can make a difference. Taking part in fundraising endeavors help to fund those programs and initiatives of our Federation can help us succeed.

“…to support the policies and programs of the Federation…” is important because without those policies and programs, we could become and be seen as disorganized, with no focus. Our programs are vital to the lives of blind people, that without them, we would be adrift. We have so many programs to educate ourselves and the public about blindness, they can’t be listed in this newsletter. A future issue will discuss some of our programs, but in a snapshot view, here are just a few:

* Braille Enrichment in Literacy and Learning (BELL): our BELL academies are programs over the summer for blind children, ages 4-12. Each summer, throughout the United States, our affiliates conduct one of these “summer camps” for blind children, where they can be taught skills such as orientation and mobility (cane travel), Braille (identifying the alphabet, for a start) and identifying money. These are just the tip of the iceberg.
* Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM): we have a variety of programs that work to facilitate those children interested in entering the fields of science, technology, engineering and math. It is untrue that blind people can’t be scientists, engineers or mathematicians. We can not only use technology, but create it as well. There are successful adults working in those fields who are blind and making innovations and, children excited to learn in those fields and innovate. Tactile art has become ever more popular and is something we have focused on, with programs geared towards artists who want to create art in a way that blind people can enjoy. Some museums have tactile displays so we all can enjoy exhibits.
* NFB Newsline: our Newsline program is a newspaper and magazine reading service provided to all blind and print disabled people by the National Federation of the Blind. It is a free service that gives you access to over 400 newspapers and magazines, as well as tv listings and some store ads. Newsline is accessed through a telephone number (you may use your landline or cell phone), through an app on the iPhone or iPad and can even be used on a Victor Stream. It is versatile and a great tool if you like reading news, especially from around the country or the globe.

“…and to abide by its constitution.”: although we are a member and volunteer driven organization, we must still be organized. We have a constitution, nationally, affiliate and local chapter or division levels. These are the rules by which we govern ourselves. It is important for all members to know and understand our constitutions and recognize they are expected to follow it. We are united by blindness and each of us have a responsibility to uphold the same rules for everyone. Under our constitution, every part of our organization is governed by a majority of blind people. What that means is, a majority of our membership must be blind, a majority of our governing boards (nationally, affiliate, chapter and division) must be blind and, each president and vice president(s) must be blind. Our only exception is the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children. We love and encourage our sighted partners in society to be with us, but we are an organization of the blind, speaking for ourselves. There are deep meanings to this, that should be explored on your own and will not fit into the scope of this article.

All of you are encouraged to learn more about our philosophy. There are many articles, speeches and other materials available to read or listen to at your leisure. A great resource is our national website, nfb.org. You will find access to speeches given by our four major presidents, Braille Monitor (our magazine) articles, Future Reflections and many others. There are materials available through the Talking Book Library and its Braille and Audio Reading service, BARD).

**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.**