

September 18, 2023

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

From: Marty R. McKenzie, President

Positive Note 1936

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Dear Federation Family,

As we enter a busy fall season of Federation activities and family holiday gatherings requiring our time and attention, it is important we pace ourselves and choose items that will uplift us. Sometimes, it is difficult to find time to nourish our NFB spirit and ensure that we are current with Federation information. There are many ways to accomplish this such as spending time with the Braille Monitor, the Nation's Blind podcast, the NFB of SC podcast and the huge amount of information shared weekly on the NFB of SC mailing list. We should not be just consumers of electronic information. It is also important that we communicate with each other on a regular basis. You never know when a kind word will brighten someone's day. In the rush of the coming months, let us keep our Federation philosophy in mind and take care of each other.

Some questions regarding the new membership portal have come to my attention. The National office rolled out the NFB Portal approximately one year ago. Affiliates were charged with updating and uploading new members into the portal. This is a time-consuming task as there is no way to import from affiliate records. The Membership and Mentoring committee has worked hard to accomplish this, but we have almost 500 members in South Carolina.

Technical challenges required information to be entered more than once. As a result, not all members were added, and dues information may not be accurate on the portals. The Membership Portal was rolled out recently. Please bare with us as we work to get all of these records updated. President Riccobono has asked members not to contact the National office regarding dues. As more information becomes available, it will be shared here in the Positive Note.

October is celebrated as Blind Equality Achievement Month and is a time when we publicly highlight the National Federation of the Blind in our communities. As chapters and divisions plan events, please share with everyone via the NFB of SC listserv. Events should also be registered at [www.nfb.org/blindmonth](http://www.nfb.org/blindmonth).

The We Care committee is holding a Birthday Blessings Fundraiser from September 1 through December 31, 2023. To determine the amount of your donation, count the letters in your birth month and multiply by two. This gives you your donation amount. The purpose is to assist members in our communities who may have needs during this time. For more information, contact Melinda Jones at Melindajones0571@gmail.com or Pathronda Anderson at tronda1@outlook.com.

Here is David Houck's Federation Facing Fact.

The Blind Who Lead the Blind will provide background information on each board member over the next fifteen Positive Notes. We continue with Debra Canty, Second vice President of the NFB of SC this week.

Debra Canty serves as president of the Sumter Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). She also serves as 2nd Vice President of the NFB of SC, Co-chairperson of NFB of SC Federation Center and Chairperson of the NFB of SC Oversight Committee of Successful Transitions. Debra's outreach efforts are to bring blind awareness to the sight impaired and to the sighted. Debra is an advocate on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC who discusses the concerns of the blind to the seven representatives of South Carolina's congressional districts. Debra also serves on several committees of the NFB of SC including chairperson/Co-Chairperson of the NFB of SC Fundraising Committee, The Scholarship, Donald C. Capps, Blind Equality Achievement Month (BEAM), Legislative, Membership, Public Relations, Doing our Fair Share, Diversity and Inclusion, Educator of the Year, Employer of the Year, Finance and We Care Committee.

Debra is a life-long resident of Sumter, South Carolina. She graduated from Sumter High School-Class of 1973 and attended Sumter Area Technical College. She has received several certificates from The Hadley School for the Blind. She was diagnosed with an eye disease called Optic Neuritis and was totally blind at the age of 44 in 1999. She was introduced to the NFB Sumter Chapter of South Carolina by way of her dear brother, Thereyarn Pressley who met Ralph Cowley (past president of the Sumter NFB) at the Sumter Mall for the Belk Charity Day Sale. As a result, Debra became an advocate and spokesperson for the blind, devoting most of her time and energy to issues and concerns pertaining to the blind. Debra was the first computer "Job Access with Speech" (JAWS) student with The Recovering Sight Foundation in 2004. Today, Debra serves on the Recovering Sight Foundation Board and volunteers as an instructor for basic classes for JAWS and the iPhone, as well.

In her community, Debra has been a member of the Trinity Missionary Baptist Church for 62-years, where she currently serves as a Deaconess. Her motto is, "if I can help someone along the way, then, I know that my living is not in vain". One of her choice Scriptures is, "Then, Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life". (John 8: 12). Debra is also a strong believer of the philosophy of the National Federation of the Blind: "Live the life we want, blindness isn't what holds us back."

In Sumter, Debra Canty was honored as a "Woman of Excellence" and also recognized at The Inaugural Women Pioneers Award Luncheon". In March of 2023 Women's History Month, Debra was recognized in the NFB Positive Note. In 2011, she had had the illuminating experience of her name being drawn as one of the twenty Federationists, from across the nation who rode with Mark Riccobono in Orlando for the "Blind Driver Challenge".

Marty

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