

August 20, 2023

Memo To: Executive Officers, Board Members, Chapter & Division Presidents & Others

From: Marty R. McKenzie, President

Positive Note 1932

843-939-8091 marty2music@outlook.com

Dear Federation Family,

The sixty-seventh Annual State Convention of the National Federation of the Blind was held at the Embassy Suites in Columbia, South Carolina from August 17-20, 2023. The Convention began with our first ever Rookie Round-Up focused on students being served by Successful Transitions. National Representative Ron Brown from Indiana greeted the students as well as Lauren Altman who serves as the National Association of Blind Students' president. Carol Castellano, secretary of the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children was also present at this event. The students had a great time and the opportunity to meet with NFB of SC leaders including division presidents.

The Convention continued Friday with division meetings held throughout the day and nineteen exhibitors showing their many products and services in the exhibit hall. This is the largest number of vendors in several years. The turnout for the exhibit hall was remarkable and we are deeply grateful to our vendors who chose to spend their time with us throughout the weekend.

The Friday evening reception featured a sports theme with tailgate food including hamburgers, hotdogs and the trimmings. Good music gave it a party atmosphere and attendees had lots of fun with items being distributed by the Blind Merchants division.

The Convention moved into a robust state on Saturday, where attendees heard from the leaders of the agencies serving the Blind in South Carolina. These included Darline Graham, Commissioner of the SC Commission for the Blind, Scott A. Falcone, Director, Division of Outreach Services of the SC School for the Deaf and the Blind and Jennifer Falvey, Director of the SC State Library Talking Book Services. Updates from the Rocky Bottom Retreat and Conference Center of the Blind and the Federation Center of the Blind were also given.

Other program items include Where the Blind Work featuring Ron Brown, an entrepreneur and orientation and mobility instructor from Indiana, Lauren Reeves, a registered nurse and Vice President of the Charleston chapter, Belinda Banks, A blind licensed vendor as well as Blind Merchants Division and Spartanburg chapter president and the Honorable Parnell Diggs, Administrative Law Judge with the Social Security Administration. The panel was moderated by Sonia Timmons, SCPOBC leader. The panelist responded to questions addressing many topics about their visual impairment and their workplaces.

Amy Hatten presented a program item titled Breaking Barriers: A Journey to Becoming a Triathlete. She participated in a triathlon and challenged herself to complete it which she did successfully.

David Houck was honored for his forty years of service to the Federation Center as its Executive Director. Ed Bible, Frank Coppel and Parnell Diggs spoke regarding his long time in this important role within the affiliate. He received a plaque at the banquet from the Federation Center Board and was awarded the Presidential Citation at the banquet on Saturday evening.

The banquet was a wonderful event where Ron Brown provided an inspiring and uplifting speech that moved the audience from laughter to very serious moments in his story. Scholarships were awarded to Andrew Adams and Matthew Duffell-Hoffman. Gerald McMurray received the Donald C. Capps award for his many contributions during his years as a member of the South Carolina affiliate. Jennifer Jeffcoat received the Educator of the Year Award for her years as a highly effective orientation and mobility instructor. Dr. Tina Herzberg was presented with the Distinguished Service Award for her work to improve the training program for teachers of the blind and visually impaired in our state. Lastly, over \$10,000 was raised at the annual banquet fundraiser. A final number will be provided when it is available.

The Sunday morning session brought a moving devotional service in memory of Federationist who passed since the last convention, the reading of the financial statements and an update on PAC, SUN and the Dream Makers Circle programs. Elections were held with the following results:

- District 1, Michelle Scott
- District 3, Frank Loza
- District 5, Linda Dizzley
- At Large 1, Derique Simon

- At Large 2, Roger Web
- Unexpired At Large, Janice Smith

Congratulations to all of the new board members. We also extend our appreciation to Loretta Green, Isaiah Nelson and Ed Bible for their many dedicated years of service on the NFB of SC Board of Directors.

I want to extend a special thank you to our Blind Merchants Division for all of their hard work and contributions to the Sixty-Seventh Annual Convention of the NFB of SC! Without their generosity and hard work, there are many things that would be missing from the convention. There are many others who assisted in so many ways and I thank you all!

For our sixty-seventh state convention, there were a total of 186 people registered, though a few people were unable to attend. This was the largest number registered that we have seen in several years and it was incredible to see and hear so many new faces in attendance. There is much to do in this coming year and the winning team of the National Federation of the Blind of South Carolina is certainly up to the task. Let's go build the National Federation of the Blind!

Here is David Houck's Federation Fun Fact for this week! Let's continue to read and learn together about our rich history in South Carolina.

Barry Chavis was born in Orangeburg County and his family moved to Columbia when he was about nine years old. As fate would have it, Barry and his parents moved to just around the corner from the street where the late Reba and MacDonald Hancock lived. It was the Hancocks who got Barry involved in the Federation in the mid 1950's or about 68 years ago when he was a nine year old boy. While still in his teens and for many years thereafter, Barry drove the van for chapter meetings including canvassing nights. The beautiful original table in the board room of the Federation Center was also made by Barry, as were the two signs on the wall of the Federation Center.

Barry participated in the very early stages of going to Rocky Bottom between 1962 and 1967, serving as the van driver. When Rocky Bottom was closed by the Health Department because the water system failed to meet certain standards, the blind did not go to Rocky Bottom. After the Federation secured the Rocky Bottom property, once again, there was Barry pitching in, doing miscellaneous things including the restoration of a large table with a formica surface. Until recently, Barry has participated in Rocky Bottom activity. He has been honored and also accepted a position on the Advisory

Board. Gifted in artistic talents, he reproduced the way in which the Old Dining Hall appeared after some 75 years. This painting appears in the dining hall of the conference center. The handsome board room table in the conference center was constructed by Barry. Barry had a successful career in various positions with companies involved in sign making, etc. Additionally, the outside sign of the conference center was made by Barry. The miscellaneous repairs, etc., he has made are too numerous to mention.

Barry is proud of his Indian ancestry on his father's side. His tribe is known as the Beaver Creek Indians. As a member of the tribe, Barry has been instrumental in the passage of legislation benefitting the Indian population of the state. Barry is much appreciated as he, for the past six years, has coordinated the renovation of the Federation center.