

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Public Commission Meeting

November 22, 2008; 9:00 a.m.

Lincoln, NE

Approved Minutes

Call to Order and Introductions

Nancy Oltman, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and she welcomed everyone to the meeting. Chairman Oltman noted that Carol Jenkins was recently appointed as NCBVI, NFB delegate, commissioner by the Governor. Her term will expire on December 31, 2011. Executive Director Van Zandt read a letter to Carol Jenkins from Governor Heineman and the Commissioner Appointment Certificate for the record.

Commissioner Jenkins noted that at one time she was a Center client at the Nebraska Center for the Blind and that she graduated from her Center training in 2007. Commissioner Jenkins is also a graduate of Peru State College and is currently working as a teacher's assistant, through Family Services, at the Early Childhood Center and at Riley Elementary School.

Announcements Concerning Public Comments, Meeting Recordings,
Lunch Arrangements and other Logistics

Commissioner Walla read the agenda items and introductions were made. It was noted that public comments are always welcome regarding the agenda items. The Center clients prepared and will serve lunch. Hubert Paulson recorded the meeting.

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was located on the side table in the meeting room. The Act was available in both print and Braille format.

Commissioners present: Nancy Oltman, Chair, Darrell Walla, Jim Jirak, Julie Johnson, and Carol Jenkins.

Commission staff present: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director, Lincoln; Fatos Floyd, Center Director, Lincoln; Carlos Serván, Deputy Director VR, Lincoln; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director, IL, Lincoln, Jeff Poore, Apartment Resource Aide, Lincoln; Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor, Omaha; Connie Daly, Lincoln District Supervisor, Lincoln; Sarah Stewart, VR Counselor, Kearney; Chad Weber, VR Counselor, Omaha; and Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant, Lincoln.

Clients Present: Ronnie Kellogg, Ermyl Leazenby, Gwynne Widhalm, Aaron Peterson, George Fischer, Warren Bennett, Steve Senteney, Alex Curtis

Public Present: Hubert Paulson, Sidney Crane, Amy Mason, Dr. James Nyman, Chris Gengenbach (UNL), Bob Burns

Minutes of the August 9, 2008 Commission Meeting

Commissioner Jirak moved to approve the Minutes of the August 9, 2008 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Walla seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and it was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Focus Topic: Working with Employers/Focus on Employment

Carlos Serván had previously emailed to the commissioners a report regarding NCBVI's placement activities statewide. The employment seminar survey results were also previously emailed to the commissioners. The report is below the minutes of the meeting.

Connie Daly reported that NCBVI has a very good working relationship with UNL and especially with Chris Gengenbaugh. Chris has worked closely with NCBVI clients in filling out job applications and developing their skills.

Work with UNL

Chris Gengenbaugh from UNL was present at the meeting to talk about how UNL works with NCBVI for placement of clients.

Chris stated that UNL works closely with NCBVI in working with clients on their skills and filling out job applications. She also works to educate people at UNL about the capabilities of blind people. Chris stated that she believes that NCBVI is a great Commission and the services offered are excellent. Chris stated that the collaboration has also been excellent.

The dialogue is very open between NCBVI and UNL. Items are discussed when things are going well and when they are not going well. UNL works carefully to ensure that their online application is user accessible. They also provide one-on-one assistance to help with feedback. UNL currently has approximately 12 NCBVI clients working for them. Some of the jobs currently being held are pizza maker, clerical, custodial, and food prep. The starting wage for these positions is generally \$8.00 to \$10.00 an hour. Chris noted that it is a win-win situation. NCBVI clients are very dedicated workers. Chris stated that they are working out some other goals that can hopefully be met. Chris noted that NCBVI also provides on-going support to clients once they are placed in employment. It was noted that there is a long way to go as far as educating employers on what blind people are capable of; however, we continue to move forward.

Chris reported that she goes through the on-line applications and she will inform NCBVI clients on how HR people look at applications in an effort to help them get interviews.

Nancy Flearl reported that she is currently working with getting the foot in the door at UNO. Chris Gengenbach is helping with the contacts and hopefully things will begin to open up.

Carol Jenkins was invited to attend the Commission meeting as a former client to talk about the placement services she received from NCBVI.

Carol Jenkins reported that she started Center training in January 2007. Carol stated that the first couple of months were challenging. During Center training she was taught things such as the interview process, writing cover letters, developing a good resume, and they conducted mock interviews.

Carol stated that this all really helped her to see where she needed to improve.

Carol reported that she was a mentee in the Mentoring Program. Larry Mackey was her VR Counselor at NCBVI and she truly appreciated all the support and assistance she received from him. Carol noted that job hunting is hard to do by your self and she used NCBVI staff as a support system and for networking.

Carol reported that she attended the Employment Seminar “Today’s Job Seekers – Tomorrow’s Leaders” and she took lots of notes. Carol stated that she is now working full-time after almost a year of searching. Carol added that it has been a rough road and she does not want to sugar coat everything because she had to work very hard to get where she is. Carol noted that without NCBVI she would not be where she is today and she stated that NCBVI staff should give themselves a big pat on the back.

While at NCBVI, she also gained some work experience through internships, a counselor for WAGES, a counselor for First Ever Junior Blind Academy Project Independence for blind elementary students in Baltimore, the Governor’s Summit and she also helped teach GATE.

At the Governor’s Summit, a group of former clients were hostesses and escorts as we ran information back and forth to meeting rooms. This was held at the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln and it lasted several days.

Public Comment

Bob Burns asked if NCBVI clients have been candidates of any professional level positions at UNL.

Chris Gengenbach stated that UNL does have professional level positions available. The application forms are also on-line. Bob Burns asked Carol what types of alternative techniques she currently uses in her job.

Carol said that she has a Braille printer, she has a PacMate, and she uses large print, a reader and JAWS. Carol noted that most of the work she gets is electronic.

Carlos stressed the importance of NCBVI counselors and the high expectations NCBVI places on its clients. With proper training and education blind people can compete. Blind people should be treated just like sighted people. If a blind person cannot perform a job, an employer should terminate them just as they would a sighted person. Carlos added that we still have a lot to do as it relates to educating businesses and employers on blindness.

Chairman Oltman noted that blind people need to remember that a job may not work out and often the cause is not blindness related.

Carlos Serván reported that NCBVI places a different emphasis than many state agencies on what we consider to be successful employment. Some agencies concentrate on getting clients who already have job and then they close the case out as successful employment.

Bob Burns asked if NCBVI categorizes successes based on the level of vision that a client has.

Carlos Serván responded that NCBVI does not. NCBVI looks at the number of hours worked, the benefits, the salary and other things of this type.

Van Zandt stated that when the new case management system, eForce, is up and running, perhaps NCBVI can track this.

Commissioner Johnson noted that the level of a person's blindness does make a difference to some employers. If a person states they only need large print as an accommodation an employer may be fine with this. However, if a person states they need Braille and JAWS software, an employer may hesitate to hire the person. While this is not the way it should be, it is a reality.

Van Zandt noted that this is where education for employers becomes very important. Some other states refer to their clients as totals and partials as to their blindness level. NCBVI does not do this. NCBVI's focus on training in the Center is the structured discovery, problem solving approach and the level of vision does not make a difference. If NCBVI did track the jobs that totally blind clients have versus the jobs that clients with some vision have, then we could ensure that they are comparable.

Connie Daly pointed out that the accessibility of job equipment is often a bigger barrier for clients than their blindness.

Van Zandt stated that last year the RSA people were saying that they had determined that administrative costs were far more in the separate blind agencies. The other directors asked where they got their figures and then RSA cited lines on a form. It turned out that the way the particular form is designed, the instructions are very unclear and the agencies who submitted forms and were approved and accepted were defining administrative costs differently. So in reality, RSA was taking apples and grapes and concluding that it costs more to run a separate agency. RSA did say publicly this time that they were not saying that.

Bob Deaton stated that he feels the issue goes back historically quite a ways. There are a number of individuals in the leadership of RSA now who are identifying with the independent living movement and this movement is opposed to categorical services. When you say categorical services, this includes services for the blind. Their philosophy is more cross-disability in which case agencies should work toward a more general goal of making life better for people with disabilities across the board. Categorical services, like services for the blind, are not typical to what they support.

