

Approved Minutes
Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Public Meeting
Saturday, February 2, 2013
Nebraska Commission for the Blind
4600 Valley Rd, 4th Floor, Room 4A
Lincoln, NE

Call to order. Welcome and introductions. Announcement concerning meeting agendas, open meeting act, proof of publication, recordings, lunch arrangements and other logistics.

Julie Johnson, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. and she welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Commissioners present: Julie Johnson, Chairperson, York; Mike Hansen, Designee of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska, Lincoln; Jim Jirak, Vice Chairperson, Designee of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, Omaha; Nancy Oltman, Hastings; Darrell Walla, Omaha.

Commission staff present: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director, Lincoln; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant, Lincoln; Carlos Serván, Deputy Director VR, Lincoln; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director IL; Connie Daly, Lincoln District Supervisor; Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor; Wes Majerus, Program Manager Technology; Alex Castillo, Apartment Resource Counselor; Amy Buresh, Vocational Rehab Counselor; Conchita Hernandez, Vocational Rehab Counselor.

Public Present: Hubert Paulson, NCBVI Contractor; Robert Newman, NFBN; Cheryl Livingston, NFBN; John Sailors; Stephanie Wagle; Hannah Linder; Kelly Coleman; Jody Schultz; Barbara Loos; Brad Loos; Sharon Brennfoerder; Terry Brennfoerder; Stephanie Eggers; Charli Saltzman; Zach Haye; Penny Laschanzky and Alli Laschanzky.

Announcements Concerning Lunch Arrangements and Other Logistics

Connie Daly announced that a Potato Bar served at 12 noon in the Lincoln District Conference Room. Clients and staff will be preparing the lunch.

It was noted that public comments are always welcome regarding the agenda items. Hubert Paulsen recorded the meeting and the recordings are available on the website.

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

Approval of November 3, 2012 Board Minutes

Commissioner Jirak moved to approve the Minutes of November 3, 2012 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and it was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Chairperson Johnson noted that the Minutes are located on the NCBVI website for review.

Focus topic: Transition Services & the Opening Doors Handbook

Below is a link to the Opening Doors Handbook.

<http://www.ncbvi.ne.gov/pdf/transition-guide.pdf>

The handbook is posted on the NCBVI website and on the NDE website (under technical assistance on the transition page).

Amy Buresh presented on the Focus Topic. Amy is a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the Lincoln office. She has been working with NCBVI for 12 years. Amy noted that it has been awesome watching some of the youth grow. NCBVI takes great pride in the Transition programs that they have at the Commission. The programs are very successful and they are important in show shaping and growing confident and skilled young adults. The Transition programs the Commission offers are Winnerfest, WAGES and local district programs like Lincoln's STARS, Omaha's TABS and the newly formed BYG in Norfolk. Winnerfest is held in the Spring and the Fall each year. WAGES (Work and Gain Experience in the Summer) is a six week employment program where youth come from all around the state and stay at the UNL Selleck Hall and are employed for the six weeks. The youth earn a salary which is paid by NCBVI. The youth obtain very valuable work experience and experience living away from home. Amy noted that she does not recall what STARS stands for. It was created by Mary Robinson from Fremont Public schools. Mary was unable to attend today's meeting, but Amy will check with her to see what STARS stands for.

The transition team was formed in the mid '80s to foster good relationships, open doors and connect individuals serving blind youth in transition. "Opening Doors" is a handbook developed by the Transition Team. The Transition Team consisted of the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI), Nebraska Department of Education - Special Populations (NDE), Nebraska Center for the Education of Children Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI), parents, consumers, Teachers of the Visually Impaired and other related agencies.

The transition age is defined as between the ages of 16 and 21 years old. In Vocational Rehabilitation this age is expanded to age 26. Over the years there have been a lot of discussions about what age should the agencies become involved and how can NCBVI best partner with the education teams, the IEP teams, the schools and the parents. At

this time it was decided that creating this handbook could be very helpful to have this guideline in a written format that would identify the areas where people had questions.

“Opening Doors: A Transition Guide” is a protocol developed by the Transition Team to implement recommended practices to help assure that blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired children and youth and their families receive the best possible services from all available resources. This handbook explains how NDE, TVI, NCECBVI and NCBVI can closely coordinate services among these agencies and local school districts to assist students who are blind, deaf-blind or visually impaired in a smooth transition from school into adult living. When agencies and schools work jointly with a student/client, the interest of the individual being served shall prevail.

It is the intention of this protocol to easily access when to refer students/clients, the responsibility of each agency for each age level and the purpose of the agencies who may be serving blind students.

The Commission continues to promote the handbook through the teachers that we work with and we provide copies to parents and students. Amy noted that Diane Ditmars had planned to speak today, but was not able to attend. Diane is a teacher of the visually impaired and she had a large part to play in helping put the handbook together.

Amy noted that since the publishing of the handbook, the Transition Team has disbanded. As a group they are no longer together, but they do continue with the connections and the relationships that were made.

Amy noted that she did invite some clients/parents to share their unique perspectives and illustrate best practices in how services should look.

