

Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired  
Public Meeting  
Saturday, November 5, 2016  
Omaha State Office Building, 1313 Farnam Street, Room 226  
Omaha, Nebraska

Call to Order. Welcome and introductions. Announcement concerning public comment periods, meeting agendas, open meeting act, proof of publication, recordings, lunch arrangements & other logistics.

Mike Hansen, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. The meeting began with introductions.

Commissioners present: Mike Hansen, Chairperson, Designee of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska, Lincoln; Robert Newman, Vice Chairperson, Omaha; Mark Bulger, Designee of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, Omaha; Becky Rieken, Executive Secretary, Dakota City; Chad Bell, Alliance.

Commission staff present: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director, Lincoln; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant, Lincoln; Carlos Servan, Deputy Director Client Services, Lincoln; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director-HR, Lincoln; Wes Majerus, Program Manager of Technology, Lincoln; Bill Brown, Business Manager, Lincoln; Eric Buckwalter, VR Counselor, Lincoln; Stephanie Wagle, Transition Counselor, Lincoln; Charli Saltzman, VR Technician, Lincoln; Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor, Omaha; Connie Daly, Lincoln District Supervisor, Lincoln; Kim Schnitzer, VR Counselor, Omaha.

Public Present: Barbara Epworth, Omaha; Brian Baldwin, NCBVI Intern; Jim Jirak, Omaha; Naomi Marion, RTBS, Omaha; Bekah Jerde, RTBS, Omaha; Dick Harrington, RTBS, Omaha; Jane Nielson, RTBS, Omaha; Joe Seda, RTBS, Omaha; Ross Pollpeter, Omaha; Staci Cloyd, Omaha, Maida Avdic, Omaha.

It was noted that public comments are welcome during the scheduled Public Comment Periods regarding the agenda items or other relevant issues. Wes Majerus recorded the meeting and the recordings are available on the website. Lunch will not be served as the meeting is scheduled to adjourn at 12:35 p.m.

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was available in both print and Braille format. The Notice of the Meeting was published in the Omaha World Herald, the Lincoln Journal Star, the State Government Calendar, NCBVI Website, NFB Newsline® and Radio Talking Book. The Notice was also sent to ACBN, NFBN, and the NCBVI List Serve.

Approval of the July 23rd public meeting minutes.

Commissioner Newman moved to approve the Minutes of the July 23, 2016 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Bell seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and it was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Focus Topic: **Social Media and Outreach**  
*Focus Topic Report to the Commissioners*

*By Eric Buckwalter and Wes Majerus*

The Nebraska Commission for the Blind has applied strategies for reaching clients and the public including brochures, social media, and a web presence. NCBVI is also looking at new ways of providing outreach.

NCBVI has employed a web site for quite some time. It became apparent that the site that NCBVI had was both out of date and that new features for supporting new access methods would serve the agency well. A web site committee was formed to work through the process of revising the content and determining how the look and feel of the page might change. We worked closely with Nebraska.gov, the State's contracted web provider, to determine what was available. We wanted to modernize the look and feel of the site and to ensure that it could work on devices that have different screen sizes. This would be beneficial for those visitors that come to the site using an iPhone or another device.

Nebraska.gov recently unveiled a new platform called Meadowlark. This system is a Content Management System, CMS, which facilitates creating web sites. It allows for the upload of files and the editing of content on the fly. The system is based on the Drupal platform, which is used by a number of organizations to manage their web presence. We have received a number of compliments on our new web site from a look and feel standpoint. The new platform has freshened up the site and items are easy to find. Those who visit the site on their phones or tablets also enjoy improved access with a responsive design that adapts to the size of the screen being used.

The site also works well for those who add and manage content. In the past, content such as meeting minutes, audio files, requested changes, and site content had to be sent to the web designer at Nebraska.gov downtown. Three Commission staff members now have log on access to the site that gives them the capability to instantly create content in a word processor-like interface, upload relevant files, create calendar events for a public agency calendar, link to other parts of the site or other sites on the web, and more. This meant that the site has become more dynamic and relevant information can be added in minutes or hours instead of days or weeks. Drupal provides the capability for accessible content to be created. By default, the textual content is accessible. Options are available to add alternative text to images that are posted. Because Drupal is a vehicle for content, one must take care that any content that is uploaded or linked to, such as PDF files or videos, is accessible.

The numbers for our website for the month of September show that we had 543 Unique Visitors to the website, with a total of 814 Total Visits. 60.07% of those visits were from new visitors. Most of the visitors were directed by Google searches (323) and 318 were direct visits. For the month of October, we had 499 Unique Visitors to the website, with a total of 763 Total Visits. 57% of those visits were from new visitors.

Our home page, not surprisingly, received the most visits. Visits that were directed from social media sites were only 12 for Twitter and 6 for Facebook. Although, this is not surprising as most people visiting these sites are not looking to leave them. This will be addressed more specifically later.

Almost 100 years ago radio transformed the way humans communicated and interacted with the larger world. Thirty or so years later, the introduction of the television did the same thing. People in the business of selling things quickly realized that this is where they needed to be; this is where people's attention was focused. Now, there is a new change. People are no longer as engaged with the radio or television as they used to be. Technology exists to skip right over television commercials. Even banners on the sides of busses that once commanded attention as you walked down the street are becoming less relevant as people's noses are buried in their phones.

Social media guru Gary Vaynerchuk talks about how, "advertising is interrupting; interrupt people where they are, where their attention is," (Marketing 101: Attention, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZTt\\_uuhSt0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZTt_uuhSt0)). That attention is focused on social media and the internet. How we interact on those sites though is distinctly different from the old radio and television ways of advertising, the hard sell. The hard sells that take place online are just as annoying as those on television, think of the pre-video advertisement prior to a YouTube video. Advertising effectively online, especially on social media has taken on a softer feel; it is more of a conversation.

The social media explosion has seen a rise in a number of different platforms. These platforms are not all the same, and serve different purposes for different people. Knowing what the people coming to the sites are looking for helps craft a strategy for meeting people's needs/wants. Analytics available about your social media performance can further help craft a message that meets people where they are. It also allows you to monitor when the best times to post are to reach those people who want to connect with you the most.

Two platforms that are gaining a lot of attention these days are Instagram and SnapChat. By nature, these two platforms are highly pictorial in nature. Instagram is moderately accessible if captions are used appropriately; SnapChat slightly less so. It is necessary though to have a presence on those platforms as that is where people are. Businesses have a presence on both platforms and use it to communicate with their consumers. In addition, people who need our services, or have family/friends that do, are present there as well. Some of our current transition-age clients who we need to interact with are there. At least one client is effectively using Instagram and SnapChat, as well as Facebook, Twitter, and other sites to promote his business. Having a broad presence on multiple social media platforms is a great way to meet one of the new federal standards of Serving Employers.

