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

From: Marty R. McKenzie, President

Positive Note 1900

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Dear Federation Family,

Approximately 125 loyal Federationist gathered at the Federation Center of the Blind on Saturday, January 7, 2023 for the Statewide Seminar. There was great enthusiasm in the room as Federationist enjoyed a time of fellowship in addition to the many items that were on the agenda. A spirit of good will and harmony was present for this seminar.

Board of Directors District 2 representative Andrew Adams led the program with a presentation titled My Story. He shared the journey that led to his vision loss and his membership in the NFB of SC. Andrew inspired the crowd and received a hearty round of applause for his time of sharing.

SC Association of Black Leaders President, Derique Simon, presented on the newly formed SC Association of Black Leaders division. He shared his thoughts about where the division should go and how we should all work together for the good of everyone within the NFB of SC. Derique's presentation was well received and we appreciate his leadership.

Karma Marshall, Director of Consumer Services for the South Carolina Commission for the Blind (SCCB), provided an informative update. She encouraged the Federation to share our ideas and thoughts with SCCB. Karma also communicated federal limitations often prevent SCCB from completing some of the ideas we share. She emphasized there are only three current board members on the Board of Directors. While the Governor appoints board members, recommendations can be made. This is our opportunity to recommend candidates who have the potential to significantly impact services for the blind.

Jennifer Falvey, Director of Talking Book Services from the SC State Library, provided statistics regarding current patrons. The Talking Book Services program currently has more than 4,000. There will be a patron drive this year, because it's estimated that 120 to 130 thousand South Carolinians are eligible for this wonderful service. Jennifer also commented that the National Library Service is currently working on the next generation book player, but progress is slow.

Sonia Timmons was introduced to the Convention as the new leader of our Parents of Blind Children (POBC) Division. The POBC is not currently active, but Sonia has the energy and ideas to help revitalize this division and energize other parents to be a part of the Federation. She shared information about herself and her daughter, and her presentation was well received by attendees.

Our own the Honorable Parnell Diggs rounded out the morning with a thought-provoking speech on being a Federationist and the purpose of the Convention. We were reminded that our lives are in our control and the NFB is an influential organization that can help us achieve equality and first-class citizenship. Progress has been made, but we are not there yet. There is work to be done.

Chairman Frank Coppel led the Shares Unlimited NFB drive just before lunch. SUN is the NFB's rainy day fund and will be used if there is ever an unexpected decline in financial support or for other important reasons. In 2022, the South Carolina affiliate donated \$1,200, placing us in the number one spot

nationally. This year, SUN raised approximately \$2,810.00 for this fund. Our members are generous, and they gave their fair share and then some!

Andy Berstein presented information about Accessible Pharmacy Services for the Blind. The unique company provides home delivered medications in accessible packaging to blind, low vision, and deafblind folks in 32 states. Braille, large print, high contrast, individual pill packs and many more products are available to the blind and others with disabilities. There is no extra cost to consumers for these items. Accessible Pharmacy Services also offers support like pill identification and medication management. Some NFB of SC members are already using this service, and they are loving its many benefits. Lavell Keeling is the representative for South Carolina. Anyone interested in having a virtual presentation to your local chapter or division should contact me, and I will provide Lavell's contact information.

Chairman Ed Bible and Executive Director David Houck gave very informative reports regarding progress at the Federation Center of the Blind. Much was done last year and the facility looks great! There is more to do in 2023.

Chairman Thom Spittle gave an informative report about RBRCCB and encouraged chapters and divisions to visit during 2023. Information was provided about the cost for chapters, divisions, or individual blind members to stay at Rocky Bottom, and the report was well received by the attendees. The auction benefitting Rocky Bottom took place throughout the seminar. Many nice items were auctioned, and competition was fierce among attendees. Chairman Thom Spittle presided over the auction and reports that approximately \$2,770.00 was raised to support RBRCCB.

As President of the NFB of SC, the 2023 Statewide Seminar was overwhelming. Your support, good will and generosity never ceases to amaze me! \$5,580.00 was raised among 125 attendees to support both state and national programs. I deeply appreciate all that everyone did to make the day such a huge success! . Helen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much!" 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.

Rocky Bottom Retreat and Conference Center of the Blind was established in 1979. The property was an old 4H camp dating back to the 1920's. While Donald Capps was working at Colonial Life, he assisted a policyholder and the man was so grateful that he asked the Capps to visit where he lived in the Rocky Bottom community. Upon seeing the abandoned 4H property, Dr. Capps was determined to use it for the blind of the state.

The first Resident Manager was Jerry Whittle. There were many fundraising projects for the erection of new buildings, a swimming pool etc., and renovation projects for existing buildings. Annual Fun Days brought in much needed revenues as did rental of the camp from outside groups. The biggest accomplishment was the erection of the Conference Center in 1990.

Children's Camps and Senior Blind Camps are available offering the blind education about blindness, training and recreation. Many groups of blind South Carolinians traveled to Rocky Bottom as they have priority over other groups. Local chapters of the NFB of SC are included in these groups. The

mountainous surroundings make for a peaceful place to get away from it all. If you have never been to Rocky Bottom Retreat and Conference Center of the Blind, make reservations for 2023!