Kelly Coleman, client – Kelly grew up in Lincoln and her TVI was Diane Ditmars. Kelly noted that she is not familiar with the Opening Doors: A Transition Guide handbook, but she was introduced to all sorts of teachers of blind and visually impaired and the Commission. Kelly stated that she was taught Braille at 5 years of age. She used Braille primarily all the way through elementary school. When she was in middle school she got glasses which helped her to read normal size print. At that point she did not use Braille anymore because it was viewed to be too complicated and too expensive. Kelly noted that she had been given a cane at a very early age as well, but she did not use it besides mobility lessons. She did not really begin to use the cane until after high school. In high school Diane became her vision teacher and asked her if she read Braille. Kelly responded stating that she used to, but no more. After checking her reading speed, it was discovered that she was only reading about 20 wpm. Her eyes would also get very tired as she read print. Diane had Kelly begin reading Braille again. Diane also encouraged Kelly to begin using her cane. Kelly noted that even though she was encouraged, she ignored. After high school she went to the Colorado Center for the Blind in Denver where they used sleep shades. At the end of the program she used a cane, and still does, all the time. Kelly now reads 480 wpm in Braille. Kelly noted that is much more proficient for her to use Braille and a cane than without, even though she

has some useable vision. Kelly said she is now a student at UNL studying Child, Youth and Family studies. Kelly noted that it is her goal to teach Braille to blind children.

Commissioner Oltman asked Kelly if she thought that learning Braille as a child was beneficial to her. Kelly stated that after not using Braille most of her teen years, it took about 9 months and constant practice for her to get up to 480 wpm.

Commissioner Hansen asked Kelly if she ever took part in the VIPS program. Kelly noted that she did not have the opportunity to take part in those programs. Her family was a very big component of making her as "sighted" as possible. Kelly noted that she did take part in some of the youth programs put on by the Commission. Kelly stated that she did attend Winnerfest and spent two summers working the WAGES program. Kelly stated that both programs were very beneficial and valuable to her.

Commissioner Jirak asked Kelly if she took Braille away from herself or if it was taken away by the teachers. Kelly stated that it was a little bit of both. At the time she did not think she needed it and teachers were agreeable to it because she was able to read print and the eye doctor said she could use print.

Commissioner Johnson asked Kelly what age she was when she began participating in the planning process. Kelly stated that she was in about middle-school or high school when she actually started getting into the planning.

Jody Schultz, client – Jody is a client of NCBVI and she went through the transition process. She is currently a parent of a blind student of the Commission. Jody stated that she started working with SVI in the 1980's when she first began losing her sight. Jody noted that her mom was her best advocate in that she wanted to find services for her as soon as she could. Jody stated that she learned Braille at a very young age even though she did not use it very often. Her counselor came to her school and talked to her peers and her friends to let them know that blind people should not be treated differently as they are people. Jody then began working with LPS and using a lot of enlarged print and magnification. When she was in junior high she began coming to NCBVI during the summers and she went to classes with Amy and Shane Buresh. The classes really helped her. When she was in junior high she told LPS that she wanted to learn Braille very well. Currently she does have some vision but it is only being held by a string. Jody noted that she did not go through the entire Center training, but NCBVI staff was always available to her. Currently, her little boy Joshua who has an eye disease, is in the STARS program. Joshua is 7 years old and he is beginning to learn to use the cane and Braille.

Commissioner Hansen asked Jody if VIPS was available to her at LPS. This was a group of visually impaired children who got together as a group so they could interact. Jody noted that groups of visually impaired children would get together, but it was not formally organized. It was noted that LPS had the VIP Club, not VIPS.

Commissioner Johnson asked Jody how she thought the services have changed since she was in school till now when her son is in school. Jody stated that she thinks the services are as good now as they have ever been. Jody noted that she thinks that the services are more structured today.

Commissioner Walla asked Jody what the extent of her transition was in the adult world. Jody noted that she did go to college and she is currently a senior at UNL. She took a break and worked for a while and settled down and had a family. During that time, college was put on hold and she is now finishing.

Commissioner Walla asked Jody what she thoughts were on a cane versus a dog. Jody noted that she thinks both are good. She likes the cane because it allows her to squeeze through small spaces, but she also loves dogs for companionship and safety. Jody stated that she alternates back and forth and she carries her cane with her when she is using her dog.

Allison Laschanzky, Client – Ally recently completed her time with LPS and is currently a student at SCC. Ally noted that she had two strokes when she was a baby which why she is visually impaired. Ally stated that her vision has been the same since she was born. When she was in first or second grade she started using Braille but never got proficient at it. Her vision teacher at that time saw her taking notes off of the overhead so they decided that she did not need Braille. Her parents agreed with this decision so she stopped learning Braille at that time. Ally noted that she does not use Braille to this day. Ally currently lives at home with her parents. She did participate in the VIP Club with LPS and she is still a member of that Club. Ally was in the LPS Voice Program and she held various jobs through that program. The Voice Program is through LPS. It stands for Vocational Opportunities in Community Experiences. They take kids with special needs and they put you in a job site and you have that job for an LPS semester. After that time you can either stay with that job or switch to a different one. Also, when she was in the Voice Program she got to lead her IEP meetings. She took a huge role in how the IEP meeting was run and she got to help make decisions about her LPS career. Ally began working with NCBVI when she was a freshman in high school. NCBVI has helped her financially with her college education as well as her counselors and everyone she has known at the Commission has been a huge support system for her. Ally participated in the WAGES program when she was 16 years old.

Commissioner Hansen asked Ally to talk about the VIP Club. Alli stated that she was in VIP Club since before it was called VIP Club which was in the 7th grade. The VIP Club is for middle and high school students who are visually impaired or blind. It stands for Visually Impaired People. They meet once a month and do different things. In January they took a karate lesson. They have gone to movies at the Grand Theater, had cooking lessons, backpack walk, etc. Alli stated that it is a lot of fun and it has helped her realize that she was not the only person who had a vision disability. She found out that there are other people like her. She had always been taught to use what vision she had.