Van Zandt noted that RSA has over the last number of years, increasingly eliminated the focus of central office staff on anything related to blindness, including the Randolph Sheppard Program, which is a very large national program. Van Zandt added that it appears that RSA is making an effort to move in the direction of supporting cross disability services with the belief that no service is a good service unless it serves all disabilities. Van Zandt noted that RSA has not specially said this, but the direction has been very negative for blind services. Van Zandt added that changes may be occurring within RSA with the new administration.

Bob Burns asked whether the opinion of RSA is concurrent across the nation. Van Zandt stated that the National Council for State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) would definitely concur with what she just said. Van Zandt added that over the past several years the President and the Executive Committee of NCSAB has worked with the administrators within RSA to continue to offer specialized services for the blind.

Carlos Serván advised everyone that the commissioners and the public are always welcome to contact NCBVI if they have questions.

Van Zandt gave a special thanks to Chris Gengenbach for coming to the meeting to present.

A break was taken at 10:32 a.m. The meeting resumed at 10:42 a.m.

Warren Bennett, a Center client, asked to have the floor. Warren stated that he wanted everyone to know that the atmosphere at the Center for the Blind is such a 'big sell' for helping with the training they receive. Specifically, he truly enjoys the kidding around, the atmosphere, the fun and the real life feeling of the Center. Warren added that he would like to see a Center client lead a tour of the Center.

Chairperson Oltman thanked Warren Bennett for his comments.

Report from the Chairman

It was noted that Chairperson Oltman and Director Van Zandt just returned from a NCSAB conference last evening and their luggage was left behind. Chairperson Oltman noted that her report is on her Braille note which is not working. Therefore, Chairperson Oltman stated that her report today will be from memory.

Ophthalmologist Seminar - Chairperson Oltman noted that NCBVI staff, Jamie Forbis, Denise Johnston-Rauterkus, and Deanna Jesse recently set up a table at an Ophthalmologist seminar in North Platte. They had planned on approximately 40 people visiting their booth, but they had many more. Many people were interested in the PacMate and other technology used by blind individuals.

Winnerfest - Chairperson Oltman reported that Winnerfest went very well and she enjoyed reading the comments from the clients who attended which was compiled by Bob Deaton. It was very heartwarming to hear the comments from clients who thoroughly enjoyed the event.

RSA - Chairperson Oltman informed everyone that RSA has put out modules that are in 30 minute increments for a total of 6 hours. Chairperson Oltman stated that she strongly feels that the Commission Board as a whole should complete the modules because there is very good information on them. Oltman added that she feels the completion of these modules should be a requirement of all new Board members and be completed as a learning tool. Oltman asked for a commitment from the Board to complete the modules. It was a consensus of the Board that they will complete the modules. Chairperson Oltman stated that she will forward to all the Board members the website wherein they can locate the modules.

Friends of the Commission – Chairperson Oltman asked Dr. Nyman to report on the activities of Friends of the Commission. Dr. Nyman stated that Friends of the Commission has been inactive for quite sometime partly because the environment for raising funds has been skimpy. Also, the energy level of the Board of Friends has been low as far as their commitment. Dr. Nyman stated that Friends will either need to recruit new leadership to take charge of Friends or let it fade away.

Dr. Nyman reported that most of the funds for Friends are invested in stocks, and therefore, he would estimate there being approximately \$10,000 in the account at this time.

Fatos Floyd inquired as to what the requirement would be to get Friends of the Commission listed as a source in the State of Nebraska Charitable Giving Campaign as United Way. Dr. Nyman stated that it is his understanding that Friends would have to be connected with a National organization in order to be listed. Van Zandt reported that United Way is only one part of the State Employees Charitable Giving Campaign and the other part is CHAD. Van Zandt stated that she believes that other organizations have recently been added that are not a part of the National scope. Therefore, checking into it again may be worthwhile. Van Zandt asked Kathy Stephens to look into this as she is the Charitable Giving Campaign coordinator for NCBVI. It was the consensus of the Board to have Kathy look into this.

Staff Suggestion Box – Chairperson Oltman noted that the Board does not ignore suggestions they receive through the staff suggestion box. If the staff suggestion is in regards to a staff concern, it is forwarded to the Executive Director. The Director then informs the Board as to how she handled the suggestion or concern.

Oltman reported that recently there was a problem with the suggestion box and she did not receive some of the staff surveys until approximately seven to eight months later. This problem was not solely with NCBVI, but it was with all state agencies who utilize such a tool. It was the consensus to have Kathy send a test to the suggestion box every few weeks to make sure that it is working properly. After Kathy sends a test to the suggestion box, she will send the Chairperson an email informing them that a test has been sent.

Executive Director Report

Van Zandt verbally gave highlights of her report and she thanked the Commissioners for their time. Chairperson Oltman requested that the entire report of the Executive Director be placed in the minutes, so it is inserted here:

Staff Update

Sarah Stewart completed Center training & went to work in Kearney, 10-3-08. Chad Weber completed Center training & went to work in Omaha, 10-27-08.

Open enrollment ended. It was a 6 month period this time, to switch to the state fiscal year. Jamie Forbis' full time status is extended to June 30, '09; the position is still classified as permanent part-time.

Bill Brown was recognized as Manager of the year; Kelly Coleman was recognized as Employee of the Year by Governor Heineman.

Field Services as of 9-30-2008 (end of Federal Fiscal Year):

Voc Rehab Total 583; 54 successful closures, 30 unsuccessful.

Independent Living Total 704; 196 successful closures, 33 unsuccessful.

The Nebraska Older Blind Project served 306 active clients during FY2007; 386 clients were served in FY2008. The Title VII Part B program served 97 active clients in FY2007; 116 were served in FY2008.

A ceremony for White Cane Day Proclamation was held by Governor Heineman on October 15th in the State Capitol.

Center

163 Full-time Clients Served since 1996. Of the clients that finished training and schooling:

89 percent achieved their employment goal

20 percent are students from the total number

8 percent are not working

Competitive Employment: 95; Home Makers: 22; Students: 33

Center activities this past quarter have included:

Going to the State fair

Entering food items in State Fair; clients got 1st & 3rd prize ribbons

Our Center was assessed by the National Blind Professionals Certification Board. Dr. Eddie Bell did the evaluation. Our Center achieved agency approval.

Deana Graham, Texas Blind Services, provided training on Employment Lifestyle (for both Center and Lincoln District staff).

Buffet & grilling activities

Etiquette seminar

Apple Fest in Nebraska City

Camping trip to Mahoney State Park

NFB State convention

Scavenger hunt

Halloween costumes and luncheon

Nebraska Business Enterprises (NBE)

Put snack machines in Kearney Dialysis Center, adding to a facility; UPS Packaging Center Sidney & Rail Car reconstruction Center in Sidney to boost sales. Have checked into National Guard in Grand Island - for now they are doing their own machines. They don't meet required number of personnel to be Randolph-Sheppard priority. We will bid on the Mess Hall at Reserve & Guard training facility in Ashland.

Four rest areas are under remodeling in Sidney and Ogallala (projected completion by February or March 2009).

Administration

Submitted the biennium budget request

Continue fine tuning of eForce programming

Requested and received reallocation of Federal funds

Set up 2009 grants in NIS

Order and deployed computers to staff

Set up new driver contracts in NIS

Voc Rehab Techs in every office have been trained and are doing a great job processing client bills

Completed 2008 Inventory

Compiled Older Blind Survey information

Conducted surveys and compiled data for Buna Dahal employment training

Letters were sent to all State Senators about NCBVI services

North Platte District Update

Denise took job coaching training for developmentally disabled clients & will be training the 3 North Platte District Voc Rehab Techs.

Presentation was made to 63 nursing students at Mid Plains Community College

Jan gave presentation to NFB-N State Convention and to UNK Disabled Workers group on technology for blind college students

North Platte District will start having employment readiness training to clients and will consult with Connie Daly about the successful work done in Lincoln in this area.

The final mentoring activity was in September.

“Today’s Job Seekers, Tomorrow’s Leaders” (TJS, TL) training was held in August, in Lincoln, for clients, employers, and NCBVI staff.

Partnered with General agency and hospitals for training with Erin Reihle in September.

There will be follow-up work for potential hospital jobs for clients of both VR & NCBVI.

Lincoln District Update an opportunity to have science classes on electricity, matter, and launch water rockets.

Lincoln is working with Nebraska Department of Corrections on a bid to do a small cleaning project in the pharmacy there. Center and Lincoln clients will be trained to do the custodial work, gain job experience & earnings.