Of course, accessibility is an issue. Many of our clients do not use Instagram, SnapChat, or other platforms because they find them to be inaccessible. The key here is to recognize that not everybody uses every platform, sighted or not. And, those who do use multiple platforms often use them for different things. A person may use Instagram to look at cute pictures of their grandkids, Facebook to keep in touch with old high school friends, and Pinterest to find a new recipe to use at Thanksgiving. It is similar to how advertisers decide when to market products. Beer is heavily advertised during Sunday football games, laundry detergent during daytime television. (Perhaps that is an old and stereotypical example, but it makes a point) Meeting people where they are at is key to being successful in social media. It is not about us; it is about others. Pictures posted to Instagram can easily be cross-posted to Facebook, where descriptions are easier to place and to read. SnapChat Stories, the most effective way for us to use the platform, can be downloaded and descriptive audio placed overtop of them, and then reposted to Facebook or YouTube. There is a plethora of ways to make all

of our content accessible, while still working to promote making the native platforms accessible to all.

Cross-posting content to multiple different platforms, adjusting the information to be suited for its need, is another key to reaching people. For example, a blog post to the website can be reposted, perhaps in condensed form, to our Facebook page. What is important is we reach people where they are at, and not try to drive visits to the website. People want things quickly, and clicking a link to go outside of where they are wastes time. It is also imperative that we are posting quality content. Content is king. If people are not receiving quality content, they will not come back to us for more.

Oklahoma's Department of Rehab Services (DRS) worked with the Oklahoma Talking Book and Braille Library to create a cartridge that contains information about their services that would be provided to new referrals and library patrons that may not know about their content. NCBVI is in the process of creating a similar offering. The cartridge contents were gathered and edited by Wes Majerus and Nancy Flearl. The Nebraska Library Commission Talking Book and Braille Service agreed to record the audio content and provide DAISY markup. NCBVI plans to purchase 400 cartridges. The library will place the content on these cartridges for us. They will keep 200 for distribution to new patrons who identify as having a visual impairment. NCBVI will keep the remaining cartridges for distribution to new referrals. These cartridges are protected by the Library Commission due to the way their duplication system functions. This means that any modifications to cartridges would require that they be provided back to us and then to the Library Commission.

A new order for a small run of our current brochures was placed in late summer. These brochures serve fine, but we will not be working with the company who did the work on them in the future. When the need to update brochures comes, plans will be made well enough in advance that we have the ability to get them updated without rushing. One possibility is to do the brochure work in house.

Our new logo continues to gain traction. As has been discussed before, the image of the sprout represents new growth and the new possibilities that we offer those we serve. The new logo prominently displays NCBVI. Moving forward, it should be considered to brand ourselves as such, using the acronym for most of our communication (similar to the move made a few years ago to rebrand Nebraska VR. This would extend to things such as answering our phones with NCBVI instead of Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. This will be a slow process to both acclimate our staff, consumers, and public to the change.

Discussion –

Commissioner Bulger thanked Eric and Wes for their efforts. He noted that he is impressed with the scientific approach that they put to this which is important. Commissioner Bulger noted that he is a Facebook user and he considers NCBVI to be a Friend and he appreciates the different things that NCBVI posts to Facebook. He enjoys the various descriptive videos. Commissioner Bulger noted that NCBVI has several different audiences that we are trying to reach. Commissioner Bulger suggested getting our brochures out to all these audiences including those who we want to come to NCBVI to get services. This comes not only from blind people, but also from their family and friends. Commissioner Bulger also suggested that NCBVI pops up quickly when people are searching on google

regarding blindness issues. Commissioner Bulger agrees that we should only post information that is relevant and NCBVI does have a lot of relevant information.

Commissioner Bell noted that he enjoys the descriptive photos and videos that NCBVI posts on Facebook. A lot of his personal friends never put a description with the photos they post.

Chair Hansen stated that he also enjoyed the videos regarding the NCBVI Lincoln office remodeling. Chair Hansen noted that it takes some effort to get into other people's feeds on Facebook and Instagram and he asked how NCBVI is doing this and he asked what, if any, help he needs from the Commission Board.

Eric Buckwalter stated that the organic growth is the best way to gain followers and also becoming known for the content that you post. We can't expect that just because we are a government organization that works with a specific group of individuals within the state that people are going to follow us out of good graces. We have to make sure that what we post is quality. One of the best ways to start the organic growth, in addition to having the people we already know link up with us, is to follow those who follow you. (Reach out to organizations that have the same interests.) NCBVI also has current and former clients who are using all forms of social media to promote their businesses.

Commissioner Rieken stated that she loves how NCBVI is reaching all types of audiences. She is hearing that a lot of people are looking at the NCBVI website for themselves. With her being a teacher, she loves the thought of a parent being able to go to our website and look for information for themselves and their child to get them up and going. Commissioner Rieken stated that she would like to see some types of parent groups nationwide or in Nebraska that can be posted on our website as a resource so they can go and get help for themselves.

Commissioner Bulger stated that he has noticed that in the last month or so NCBVI is doing a lot of contracts with outside vendors because obviously, NCBVI cannot know everything. Commissioner Bulger noted that the whole topic of social media requires someone with expertise and he asked what kind of commitment NCBVI has in making sure that social media receives the appropriate attention so we can reach the people we need to serve. Commissioner Bulger asked if NCBVI has the expertise in-house to do this.

Director Van Zandt stated that by having the passion of the people involved and the expertise that Wes and Eric have in-house and knowing what items are meaningful content versus fluff is very beneficial. We have also rearranged the ways that job roles within the Lincoln District are distributed. When Stephanie Wagle, the Transition Counselor who is currently in training, comes on board, Eric Buckwalter's case load will switch so that much of his time is available to work on social media. Bringing social media in-house has allowed us to be much more direct and target what we know to be the audiences. Director Van Zandt stated that she and the social media staff have a tremendous commitment to make it work.

Eric Buckwalter stated that he really likes the idea of adding a section on resources for parents of blind children to our website. One nice thing about the new website is that we can add resources in-house as we find them and then delete them as they become obsolete. The whole process will be quicker.

Chair Hansen noted that Eric had mentioned that NCBVI wants to make sure that the content we post is high quality and not post fluff just to be posting something. Chair Hansen stated that he feels it is best to keep the task of posting items in-house in order that we can maintain quality. If NCBVI ever feels that there comes a time when this work should be out-sourced, then it can be taken under consideration.

Eric Buckwalter thanked the Board for allowing him to come to the meeting today to speak about social media. Eric stated that he is very excited to get into his new position as it will allow him to use his creativity.

### Public Comment

Jim Jirak – Jim complimented the staff who is involved with the social media for NCBVI. Jim asked if NCBVI staff has the time to do the work that social media entails. If NCBVI would contract this work out, then staff would have more time to serve the clients that we need to serve.

Jim noted that NCBVI needs to be where it should be as it relates to accessibility for the clients we serve. We also need to look down the road and try to reach the people we may be serving in the future.

Jim stated that he noticed the website is secure, which is good. He inquired as to if it could be set up so donations could be made on-line through a PayPal account. Also, with regard to the NCBVI brochure, is it possible to have it on our website as a downloadable accessible PDF so people could print it off as needed. Also, would it be possible for the brochures be printed in a regular font and a large print font.