Penny Laschanky, Parent – Penny noted that Braille was not a real option for Alli because of her physical limitations. While this is not an excuse not to learn to use Braille, it did not seem to be the most effective means because of the amount of vision she has. Alli is a huge technology person and she is a very fast typist with just one hand. Alli does not have fine motor coordination in one hand. NCBVI and Amy Buresh has been a guiding force in helping Alli pass through all transitions. Penny noted that she also has to toot LPS's horn and say that there have always been very quality people working with Alli. Vision people have been involved with Alli since she was about four months old. Alli's first eye surgery was at two months old. Alli has received superior services through the Commission and through LPS.

Stephanie Eggers, Client – Stephanie has been a client with the Commission for approximately two years. Stephanie is currently in high school and she is working through her transition process. Stephanie stated that she is in a program called Project Search/Voice. Through Project Search she is currently working at Embassy Suites. She works a rotation and the first semester she was in engineering. She learned how to change air filters, clean rooms and fix items that were leaking. Her next rotation was in the kitchen. She stated she is currently learning how to cook food and do dishes. For her next rotation she gets to choose where she wants to go. She is hoping to stay in the kitchen because she really likes it there. Stephanie will graduate from LPS this year. In 2012 Stephanie attended WAGES which she really enjoyed. Stephanie worked at Selleck Hall kitchen where she washed dishes and wiped down tables and chairs. Stephanie may participate in WAGES again in 2013. After Stephanie completes WAGES this summer she plans to attend Center training. Stephanie stated that most of her family is either visually impaired or blind. She said this helps her because she feels like she is not alone. Stephanie hopes to learn Braille so she can play UNO with her grandpa. She also wants to learn Braille because she cannot see small print at all and large print is also hard for her to see. LPS has informed her that once she learns Braille everything will be provided to her in Braille.

Chairperson Johnson asked Stephanie when she began participating and planning in her services. Stephanie stated that this happened when she was about 18 years old. Stephanie stated that she has been in special ed. almost all her life and it has not all been vision related. Stephanie also participated in the VIP Club. She stated that it was very fun. In the VIP Club Stephanie stated that she has a lot of friends who really care about her. She also learns a lot of new things.

Chairperson Johnson asked Stephanie when she first started participating in Project Search if she had a lot of input in the process and did she get to pick where she started. Stephanie said she did not. She found out the end of last summer that she was going to Project Search. They had to do an interview and they picked her. Stephanie stated her goal for the future was to either work with animals or work in the kitchen. Her dream job would be vet tech.

Darrell Walla stated that he really enjoyed reading the Opening Doors: A Transition Guide handbook.

Executive Director Van Zandt noted that one of the wonderful things that Diane Ditmars contributed during the development of the handbook was the concept about the driver. Everyone might all be traveling in a van together, the student, the family, Voc. Rehab., the schools, etc. Everyone is in the van moving down the road, but at different points a different person might be driving.

Chairperson Johnson asked Amy Buresh what her thoughts were about Project Search. Amy stated that she feels that Project Search is a wonderful program. There are several locations throughout the State of Nebraska. NCBVI has had clients participate in the program throughout the last few years. Project Search is a very successful program and it gives practical work experience.

Chairperson Johnson stated that she is hearing that the youth are not really choosing Project Search but they are being told that this is what they need to do. Chairperson Johnson stated that she does feel that Project Search may not be a good fit for all youth because their area of interest may not be offered by Project Search.

Amy Buresh stated that the reality is that not everyone starts out at a job that they want to do forever; rather it is just a started to learn the beginning skills. These skills can then be built upon as other opportunities come up.

Executive Director Van Zandt added that Project Search is not only for blind students. NCBVI partners with the General Vocational Rehabilitation agency and each Search project is specific to an entity, such as a hospital or other business. In some areas, we have not had a blind student involved, but NCBVI is still active in the project because we believe that it helps major employers see the value of employing people with a range of disabilities. Van Zandt added that it is certainly true that the first job that most people have right after high school is not their career goal.

Commissioner Hansen noted that he had some questions about VIP Club which exists at LPS. Commissioner Hansen stated that he is aware of a similar program at the Fremont schools. When we get to other areas of the state where there may only be one blind child in the county or in the school district, some of those opportunities do not exist at a school district level. In reading the handbook it appeared that it was difficult to write because of differing opinions that came to the table. The protocol was to try to keep everyone's thoughts in mind respectfully as children grown up. Commissioner Hansen added that knowing that there may be some differences of opinion on the way that children should be educated, he wonders if programs like Winnerfest, WAGES and other youth programs are communicated to the younger kids who could benefit from them and especially kids who are in the rural communities. Is NCBVI reaching all the kids that are out there or there a lot of kids who are being missed and we are not finding out about until they are much older.

Amy Buresh stated that the outreach process is one that just continues to grow. NCBVI continues to try our best to build relationships within the ESU units, the teachers of the visually impaired, NCECBVI and others and we try to disseminate our information as much as we can and as broadly as we can. There certainly may be those that we miss especially when they are younger. NCBVI can only work with the individuals who are referred to us and choose to sign up for services. Individuals need to be clients of our agency before we can offer services to them.

Amy Buresh noted that Mary Robinson who is Kim Adams' successor has a group in Fremont and they work on a lot of blindness related skills and do a lot of activities after school. NCBVI does participate and helps teach that group. NCBVI also brings in peer mentors when appropriate to help with that group. Shane Buresh, an Orientation Counselor in Lincoln, does attend almost every meeting of those groups and he helps facilitate the meetings. The VIP Club tends to be more social than some of the other programs.

Allison Laschanzky stated that the VIP Club started out as a social event that happened once a month for middle and high school students. At the beginning it was just her and two other girls. There was a teacher who would also attend. During the events they would usually make snacks. As the group became larger they would do activities such as attending movies and take karate lessons.