We are working with UNL to set up an internship program. Clients would apply and be screened by NCBVI. UNL provides the work experience opportunities; we will advertise on our website & provide the technology. It will help clients & to gain visibility at UNL.

We have followed up with businesses that attended 'TJS, TL' training - arranged mock & informational interviews with them to keep the businesses engaged.

Connie is working with the Chamber of Commerce to develop more relationships with businesses. We hope to host a meeting of the Small Business Network at the Commission & give a tour of the Center.

Clients got jobs as Call Center Operator, Housekeeper, Production Worker, Dishwasher and Case Aide. Set up internship for a Case Aide. Two Lincoln Counselors attended the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Road Show & shared info about changes in the ADA.

One counselor attended Focus on Success workshop in South Dakota, sponsored by SD Blind Services and the American Foundation for the Blind.

Omaha District Update

Apogee is a new company near Columbus hired several clients, working closely with John & Glenn. They contact people to donate items, who have previously donated. Company is well versed in screen readers and screen enhancement software. They will be hiring another 50-100 people. Clients statewide may move to Columbus for the jobs.

We are in the process of hiring for the program specialist position.

We continue to hold group teachings in Omaha for 6-8 older blind (SAILS-Seniors Adventures in Independent Living Skills) and teens (TABS-Teens Adventures in Blindness Skills). They work at challenging themselves; a very cohesive and supportive group. The TABS group went to Home Depot for a wood building activity. The activities will help students recognize what is available in their community, that you need not let blindness stop you from participating, and you have a chance to learn what you like or don't like. They use all their blindness skills as a part of these sessions.

Hand and Hand met on September 20th to go to the Pow Wow on Metro Community College Campus. It was a wonderful experience. It is nice to see this group once again being able to meet on a fairly regular basis.

Cheryl Poff presented a workshop for Support Service Providers, assisted by Flearl. It was an excellent opportunity for interpreters or other interested individuals to learn how to provide support services to deaf blind persons.

The Omaha Public Library which is interested in working with us on educating the city on blindness. We discussed a city wide focus in October for white cane awareness and maybe June for Helen Keller's Birthday or maybe Louis Braille. In Lincoln, with the training center being there, blindness is so visible. We need to work on ways to make it more visible in Omaha as well.

The placement committee is working on the next Placement Conference to be held in Omaha, February 2009. It will be a workshop with general and breakout sessions, with a job fair at the end.

We have been working with Cox Communication and have placed someone as a Customer Service Technician. This is a very technical job where you need to be pretty savvy with the computer and JAWS.

We are working with ConAgra for their call center and work from home positions. Their system works well with JAWS. They did request information about the cost of site licenses. We are working with HR of that division to work through the other alternatives needed for the job. As people call in, they ask about products, the info is in hard copy, easy to accommodate, we address alternatives & accommodations for training.

NCBVI Website: Chairperson Oltman asked Carol Jenkins to forward her bio to Kathy Stephens in order that it can be placed on the NCBVI website under the Commission Board Member section. Chairperson Oltman reminded Commissioner Johnson that she still needs to send in her bio.

The commissioners discussed having their pictures placed on the website with their bio. The pros and cons of having their pictures on the website were discussed. The digital camera will be available at the February 2009 Commission meeting for those commissioners choosing to have their picture taken and placed with their bio.

Old Business

Budget Update

The State of Nebraska budget is set up on a biennium basis. The next biennium begins on July 1, 2009 and goes through June 30, 2011. Many of the agency's financial reports are based on the federal fiscal year, but the biennium budget request is based on the state fiscal year.

Van Zandt stated NCBVI has requested \$1,205,179 for the upcoming fiscal year. This includes \$235,252 for the senior blind project from State General Funds. For 2011, NCBVI has requested \$1,737,248 which includes \$487,000 for the senior blind project. This year, NCBVI General Fund appropriation is \$969,684. Therefore, much of what we can do and will do in the next few years depends upon what the Unicameral and the Governor do about our request. Bill Brown, Business Manager, and Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director, met with the Budget Analyst from the Unicameral and the Governor's office this past week. During this meeting they answered some questions that the Budget Office had and they also met a new person who has been assigned to NCBVI by the Governor's office. Van Zandt reported that the new assignee does not currently know about the services NCBVI provides. Van Zandt added that they did invite him to come to tour the Center. NCBVI is quite different from most State agencies; and therefore a tour of the Center and client visits with VR counselors can be very helpful in understanding what we do.

Van Zandt stated that NCBVI is doing a good job of keeping on track with the current budget. NCBVI has received some additional funds from Social Security reimbursement because of clients getting good jobs which has been very helpful.

The funding that NCBVI received from the Federal Government this past year was less than what we had before even though there is a requirement in the law that the vocational rehabilitation nationally is supposed to get a cost of living increase every year. Van Zandt noted that this has not been the case last year and the year before. In August 2008, NCBVI applied for re-appropriation. Through this, NCBVI was given an extra \$72,237. This is approximately the amount we needed to bring federal funds up to the previous year's allotment.

Staff members are working very hard with clients to provide the services that are needed and not to skimp on anything for them to meet their employment goal, while still being mindful of our budget.

Chairperson Oltman thanked Van Zandt for the report.

NIS Update:

Van Zandt reported that NIS continues to be a challenge as it relates to accessibility. The Office of the CIO does have an individual who is working on accessibility issues.

Open enrollment with NIS continues to create some accessibility as well as some usability issues. State employees who do not use NIS very often usually have more difficulty than those who use NIS on a regular basis.

Van Zandt stated that NCBVI will keep working to improve NIS accessibility.

NFB-Newsline® Update:

Jamie Forbis emailed the NFB-Newsline® Update to the Board members, Pearl Van Zandt and Kathy Stephens. Stephens read the report for the record and it is below.

Nebraska NFB-Newsline®

November 16, 2008

By

Jamie K. Forbis Nebraska NFB-Newsline® Outreach Coordinator

Hello and happy fall! The leaves have fallen, but the ratings for NFB-Newsline® definitely haven't! This report is full of good news and lots of updates!

The last three months I've been busy spreading the word about NFB-Newsline® to Nebraskan's across the state. In September I spoke to participants of the For Your Independence program in North Platte. In October I spoke to members and guests of the NFB of Nebraska State convention on two different occasions. During a technology workshop on Friday afternoon of the convention and during the general session on Saturday afternoon. Recently I spoke at the White Cane banquet sponsored by the NFB of Nebraska Omaha Chapter.

I'm always willing to present at different programs and events, so if you know of anything coming up that you'd like me to speak at just let me know.

Emailing and the internet are the most popular forms of communication today. NFB-Newsline® recognizes this and is constantly thinking of new ways to keep up to date with this fast pace world. In the works right now is companion software for the new Victor Reader Stream to make downloading papers even easier! Along with this is a website will be created for subscribers to browse through papers and have even more access to current events. Even though the computer is the chosen form of communication the phone is still easy and convenient. So keep up those calls through the toll free and regional numbers!

A new marketing director was hired in Baltimore and her first issue of the sponsor's newsletter sure made Nebraska look good! Nebraska was in the top ten in October for new subscribers!

During the month of October thirty people signed up for Nebraska NFB-Newsline®! A few more have already signed up in November making the total number of subscribers at exactly 1,300. Nebraska was also in the top ten for number of papers emailed in October with a total of 4,428 and 11,464 emails have been sent since August. The number of minutes used since the last meeting is 58,411, proving that the phone still beats email!

Fun facts: the average caller uses NFB-Newsline® for 21.20 minutes at a time. The most calls in August were made on the 24th with the least calls made on the 2nd. In September the most calls were made on the 11th with the least calls made the very next day, on the 12th. I guess everybody got “newsed out” on the 11th. In October three days tied for most calls which were the 12th, 15th, and the 22nd. The least calls for October were on the 10th.

Coming up in Nebraska NFB-Newsline® will see a new application form. This application will be distributed to all Commission staff, the Talking Book, Braille Library, and other organizations and agencies. The new application will include a place for an email address and a place to put Mr. Mrs., or any other prefix so I don't have to keep playing the guessing game with those unisex names!

This concludes my report for this quarter. If you ever have any questions please let me know by calling (402) 471-8102 or emailing me at Newsline@ne.nfb.org. Have a wonderful Thanksgiving and seasons greetings!