Director Van Zandt reported that some time ago we looked into having it set up so donations could be made on-line. There are state agencies that do have an on-line payment system. We decided not to go this route. NCBVI does not need the donations as much as we need to connect with people. If people set NCBVI up as a memorial, etc. they can contact the office and we can provide more information about NCBVI and what we have to offer people.

The NCBVI brochures are currently on-line and they are downloadable. If someone would want a larger print of the brochure they could do this after they download it. The print brochures that we currently have available are not a small font size.

Stephanie Wagle – She noted that the question about parents of blind students really excited her as she will be a Transition Counselor for 14-21 year olds when she completes her Center training. Stephanie noted that there are already a lot of resources available for parents of blind students and she will be working of getting all the resources out there.

Ross Pollpeter – He asked which NCBVI staff will have the ability to add, delete and edit content on the website. He noted that on the NCBVI website calendar it had today's meeting listed on November 5 at Omaha State Office Building, all day. It was suggested to have the calendar link back to a location where additional information can be found about the meeting.

Eric Buckwalter reported that currently Wes Majerus, Kathy Stephens and he have the capability to maintain the website. Eric asked that if anyone sees something on the website that is not accurate to please let him know. Eric noted that running a website is something that is new to us and it may take some time to fully learn the new system. Eric asked that in the beginning that we be given some grace and revisions will be made as need be. Wes noted that next week he will look to see if we can add a link to the calendar listing to a page that has more information.

~Mieta Aveg – asked is NCBVI considered creating polls or surveys on what people would like to see more of from NCBVI on their social media sites.

Eric noted that this has not yet been talked about but he is not opposed to it.

Connie Daly – thanked the Committee for all their work on the website. As far as contracting the work out or keeping it in-house, Eric does currently have a full case load, but when Stephanie starts in the field he will have a part-time case load so he can devote more time to us. Connie noted that NCBVI is looking at changing the boundaries of the districts in order to take a little off of Lincoln. Connie added that she does like the idea to keep the work in-house and she has confidence that Eric will do the work very well. Connie noted that it would be better if this could be a full-time position.

Commissioner Bulger reported that he would never want to give away NCBVI's ability to control the content or the accessibility feature of the website. However, there are some firms around who are very good at finding the networks of the people.

~Naomi Marian – stated that she enjoys being at the meeting today. She enjoys listening and is glad to see information getting to blind people.

Nancy Flearl – noted that the Omaha office has started a parent group. Tim Jefferson is currently working with Shane Buresh on this project.

A break was taken at 10:30 a.m.  
The meeting resumed at 10:55 a.m.

#### Commissioner's Report

Chair Hansen – noted that he has been working with Director Van Zandt and others to continue to develop the processes that we are going to utilize in moving forward with the Commission Board's role of financial review.

Also, we have been asked a couple of times and we spent some time and effort to go back and speak to the Attorney General's office about this to make sure we were standing on solid ground. This relates to a concern made that the new Commissioner training that we have done in the past was not correctly done if it needed to be conducted in an Open meeting. The Commissioners had not held the training in an open meeting because after researching the issue it was concluded that the training did not have to be conducted in an open meeting as long as no business was done. Now, after checking with the Attorney General's office again, it was determined that the new commissioner training should be conducted in an open meeting. Chair Hansen stated that he has been communicating with

the person who brought this concern to them and he will ensure that a final response to that person is provided.

Commissioner Hansen noted that when it is time to hold another commissioner training the format will be changed so that it will be a public meeting and executive sessions will be held if needed.

Commissioner Bell – noted that attending the commissioner training that was held when he became a commissioner was of a great benefit to him. It also gave all the commissioners a sense of direction.

Commissioner Bell noted that he got to play the role of a counselor as he assisted with (FYI) For Your Independence in North Platte. Commissioner Bell stated that he taught wood working to the clients and assisted with seminar. Many clients informed Chad that he has been an inspiration to them. Commissioner Bell stated that this is why he likes to help; he remembers when he went blind and had many fears. It is awesome to give back and help someone else.

Commissioner Bell reported that he also serves on the Board of Friends of the Commission.

Commissioner Bulger – reported that he is the American Council of the Blind president and the Omaha Association of the Blind president. In these roles, he has been busy working with members. Commissioner Bulger noted that at the last Commission Board training there was a need for some type of matrix so that we can reconfirm and compare what we are doing in Nebraska compared to other states. Commissioner Bulger stated that this could give NCBVI some reaffirmation that we are doing the right thing.

Commissioner Newman – reported that he was also an instructor at FYI in North Platte. Friends of the Commission provided funds for t-shirts for PI (Project Independence). Commissioner Newman stated that he is also on the Board of Friends of the Commission and he is the current president. Last year they gave out a \$1,000 grant to help blind children in the state learn about braille. This was put on through the National Federation of the Blind Bell Program. This next year they are going to look at targeting older blind for a grant. They are currently looking at areas of funding and they are looking at working with the Schwans Company.

Commissioner Rieken – reported that she had a teachable moment that made her feel very good. A student made a comment to her that he wanted to travel before he becomes totally blind so he can enjoy it. Commissioner Rieken helped him see a different perspective and assured him that blind people can enjoy traveling. The student felt much better after they talked.

Chair Hansen – noted that in regards to Commissioner Bulger's comments, the Board has looked at some things in the past. The Federal Government puts out some information and standards and indicators and NCSAB also has some resources. However, he has not yet found a comprehensive list for some of the questions they have.

Report from the Executive Director  
Activities and efforts since July 2016

Announced the Governor's Employee and Supervisor of the Year: John Schmitt VR Counselor in Norfolk and Carol Jenkins, Supervisor, Nebraska Center for the Blind in Lincoln. The awards ceremony was held November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Completed and submitted the Biennium Budget Proposal for the next two years. Since submission, we have fielded a number of calls from the Governor's and Legislative Fiscal Analysts. This is a typical part of the process, which often continues during the interim before the next session of the Unicameral begins.

I took a road trip to meet with staff members in the Scottsbluff, North Platte, and Kearney offices. We were able to meet individually and also make client visits. It was very enjoyable and inspiring to spend time with field staff members. It also coincided with the Open House and Ribbon Cutting at the new Kearney offices.

Invoked an Emergency Procurement Justification for the Client Management System (CMS). We are now purchasing the AWARE CMS from Alliance Enterprises. We are holding meetings to establish timelines, team leads and members, assignments and other details. Our plan is to go live with the new system as of August 1, 2017, compliant with requirements of the new federal law and regulations.

Attended White Cane Proclamation Ceremony with consumers and Governor Ricketts; spoke on the benefits of employing people who are blind.

Attended the NFB-N State Convention; spoke about NCBVI.

Attended OCIO training about OnBase, an electronic content management system.

Components are available to state agencies. NCBVI uses the system for processing surplus items, for recycle or destruction, for example. As always, we brought up questions and comments about accessibility. OCIO has tested the system with JAWS and believe it to be accessible. The 'shell' and basic system do work with JAWS; we have not gone into forms or other aspects, so do not know about them. With our procurement of AWARE, we do not plan to go deeper into using OnBase at this time.