Commissioner Hansen asked if there was a requirement for any IEP that occurs that a parent must be given a copy of the handbook. Amy Buresh stated that it is not a requirement, but it is suggested as a best practice. Commissioner Hansen noted that he has it in the back of his head that there might be some TVI's out there who disagree with NCBVI. Commissioner Hansen stated that he gets this impression because he grew up in an environment where he did not learn about the Commission until he was 18 years old. Commissioner Hansen noted that he was a high partial so this may have played into it. Commissioner Hansen stated he wants to make sure that individuals have the opportunity to be able to make a choice. Amy Buresh noted that this is what NCBVI strives for. Everyone needs to know what is available and what their options are.

Commissioner Hansen noted that it was stated that since the handbook has been completed the Transition Team has disbanded; however they do still continue the relationships that were formed. Commissioner Hansen asked if there is still a need for a Transition Team and what its purpose might be. Amy Buresh stated that when the group first began in the mid 80's there was a lot of unknown about the other entities. The thinking among the Transition Team members was that they had reached a plateau where they knew the other entities and they no longer had a large enough purpose to justify spending the grant monies.

Executive Director Van Zandt reported that there is a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Special Populations Director at Department of Education, herself for NCBVI and the Director of the NCECBVI. There is also the Transition Practitioners

Group which is statewide and it includes educators in rehab and others, including Amy Buresh representing NCBVI. This committee is connected to the Board of Education at the State level. Director Van Zandt serves on the Transition Advisory Council which is also connected to the Department of Education Board of Education. Even when the Transition Team met, it was just a handful of individuals who represent NCBVI, educators and families. It does not get to the individual who lives in Ainsworth, McCook, etc. Director Van Zandt stated that she believes that over the years the Transition Team served a very good purpose for educating each other and there was a period of time when there was a very good newsletter that came out of that. Most importantly, Director Van Zandt believes today that grassroots educators, rehab professionals and families getting acquainted with each other and knowing what the resources are. It is not that a Transition Team is not needed, but what is really needed is a strong grassroots component of educating each other with ongoing communication.

Director Van Zandt noted that another important piece is that if every single blind and visually impaired child in the state were referred to NCBVI, we do not have the resources to serve them all. The amount of involvement we have may change over the years. NCBVI does want everyone to know that we are available as a resource and it is important that we educate other sources in education.

Amy Buresh noted that in best practices when a student is below the transition age, NCBVI wants to help support the teacher and enhance what is being done. NCBVI strives for best practices in all of its relationships in working with clients.

Commissioner Walla suggested that the Board revisit this area as a Focus Topic every few years since things change all the time.

Executive Director Van Zandt thanked all the students and the parents who spoke at today's meeting.

Break – A break was taken at 10:50 a.m. The meeting resumed at 11:08 a.m.

10:20 a.m. - Public comment

Hubert Paulsen – Hubert asked if the State Convention of Teachers is a form through which knowledge of some of these groups for the younger kids could be made available. Commissioner Walla noted that Teachers Convention was done away with several years ago. However, there is an Education Conference that teachers can go to in the spring which may be an option. Director Van Zandt noted that NCECBVI puts on fall and spring conferences which NCBVI staff have attended fairly often.

Alex Castillo – Alex noted that he is going to make a comment as a member of the Lincoln community and a member of NFB; not as a NCBVI employee. Alex stated that he strongly feels that transition services is something that really should be revisited every couple of years. Alex noted that he came from a different state that did not have the successful transition services. What you have in those situations are really kids who

go onto adulthood without a clue as to how to make a connection between when a counselor says “you can be anything” and what their interests are. For example, kids may wonder how they can become an I.T. person. What do they do? Individuals need that first job and it is very good to see that some of these programs are going on.

Zach Hays – Zach noted that it sounds like LPS has a lot more programs offered for blind and visually impaired kids that OPS has. Zach stated that a lot of schools are under the impression that if a student has some vision they do not need braille. Zach noted that while at OPS he has received most of his material in large print. He likes what he hears about what LPS is doing.

Report from the Chair

Chairperson Johnson noted that there have been email exchanges between the Board and the Executive Director this past quarter as maintenance of information of items occurring between meetings.

Commissioner Hansen noted that he viewed a great program titled “Blind Kids”. This program aired on January 28 on the Nickelodeon Channel. The program is now available to watch online on Nickelodeon's website. The program is about blind kids across the country talking about themselves and it was geared toward other kids so they could learn about blindness, etc. Commissioner Hansen commented that Nickelodeon did a great job producing the show and encouraged everyone to check it out.

Commissioner Oltman reported that she has a great nephew who lives in Gibbon, Nebraska, but is now working in Texas as part of the oil industry. He happened to be at her home to help with repairs and he informed her that he knew a guy in Texas who was not satisfied with his little boys schooling. His little boy is blind and has some other disabilities. He was going to a school that was geared towards a variety of disabilities and he wanted to know where he should go. Commissioner Oltman noted that Director Van Zandt sent her a gentlemen's name in Texas that she hooked him up with. Commissioner Oltman noted that she hopes that something good came out of this.

Report from the Executive Director

Director Van Zandt verbally gave highlights of her report and she thanked the Commissioners for their time. The entire report is pasted here.

Executive Director's Report – February 2, 2013

Scott Pavelka came on board January 7th. He will serve as Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, based in North Platte, working with clients in both the North Platte and Scottsbluff areas. While he is in training, we will be reviewing the location of current clients. We want to assure coverage of clients and support for both Angie and Jamie in Scottsbluff and North Platte.

