Minutes of the National Federation of the Blind Fairfax Chapter Meeting on September 18, 2014

Call to Order and Meeting Participation

The September 18, 2014 meeting of the Fairfax chapter of the National Federation of the Blind was called to order at 7:00 PM on Thursday September 18, 2014. The following people attended the meeting. Wanda Taylor, Beverly Coni, Sue Garrison, Elden Wright, Carolina Garrison, Ashley Bramlett, Alex Hernandez, Jessica Hernandez, Tajuan Farmer, Rodney Neely, and Cathy Schroeder.

VLEI Foundation

During the first portion of the meeting, Mr. Elden Wright, who is the President of the Virginia Lions Eye Institute Foundation, presented a program on the VLEI Foundation. There are three major purposes of the Virginia Lions Eye Institute has three major objectives: to purchase medical equipment for the Innova Fairfax Lions Eye Clinic located at Fairfax Hospital, to fund scholastic grants for blind people who live in northern Virginia, and the Lions Low Vision Clinic.

The Virginia Lions Eye Institute has been in existence since 1969. It is a partnership between the Lions Clubs of District 24A and Innova Fairfax Hospital. Since 1969, the Lions have purchased over $500,000 worth of medical equipment for the Fairfax Hospital Opthomology Clinic. Inova Fairfax Hospital permits their ophthalmologists to staff the clinic, they pay for the facilities where the clinic is located, and they also permit students from Georgetown University’s Opt homological department to assist their ophthalmologists with the surgeries that are performed at the eye clinic.

In an average year, the Lions’ Eye Clinic sees approximately 3000 people, who live in northern Virginia and Fredericksburg, VA. The clinic performs approximately 250 surgeries each year. Most people are referred to the lion’s eye clinic because they need a medical exam to get glasses. The lions of northern Virginia purchase approximately 2500 pairs of glasses each year for people, who live in northern Virginia, who can not afford to purchase their own glasses. The majority of the clients, who receive these glasses, are referred by social service providers.

The Virginia Lions Eye Institute also awards scholastic grants to visually impaired and blind people, who live in northern Virginia. So far, since 1996, VLEI has awarded over $263,000 in scholastic grants. The purpose of these scholastic grants is to enable blind people to increase their independence and to lead more productive lives.

The web site to visit to learn more about the VLEI scholarship applications is [www.valions.org](http://www.valions.org) Mr. Wright’s email address is ewright22@aol.com. Mr. Wright would like to award some VLEI grants at the fall conference this year, but he is not sure that he can get the necessary mechanisms in place to make this occur.

Wanda sent out the application to the chapter email list yesterday. Cathy is going to post it on the NFBV web site.

There is also another grant that blind students are eligible to receive. This grant comes from the Old Dominion Eye Foundation. A blind or visually impaired person can apply for this grant only if he/she is pursuing education of some type or if he/she can use this grant to purchase assistive technology, which would facilitate employment. Additionally, each applicant must be supported by a local lions club. Here is a web link to the description of this program.

http://odef.org/lipomi-lions-vision-fund/

The Lions Low Vision Clinic is located in Alexandria, VA. It is located in a building that also houses the Society for the Prevention of Blindness. The Lions Low Vision Clinic provides medical services to people, who live in the northern Virginia area, who have low vision. They can sometimes loan people equipment to see if the equipment would be useful to them in their daily lives.

President’s Message

After Mr. Wright finished his presentation, we listened to the August 2014 NFB President’s message. Topics which were discussed in the president’s message include the Source America Protest, the TEACH Act, the NFB Kurzweil Reader App for the IPhone, and the 75 days of Action membership drive.

Source America Protest

On August 28, 2014, the National Federation of the Blind and some other organizations of people with disabilities held a protest at the Source America headquarters located at 8401 Old Courthouse Road Vienna, VA 22182. The reason for the protest by the NFB and the other organizations of people with disabilities is that many of the sheltered workshops continue to pay people with disabilities less than the minimum wage. The organizations of people with disabilities think that this is not a good practice.

The TEACH Act stands for Technology Education Accessibility in College and Higher Education.

**The TEACH Act:**

1) authorizes the Access Board to develop accessibility guidelines for electronic instructional materials and related information technology so that those materials are accessible to students with print disabilities.

2) Provides an incentive for schools to follow the guidelines by offering a safe harbor from litigation.  Any school that only uses technology that conforms to the guidelines will be in compliance with current law.