Worked on contracts and the NBE Licensee agreement. We have finalized templates for drivers and other services, with legal review as part of the form. Standard contracts will include the attorney's signature; for now, the Driver contracts have an approved template. We are working on standard forms with legal review for instructors, interpreters, and other routine contracts that do not vary much. For other services, our form has been reviewed and approved by the attorney, but we will send to him each time because the specifics vary on each one.

We are working with Nebraska VR on aspects of WIOA, especially regarding Section 511 (the closing of sheltered workshops), Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), state match and maintenance of effort (MOE).

Numerous Counselors are renewing their status as Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind (CVRCB). Renewal requests are sent to me, for my review and approval. Many of the agency's Orientation Counselors and Program Specialists are also CVRCBs.

Met with a coordinator for the Nebraska Sesquicentennial (the year-long celebration in 2017), to discuss involving blind persons and ensuring that planned events are fully accessible.

Attended the Groundbreaking Open House at Outlook Nebraska (ONI) for their new technology and training facilities.

Lincoln offices projects are nearly done. Some have new furniture, carpeting, drywall in offices that had been impacted by water damage in the past, a new second bathroom in the Center, new tile, and other things that have improved and enhanced the professionalism of our Lincoln offices.

Weekly meetings with Leadership Team on many issues.  
Continued attending WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act) Core Partners Meetings with Nebraska Department of Labor, Education/Voc Rehab, Unemployment, and Adult Education colleagues.  
Attended Mayor's Multicultural Advisory Committee for Lincoln/Lancaster County.  
Continued work on strategies and procedures to address audit findings and recommendations.  
Attended Supervisors Meetings.  
Attended monthly NCSAB Executive Committee Meetings by conference calls.  
Participated in Friends of the Commission conference calls.

#### Service Statistics from Julie Buren

During the Federal Fiscal Year 2016 (October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016), we served 891 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients in all statuses. Of the 468 available for VR action, sixty-seven (67) were closed having achieved their employment goals. Seventy-six (76) were closed without achieving employment (refusing further services, transfers to another agency, unable to locate, incarcerated, and other). Five (5) clients were closed before a Plan for Employment was developed. There were 320 Active VR Clients as of September 30, 2016.

In the Independent Living (IL) track, 680 clients were served, in all statuses. Of 555 Active Clients, three hundred twenty one (321) were closed successfully achieving their goals; thirty-three (33) were closed without achieving their goals (withdrew, moved, deceased, and other reasons). At the end of the Federal Fiscal Year, there were 201 Active IL Clients. The majority of these (189) are Senior Blind. Seven clients are ages 24 to 48; five are under 18 (ages 3 to 12). There are no IL clients in the Transition age range.

#### Nebraska Center for the Blind by Carol Jenkins 7/24/2016-11/5/2016

I am happy to announce that the Center is full as of 10/24/2016!  
Currently: 10 Clients and 2 Staff Trainees and 1 O&M Apprentice  
Since July 24:  
6 New Clients  
2 New Staff Trainees  
1 O & M Apprentice  
7 Three Day Stays  
2 Students and 2 Staff Trainees had Commencement Meals  
1 Student had a Mini Meal

Tours: A staff member from NCECBVI, a UNO staff member, and 7 agency consumers.

Activities: Went on Airboat rides and had lunch; attended the Omaha Council of the Blind Picnic; went to Carol Joy Holling and participated in the following: a Communication Skills Exercise, a Team Building Game, Played Human Foosball, went Owling, Cooked S'mores over a campfire, went Geocaching (GPS Activity with Voiceover), went fishing, Went paddle boating and canoeing, went Zip Lining, and attended the Wildlife Safari Park. Clients also carved pumpkins and cooked a Halloween Soup luncheon.

Some Center Staff Attended: Deaf-Blind Training, BrailleNote Touch Demonstration, Life Coach Training, Easter Seals Training, Structured Discovery Refresher Training, TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury) Training, Star Tran Open House, worked the Eye Run booth, helped with Winnerfest, and participated in Motivational Interviewing training.

Center Supervisor: Continues to speak to all NCBVI districts on Center changes and updates and has started participating in monthly Center Directors' conference calls.

Additional Notes: We had clients attend the BrailleNote Touch Demonstration, Melaleuka cleaning products demonstration, the Star Tran Open house, participate in an Etiquette seminar, attended the White Cane Proclamation Ceremony, volunteered at the "Light the Night" walk assembling lanterns, and attended the NFBN State Convention.

The Center students who wanted to participated in voting.

We had 3 Bryan Nursing students volunteer at the Center.

The remodeling still continues in the Center and will hopefully be finished by the end of the year.

#### Lincoln District Activity Report October 24, 2016 by Connie Daly

We hired Charli Saltzman to replace Stephanie Wagle as a VR technician. We are very happy to have another positive, team player working at our front desk. Stephanie Wagle is still in Center training and will start in the field before Christmas.

Most of our team has been working away from our offices for 3 ½ months due to remodeling. The team moved back in on October 13<sup>th</sup>. The conference room is still not complete but the offices look updated and professional. I really appreciate the team for continuing to serve clients effectively during this time. It will all be worth it when we get settled in again.

Our caseloads have gotten very large and we serve a large part of the state geographically. We are looking at the boundaries of the districts to try to even it out.

Amy and Stephanie are attending Leadership training through Project A.L.L. We had the first session of Motivational Interviewing, which was excellent. I attended my last session of NRLI in September. I wrote an article that appeared in the October issue of the Lincoln and Omaha magazine, Strictly Business. I will attend NCSAB in Pearl's place.

We held a teens' group in September and took the young adults to Golden Corral and Escape Lincoln. We had a seminar on hiring drivers. We also had two workshops from the Abilities Fund: Exploring Self Employment and Using Social Media. We haven't been able to start our job seeking class, Brown Bag and Braille, or a Group Home Teaching due to the remodeling.

We participated in a satisfaction survey with the One Stop System. All of the participants of the Greater Lincoln One Stop were involved. We surveyed clients that we had contact with in Lancaster and Saunders counties. It took place in June during WAGES and all of our summer programs, so the survey distribution was very small since counselors were working other programs. All clients were very satisfied with the services received.

We had clients get jobs as a Dishwasher, Professor, VR Tech II, Resident Events Coordinator, Job Coach and Child Care worker.

#### Highlights Omaha District November 2016 by Nancy Flearl

August was the start of another school year. We have been doing outreach to all the schools within our district. We continue to hold group teaching sessions with our students. School districts have the schedule of these group teaching and other transition program dates.

Winnerfest is this same weekend and Kelly and the Winnerfest Team are focusing on Leadership Skills with Dale Carnegie.

We participated in training for Motivational Interviewing in October and will have a follow up in November.

We are working on providing refresher training on the checklist for Counselors in the field: Downloading books and apps to book reading devices and/or mobile devices; Navigating book reading devices, mobile devices; Knowledge of Talking typing teacher, typability, basic screen reading commands; and access technology of screen access or magnification software.