Commissioner Jirak requested that, if possible, Jamie Forbis include in her report information about how many hours the NFB-Newsline® was used on the days with the most calls and the least calls. Commissioner Jirak stated that he will follow-up with his request through email. The Board agreed that it would be a good thing to know.

Commissioner Jirak mentioned that a number of years ago when he was on the State Rehab Council, that entity decided to cease funding to the Radio Talking Book because of a law that was passed in support of digital newspapers. Commissioner Jirak inquired as to what the Bill number of this law was. Van Zandt stated that this Bill was a part of the NCBVI Bill itself and once something goes into law it becomes a Statute.

Commissioner Jirak stated that he believes the original Bill that created NCBVI was LB 1366 and part of the language to fund NFB-Newsline® was LB 352. Commissioner Johnson stated that this can be researched on the Nebraska.gov website. Van Zandt noted that the information is also located on the NCBVI website.

Public Comment:

Bob Deaton stated that he will follow-up with Jamie Forbis about including in her report information about how many hours the NFB-Newsline® was used on the days with the most calls and the least calls.

Bob Burns suggested that items such as NIS and NFB-Newsline® be taken off the quarterly Commission meeting agenda and only have the items on the agenda as requested.

Chairperson Oltman noted that several standard items have already been removed from the agenda. After discussion, it was the consensus of the commissioners to leave NIS and NFB-Newsline® on the agenda.

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Complaints or Issues

There were no CAP Cases this quarter.

A Lunch Break taken at 12:05 noon.

Meeting resumed at 12:35 p.m.

Review of Staff Survey; finalization of form, discussion of ideas for anonymous submissions and independent tabulation of results

At the August 9, 2008 Commission meeting revisions were made to the staff survey and the revised survey was then emailed to the commissioners for their review and input.

Kathy Stephens read the revised survey into the record and it is also below.

NCBVI Staff Survey

As an employee of NCBVI, the Board of Commissioners values and appreciates your honest feedback. Therefore, you are encouraged to take a few minutes to complete this short survey for the board of commissioners. As we understand the importance of anonymity, we have taken steps to absolutely ensure all responses provided will be confidential. An anonymous compilation will be provided to the executive director for his or her review. Your answers will assist the Board of Commissioners to ensure employee satisfaction, Executive Director performance and excellent consumer services.

Part A: Evaluation of Executive Director Performance

The below ten statements will be used by the Board of Commissioners to evaluate the performance of the Executive Director in conjunction with the Board assessments. Your input assists us to make decisions concerning salary, retention of the Executive Director and other concerns.

Please use the scale: 5 Outstanding; 4 Above Average; 3 Satisfactory; 2 Needs Improvement; 1 Unacceptable to respond to the following statements.

The executive director believes that it is respectable to be blind.

The executive director listens to concerns from staff.

The executive director responds to concerns from staff.

The executive director listens to concerns from consumers.

The executive director responds to concerns from consumers.

The executive director identifies priorities.

The Executive Director ensures that identified priorities become completed tasks.

The executive director negotiates creatively to hire quality staff.

The executive director negotiates creatively to fund exemplary service delivery.

The executive director delivers progressive steps toward true equality for blind Nebraskans.

Part B: NCBVI Employee Satisfaction

The following 24 questions are used by the Board of Commissioners to evaluate job satisfaction at NCBVI. The results are used to identify strengths, weaknesses and most importantly to implement changes that will make NCBVI a better place to work.

Please use the scale: 5 strongly agree; 4 agree; 3 neither agree or disagree; 2 disagree; 1 strongly disagree in response to the following statements.

I like working for NCBVI.

I have the training and support I need to do my job.

I understand what my job responsibilities are.

I understand the objectives of NCBVI.

If I have a problem I feel I can go to my supervisor for help.

I feel that I can go to the Executive Director with a problem.

There is a system at NCBVI for me to make suggestions.

I know how to contact the NCBVI Board of Commissioners.

I understand the role of the Board of Commissioners.

The Executive Director demonstrates equal opportunity for the Blind.

The Executive Director sets the right goals for NCBVI.

The Executive Director sets the right priorities for NCBVI.

The Executive Director is a good manager.

The Executive Director is a hard worker.

The Executive Director seeks input from the staff.

The Executive Director is fair.

If there is a dispute with the Public, I trust the Executive Director to listen to all sides and make a reasoned decision.

Promotions at NCBVI are based on qualifications.

I think that NCBVI is run efficiently.

NCBVI is on the right track.

NCBVI has a good budget process.

If you could change one thing at NCBVI, what would it be?

What is the best feature about working at NCBVI?

I believe the feedback I provided today is valued and appreciated.

The Board of Commissioners extends our sincere thanks to all the staff members who have completed this survey. Your participation assists us in making sure that NCBVI continues to be an excellent resource to blind and visually impaired Nebraskans. [End of Survey]

Chairperson Oltman thanked the past commissioners for developing the initial survey. Chairperson Oltman added that she feels that the survey is a very useful tool in the evaluation of the Executive Director. The current commission board decided to revise the survey in order to separate out the questions in order that staff would not have to divide their answer for the two-part questions. A few questions were added to the survey which are, "If you could change one thing at NCBVI, what would it be?" And, "I believe the feedback I provided today is valued and appreciated."

Commissioner Walla moved to approve the survey as currently written. Commissioner Jirak seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and it was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Bob Burns, former commissioner, reminded the commissioners that the revised survey needs to be sent to State Personnel for their review and approval.

Chairperson Oltman noted some problems with the formatting of staff surveys when they are submitted through the staff suggestion box. The commissioners discussed placing the NCBVI Staff Survey on the NCBVI website as a password protected form to fill out and submit. Van Zandt stated that we could contact Nebraska.gov to see if the formatting issue can be resolved. Secondly, Van Zandt stated that if the commissioners decide to keep the virtual suggestion box, the Chair could forward the suggestion to Kathy Stephens for formatting and then she could forward it to the commissioners.

The commissioners discussed several options for staff to complete the surveys. Kathy Stephens and Pearl Van Zandt will check with Nebraska.gov to see if they have an electronic means to gather the survey information and tabulate the results, making sure the format is retained.

Making it mandatory for staff to complete the survey was discussed. Chairperson Oltman stated that she is not a proponent for making it mandatory. It was the consensus of the board to not make it mandatory for staff to complete the survey. It was also the consensus of the board to keep the submission of the surveys anonymous.

The tabulation process of the surveys will be tabled until the February 2009 Commission Board meeting.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

New Business

RSA Monitoring and Technical Assistance

Van Zandt stated that the information was reported earlier in today's meeting. The commissioners have been kept up to date on this through the State Plan and the emails that have been sent back and forth through the process.

Review of the Virtual Suggestion Box

Chairperson Oltman stated that she feels there is a need for an option through which staff can send anonymous suggestions to the commissioners. Two recent staff suggestions that she received were more personnel related; and therefore, forwarded to the Executive Director for a response.

Commissioner Jirak stated that he also feels that it is good to have a virtual staff suggestion box for staff to use.

Fatos Floyd suggested sending a test suggestion to the suggestion box every few weeks and to also send the Chair an email informing them that the test has been sent. This would help to ensure that the suggestions are getting their regularly.

Van Zandt reported that she and Kathy Stephens already discussed the suggestion made by Fatos. Kathy will send a test suggestion to the suggestion box every few weeks and will also send the Chair an email at this time to inform her or him that the test was sent.

Public Comments:

Fatos Floyd thanked the commissioners for not making it mandatory for staff to fill out the staff survey. As a staff person herself, she would resent it being mandatory and she feels she should be given the choice.

As for the virtual suggestion box, Hubert Paulsen suggesting checking with the web master to see if an acknowledgement can be sent to the person after they submit a suggestion. Van Zandt stated that we will add this to the list of questions to ask them.

Outcome of the Mentoring Program:

Carlos Serván reported that he previously emailed the summary of the mentoring program to the commissioners. The report has been placed at the end of the Minutes for informational purposes. Carlos Serván inquired as to if the commissioners had any specific questions.

Chairperson Oltman stated that she was glad to hear the comments and the feedback from those who participated in the project. Oltman acknowledged Carlos and other NCBVI staff for getting such a useful program going. Oltman noted that the Mentors learned a great deal as well. Commissioner Walla stated that he saw the negatives of the program on the surface, but the hard data he read proved that the program was successful and that it did make a difference in some people's lives. Walla noted that he was very happy to see the results.