3) Establishes a minimum usability standard for schools that choose to use technology that does not conform to the guidelines.  This offers flexibility and leaves room for innovation without compromising print disabled students’ right to equal access.

TEACH Act (S. 2060/H.R. 3505) addresses the problem of inaccessible instructional materials in post-secondary education.

 The TEACH Act is a collaboration of the NFB and the Association of American Publishers (AAP), the leading trade association for the U.S. publishing industry. The TEACH Act is supported by the University of Montana and the Association of American Publishers.

The American Council on Education (ACE) opposes the TEACH Act. On August 29, 2014, ACE sent a letter to Senator Harkin which states “This provision creates an impossible to meet standard for institutions and will result in a significant chilling effect in the usage of new technology. Such a proposal, if implemented, will seriously impede the development and adoption of accessible materials, harming the very students it is intended to assist. The TEACH Act has bipartisan support in the Senate.

[www.nfb.org/teach](http://www.nfb.org/teach)

The KNFB Reader App for the IPhone was released on Friday, September 19, 2014.

 <http://www.knfbreader.com/>

The KNFB Reader will only work on IPhone 5, 5S, or 5C or the IPhone 6 and the 6+.

President Riccobono also discussed the 75 Days of Action, which is a drive to start at least 75 new chapters in the National Federation of the Blind.

 [The Spirit of 75 video](http://nfb.org/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=3792&qid=573477)

At the end of his message, President Riccobono reminded us to sign up to host the Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning (BELL) program. This summer the BELL Program was presented in 23 states.

https://nfb.org/bell-program

Wanda discussed our BELL Program. I think that we had a total of six students. Unfortunately, only three of the students could participate in the entire BELL Program. They learned some basic food preparation and pouring skills. They learned how to use their canes and to go on trips with blind mentors. They learned to explore their surroundings. They also went to visit Jack Wood’s horse-riding facility. All of the children seemed to enjoy the BELL program.

 Social Outing

Many of the ladies in our chapter—Jessica, Wanda, Carolina, Sue, and Cathy have made tentative plans to visit Jack Wood’s farm sometime on a Saturday in October to go horseback riding.

Everyone should bring a bag lunch because there is no food available for purchase at the facility.

Chapter Summer Social

Wanda also discussed the summer social, which occurred on Saturday August 23, 2014. The weather was not particularly nice. So the event was held indoors at the Schroeder’s’ home. Some of the people who attended the event were John, Fred, Cathy, Wanda, Bobbie, Annette, Sue, Jessica, and Alex. We would like to express our appreciation to the Schroeder’s for opening their home to us. Everyone, who attended the event, seemed to enjoy it.

State Convention Registration

Cathy let us know that we can register for the state convention on-line this year. The information about the state convention is on our web site

Wwww.nfbv.org

The state convention will occur from November 7-9, 2014 at the Crown Plaza Hampton Marina Hotel located at 700 Settlers Landing Road Hampton, VA 23669. The rooms are $82 per night. Only about half of the rooms have two double beds, so we should make our reservations as early as possible. The phone number for the hotel is 757-727-9700.

The Potomac Chapter is considering organizing a bus from northern Virginia to the state convention if we have enough interest to justify this. Only Wanda and Carolina expressed interest in riding the bus.

If chapter members are interested in riding the bus to convention, they can contact Tajuan Farmer at potomacnfb@gmail.com

 If you take the train to the convention, your cab fare from the train station in Newport News, VA to the hotel will be approximately $22 each way. If you ride the Greyhound or the Mega bus, the cab fare should not be very expensive because the hotel is located approximately two to three blocks from the Hampton Transportation Center, which is where these two uses stop.

The chapter usually sponsors one person to attend convention. This usually costs the chapter approximately $150.00. If you are interested in this scholarship to attend state convention, please contact either Cathy or Wanda.

Meet the Blind Activity

This event will be a trip to a restaurant in Tysons Corner. We will meet at the East Falls Church metro station at approximately 5:00 PM. We will then ride the metro Silver Line to Tysons Corner. Cathy mentioned a couple of restaurants at Tysons Corner-Seasons 51, which serves low calorie food. Coastal Flats is also at Tysons Corner.

Ashley agreed to contact a possible speaker from either the Smithsonian Institute or someone to discuss descriptive video services for our October meeting, which will occur on October 16, 2014.

Other Announcements

Wanda reminded us about eh proclamation about Disability Employment month, which will occur at the Fairfax Counting Government Center on September 23, 2014. One of our members, who lives in Maryland, Geoffrey had a baby. Her name is Kimberly.