We had the NCECBVI Transition Counselor, Leslie Wagner, meet with us October 6, 2016. A new Project Search was started at Embassy Suites in downtown Omaha; it is another adult program with VODEC and Papillion LaVista School District. Tim is the contact for that site.

Pearl and I attended the groundbreaking for ONI expansion project on August 3<sup>rd</sup>.

We have had 3 people start training at the NE Center for the Blind August 15, Sept 19 and Oct 11.

We have had several people start employment. One as a project manager, two Customer Service Reps, Machine Operator, 2 as Food Service Worker, lock box senior specialist, Radio Announcer, 2 as Student Services Counselors for Post-Secondary Institution, Computer Systems Analysis, Computer Network and Systems Administrator.

We have started a Parent Network, Tim is taking the lead on this. They have met twice. It is an effort to support what parents gained by attending convention and the importance of high expectations.

Presented at a Transition meeting for parents and teachers on sensory and dual sensory loss 9/24 in York. There were a less than a hand full of parents. But had a great discussion with teachers. They were so impressed with all our transition services and would like to know as soon as possible dates for the coming year. Several would like to attend and/or volunteer to work the programs. They shared that the services made a big impact on their students. They noted specifically WAGES, ReBoot and Social Savvy.

Elaine and Kelly have been doing more group teachings sessions here in the office as we provide skill instruction. It always reinforces the importance of peer support in the adjustment process.

We completed the new grant for PILBO. The final report for 2016 is due after the first of the year. Big thanks to Bob and Bill for all their work on this grant.

Tim and Kathy are participating in the state leadership training program. It started in September.

Larry, aside from the usual busy schedule, will be presenting with Chase Crispin, Nancy Coffman, Wes Majerus at the upcoming NFBN State Convention in Columbus.

Cheryl has been meeting with community resources on aging to discuss our services.

Attending Partners in Aging meetings, presenting at Senior Companion program on our services, making contacts with senior centers, etc.

Kim along with her caseload, she is doing a practicum for her master's degree with Project Search and is developing some wonderful relationships through her work with them.

It must be said that with all our summer activities we generated a LOT of purchase orders and then as the programs come to an end then college starts. Monique and Tim Terrell have been extremely busy!

Worked with VR on disability awareness month to discuss blindness. Did a Braille activity with them on 10/17.

We had a refresher training with NBE in September and have 2 individuals interested in the program.

All this is in collaboration with each other and other NCBVI staff. What a team.

North Platte (NP) District Highlights by Erin Brandyberry

We had 2 clients complete 3 day stays at the center, and had 2 clients start center training. We will have a 3rd client starting center training in the next couple of months. 2 clients successfully completed their VR program by gaining employment at NCBVI and Walmart. A 3rd client became employed at a coffee house after completing an on the job experience. Another client is completing an on the job experience at Grand Island public schools in the cafeteria.

NCBVI contracted with a teacher over the summer to teach a 15 year old braille as her school had not been teaching it, and at the start of the year she started using a BrailleNote Apex to read her AR Books for school.

Our new VR tech in the North Platte office is Laura Lavaley, and she started on August 1st. She has been a phenomenal fit for our agency and has already enhanced the lives of the clients we serve.

We enjoyed having Pearl spend a week in our district shadowing our counselors. During that time we also had a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Kearney office which was a great success.

We completed the Easter Seals training series and have been enjoying the benefits of their service. We have referred 6 clients already and the impact that this service has had on the client's goals for employment have been extremely positive.

We had an extremely successful FYI program this fall in North Platte, where we had 9 clients participate and 1 parent of a young client observe. The feedback from the clients was very positive and it was all in thanks to our great staff and the 2 commissioners that we contracted with for our program.

Jan and Cristal attended a career fair for school aged students in the Kearney community. Approximately 300 students and teachers attended the fair and they shared a lot of information about the services we provide.

Cristal did several presentations at the Kearney Head Start where she educated about blindness. Cristal also presented at a Community Connections meeting for Disabilities Awareness months where there were over 20 agencies in the Kearney area present.

Deanna continues to coordinate the aging coalition group in Kearney to increase awareness of our agency in the Kearney area.

Angie was recognized for 20 years of service for the state of Nebraska, and we are very grateful for the service that she does for our agency.

Our staff has completed the first half of the motivational interviewing training and have already found many ways how it can improve the services we provide.

### Bob Deaton Highlights

Weekly meetings with each new staff trainee

September 8 WINTAC meeting in Chicago

September 30 Application for 2017 PILBO grant submitted

October 18-19 Motivational Interviewing Training

### Quarterly Report on Transition Activities by Shane Buresh

Since my last offering to you, we concluded both WAGES and Project independence and I have made the transition to ramping up for this year's programs. While I did spend the majority of last quarter's report discussing in detail both of these programs, I would like to revisit a couple of aspects of them here.

Wages was by all accounts a very successful endeavor. The 17 youth grew in their blindness skills and belief in themselves through the half day skill building activities, in their work place abilities through their on the job experiences and socially savvy training, and

they expanded their paradigm of their futures and stretched their dreams of what they can be through their experience at the consumer convention. Whether it was learning how to cut their food or flying and leaving Nebraska for the first time, I truly can say everyone grew through one experience or another.

In order to better capture and measure all of this growth among the WAGES participants, we have entered into a partnership with Gemini Research to survey the WAGES students and assess their knowledge take away on many aspects of the program especially the new additional training and new format.

The programs have also lead to much growth in our relationships with teachers as a result of WAGES and other programs such as reboot camp, because we demonstrated the capabilities of students, particularly those with multiple disabilities and because we offer knowledge that is cutting edge and has real world application. Many teachers now want to join our programs. I for example, had three teachers approach me at the Eastern Nebraska Transition Conference, where I presented and where I and Lincoln District staff attended workshops and had an informational booth and they asked if they could attend Winnerfest or WAGES and if we were holding another reboot Camp. Our success has also I believe opened the door to better relations with NCECBVI as their new state-wide transition coordinator has asked me for a meeting and will have visited me and toured the center between the time of this writing and your meeting.

As we mentioned above, Project Independence took place two days after WAGES concluded. We had 13 youth between 6 and 13 who attended this year. Our theme was "come sail away with me", which is an off shoot of a quote that they learned about which states; "A ship is safe in a harbor but that isn't what ships were built for". Beyond the customary sleep shade training; we once again held the home chore challenge, took air boat rides, learned how to listen for birds, built and raced our own ships, completed a wordle project (for self-esteem building), cooked our own dinner over the camp fire, ran our own ice cream shop, took a field trip into Omaha, and much more.

While the commission board meeting is taking place, the fall Winnerfest will be nearing its conclusion. We have expanded the program by a day this time in order to accommodate the much anticipated Next Generation training presented by the Dale Carnegie Corporation. The 20 participants will receive world renowned leadership training presented in a targeted format that appeals to their age group and life experiences. This is more than an exciting opportunity for these youth and staff who will be in attendance, as Carnegie training is cited by individuals such as Warren Buffet as being the single most important training they ever received that most helped them to be successful.

