Hello fellow Federationists. At our upcoming state convention, September 18-21 at the Holiday Inn Crabtree in Raleigh, our state affiliate will elect a new board of directors. We will elect a President,First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and board members. Elected for two-year terms, these officers and board members direct the business of, and represent, the membership of our organization. It is through such elections that affiliate membership indicates, collectively, what it expects, and what it values, in its affiliate leaders.

According to our affiliate's constitution, nominations for board members and officers are considered and vetted by a nominating committee appointed by our affiliate president. Through this process, our affiliate enhances its assurance that nominees for leadership positions have the insight, dedication, and historical perspective to lead and perform the important work of, our most valuable organization.

This year, the committee has placed my name in, and I have humbly accepted, its nomination to serve as your state president. It has also nominated Tim Jones as First Vice President; Charles Parker as Second Vice President; Jeremiah Rogers as secretary; Boyce Locklear as Treasurer; and four board members. I wholly support, and would be honored to serve alongside, each of these nominees.

For at least some of these elected positions, you will be faced with choices in addition to those recommended by your nominating committee when you cast your votes for your leaders on September 21. I want to be your President, and I believe I'm ready to serve you well. As you consider the direction you believe to be necessary for our affiliate, and as you consider the qualities and experience necessary to lead this organization's work, I offer the following attributes which I believe have prepared me to serve you. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of my candidacy, and I appreciate your support on September 21.

I'm the third of four children and grew up in a poor, working-class family in the mill town of Kannapolis, NC. I come from humble, proud roots, and learned to work hard from an early age. I believe in pursuing what you want, and in working hard to do so. I worked in the cotton mill until I was 20, when I learned I was going blind due to Retinitis Pigmentosa .

When I learned I was going blind, I promised myself that blindness wouldn't end my life. I decided that blindness wouldn't stop my pursuit of happiness, safety, and a rich life for my family and I. I decided that blindness would not keep me from living the life I want.

While seeking information, I attended Camp Dogwood, where I met people who were living the lives they wanted. They lived independently, held jobs, were raising children, and pursued hobbies. Through these people, I learned of the National Federation of the Blind, and I knew the National Federation of the Blind of NC was what I needed as a blind person.

I've been an active Federationist since my first state convention in 1980. I served as President of 2 different chapters and hosted 3 state conventions. I've learned of the operation and philosophy of the federation through attendance of numerous state conventions, numerous Washington Seminars, and nine national conventions. I assisted, and learned greatly from, past NFB of NC President, and National Board member, Hazel Staley, with coordinating the National Convention when it was in Charlotte in 1992. I've served on state committees including Scholarship, Membership, Legislation, Fund raising and PAC. I've served on the state board of directors, served as State Treasurer and currently serve as state Secretary.

While raising my two children, I worked at Camp Dogwood, starting as a recreation counselor and later as Camp Director. As Director, I lead the camp's expansion from a 10- to a 13-week camping season. This resulted in a nearly 40% increase in blind people served. This included management of budgets, leadership of year-round and temporary staff, coordination of services, building and maintaining relationships with donors and service providers, and careful management of valuable volunteers and their resources.

At present, I am a blind entrepreneur. My business is Sharon's Café and Vending in Winston-Salem. As I did at Camp Dogwood, I've built a dependable staff and successfully manage the relationships and money necessary to keep my business progressing. I'm proud to say that I have great employees who are capable of running the business when causes meaningful to me, such as NFB of NC, demand my attention and presence.

Service to causes in which I believe is a vital part of who I am.

Along with service to NFB of NC, I am a District Governor with Lions Clubs International for the year 2014-2015. I have received many awards as a Lion for my dedication, leadership and hard work, but the two that stand out are the Presidential Leadership Award and the Presidential Medal. These are the second and third highest awards given by Lions worldwide. They represent the personal characteristics of which I'm most proud, and which I believe make me well suited to be this organization's president.

I'm a thorough, patient listener; I work to make sure everyone is heard; I'm adept at building concensus; and I effectively manage resources.

Once again, I thank you for considering me as a candidate for president, and I look forward to serving for and alongside you.

Sincerely,

Sharon Weddington