Carlos Serván reported that Nebraska and Louisiana were invited to Baltimore to talk about their experience. Dr. Bell provided a similar report. Dr. Bell stated that the purpose was integration in society and to increase academics. For the academics, the results will not be known for several years because some of the kids are just starting college. The attitudes on the adjustment to blindness were measured by the start and the end of the program. The more time mentees spent with mentors, the better their attitudes become on blindness.

Data shows that the individuals who acknowledged being blind had a better attitude about their future than those who considered themselves to be low vision. By the end of the program, most of the individuals preferred to be called blind. The attitudes and hope changed with intervention.

Carlos Serván stated that this concluded the basic summary of his report. Chairperson Oltman thanked Carlos Serván for his report. The commissioners asked this report along with the results from the “Job Seekers” workshop be included with the minutes. Commissioner Walla mentioned that he liked the comments on what the participants liked about the training and what they did not like.

Commissioner Walla asked if there will be a mentoring program for the senior blind as he feels that this may be very helpful.

Bob Deaton stated that they do have this in mind; however, instead of calling it mentoring they call it peer counseling. Bob Deaton noted that they have found that the concept is very popular and so popular that they began experiencing problems with our ability to commit adequate staff time. The peer counseling worked fine when there were a few groups, but as it expanded it got to be more and more difficult to do. At this time, NCBVI does not have the staff to provide services for these support groups. New groups cannot be started because we do not have the staff to keep them going. NCBVI has gone to group teaching for providing support to go beyond the immediate training experience. Bob Deaton stated that he would like to revisit this issue of expanding efforts of mentoring to the senior blind in the future. NCBVI is trying to expand our support for the older blind population, but we will need more staff. Bob Deaton concluded by stating rehabilitation does not start until you can truly relate to other individuals who are blind.

Nancy Flearl mentioned that the senior blind population often has issues with transportation for getting to meetings, as well as for medical appointments and shopping.

NCSAB Conference

Chairperson Oltman reported that she and Pearl Van Zandt attended the NCSAB Conference earlier this week in San Diego, California. They returned from the conference last evening. Chairperson Oltman stated that she had a very good time and that the conference was very informative. There were wonderful presenters and networking opportunities at the conference. She and Van Zandt presented on how Nebraska became a separate agency for the blind.

Chairperson Oltman reminded the commissioners that Blindness Services SRC and Boards continue to have the networking conference call. Oltman encouraged all commissioners to join in on the call. The next call is scheduled for Monday, December 1, 2008. Van Zandt will forward to the commissioners the details of the call.

Focus Topics for Next Meetings:

February 7, 2009, Omaha, Topic: Group Home Teaching Sessions

May 2, 2009, Columbus, Evaluation of the Executive Director

August 8, 2009, (Tentative date) Scottsbluff, Topic: Supported Employment

Public Comment:

Bob Deaton stated that it is his understanding that other State agencies will conduct their evaluation of the Executive Director in an executive session and not during the open meeting.

Chairperson Oltman noted that the Open Meeting Act mandates that the evaluation is conducted in an open session. It can only be conducted in closed session when necessary to prevent needless injury to the reputation of a person and if such person has not requested a public meeting.

Final announcements:

There were no final announcements.

Adjourn:

The November 22, 2008 Commission Board meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Stephens

Administrative Assistant

NCBVI

Nancy Oltman

Chairman

NCBVI Board of Commissioners

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Board of Commissioners

Focus Topic for November

The below report is regarding NCBVI's placement activities. The format that we are following is based on each of the questions that were provided from the Commissioners. This report mentions in general the state wide activities and approach to placement. Additional summaries were also provided from the Lincoln district, Omaha district, and the Nebraska Center for the Blind. As always, NCBVI staff will be present at the Commission Boar meeting to answer any question or clarify any item.

1. What work is done with employers?

How do we get employers to consider a blind person for a job?

NCBVI works in two main, general ways with businesses and agencies in order to place blind consumers.

The first is that NCBVI staff approach businesses and other agencies to start building a relationship by providing information about our services, what is available regarding technology, and the capability of blind people. Some of the work done at this level are:

NCBVI staff provide power-point presentations showing the different jobs blind people are doing in different businesses. Our staff members also do job assessments at the work place to see if we have a candidate ready or who will be ready for this business. In some instances we also invite employers to our offices to talk about partnering with us. Our technology staff visit the workplace to do software and hardware assessments, among others.

The other way is to see when then the clients are getting ready for their employment goal or finishing their training. In this case we look for a specific business or agency to see if the client can get an internship, OJT, OJE, or also work assessment and technology testing. The Nebraska Center for the Blind also plays an important role in how we work with employers. Employers come on many tours of the Center and see directly the type of training our clients are exposed to. They can see the high level of expectation, the different alternative techniques, and the different equipment and technology. The employers learn that in most situations the accommodation does not cost much money but in fact it helps their business or agency to be more productive. During the WAGES program we also work mainly with governmental agencies or non profit organizations. Here the employers are being introduced to young blind people and how capable they can be. During WAGES we provide job coaches and constant supervision to guaranty that there is a high level of expectation toward the participants.

We are also in the process of building a better relationship with hospitals and the health industry across Nebraska. Erin Riehle, Director of Disability Services, Cincinnati Children Hospital-Medical Center, came during the second week of September to provide training to the General Voc Rehab agency counselors and the Commission for the Blind placement team, including some VR counselors. Several Human Resources staff members came representing the hospitals and had a good experience.

As a follow-up, Carlos Serván will contact the hospital representatives who came to the training. In addition, Nancy and Connie are working on developing an educational power-point presentation showing how to deal with blind patients in the hospitals. We are also having the Kearney office working already with Saint Francis Medical Center in Grand Island on making their system accessible. We will also work on doing in-service presentations about blindness and our services for those in the health industry who need to meet their continue education units requirement.

One of the main challenges is having adaptive technology available at the workplace, thus: our counselors and technology staff work diligently on partnering with different businesses and governmental agencies. They provide assessments, training and consultation to blind consumers and employers across the state.

Here are some of the businesses and agencies where technology consultations were provided in the calendar year: Social Security Administration, Nebraska Health and Human Services System, Nebraska Department of Revenue, Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership, Library Commission, State Treasurer, Vocational Rehabilitation agency, Unemployment Insurance Division/Workforce Development, Bryan LGH West, Saint Elisabeth Hospital, Hillis 66, WEST Corporation, PayPal, Qwest Customer Service Center, Omaha Lancaster County, Lincoln Workforce Development, University of Nebraska-Omaha, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Nebraska-Kearney, Chadron State College, Southeast Community College, Metro Community College, Hamilton College, Doane College, Iowa Western Community College, Ohio School of Broadcasting, Influent, Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Nebraska Office of the CIO, US Info, the Hyatt Hotel reservation center in Omaha, GoodWill Industries of Omaha and Grand Island, Red Cross, Cabela's, Frank House in Kearney, Methe Insurance Agency in Kearney, Home Depot in Scottsbluff, Nebraska Department of Labor, Lincoln Public

Schools, Omaha public schools, Kearney public schools, McCook public schools, Minden High School, Grand Island public schools, Scottsbluff High School, Chase County High School, JRW Sales, and Google Inc., among others. The technology program also provides loaner equipment to consumers and employers.

2. What are some interesting or unusual jobs that our clients have obtained?

It is difficult to define what is unusual because we work hard on motivating the clients to achieve the goal they want. When we work with the clients, we start by asking them, what would you like to be if you were not blind? Then we work with the client on achieving such goal. We encourage them to utilize their full potential according to their interests.