In terms of future plans, I have begun the initial stages of work on a college seminar which will likely take place in late January as it looks at this writing. This prep work has spawned an idea for a series of conference calls to engage youth on a monthly basis over a variety of topics that are relevant to their success in school or after-school employment. These are conceived to be co-presented with blind youth and whenever possible lead by these youth. Speaking of partnering with blind youth; tech team staff co-presented an iOS based application workshop and the tech team and I have begun the plans for reboot Camp number two.

Over the next few months we will finally be implementing phase two of our project with Dr. Gary Meers to begin addressing the highlighted barriers to our work with youth from the survey last spring and help us generate ideas for reviewing or working through these obstacles. His work will also assist us in developing individualized plans for counselors to use uniquely with their youth in the five required areas from WIOA.

Let me conclude by saying that by comparison this quarter was much slower than last, however, rest assured that the ground work is being laid to create and execute innovative programs that address the needs of the students in the areas identified by WIOA, and by the time you are meeting momentum will be accelerating once again.

### Technology Program Report by Wes Majerus 10/21/2016

#### Technology Program

Work continues on the procurement of the new Case Management system. Alliance Enterprises provided NCBVI with a proposal for procuring the system. This assumes that we will procure on an emergency contract basis. I am working with Julie, Bill, our OCIO contacts, and Pearl to ensure that everything is accounted for from a technical standpoint and that we approach staff training/setup with efficiency.

The NCBVI Web site was converted and launched on September 1, 2016. We are now using a branded version of Drupal known as Nebraska Interactive Meadowlark. I have thoroughly enjoyed being able to accessibly modify the site's contents as a blind person and turning around the updates in hours/days instead of weeks from sending items downtown to be uploaded. We have also received positive feedback about the look and feel of the new site; it has been a relief to have the new system up and running.

Since the last meeting of the Board, we have worked with Lexmark International and our local dealer, SolutionOne, to solve the issues related to the copier that we have had at our Lincoln Office front desk since 2015. It became apparent that the copier in our possession couldn't be repaired and Lexmark agreed to provide us with a machine with greater features. We received this unit on October 11 and the deployment has been mixed. Although the unit contains built-in text to speech, navigational gestures, and a built-in keyboard, they do not work as well as displayed in the demo. We are also having difficulties with the PDF file output on the copier; Lexmark Support and SolutionOne are attempting to rectify the situation. The PDF files seem malformed in that some of our systems can't work with them correctly. Also, we are having trouble reading them with VoiceOver on iPhones and their accuracy is less than the prior machine. Our former copier had a solution where one could control the copier's accessibility features through a web page. Despite assurances this would still be available on this new machine, it is not present at this time. This is another item that I hope to have resolved shortly.

The Google Company worked in partnership with the National Federation of the Blind in offering a training on Android, ChromeBooks, the ChromeVox screen reader, and G Suite. G Suite is comprised of Google Drive, Docs, Mail, Calendar, Sheets, and Slides. NCBVI attempted to send multiple trainees, but due to limited space, I was asked to attend and to bring knowledge back to the agency. We plan to use knowledge gained from this training in our daily work, but also to host what is tentatively being called reboot 2.0, wherein students will learn how to use G Suite with NVDA.

I am also working to deploy new technology. The Office of the CIO has provided us with our reimaged Windows 10 units that we had purchased for the Tech Team and Omaha's tech lab. The OCIO ran into issues with the image; once we received the machines back, I needed major assistance in getting them set up because they came with no audio drivers installed. This is a growing concern for me as deploying computers used to be very simple and straightforward. With Windows 10, provided all drivers are in place, Narrator could be used to install JAWS and other software. It is my goal to ensure that future laptop and desktop images have the proper drivers installed so that I can deploy machines independently as I have in the past.

We are also looking at new BrailleNote Touches from HumanWare. Six staff members have requested the units and I am working to get them deployed, data migrated, and the trade-in units back to Nanopac for recycling. These tablets are the first google-certified Android-based Braille tablets. We will need to see how they fit into our business processes and work out any difficulties that arise from using a new platform.

#### H/R QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS by Dave Robinson

July 7 to October 17, 2016

1. The Vocational Rehabilitation Technician position previously occupied by Stephanie Wagle was advertised. The job opened on May 23, 2016 and closed on June 3, 2016. Thirty-One applications were received and Charli Saltzman was hired. Charli began her duties on August 8, 2016
2. Since Emily Proctor took another position, the Business Manager II position was re-opened on July 1, 2016, with a closing date of July 15, 2016. Thirty Six applications were received. An applicant currently employed as a Business Manager II with the Dept. of Corrections was selected, but desired a higher starting salary. NCBVI petitioned State Personnel for authority to hire at the higher rate and was rejected. The applicant declined the position and the position we re-opened on August 17, 2016 to remain open until filled. Sixty-Eight applications were received from the third posting of the Business Manager II position and Leonard LeBental was hired. Leonard began his duties with the agency on October 3, 2016
3. Sherrie Bruegman announced her retirement, effective August 1, 2016, so a job posting for her position was immediately opened on July 1, 2016, with a closing date of July 15, 2016. Fifteen applications were received and Laura Lavaley was selected for the position. Laura began her duties on August 1<sup>st</sup>, so she could spend a day with Sherrie, "getting a feel" for the office.

#### Kathy Stephens – Quarterly Highlights

Registered staff and clients for the 2016 NFBN Convention which was held October 7-9 in Columbus, NE

Interviews for the Business Manager II position took place and Len LeBental was selected for the position.

Kathy is sending out CVRCB renewal notifications to staff as they come up. There are quite a few between October and December 2016.

Office Innovations has been assisting with moving the office furniture around in Lincoln as the remodeling is done.

Working to surplus some furniture that is at the client apartments

NCSAB Fall Conference is coming up in November. Attending from NCBVI are Bill Brown, Carlos Servan, Bob Deaton and Connie Daly.

Table covers were ordered and received for each office. The table covers have the NCBVI logo on them. Staff will use the table covers when having a display at an event.

The new NCBVI website was launched.

Assisted with the Flu Shot Clinic.

#### Business Office - Bill Brown

Budget submitted

WIOA Documentations

Close Out Grants  
Install new Grants and Coding  
Alliance Contract  
Contracting Procedures  
Hiring of New Business Manager II

Chair Hansen noted that NCBVI has been trying to find an accessible copier machine for quite some time. Chair Hansen asked if we have ever reached out to other state blind agencies around the country to see what they are using for a copier and if it is accessible.

Wes Majerus stated that he has had some past experience with Lexmark when he was working at the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) in Baltimore. NFB also presented at NCSAB and this is where it started. We also had a Canon copier machine previous to this and it had some features that did not work the way we wanted them to. It was our plan that Lexmark would meet our needs because it worked so well when he used it at NFB. The old copier did what we wanted it to do but it kept falling off the network. The solution to this was to replace the machine. The new machine has some issues with scanning fidelity and other stuff. Wes noted that at this point he does not know the way forward.

Chair Hansen asked that with AWARE coming he knows that there will be a lot of planning and a lot of changes. Chair Hansen stated that it is his understanding that AWARE will be hosted in the cloud and he inquired as to if NCBVI will have ownership of our data and if we will have a local backup of the data.