Nicole Schopen will be leaving NCBVI. For the past few months Nicole has been working a part-time job and has been offered a full time position and will create many new opportunities for her. Her last day with NCBVI will be on Friday, February 15, 2013.

Elaine Kavulak, Jan Brandt and others have worked in partnership with the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing on a project to distribute equipment to persons who are Deaf-Blind. The process is now in place. Here is a link to learn more and to get access:

<http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov/NDBEDP/ndbedp.html>

In the past quarter, I spent time shadowing eight staff members. Most were in the North Platte District, plus one Center staff member. I had the pleasure of visiting our new Scottsbluff office in the new State Office Building there. I will be scheduling time with other staff in the near future.

Another quarterly update to the RSA Monitoring Review Corrective Action Plan was completed and submitted this past week. Most items have been fully resolved, though some parts of the financial items are dependent upon action from the U.S. Department of Education/Indirect Cost Group, and Rehab Services Administration. We have submitted what we can do and we have changed practice and procedures to be consistent with what we expect to be approved.

The Unicameral is now in session and will be working on agency budget proposals. We do have the proposed budget from Governor Heineman. He has slated our agency for increases that are in line with salary increases negotiated with NAPE/AFSCME and state regulations. There does not seem to be a push to cut our budget. We have not yet heard from the Appropriations Committee. We did respond to some questions from the legislative fiscal person, but no word back yet about our responses. As the session moves, we will keep you informed.

We are working with Mississippi State University on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. We do not have a timeline yet, but it will include some in person and telephone interviews, perhaps internet survey for staff, etc. The details are in the works for completion throughout the year.

I continue to attend many meetings with Center, Field offices, State agency directors, Lincoln/Lancaster Multicultural Advisory Committee, Friends of the Commission, National Council of State Agencies for the Blind, etc. I've been invited to speak at the ACBN State Convention this spring.

Field Services

During the first quarter of Federal Fiscal Year 2013 (October 1, 2012 through December 31, 2012), we served 517 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients in all statuses. Eleven (11) were closed having achieved their employment goals. Four (4) were closed without

achieving employment (refusing further services, unable to locate, disability too severe to benefit from VR, and other).

In the Independent Living (IL) track, from October 1, 2012 through December 31, 2012, we served 352 clients in all statuses. Sixty (60) were closed successfully; seven (7) were closed without achieving their goals (withdrew, moved, deceased, and other reasons).

Nebraska Center for the Blind

Total Full-time Clients Served between 1996 through January, 2013: 214

Competitive Employment: 121

Homemakers: 23

Students: 46

Results:

Of the clients that finished training and schooling;

86 percent are employed (competitive employment and homemaker)

72 percent of the clients who finished training and schooling are competitively employed

13 percent are homemakers

21.5 percent are students from the total number

10 percent are not working

Activities this past quarter included the Thanksgiving dinner, bell ringing at the mall, holiday party, and making cornhusk dolls. We have been discussing how to make sure that activities are good experiences for clients, to build confidence and skills, and to get out into the community.

Bryan Hospital Nursing students continue to spend days at Center to learn about training. This has been assessed as an extremely beneficial experience for the students. Center staff members are working on ways to maximize the positive impact while keeping Client training strong.

North Platte District – Sarah Stewart

The North Platte District had a very busy and exciting quarter. November, December and January were over before we knew it!

Winnerfest was November 7-9th at the Aurora Leadership Center. We were excited to have five kids from our district attend this fall. The committee planned a great program that included information about preparing for college. There were presentations by Wes Majerus technology program coordinator, a panel of college students, David Brandt-UNK disability services coordinator, and Education Quest. Participants also got to take part in the challenge course at Timberlake Ranch and learn about healthy eating and cooking at HyVee in Grand Island.

The North Platte District held our annual District meeting in Kearney on November 28th and 29th. Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Carlos Servan, Bob Deaton, and Wes Majerus were able

to join North Platte District staff for the meeting. In addition to our meetings we invited William Boucher from the American Safety and Health Association to provide basic safety, CPR and Defibrillator training to our group. The presentation was very accessible and informative.

Unfortunately, Sherrie Bruegman, North Platte VR tech was unable to join us for the meeting due to a shoulder fracture she sustained in early November. She was not able to work for about a month. Being the hard worker she's always been I'm sure it was as hard for her not to be in the office as it was for us not to have her assistance. We appreciate her perseverance despite her injury and I thank Josie Rodriguez Scottsbluff VR tech and support staff statewide for stepping up and helping out in Sherrie's absence.

We conducted interviews for the North Platte Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in late November. Scott Pavelka was hired for the position in December after his tour of the Nebraska Center for the Blind. Scott spent a week in the field with counselors in the North Platte District beginning on January 7th. He began his 600 hours of immersion training at the Nebraska Center for the Blind on January 14th. We expect that Scott will be a great addition to our team.

We had another exciting addition to our district in December. Cristal Grado, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in Kearney had her baby boy, Julian Jacob on December 6th. Although we miss her at work, we are glad that Cristal will get to be home with her little guy until the beginning of March.

Dr. Pearl Van Zandt spent time with each staff member in the district this quarter. She visited Deanna Jesse and Cristal Grado in the Kearney office after the District Meeting in November. She then came to the Scottsbluff, North Platte and Kearney offices again in January. We know she had some long days on the road but we very much appreciated and enjoyed the time she took to join us in the field.

We had two successful closures this quarter. One consumer achieved her employment goal as a Lutheran Minister. Another individual was able to retain his employment as a taxidermist. We continue to strive to provide quality services to clients despite the shortage of staff in our area. I am very proud of the teamwork our district continues to demonstrate and the support provided to one another whether in the face of recovering from an injury or the joy of a having a new baby. We are gearing up for a busy and exciting spring and I look forward to reporting on our successes next quarter.