Below is the list of all the types of jobs our clients obtained in the last fiscal year:

OCCUPATIONS FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2008

Accountant

Archivist

Auto Mechanic

Automotive Master Mechanic

Automotive Mechanic Assistant

Blood Donor Recruiter

Bookkeeper/Secretary

Braille Proofreader
Cashier
Child Care Worker - Nanny
Computer Systems Administrator
Custodian
Customer Service
Customer Service Representative
Cy Thomas Document Delivery Associate
Data Information Manager
Day Care Assistant
Dining Room Attendant
Dishwasher
Factory Worker
Furniture Mover
Hand Packer And Packager
Health Service Manager
Hotel Reservationist
Janitor
Lawyer - Self Employed
Mental Health Counselor
Misc. Plant and System Operator
Office Assistant
Psychologist

Psychology - Clinical Therapist

Public Relations Manager

Ranch Manager

Randolph-Sheppard Vendor

Receptionist

Research Tech Aide li

Reservationist

Restaurant Cook

Sales Representative

Sales Representative Services

Secondary Teacher

Self-Employed Rancher

Senior Project Engineer

Stocker

Teacher

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

3. What do we do to help keep people in their jobs?

It is base on individual cases. If the person is loosing vision and needs some training at work, we provide that to the consumer. Some of this training can be using speech output, large print, organizing documents in different ways, and the use of alternative techniques for different equipment and duties.

In addition to the above mentioned, we will also provide counseling on adjustment to blindness and; in these cases, we most likely write a more extensive plan.

As an agency we work as a team in which we utilize our talents and skills in different ways. In many situations a staff person from another district or the Center would visit the employer and show how things can be done. In some situations when the employee is already blind, we keep the case open and continue providing technology support, job coaching or any other assistance. We also work closely with the businesses or agencies to let them know that we are partners and can provide, if needed, technology or any other adaptive equipment. The goal is to make sure that the client retains his/her job.

4. Expand on or clarify NCBVI's perception of the counselor's role in the placement process.

The role starts as soon as a client's case is open. Our counselors provide counseling and guidance through-out the rehabilitation process to our consumers about becoming employed. All of our counselors, as part of their training, go through the 600 hours of intensive training at the Center and they graduate knowing that blind people can and should be employed.

Our experience shows that there are three types of clients. First, those who don't need much help in finding employment because they possess all the alternative techniques of blindness, including a positive attitude, and self-advocacy skills to look for a job and become employed. For this type of clients we only provide some information and pay for their rehab process (school, books, tools, equipment, technology, etc.). The number of clients in this group is very small.

Second, are those who have the skills but need some help and guidance, but can later find employment on their own. This second group needs more training throughout the rehabilitation process on adjusting to blindness, advocacy skills, resume writing, interview skills, contacting employers, interviewing other blind people in the same type of jobs, among others. Once this second group is employed, we also do a follow up to make sure that the persons remain on the job and have a smooth transition.

The third type of client is those who would need more attention throughout the rehabilitation process. The number of consumers in this group is the largest and usually needs more assessment and constant motivation from the counselors. Many in this group also have different physical or mental disabilities and therefore we need to work in partnership with other entities. In many situations medical benefits are in risk and we work on evaluating the Benefit Planning and work incentives under SSDI and SSI. Most of our counselors received Benefit Planning training and have the ability to guide the clients to the right direction on work incentives issues.

For most of these clients, the counselors have to work on finding them employment but also doing OJT, OJE, providing job coaches, and more follow-up at the place of employment.

We have staff members in different groups or boards in order to meet and build relationships with employers. Some of these groups are, the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, Work Force Investment, and Youth Councils, among others. Our staff members work in teams to find strategies on how to best serve the clients and work with businesses. The teams exchange ideas, try different pieces of technology, different work settings, even different counselors.

5. Discuss the Buna Training – successes, things that could be improved, etc. (especially in light of the plan to do more of this in the future).

One of the great advantages was that different employers came together to talk to each other but also to clients. The employers were from both the private sector and also the public one. This also gave the participants a chance to see the variety of jobs blind people are doing in Nebraska.

In addition to the employers we already partner with, we also have new businesses coming. This gave the opportunity to those who didn't know about the capability of the blind, didn't know about our services, and didn't know about the other businesses and employers who hire blind people, have the hand on hand experience to the real deal.

Another advantage was to have technology available illustrating businesses how blind people can do their jobs. At the same time, clients who are looking for a job saw how adaptive equipment is effective and productive if they get the skills.

The conference provided the opportunity to our clients to meet each other and share their experiences and build a network of support. The message from the presenter and seeing other capable blind people around brought an immediate positive reaction to many who started to ask more questions and show more confidence.

The presenter was very knowledgeable and dynamic. This helped clients to ask questions, but also participate with their ideas.

Some of the new ideas which came up as a result of the training are: Have more extensive and separate break out sessions for those who are more advanced in their job search. Have longer breaks and more time for lunch. Look for a location where buses are more accessible and also close to eating places. The placement committee also recommended having the next conference in February 2009, in Omaha and to extend or focus more in a job fair setting. In this way clients can expend more time learning from the businesses and the businesses can learn more from the clients. The idea is that both the consumer and the business can build a rapport and end in a job interview, OJE, OJT, or a job offer.

Omaha District Report

1. What work is done with Employers & how do we get them to consider a blind person for a job?

We individualize what we do with employers based on the needs of our clients.

We look at the goals that each client have and then look at the different directions that the skills will transfer. We identify the employers that would have positions and then the client and the counselor share the contact with these employers to see who is presently hiring. We then concentrate our efforts on where there are current openings and then the VR counselor goes out and makes contacts with those that do not presently have openings. We do a public education of our services and try and market it from the stand point of how with the aging population that they can retain their employees beginning to lose vision and keep valuable talent. We ask to review the positions they have the most turnover and discuss/demonstrate how an individual that is blind and visually impaired would perform their job duties/responsibilities. Connie Daly and I are working on a PowerPoint presentation that will be adapted to meet specific industries.

We have also been doing outreach to employers and inviting their HR departments to come and visit the office and demonstrate equipment and discuss how we can work in partnership. We have had ConAgra come in with all their HR Staff. They then went to visit with Hyatt and discuss our partnership and the benefits of hiring individuals we have worked with. When we do it, and take the time to do it right, then the employer comes back and asks if there are others that would consider employment.

With ConAgra we are in process of assessing the computer system and doing a job analysis to get it set up for individuals to be hired this will be an entry level customer service/work from home opportunity with full benefits.

It is hard as every case is truly individualized based on needs and individual talents and abilities. Some cases individuals want to do their job search themselves and we talk and follow up on how they are doing. Others we are doing extensive job development. But the success is based on employers seeing people employed doing the job successfully (seeing is believing) and then also the value of hearing from another employer of the benefits they have experience in hiring an individual that is blind and visually impaired. They also recognized the benefit in working in partnership with us as an agency.

Another strategy is there are so many employers in the Omaha area that are going to temp agencies to fill entry level positions for all types of industries from clerical, customer service, production to custodial. They are temp to hire positions. We have been going directly to both the temp agencies to educate them and how we can work in partnership in placing individuals, we also go to the company as to be the temp agency. We place the person and they try them and then if they meet the employment standards they are hired. We have went this way as many of the temp agencies will not even consider an application or resume if you have not worked in the past 4 to 6 months.

2. Some interesting and unusual jobs that our clients are doing?

Have students on other areas: Astronomer, Language Translator, Doctor of Naturopathy, Chiropractor, Health Educator, School Counselor and

physical therapist assistant. The health field is a growing industry and one that more and more clients are expressing an interest.

We recently had Erin Riehle do a joint presentation on her approach to hiring individuals that happen to have disabilities. She is from Ohio and works for Project Search with Children's Hospital. She discussed ways of us working effectively with hospitals. Since we are a small agency that will not have large numbers of people pursuing the same goal, we need to look at ways to educate the healthcare industry on blindness and the abilities of blindness. We learned that doctors and nurses receive a grant total of 3 hours of training on disabilities. Based on our individual dialogue with Erin, we will be doing more extensive presentations to healthcare related training programs (Occupational Therapy Programs, Physical Therapy Program, Nursing, etc.) We will be contacting the Education Departments of each hospital. Erin mentioned staff are required to have so many CEU's to maintain their license and get on the schedule to provide this training. Likewise doctor's do Grand Rounds and do intensive training sessions for 30-45 minutes and we need to contact the necessary staff to arrange to do a presentation at Grand Rounds at each hospital.

Connie Daly and I have developed a PowerPoint presentation as mentioned before starting with the healthcare industry. Erin did discuss this and she suggested including a virtual tour of the orientation center. We have information on occupations in the healthcare industry where people are working here in Nebraska as Doctor, Nurse, Med Tech, CNA, and Dietary. The equipment they use and the focus being that with an aging work force, they want and need to retain their talent. The strategy is to not only work with retaining position, but why then not hire. It is about developing relationships and education.