Director Van Zandt stated yes, NCBVI will own our data. Alliance Enterprises works with contracts with about 35 other VR agencies and they are very well set to help us to do the reporting. At the same time, we occasionally need to other reports than the federal reports. Therefore, we will have an off-line copy of all the data.

Bill Brown reported that NCBVI worked with Dave Hatten at OCIO to put the contract together. We will have an Escrow arrangement with Alliance Enterprises. This account will help us get all our information back if need be.

Chair Hansen asked about the security of AWARE. Wes Majerus reported that the data will be isolated behind several firewalls. Wes stated that he would look into this further to ensure the confidentiality of the data.

Commissioner Bulger noted that it is great news that the Center is now full. He appreciates the state-wide effort to make this happen. Also, congratulations for receiving some extra funding from federal match dollars.

Commissioner Bulger stated that with WIOA we are no longer able to serve those people working age up to 55 years old that do not have a VR goal outcome. Commissioner Bulger asked what is happening to these people. Director Van Zandt noted that we recently received word that we can provide services to the individuals in that age range that have independent living needs and don't have an employment goal. We are trying to get guidance from the federal RSA. It is possible that we could use state funds to provide some basic training on independent living needs.

Commissioner Bulger noted that he is on the Statewide Independent Living Council and he knows that VR (the non-blind agency) are trying to encourage people who are not sure if they want to work or not to pursue the VR track and he hopes that NCBVI is doing this as well. Also, Mark has heard that the Governor is requesting that agencies be prepared for an 8% decrease in funding and he asked what NCBVI is doing to prepare for this.

Director Van Zandt reported that NCBVI has put together a major effort this past year in working directly with all of the IL clients that are in the 24 to 55 age group to encourage them to consider a VR goal. With regard to the budget, there is still the emphasis from the Governor's office that budgets could be 8 – 10% less than what was submitted. As a part of our budget request we did submit a secondary portion with 8-10% less funds, as required. All of this is a part of our Biennium proposal.

## **Unfinished Business**

### **Budget and Biennium Update**

Chair Hansen noted that he had some questions regarding the reports that were sent to the Board. Chair Hansen stated that this is the first round of the commissioners having some more detailed documents regarding financial standings of NCBVI given to them to review before the meeting. Chair Hansen inquired about the bonuses that were paid to employees. Director Van Zandt reported that once a year a bonus is paid as a result of the Governor's Awards for Employee and Supervisor of the Year. These individuals receive a small bonus which shows up in their paycheck.

Chair Hansen stated that in looking through the 2016 General Ledger he noticed some State Purchasing Card (P Card) payments and he asked how we can tell what the purchases were for. Bill Brown noted that the General Ledger report basically delineates each transaction that is made during the month. For the P Cards, State Accounting pays the balance of the cards and they charge each of the agencies for their portion. Then, the actual journal entry goes back to the agency and they do another journal entry that takes each individual transaction and allocates the money back to the proper office expense. Most of the amounts will be negative. The journal entry negates the original State Accounting entry and then allocates it right back to our grants. The things that come under the cost allocation plan where we buy something for the office need to be allocated between our three federal grants. About 90% goes to Basic Support and 8% goes to Older Blind and 2% goes to IL Part B. Bill noted that all P Card purchases are reviewed. When a P Card purchase is made a detailed receipt is provided for the purchase.

Commissioner Bulger commented that in a recent audit the auditors suggested that the commissioners have a good understanding of NCBVI's budget. As commissioners they take this responsibility very seriously, and therefore, the commissioners are receiving more information about the budget. Commissioner Bulger stated that he appreciates all the detail that is involved in keeping track of the budget.

Commissioner Newman stated that he needs some training of some JAWS commands and how to navigate the spreadsheets. Bill Brown stated with the General Ledger spreadsheet he took the first three columns (A, B, and C) and the first column is an object category, the second column is payee and the third column is the amount. The spreadsheet is sorted by the object categories. The Budget Status Report contains monthly expenses that were paid and it is by object code. This report is good for providing aggregate information. Director

Van Zandt noted that NCBVI staff is available to help commissioners with reading the spreadsheets if needed.

Chair Hansen asked if the object codes could be placed in an excel document and a column could be added which describes the object code and make more sense to the reader. Bill Brown stated that he is willing to give this a try.

### Newsline® Update

Nebraska NFB-Newsline®  
November 1, 2016  
Jamie K. Richey, Outreach Coordinator

This past quarter no new publications were added to NFB-Newsline®, but lots of other information has been added to the service. With the election just one week away what better place to get breaking news than NFB-Newsline®. A special channel has been designated to elections information where transcripts from recent debates can be found as well as the platforms for both the republican and democratic parties. The global search feature allows subscribers to brows hundreds of publications to get all the information needed to vote next Tuesday.

Here in Nebraska, more specifically Lincoln, the new Startran routes have gone into effect. All the schedules, designated stops and turn by turn directions have been posted for each route. This will hopefully make it easier for subscribers to plan their trip around the capital city.

This quarter I had the privilege of speaking to the convention assembled at the 2016 National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska state convention in Columbus. I provided a brief description of the service, gave highlights of the past year and left the technology demonstration up to the very competent Wes Majerus. Mr. Majerus demonstrated the updated options of the In Your Pocket feature of the Victor Reader Stream. These updates allow subscribers to add or remove publications from the favorites list quickly with just a few key strokes. The Victor Reader Stream second generation is a great alternative for reading NFB-Newsline® on the go without draining a subscribers iPhone battery and with over 6,000 In Your Pocket deliveries this quarter alone the new updates and ease of use have definitely peaked subscribers interest.

As we come to the end of another year it was my hope to hit 2,000 subscribers by 2017, but it hasn't happened yet. Currently Nebraska NFB-Newsline® has 1,940 subscribers with 26 added this past quarter. Subscribers have read 48,910 minutes of content via the phone with October being the most popular month. Online accesses were also the most popular in October and subscribers accessed NFB-Newsline® online 12,963 times over the past three months. The most content accessed were the Nebraska publications, followed by national newspapers and breaking news publications.

This concludes my report and always if you have any questions please give me a call, shoot me an email or follow me on Twitter! Until next time, happy holidays and happy reading!

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Complaints or issues  
**Quarterly Highlights from the Client Assistance Program**  
**July-October 2016**

There were no cases to the Client Assistance Program relating to the NE Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) during this time.

New CAP Director, Shari Bahensky is planning to meet with the Lincoln NCBVI staff at their next meeting November 3. She also plans to attend the February 2017 Board Meeting.

#### Anonymous Staff Suggestion Box Submissions

Chair Hansen noted that two different suggestions were received in the Anonymous Staff Suggestion Box. The first was submitted in September 2016. It was regarding a way a co-worker is formatting their emails. Sometimes it takes too much effort to get to the informational nuggets within the email. Chair Hansen stated that he feels the best way to handle this is for the person who submitted this should provide some constructive feedback to the individual that they feel is not getting to the point in their emails. If they feel this is a problem they should discuss it with the co-worker in a professional manner.

