

September 25, 2023

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

From: Marty R. McKenzie, President

Positive Note 1937

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Dear Federation Family,

Fall has arrived and the seasons are definitely changing. Federationists have seasons within their lives as well. There are times of great happiness, great joy, great depression and great sadness. These seasons come for a variety of reasons and we must support each other through them all. As we enter the fall season with its many activities, not everyone has close family and friends to help them fill their days and special times. Be mindful of those in your chapter, division and circle who need an encouraging word and something special from you. Let us show our Federation family spirit during this time of year.

Committee assignments are being released along with this Positive Note. If you were inadvertently left off a committee that you wish to serve on, please let me know. Committees are open to all and there is an announcement each month from committee chairs regarding when committees will meet and what platform will be used. Let's purpose deep in our hearts, the hearts of Federationists, that we will increase our committee participation this year and work together with love, hope and determination to go build the National Federation of the Blind of South Carolina!

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.

The fall season brings new elections for chapters. As elections are conducted, please share your chapters board members with David Houck and myself.

It is never too early to being collecting dues for the 2024 calendar year. Dues cover January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024. State dues are \$10 per person and

should be paid through your local chapter or division. State dues must be paid once, and then the dues of your chapter and any division must be paid to that chapter or division.

The Rocky Bottom Board Retreat will take place the weekend of November 17-19, 2023. Please contact Thom spittle at 803-331-3344 or via e-mail at nfb-sc.lab.4@gmail.com to make your reservations. This event is open to board members at this time. If we determine that we can expand it, we will share that information.

Things to Remember

- We Care Birthday Fundraiser
- BEAM Events
- State Dues

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 Shannon Watson Cook, Secretary of the NFB of SC this week.

Shannon Watson Cook

Shannon grew up in Bamberg, SC, Gary and Kathy's only child. She was born with cataracts, developed glaucoma at three, and then began having cornea issues in her mid-twenties. She has had thirty eye surgeries so far. She was the only mainstreamed blind student in the small-town school district, which made it necessary to learn the importance of self-advocacy early on in her educational journey. Along with her academic pursuits, she was an accomplished pianist and vocalist. She took jazz, tap, and ballet for twelve years by the time she graduated high school. Shannon graduated tenth in her class and received many academic honors along the way.

After high school, Shannon attended the College of Charleston, earning a Bachelor of Sociology in 1995. The College of Charleston had no program for students with disabilities then. This lack of official services further taught her more ways to advocate for herself and others. She started a disability student group to serve as the voice of

disabled students for college administration. Shannon then entered USC and graduated with a Master of Social Work degree in 1999.

At 18, Shannon was introduced to the National Federation of the Blind of SC approximately one month prior to her high school graduation. Parnell Diggs invited her to a Student Division Membership Meeting. She met David Bundy, Donald Blanchard, and others who she is still friends with today. Some she knew through attending the Summer Teen Program. This was a pivotal meeting that changed her life and perspective on blindness forever. She quickly became involved in the NFB, attending her first national convention in New Orleans only six weeks after her first meeting. She was so energized by the people she met and their positive image of blindness that she could not stay away from this upbeat group of people. Within the next year, Don Capps asked her to start a new chapter in Bamberg County, where she served as president for eight years. She soon thereafter served on the Scholarship Committee, became Student Division president for 1 – 2 years, and was elected to the state board. She has attended all but two state conventions since 1991 and fifteen national conventions overall.

Shannon worked at Verizon Wireless, then the SC Commission for the Blind for nearly eighteen years, and now is employed with Successful Transitions, a program of the NFB of SC.

Other roles Shannon has had in the Federation include being Scholarship Committee Chair, Palmetto Convention Grant Chair, Counselor for Senior Camp since 2007, Co-Director of Senior Camp, and Secretary for the NFB of SC Board, Rocky Bottom Board, Federation Center Board, and the Computer Science & Technology Division Board.

Shannon has made life-long friendships and connections through the Federation, not the least of which was meeting Steve Cook, the man who would become her husband when they both served as counselors during Children's Camp at Rocky Bottom. They will celebrate twenty years of marriage in October, or for anyone who is curious 7305 days!

My Best,

Marty

Marty R. McKenzie, President

National Federation of the blind of South Carolina