3. Helping people retain their jobs?

In the past 6 months we have had several cases where people have contacted us as they are losing their vision and want to retain employment. We go in and look at the entire job and learn what is needed to perform the job. We put in place some immediate interventions and then discuss what is needed in the long term for successful retention. We will work with a more extensive program to address JAWS, Braille, cane travel, etc. If they are struggling to get to work, it will be hard to maintain the job. We work closely with the individual and their employer. We discuss transportation options, etc. To name a few, we have assisted a professor, a nurse, senior customer service representative for an insurance company and another sales representative with Omaha Steaks in maintaining their jobs.

There are many insurance companies that have disability policies and we have been contacted on educating their case managers on blindness. There question to us is when is blindness to great a disability that a person cannot work. They were not aware of our services and doctors certainly do not discuss our services with patients. We will be meeting with Lincoln Financial Services to provide information on our services and how people can retain/resume their employment. Connie Daly is working with me on this presentation, one that we can in turn use for other insurance companies and the employers they represent. This will serve us two-fold; it will be a source of referrals as well as help with retention of employment.

4. Role of the NCBVI counselor in the placement process?

The advantage of being around a long time, you see what we have done and what we do now. We in some cases have come full circle. When I first started clients did a lot of their own placement, then the counselor started doing it with the client. Then we had the brunt of it falling to the counselor. Now we are back to it being a team with the client in the center and very much an active participant.

We need to go out and do the education with employers. We need to be preparing the clients, giving them the tools they need to be successful. There are still companies that do applications on line and the sites are not accessible, we need to talk with the client about how to address those and other situations such as this. Once a client does the application either hard copy or on-line, then there are tests, we need to discuss how this can be accommodated.

We work in tandem with the client, but a lot of the education with employers and addressing the accommodations we do. We discuss how we work in partnership with employers. But we have the client actively seeking job leads also, and we meet or talk weekly about what we will each be doing. If in the process of developing job leads, a client will contact their counselor about a job lead; let them know if they have filed an application, what assistance they need in that process, a reader/driver and then the counselor will follow up with the employer and after that application. We can't do it all, but also it is the client's goal and we should be at that point in their program empowering them in this process.

Again, we have several people with multiple disabilities along with blindness that need additional support in the placement process. In these cases, the counselor is working more extensively on those cases along with other agencies we might be partnering with such as Community Alliance, Developmental Disability Service, etc.

5. Today's job seeker's/Tomorrow's Leader:

We have had several people that were on the fence about leaving SSI. We have done benefit counseling with them. They went to the training and were so motivated by the training and networking event that they are calling several times a week and working hard with their counselor to finding employment.

It helped them realize that there are employers out there and interested in what they have to offer. The group dynamics also aided in the attitudinal change.

There were all types of industries represented at the networking event. They were from the private as well as government sectors. Jobs from entry level to professional were discussed. A blend of new employers that we have not worked with and others we have positive working relationships. It was a rewarding experience for those new employers to hear of the benefits that employers have gained from hiring individuals that are blind and visually impaired.

We had a discussion with employers participating in the networking event and we discussed the process of the afternoon. We asked new employers about what questions they might have in hiring someone that is blind or visually impaired. Envision America was there as an employer, they produce the ID Mate/bar code reader, also present was a grocery store chain and Tony Melvin, representative of the Envision store at Offutt Air force Base. They discussed the ID Mate and then Tony discussed employers that are blind and visually impaired that run the entire store from stocking, running the cash register and providing excellent customer service. He discussed the id mate for stocking or in identifying products; the talking cash register and bill identifier as a few of the alternatives that people employ. The grocery store chain and other employers took the time to visit with Envision America about the ID Mate/bar code reader. His openness helped other employers to recognize the opportunities that are available to them. The stories that Envision America was able to share on a national level of employment of individuals that are blind and visually impaired were valuable. On an exciting note, they traveled from eastern Illinois to be apart of this. They drove a long way and said they work with a large number of agencies and had never seen a program like this before. They thought it was powerful and asked that they be invited again.

We have had employers call us about discussions they had with clients at the networking event and want to pursue employment options. Several were with Homeland Security and another is with a grocery store chain. Several people have had interviews at UNL. The UNL human resource representative is working with us to develop a working partnership with UNO.

The key is those consumers that are open to relocating to obtain a job.

Several clients that in having the two and half days to meet other individuals that are blind and visually impaired was instrumental in them realizing they need more skills. We have said it, but in seeing others not struggling and carrying themselves with confidence, they have elected for more training. Four individuals are doing more extensive training. It goes to the importance of looking at the job description and do you have the skills and confidence to do the job.

I think we need to be responsive to clients that are more advanced in their job search and provide them with more extensive break out groups. We have discussed having them on Disclosure, Critique your Resume, Mock Interviews, The importance of Soft Skills, Dressing for Success, Do your skills match that job description.

We are looking at a location that is on a good bus line, timing the start and ending times to meet the schedule of the public transportation and having a place with a restaurant.

We are also exploring the idea of rather than a network event, instead having a job fair so clients can learn from employers on how best to use this tool to their advantage.

Lincoln District Report

We have a placement class that is 10 sessions long. The topics that we cover are interviewing, filling out applications, researching and finding jobs, organizing your job search, how to keep a job, disclosure of blindness and using job descriptions. We partner with employers to provide the training. We have worked with State Personnel, B & R stores, Nebraska Workforce Development, UNL, Manpower and Vital Services.

We make contacts with employers to talk with them about how we can be a resource to them in their hiring needs. We will visit with them at their office or we invite them to come in for a tour of the center and we developed a power point to demonstrate that blind people can and do contribute in the workforce.

We belong to different organizations in order to further our contacts with businesses. Some of the organizations are The Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, Workforce Investment Board and Service Provider groups.

We set up internships with employers to assist our clients with developing experience as well as demonstrating to the employer how blind employees can contribute at their work place. We have set up internships with Workforce Development, Health and Human Services, Department of Corrections, Downtown Senior Center, Tabitha Hospital, Holiday Inn and many others.

We set up on the job experiences to give our clients a chance to see what the world of work is like. Most of the time this is of a shorter duration and we provide a job coach.

We assist our clients with arranging informational interviews. This is an opportunity for clients to find out if a career would be a good fit for them. It also helps them start to develop a network that they can use later. It educates the employer as well.

We have been offered an opportunity to bid on a cleaning contract with the Department of Corrections. We would clean their pharmacy once a week. We are looking at this as an opportunity to develop a relationship with the Department of Corrections and give our clients some experience and income while they are attending the Nebraska Center for the Blind. This would need to be administered by the Center for the Blind and we haven't worked out all the details.

We are working with the University of Nebraska- Lincoln to develop an internship program. They will list opportunities with us and we will have our clients apply and interview.

Placement Committee

This year we added a technology specialist to our committee. We looked at the website and made changes that would focus our efforts on employment. We included language that would increase the number of hits for a search that included the words Employment in Nebraska. We ordered promotional items to give out as we are involved in many types of fairs or business fairs. We put on the workshop in August- Today's Job Seekers- Tomorrow's Leaders. We are still following up with employers as a result of the workshop. Many of the contacts that I mentioned in the Lincoln District came as a result of the workshop. We arranged training for the Rehabilitation Counselors from Erin Riehle, an administrator who knows the value of hiring disabled workers. She partnered with Vocational Rehabilitation to put in place some very creative processes at the hospital she is at.

We are working on some PowerPoint presentations that we can make to different issues on diversity.

Center for the Blind Report

Arrange tours for employers. Sometime this includes lunch which clients serve, or coffee and dessert.

Wednesday seminars. This is with the clients and the center director and topics sometimes cover employment issues.

Fridays, we have vocational seminar with Mitzy who came from HR. These seminars are from 12:30 pm to 2:00 pm.

In computer class, resumes, cover letters and personal data sheet prepared for each client by the client.

In computer class, clients fill out on line applications for jobs

Clients go for informational interviews.

Clients go for an interview with someone that they do not know to practice their interview techniques, and if possible the interview is video taped.

Toward the end of their training, clients work on a community project which they need to volunteer some place outside of the agency.

Clients work on their soft skills dressing properly, writing notes, shaking hands during center training.

Mentoring Report

What were some of the challenges at the mentoring program?