The second suggestion was received in the Suggestion Box last night. Chair Hansen said that the suggestion was somewhat slanderous about an employee, and therefore, it will not be discussed. Items of this nature are best brought to the commissioners in person so they can get more details and ask questions.

Chair Hansen noted that the Board does appreciate receiving constructive suggestions from the staff.

#### Nebraska Business Enterprise (NBE) Update

##### NBE Report November 5 2016

All rest areas are complete and reopened; and we put our machines back.

Grand Island West bound is closed for some maintenance work; it is not part of the other project.

We were awarded the vending contract for the Department of Roads in August and have 17 vending machines and do not pay rent at that site. Victor Ireland is managing these buildings, so we transferred his previous two locations to Jason Thompson. It includes 1526 K and the Joint Forces building at the National Guard in Lincoln. Jason will add those to his post offices and the Nebraska historical society museum's two locations in Lincoln. He recently moved to Lincoln to take over the four post office annexes. Therefore, he will have these six locations plus the two transferred from Victor.

The NBE team has done presentations at NCBVI district offices to better inform counselors about NBE and how someone can become a licensee.

Remodeling at Craft State Office Building in North Platte is complete and we placed our machines back there with no rent.

Recent opportunities: We were contacted by Nebraska Department of Corrections in regards to operating their vending machines in nine to eleven buildings across the state. Don has toured several locations in Lincoln. We will be looking at these other locations in the next few months. We are adding a couple of buildings at the time as we find new competent new vendors to operate these locations. We will be adding two buildings to an existing vendor next month.

We are also looking at the State Office Building in Omaha for the vending operation to start in the next few months as well as running a café next year. NBE will also get the vending sites at the Lincoln State Office Building and State Capitol in July 2018. The State Building Division is going to give us these sites without going through an RFP process. It was noted

that NBE does not have to pay rent for any of the State contracts that we have now. Carols encouraged the commissioners and consumers to write a thank you letter for this opportunity to the Building Division and the Governor's office.

On the weekend of September 24/25 we had several vending machines vandalized along I-80. At first report this included two in Kearney and three in York. Then we found out there were also two more at Grand Island and two at Gretna. This adds up to a total of nine machines that were vandalized. There is an estimated \$1000 dollar loss from these operators, in addition to parts. The vandalism was reported immediately to the State Patrol in Kearney and another report was filed with the York County Sheriff. Don has made one trip to Gretna, two trips to York, one to Grand Island, and one to Kearney to repair the machines and he has found a way to avoid the break-ins from happening in the future. Carols reported that Don Ward also contacted the manufacture of the vending machines to inquire as to if they can put the added device which will prevent the machines from being broken in to on the machines when they manufacture them.

All of the machines are now repaired and working at a cost of over \$800. Unfortunately, no one has been caught. We have tried cameras in the past but they were stolen or damaged. We are changing the locks and Don has figured out how they got in. Don is working on a solution to prevent this from happening in the future.

Leonard LeBental filled the Business Manager II position. He will be working with NBE staff and the business office. Leonard's first day was October 3 and he will be in Center training until November 18. He comes to us with private sector business experience as a former successful business owner, now retired.

Commissioner Bulger noted that NCBVI purchased a significant amount of new vending machines recently. He asked if NBE continues to grow does NCBVI have the funds to continue buying new machines to support the growth. Carlos stated that knowing we are receiving Social Security Reimbursement, reallotment funds and we have carryover funds we do have the money to purchase some new machines. In addition, he regularly meets with Director Van Zandt and Bill Brown to discuss these issues. If our funds are cut at some point, at least we will have the new sites available and up and running.

### New Business

#### Report from Radio Talking Book

Jane Nielsen introduced herself as the newest member of the Radio Talking Book team. She has been with Radio Talking Book for about one month so she is still learning.

Ms. Nielsen read the mission statement of RTBS and she talked a little about the Service. The Radio Talking Book Service mission is to provide human voiced information to individuals who have visual or physical disabilities which prevent them from reading otherwise printed material. Radio Talking Book Network and Listening Link are the two mediums used to provide their services.

RTBS reads three newspapers every day; the Omaha World Herald, the Lincoln Journal Star and the Wall Street Journal. Radio Talking Book Network, Nebraska's audio companion, provides immediate access to daily printed news and information through the reading of over 100 different books, periodicals, and magazines.

With the help of RTBN's 100 plus volunteer readers, the programs aired do not only serve informational and entertainment purposes but also as a vital component in providing equal

access to printed information and public process to an otherwise widely underserved population via our radio receivers and or online stream accessible through our website.

RTBS' Listening Link program assists all blind, visually impaired, and learning disabled students in eliminating educational barriers. In a recent survey, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) reported that 27 percent of students with visual impairments are not able to receive their high school diplomas. Listening Link works alongside area schools such as Wayne State College and Creighton University to provide audio recordings of textbooks and other course material enabling students for academic success. We hope to grow our Listening Link program over the coming years.

Jane Nielsen stated that RTBS is present at today's meeting for two reasons. First, to thank NCBVI for the past support provided to RTBS and second, to ask for some support in the future.

Several staff, Board members and volunteers for RTBS were present at the meeting and they each talked a little about their services.

Director Van Zandt reported that she served on the Board for RTBS for many years. At some point the Board decided that NCBVI should not fund RTBS because it is outside the purview of what a State VR agency should and can do.

Commissioner Bulger stated that regardless of funding he does feel that RTBS is a valuable program and resource for the blind and he hopes NCBVI will continue to help spread the word when they serve new people.

Director Van Zandt reported that when our counselors meet with new referrals, one of the resources we tell people about is RTBS. We provide the application forms, spend our time with individuals helping them fill out the form and explain what the service is. This staff time is an agency contribution to RTBS.

#### Public Comment

Bob Deaton – commented on past funding for RTBS. Bob stated that as he recalls, in the past NCBVI was using OIB money. At the time NCBVI became a Commission, it was also the time we made the transition from the discretionary program to the formula funding. The level of funding has remained the same since the year 2000. Prior to this, we had been getting increases every year which allowed us to look into using that money in different ways. At a certain point the federal interpretation of regulations changed which made it so we had to be very precise in our funding.

There was also a time when NCBVI experienced funding cutbacks where the agency had to make some tough decisions about what we would use funding for. If NCBVI were to look at restoring support for programs like RTBS, we would be in a position where we would need to look for new funding.

Nancy Flearl – added that NCBVI counselors do currently help spread the word about the services of RTBS.

Jim Jirak – stated that he does not see how NCBVI can support RTBS without a change in the law (LB 352).

Typical Final Announcements

Chair Hansen congratulated 2016 NCBVI Employee of the Year John Schmitt and 2016 NCBVI Manager of the Year Carol Jenkins.

The next NCBVI Commission Board meeting will be held on February 4, 2017 in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Adjourn – The meeting adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the February 4, 2017 Commission Board meeting, please email it to the NCBVI Commission Board at [ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov](mailto:ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov).

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant  
NCBVI

Mike Hansen, Chairperson  
NCBVI Board of Commissioners