

January 8, 2024

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

From: Marty R. McKenzie, President

Positive Note 1952

843-939-8091 president@nfbofsc.org

Dear Federation Family,

Just over 100 exuberant Federationist gathered at the Federation Center of the Blind on Saturday, January 6, 2024 to participate in the Annual Statewide Seminar. The number was impressive given the dreary, rainy weather conditions.

The morning began with opening ceremonies and proceeded with the Rocky Bottom auction. There were several items donated including a 55" smart TV, homemade cakes, a smart speaker, a Bluetooth speaker and other items. Throughout the day, Federationist participated in the auction with a final total of \$1,395.00. Federationist are very generous folks! Thanks to Thom Spittle, Trent Tedder and Gene Pardue for all they did to make this run smoothly!

The morning's program included reports from Carol Anderson, Director of Consumer Services at the SC Commission for the Blind and Jennifer Falvey, Director of Talking Book Services at the SC State Library. Both presenters brought excellent reports and information about what is coming next in their respective organizations. The National Federation of the Blind of SC values our relationships with the three state agencies that serve our population! Quoting Helen Keller, "Alone, we can do so little, together, we can do so much!"

A program item titled Personal Finance was brought by Adam Thayer of Thrivent Financial, a non-profit organization. Mr. Thayer provided an overview of the different types of life insurance policies and the importance of selecting the appropriate policy for your individual needs. The presentation was well received by the seminar attendees.

Thom Spittle provided a Rocky Bottom update which included information about the many capital projects that are needed in the near future to improve our holdings at this beautiful camp! The newest building, the Ralph E. Ellenburg Lodge, is now over 22

years old and maintenance and upkeep are needed to keep the buildings in excellent condition. There is much work for Federationist to do as we must secure funds from outside of the organization to take care of the maintenance. It is important that our members know what the needs are so that we can all work together to move these projects forward.

Sonia Timmons, SC Parents of Blind Children Leader, provided a personal story about Public Advocacy where a theater did not have the appropriate working equipment to ensure her daughter had access to descriptive video services. She allowed the incident to pass on the first visit having been assured that the problem would be corrected. When it was not taken care of on the second visit, Sonia took time to file a complaint with the appropriate authorities who were deeply appreciative of her efforts. She encouraged Federationist not to be silent when things are not as they should be. We must all work together to ensure that we can live the lives we want! Blindness is not what holds us back!

David Houck provided information from the Legislative and Advocacy committee which focused on the three bills that the NFB is promoting during the Washington Seminar. He also provided information regarding the Homestead Exemption Act that we are supporting in the South Carolina General Assembly this year. If the bill passes, the homeowner's exemption would move from \$50,000 to \$100,000, which would significantly reduce property taxes for individuals with disabilities and seniors over 65. Watch for more information about these items in the coming weeks.

Ed Bible and David Houck delivered the Federation Center report. The inside of our center is beautiful and the kitchen is in excellent condition. There have been improvements to the exterior of the building, but there are many things that must be addressed in the future. A surprise water leak almost derailed the Statewide Seminar. Through his extensive contacts, Ed was able to identify plumbers that did the necessary work for \$4,500 versus the \$8,000 to \$12,000 others quoted. He also discussed future possible programs at the Federation Center and how these can positively impact the work of the center.

Chapter and Division reports were present at the Statewide Seminar. These were historically done at the state convention but have not appeared in recent years. There were many great ideas shared about fundraising and many great programs that chapters are doing. There was a request to compile the fundraising ideas into a single document that we can share among chapter and division presidents.

Frank Coppel provided an update on SUN shares, and right now, South Carolina has obtained \$1240 in contributions and pledges. All pledges are due by April 1, 2024. Adam Thayer, who provided a presentation earlier in the seminar, has offered a match to this contribution. We are very grateful to Mr. Thayer for helping to build our movement.

No Statewide Seminar is complete without an excellent lunch! A huge "thank you" to Isaiah Nelson, Anita Beasley and Ronda Phillips along with the others who assisted with serving lunch! Their efforts bring us a tremendous amount of satisfaction. Good soup, good chicken salad sandwiches and awesome fellowship!

Please note that my e-mail address has changed for Federation business. Please reach out to me at president@nfbofsc.org for anything related to the Federation. I will keep my personal address for other purposes.

Applications Are Open

The 2024 online scholarship application is available at <https://nfb.org/scholarships>. All applications and supporting documentation must be submitted no later than March 31, 2024. A list of eligibility requirements, as well as documents containing answers to frequently asked questions, a submissions checklist, and other supporting material can also be found on the scholarship webpage. Throughout the application period, reminders and information about the scholarship program will appear in the Braille Monitor, on our website, and will be shared via social media. Please share!

Things to Remember

- National Scholarship Applications due by March 31, 2024

Marty

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