Omaha District Update February 2, 2013 – Nancy Flearl

We had staff participating in transition services of Winnerfest and TABS (Teen Group Teaching).

DBYA (the Deaf-Blind Teen Group) rang bells for the Salvation Army.

We were a bit short handed during the month of December with several counselors out ill. But services went on.

We have had 3 clients find employment this quarter. A nurse, vending assistant and production worker. We have several others that have successful interviews with an expected job offer.

We are busy planning a college workshop for February 23rd to prepare our graduating juniors and seniors.

We are working with NCDHH on a joint training with the interpreters on Deaf Blindness and communication methods as educating them on interveners, SSP's and role of each as well as interpreters. Also assisting with this project is Helen Keller Rep, Beth Jordan.

We have been active in networking with the chamber and tri-county workforce board, and HRAM (Human Resource Association of Midlands).

We completed the temp Job with Unisource and Omaha Steak on December 21. The warehouse manager was extremely impressed by the team and the work ethic. He was also pleased with our partnership and the organization behind this project.

Elaine has been working with NCDHH to develop an equipment request form and procedure for the Deaf Blind Equipment Distribution Program.

Carol did a presentation for all the counselors in the disabled student services within our community college on JAWS and ZoomText. Explaining and demonstrating where students might encounter problems if materials are presented in different formats.

Lincoln District – Connie Daly

We completed remodeling in the kitchen and the computer lab. The computer lab has two work stations. One is a Windows station and the other will be an Apple station. There is also a large conference table that people can work on with their notetakers or laptops. The kitchen and conference room were expanded. The kitchen now has a wheelchair accessible counter. We will also put in audio visual system in the conference room.

The Norfolk office will also undergo some remodeling. We are working with the owners of the office space to put in an additional office for Dave Robinson from the Business Office. They also need to update a lot of their furniture.

John Schmitt has joined the Rotary club and is using his contacts to teach interviewing skills to our clients. We are starting a kid's group in Norfolk. It will be called BYG. Blind Youth Group. The first meeting will be in March.

We are working with the Employment committee to have another workshop in Lincoln for blind job seekers. We will have a ribbon cutting as a part of that and invite a number of businesses to participate. We have been attending networking meetings and have had a number of businesses contact us because they want to learn more or want to hire our clients. Milestone Composites is interested in hiring two of our clients. Speidell Body Works also requested a tour and they are promoting us on their facebook page as a part of National Braille Literacy month. Leadership Resources have also come for a tour and would like to work with us.

I have started Leadership Lincoln the executive series. Leadership Lincoln is different than Leadership Resources. I attend a monthly class that focuses on different aspects of Lincoln. Classes are held at a different location each month. The executive series is for CEO's of companies to learn about Lincoln and service. My class has individuals from BryanLGH, Nelnet, Ameritus, Lincoln Public Schools, Union College and Education Quest. As a result of the class I have had the clients tour the Assurity Life building. We also will host a class next year. Larry Mackey and Cheryl Livingston have applied to Project All which is run by the same group.

We had a client get a job with Walmart in customer service, clerical work with Experience Works, a BEP vendor and in graphic design. We set up internships with Antonio's Tastes of Lincoln and Conroy's Bakery. We helped clients retain jobs at Apogee and with the State of Nebraska.

Business Office - Bill Brown

Federal Financial Reporting for Quarter and Fiscal Year for Basic Support, OIB, Part B and PILBO

Work on Cost Allocation adjustment

Answer Legislative Fiscal Office questions

Informing Wes of Agency IT issues, procedures, policy

Kathy Stephens – Administrative Assistant

TSB has replaced many high mileage vehicles. Kathy and Bill met with TSB in regards to acquiring a state van for NCBVI. We do now have a 7 passenger minivan housed at the Lincoln office. The van will be available to all staff but certainly if it is needed outside of Lincoln staff should work with Connie and Fatos and Cheryl to access it.

The 103rd Legislative Session begins on January 9. She will be tracking bills as they come up.

Kathy worked with several staff members and Pearl to complete the 2012 Annual Report to the Governor.

Surplus was completed for old tables, chairs, electronics, etc. in the Lincoln District.

Deputy Directors

We have a new VR counselor in North Platte. He started his training at the center the first week of January.

We will be having an Employment Conference and Technology workshop on June 5, 6, and 7. As part of that, we will also have a Ribbon Cutting ceremony for the renewed conference room and computer area in Lincoln.

We have started to do case reviews. Lincoln was January 29 and 30, Omaha will be February 4, and the North Platte District on February 11-13.

Bob and Carlos will attend a conference for policy-making administrators on deaf-blind services. This conference is sponsored by RSA and will take place in Maryland.

Bob Deaton presented information about supported employment services offered by NCBVI to a group of supervisors of local field office (LFO) operated by the Division of Developmental Disabilities statewide on November 6

Winnerfest: 9 participants attended the program November 8-10

A grant to renew PILBO in 2013 was submitted at the end of November 2012. It was approved, accepted and we have received the \$10,000 funds.

Bob Deaton, Connie Daly, Larry Mackey, Amy Buresh, Conchita Hernandez, and John Schmitt presented information about supported employment services offered by NCBVI to a group of case service coordinators and supervisors from Lincoln Field Offices operated by the Division of Developmental Disabilities in southeastern Nebraska on December 4.

The 7OB report was submitted in December.

The 704 report was submitted in December.

