Keeping TABS

A Publication of the Texas Association of Blind Students

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From the editor: you may have noticed that March was a quiet month on the Keeping TABS front, but you’re about to find out why. We have combined the March and April additions into one so we can bring you double the fun this month! The 3rd annual TABS and TPOBC Joint Spring Conference was held the weekend of Friday April 5 through Sunday April 7, 2013 in Austin Texas. The theme for this year was Winning At Life, and this month’s edition of Keeping TABS brings you the conference through the perspective of two of our attendees. The first article was written by Harley Fetterman, a freshman in high school, in which he discusses the presentations that had the most impact on him very eloquently. The second article was written by Eryn Stubblefield, a junior at the University of Texas at Arlington, in which she gives us a convention roundup in a very unique and funny way. Both of these students are a part of the NFB of Texas Project CHANGE Program, which along with NFB-Newsline were our premier conference sponsors. Be sure to read more about them at the end of this newsletter. Now, we invite you to sit back, relax, and enjoy this conference rundown told through our student’s voices!

TABS and TPOBC Conference: Winning with Good First Impressions

By Harley Fetterman

What could possibly unite a doctoral candidate in organic chemistry, a NASA mathematician, a journalist, a fashion show, a panel of college-students, and an NFB National Representative? All of these people spoke about succeeding based on first impressions at the TABS and TPOBC conference. Even though we are blind, we live in a sighted world, where appearance and perceived capabilities define first impressions. We must make those first impressions work towards our success. Although there were many equally informative speakers, I chose this group to summarize what we learned at the conference.

At 1:00 p.m. Saturday, 9 students lined up for the fashion show. The show was to demonstrate what to wear to different job situations. Sighted people get strong first impressions from things such as clothing.

Hoby Wedler is a chemist getting his doctorate. Even though chemistry is very visual, he has succeeded because he exudes an air of intelligence. This first impression will carry him far.

Robert Sheldon is now over a team of programmers working for NASA. To get to where he is now, he concentrated on learning everything he could. When asked about how he got his doctorate, he said, "I was just too stupid to be scared." Because he exudes so much confidence, he was able to become a NASA mathematician.

 Liz Campbell is a journalist with the Fort Worth Texas Star-Telegram newspaper. Her first impression was that she would not be hired by the big papers because none of her friends had been hired. However, one of her professors said, "You are not your friends." Because her professor gave her this encouragement, she gained confidence in herself and gained a job with her current employer.

 In an exclusive interview with one of the parents that attended the afternoon session of the TPOBC conference, (my mom,) I learned about a college student panel, in which each student talked about how hard it was to accept that they were blind. However, as Britney Culp explained, once we accept our own blindness, other people will be more accepting of it as well. This confidence and dignity that acceptance has given to each of these students, will lead them to succeed as individuals in a visually oriented world.

Anil Lewis closed the night with a speech about being successful in job searches. One of his key messages was if you do not act helpless, people will not treat you like you are helpless. One example from his speech about first impressions was when he went in for an interview, appearing sighted. By pretending to be sighted, the interview focused on the skills that he could bring to the job, rather than the fact that he was blind. This first impression got him the job on the spot. Ironically enough, just before being hired, the woman told him the company wanted somebody with a disability, after which he whipped out his cane.

First impressions are very powerful, as illustrated by all of the above individuals. All of these people have come to be successful and will continue to succeed because they demonstrated that they brought responsibility, confidence, and intelligence to the situation. A good first impression is the key to starting any successful relationship. Therefore, always put your best foot forward, and the chances of succeeding at the task will go up exponentially.

My Convention Roundup

By Eryn Stubblefield

TABS continues to make me extremely proud to be a member, and the Student/Parent convention this weekend was no exception. Friday brought in an excellent pasta dinner, giving everyone a chance to mingle which is absolutely imperative for us social butterflies! Speaking of social butterflies, Saturday morning not only kicked off the start of our great speakers, but our challenge to promote our organization through Twitter using the hash tag NFBTXWIN. In my humble opinion we took this challenge by storm, and really put us on the map! Most noticeable was the tweets about those awesome cupcakes! We had the opportunity to show our star power and red carpet potential through a photo shoot for the cause! Who doesn’t want the opportunity to show off canes and low vision tech in a fashionable and positive way? As we continue to show off our finest throughout the day we arrive at banquet time. Talk about good food, good friends, and a good old fashion speech to promote living life to the fullest! We were reminded to stay current and take on each and every challenge life throws at you. We wrapped up this weekend with an open board meeting. It really gave the members an opportunity to see how the meetings are held and how hard our officers are working to keep the organization going strong. Everyone was encouraged to get involved and attend his or her local chapter meetings. There is a lot of work to be done and it takes all of us! We have an individual responsibility to support the NFB and eat as many chocolate Braille coins as possible!

**About our Sponsors:**

Winning at Life powered by CHANGE! **Project CHANGE** is the NFBT’s new workforce readiness program; it empowers blind youth and young adults across Texas by helping them develop the vocational and blindness skills necessary to reach their full career potential. Project CHANGE is made possible by a generous grant from the Texas Workforce Commission. For more information about Project CHANGE contact Richie Flores or Nicole Gurgel at youth@nfbtx.org or (512) 323-5444.

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