Wes Majerus

My quarterly highlights are as follows:

- Continued support of staff computer issues.
- Held two Tech Team Meetings
- Serving on Employment Committee and preparing for upcoming Employment conference and technology expo.
- Attended kickoff meeting of the Workday Accessibility Council.
- Assist State Personnel with testing of the Cornerstone Employee Development Center. This includes the new Performance Review piece.
- Participate in calls with product vendors/developers when accessibility questions arise.
- Continue to troubleshoot eForce and JAWS.
- Attend State Web Master's Meeting.
- Dialog with Office of the CIO, and the NITC Accessibility Workgroup Chair about strategies to make sites and applications more accessible. This dialog is ongoing.
- Begin preparations for a Mac Academy training for Tech Team and other agency staff.

- Develop and revise instructions for accessing self-service tasks and W2 information in Edge system.

Dave Robinson Quarterly Highlights

1. Scott Pavelka joined the agency on January 7, 2013. He spent one week in the field, before beginning his Center training on January 14, 2013
2. State Personnel rolled out the new Employee Development Center module, but because of numerous accessibility issues, NCBVI has informed State Personnel that our agency will not be participating in its use, until the issues are resolved.
3. While we are waiting on the accessibility issues to be resolved, I have undertaken a project to have essential duties and other parts of the Employee Development module “hard coded” into everyone’s evaluations, so as to minimize the time each employee will have to spend inputting data into the evaluation, once we implement it.
4. I am also undertaking a project to go into each Employee’s file in Workday, to update the physical location of their positions. This will enable each employee to get flash, emergency notifications from the State Patrol, in their specific workplaces, in the event they would need to be notified. This is a joint State Patrol-State Personnel project.
5. I am also preparing to conduct another update/clean-out of personnel files, to make sure everyone’s files contain necessary documents and dispose of any unnecessary documents.
6. Building Division has approved the partial renovation of the Norfolk office, to include enclosing a currently unused large space, to be converted to an office for me and also enclosing a smaller, unused space, to give the Norfolk office some needed, extra storage space. Construction is expected to begin in early March.

Unfinished Business

NFB Newsline® Update

Nebraska NFB-Newsline®
Jamie K. Forbis, Outreach Coordinator
January 21, 2013

Greetings NCBVI Board of Commissioners and staff! Welcome to 2013! The previous year brought a lot of changes to NFB-Newsline®. Several new publications were added and the system was upgraded to provide greater flexibility and functionality. Not to mention the addition of the NFB-Newsline® Mobile app for the iPhone, iPod and iPad.

This past year has also been busy for NFB-Newsline® in Nebraska. Between presentations for students and seniors to system updates and additions. Most recently a Twitter account was created for Nebraska NFB-Newsline® to provide subscribers with up-to-date information and a greater awareness of the service. Follow NFBNEWSLINE NEBRASKA on Twitter @NFB_NEWSLINE_NE.

This past quarter four new publications were added bringing the total number to 361. Two of the four new publications are part of a new category labeled Breaking News Online. These are the Huffington Post and CNN. This new category can be found under option 5 from the main menu. The ACB Braille Forum is the third new publication and it can be found under the blindness specific category under magazines which is option 7 from the main menu. The Topeka Capital Journal is the fourth new publication and it can be found under the state newspapers category.

Also released in December was the first update to the NFB-Newsline® Mobile App. The update can be downloaded from the Apple App store and contains some updated features and bug fixes from the previous version.

Over the last quarter you will notice a difference in the subscriber numbers. This is due to a cleanup process that I've been working on. When a subscriber had passed away it was noted on the print applications, but those subscribers were never deleted from the system. So, I've been working with Sherrie Bruegman to insure all applications which were marked deceased were removed from the file as well as from the online system. The same goes for those subscribers who had moved out of state. This process has allowed me to thoroughly review the subscribers and delete any duplicates and those no longer living in Nebraska.

With that being said; November started out with 1,603 subscribers. Fourteen new subscribers were added in November, 18 in December and so far 6 in January. For a current total of 1,622 subscribers of Nebraska NFB-Newsline®.

Since the last report subscribers have read 443,109 minutes of content via the telephone and are broken down as follows: 14,632 in November, 18,234 in December and 10,243 in January.

Subscribers spent the longest time on the phone during December with the average call lasting 14.31 minutes. November and January were almost tied for second place with an average call lasting 13.80 and 13.55 minutes respectfully. Approximately 53.77% of the calls made during November, December and January were made through the local number.

November saw the most state newspaper accesses at 3,184, followed by December at 2,805 and January at 1,831. December saw the most state channel accesses with 121, followed by November with 89 and January with 72. December also led in the number of TV listing accesses with 504, followed by November with 390 and January with 294.

Poor January didn't have a chance to catch up since its data was only gathered over 3 weeks rather than 4 like the other two months.

Although the majority of subscribers still use the phone to dial in to NFB-Newsline® an increasing number of subscribers are using Web News on Demand, NFB-Newsline® In Your Pocket and receiving publications via E-Mail. Hopefully stats for the NFB-Newsline® Mobile App will be available soon as a lot of subscribers are now using this method to access NFB-Newsline®.

This concludes my report for this quarter and if you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me by phone, email or now on Twitter! Until next time; keep warm and happy reading!

Client Assistant Program (CAP) complaints or issues

There are currently two CAP issues.

1. A person was concerned because he applied for services and did not hear from his counselor. The person felt like they left messages and never heard back. CAP got involved and talked with the supervisor and read the file. Basically it was a matter of getting the staff person connected with the client again. The staff person and the client have been meeting and the process is moving forward.
2. A client requested their case be transferred to Omaha from Lincoln. CAP met with the client to discuss what would be involved in transferring the case to Omaha in order that the client can make an informed choice. The client has indicated that he needs time to think about this. In the meantime, the Lincoln District will continue with his case.

Public Comment

Terry Brennfoerder asked who to contact to sign up for Nebraska NFB-Newsline®. It was noted that he should contact Jamie Forbis, Nebraska NFB-Newsline® coordinator at (402) 471-8102.

Lunch

A lunch break was taken at 12 noon. The meeting resumed at 1:08 p.m.

Nebraska Business Enterprise (NBE) Update

NBE opened a new post office in Norfolk in November.

In November, GSA remodeled the break room in the Lincoln Federal Office building, and we purchased new chairs.

We had a meeting with USA Joint Forces in December to operate their new building in Lincoln. We were awarded the facility and the contract is in progress. Our new vendor should start operating that facility sometime in February.

In December, we opened the 5 Lincoln post office annexes; and a second post office in Norfolk.

In the second week of January, we met with the Department of Roads staff to renew our contract on the vending machines located at the rest areas. The contract we still have does not have any specifics. As a result of this meeting, our vendors will be paying an average of \$10 less each month per site.

The new contract with the Omaha Post Offices will be signed next week and a couple of vendors are getting 7 new small sites. The other 7 buildings will be subcontracted.

The Juice Bar at the Offutt Air Force base is not being successful. We tried several strategies and alternatives but no good results. Therefore, we sent a letter letting them know that we will be leaving that facility by the middle of February.

NBE has received a mobile vending proposal from a vendor and NCBVI will support it. The vendor will take his mobile vending to various festivals, fairs and other events. NCBVI will purchase the mobile vending unit and the vendor will purchase his own truck to haul it. This will be a new vending site for our NBE vending program. This is also a great example of initiative and leadership from the blind vendor.

Chairperson Johnson asked how vendors get appointed to the Vendors Committee. Director Van Zandt noted that it is prescribed in the Randolph-Sheppard Act the way the Vendors Committee has to be put together. All licensed vendors in the State Licensing Agency are sent notice about the Committee. The vendors then nominate who they want to serve on the Committee. The Committee is to represent the vendors and to work in partnership with the agency. Vendors serve a two year term and there is no term limit. Once they are elected to the Committee, the Committee elects their officers.

Commissioner Hansen stated that he understands why NBE would take on vending locations and then subcontract them out. It could be that we have no vendors in that location, etc. Commissioner Hansen inquired as to when NBE subcontracts those out, are we able to do it in a manner that we are still making some money on it? Carlos Serván stated that NBE gets between 11 and 13 % of the net. This money goes back into the set aside. This is comparable to the set aside that the blind vendors pay.

Chairperson Johnson asked if there has been any thought about leadership development for new vendors. Chairperson Johnson noted that NBE has a lot of new vendors and she asked what we are doing to get them leadership skills in order that they can move into leadership roles.

Executive Director Van Zandt noted that the NBE Conference which will be held annually is a leadership development program. A lot of emphasis is put upon the vendors being more knowledgeable, skilled and in charge. We have also sent staff and

vendors to the BLAST and Sagebrush Conferences. Also, under Carlos Serván's leadership we are emphasizing more involvement.

For the record Carlos Serván noted that at the November 2012 meeting, Commissioner Hansen asked him if the percentage of the money that we got was after the set aside that the vendors pay and he stated it was before. Carlos noted that it is actually after.

New Business

Discuss and act on the process of disseminating the Executive Director Evaluation and staff surveys along with data collection for review at the May meeting

Commissioner Hansen proposed that they pull the questions out from last year and then review meeting notes from the past few years to make sure that everything that they have said they are going to do to revise the survey has been added.

Executive Director Van Zandt noted that last year the survey was open between March 19 and April 24. This year's survey will follow a similar timeline. It will be available March 19 through April 19, 2013. The Commissioners requested a couple of weeks to review the survey results before the May 2013 Commission Board meeting.

Commissioner Hansen volunteered to review previous minutes and make revisions to the Staff Survey as suggested. He will send to all commissioners for review and then it will be finalized. Commissioner Hansen stated that he will have this completed by the end of February and the commissioners will get the final staff survey to Kathy by the beginning of March. About half way through the survey completion period, the commissioners will send an email to staff reminding them to complete the survey if they have not yet done so.

Discuss and act on potential commissioner travel to 2013 consumer conventions and/or other training opportunities

Chairperson Walla requested full assistance in funding to attend the ACB-N Spring Convention in Fremont. This convention is scheduled for April 19, 20 and 21. All commissioners, except Commissioner Walla who abstained, voted yes to approve this request.

Chairperson Johnson requested full assistance in funding to attend the NCSAB Fall 2013 Conference in Denver. All commissioners voted yes to approve this request.

Chairperson Jirak requested full assistance in funding to attend the NCSAB Fall 2013 Conference in Denver. All commissioners voted yes to approve this request.

Discuss and act on meeting locations for May and August and potential focus topics for November's meeting in Omaha

The following dates, locations and Focus Topics were decided upon.

May 4 – Beatrice, Homestead National Monument of America. There will be no Focus Topic as the Evaluation of the Executive Director will be discussed. We will also try to set up a presentation from the Homestead National Monument of America.

August 10 – North Platte. The Focus Topic: Technology Program Manager Position

November 2 – Omaha. The Focus Topic: Employers

Public comment

There was no public comment.

Final announcements

There were no final announcements.

Adjourn

Commissioner Jirak moved to adjourn the February 2, 2013 Commission Board meeting at 2:15 p.m. Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the May 4, 2013 Commission Board meeting, please email it to the NCBVI Commission Board at ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant
NCBVI

Julie Johnson, Chairperson
NCBVI Board of Commissioners