The mentors and mentees partners who benefit the most were those who wanted to participate and were dedicated to the program. It is difficult to bring some one into your life and make arrangements such as phone calls, emails, activities, conference calls, internet surveys, etc. Some of the mentees who were not very interested always looked for excuses not to participate in the program. This brought frustration to their mentors and eventually loss of interest and commitment. Likewise, some mentors did not have the time they thought they were committing to and could not spend time with their mentees. This also created some disappointment for the mentees and they wanted other mentors.

Another type of difficulty was lack of compatibility between the mentor and mentee. Both of them had different interests and personalities. In some of these situations we had to find a different partner.

The mentoring program definitely benefited the mentees who fully participated in the different activities. It gave them opportunities to challenge themselves and take them outside of their comfort zones. It also allowed them to network and build relationships that will last a life time. Most of all, it built the belief in each of them that with proper training and opportunities the blind can compete on terms of equality.

The mentors also benefited from the program. For instance, on some occasion's mentors were challenged to do activities that they did not feel they wanted to be part of, but their mentees were looking forward to do. Mentors had a chance to learn and also continue building their confidence.

The quarterly activities were the most successful aspect of the program. It allowed mentors and mentees to participate in a variety of activities and philosophical discussions. Mentoring pairs spent time together and were able to work together and build on the relationships already established. The quarterly activities allowed mentors and mentees, who were unable to meet monthly, to spend face to face time together. Many of the activities were very challenging, fun and also demanded problem solving skills. These allowed the mentors/mentees to develop more their relationship and build confidence.

What was the most difficult part of the program?

The monthly reports and quarterly congruence caused a lot of problems for both mentors and mentees. They were a very vital part of the research aspect and were helpful in gauging the progress, but many mentees and mentors felt it was time consuming. Therefore, the coordinator had to be reminding many of the mentors and mentees to complete their reports. The other difficult part of the program was to find the right schedule to please most of the participants and encourage them to come to the quarterly activities. Some of the mentees had extra curricular activities scheduled on some weekends and could not attend some of the activities.

Nebraska Mentoring Outcomes

Fiscal Years 2006--2008

Outcome data have been reported for youth residing in Nebraska for three years of the mentoring program. These data span the Federal Fiscal Years (FY) 2006—2008, where the most recent data were collected between September 15—October 15, 2008. Throughout the reporting period, Nebraska enrolled 38 youth into the mentoring program who completed the research component (Note: although all participants were encouraged to participate in the research, they were not withdrawn from the program if they failed to participate in the research). Complete data were obtained from nine individuals for all three years, from 16 individuals who completed the survey in two reporting periods, and from 13 individuals who only took the survey once. These data are reflective of 35 youth who completed the survey in 2006, 28 who completed the survey in 2007, and nine who completed the survey in 2008. The remainder of this analysis will focus on GroupWise changes for all youth in the program from year to year.

Monthly Contacts

The thrust of the mentoring has been two-fold: (1) to provide workshops and trainings to increase group cohesion; and (2) to establish one-to-one mentoring between the youth and adults. Principle within the mentoring program has been the assumption that youth needed to invest time talking about blindness, expectations, and issues related to education, rehabilitation and careers. For this program, an expectation was set that youth and mentors would target spending 8 hours of time together per month in communication, with face-to-face time being most important, and telephone, e-mail, and other communication being secondary. For the fiscal year 2006—2007, mentors in the Nebraska program reported spending an average of 9.74 hours per month with their youth. This is reflective of 1.84 times in person on average, 5.49 times per phone, 5.3 times per e-mail, and 0.41 times by instant message. For the reporting period spanning fiscal years 2007—2008, mentors reported spending an average of 15.45 hours

per month with their youth, a considerable increase from the previous year. This time was reflective of 2.1 times in person per month, 7.18 times per phone, 2.24 times per e-mail, and 0.85 times per instant message. The most obvious trends are that the overall amount of time spent increased by more than 40%, and this time is largely attributable to more time being spent in face-to-face meetings.

Outcomes

The goal for the mentoring program was to increase the academic success, career aspirations, and community integration of youth who are blind. It was evident from the outset, however, that these macro changes would not be realized in the mentoring program during the life of the grant. Due to the age of youth and the nature of mentoring, it was understood that the life-changing outcomes that are expected for youth may not be measurable for years to come. In recognition of this fact, the research component of the program was designed to evaluate several proxy measures. Proxy measures are not directly linked to the ultimate outcome, but are indicative of the underlying traits that are associated with success. For the purposes of this program, the youth's attitudes about blindness and their hope for their future were two of the variables under consideration. Using reliable instruments to measure attitudes about blindness and hope, it is believed that increases in these traits in significant levels will be predictive of their future success.

Attitudes about Blindness. The Social Responsibility about Blindness Scale (SRBS) was used to capture youth's self-reported attitudes about blindness, and their expectations for blind people. Youth participating in this program completed the SRBS in FY 2006, 2007, and 2008. The outcome data for the Nebraska youth demonstrated significant increases in their SRBS scores over this time period ($F(2, 71)=3.75, p=.028$). In fact, the scores increased steadily from the base in 2006 of 80.5 (SD=12.1) up to a high in 2008 of 91.44 (SD=8.27). This mean increase in SRBS scores

yields a Cohen's D effect size of 1.07. Based on typical research in the Psychology and Behavioral Sciences today, an effect of .8 is considered to be of large magnitude. The observed size of 1.07 means that youth in the Nebraska mentoring program had a very meaningful increase in their attitudes about blindness over the time they were involved in the mentoring program.

Hope. With diminished hope for one's prospects comes diminished expectations, and likely diminished outcomes. This study used the Miller Hope Scale (MHS, which is a 40 item measure of a person's hope for their future. It is assumed that as hope increases, so to will effort, and ultimately outcomes as well. The data demonstrated that youth in the Nebraska mentoring program had highly significant increases in their hope ($F(2, 71)=6.13, p.01$). In fact, the youth's hope scores had a baseline in 2006 of 187.97 ($SD=22.79$), rose to a high of 205.42 in 2007, and leveled off in 2008 at 201.77 ($SD=16.33$). The Cohen's D based on the mean increases for this group is 0.873—again a significant score considering that .8 is considered to be a large effect. In practical terms, this means that in fact, youth participating in the Nebraska mentoring program demonstrated considerable increases in their self-reported hope.

Summary

These data can not definitively conclude that the mentoring program has made significant changes in the lives of Nebraskan youth. Because no control or comparison groups were available, we do not know for sure how much attitude and hope increase on their own. Also, we can not know for certain whether the amount of time spent, or the increases observed will ultimately increase the academic and career success for these youth. Nevertheless, there are several promising points that can be gleaned from these data. First, while no control group existed for this study, it is unlikely that attitudes about blindness or hope will increase strictly as a result of maturation. Because these observed increases were statistically significant,

with very large magnitudes for the effect sizes, it is logical to conclude that these changes were likely due to the mentoring program. Next, the mere fact that the amount of time invested in the mentoring activities increased substantially from the first to the next year suggests that mentor and youth felt that the time was valuable and worthwhile. Finally, although we can not predict where these youth will be in five to ten years, the data suggest that their attitudes about themselves has increased, as has their hopes, and these facts suggest that their prospects are much brighter because of their participation in the mentoring program.

Today's Job Seekers– –Tomorrow's Leaders

Sponsored by: Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Lincoln, Nebraska

Date: Tuesday-Thursday, August 5-7, 2008

Presented by: Buna Dahal

Employment Trainer & Motivational Speaker

DynamicBuna, Inc.

Centennial, Colorado

Evaluation

1. Which topic was your favorite and why?

The Value of transferable skills – because she was in the work force for close to 50 years.

Did not have a favorite.

The Resumes, because that is where she had the most questions.

I don't remember much about the conference.

Disclosure of visual impairment prior to interview.

I enjoyed the whole seminar. This was my first one.

I liked the debate on whether to disclose or not to disclose.

No favorite topic.

I liked them all.

I loved them all the same.

The Networking topic. This showed me how to network.

Disclose or Not to Disclose – I enjoyed the debate.

While too much time has elapsed between the seminar and the distribution of the survey to recall accurately each topic discussed, my memory recollects the interview role-playing. This was enjoyable because it gave me a chance to see others in action not only look foolish, but also gain insight as to what to do and what not to do in an interview.

All the topics were good and informative.

My favorite was the one about the networking.

Not sure.

Disclosure – it gave me things to think about.

Does it Matter How I Speak?

Interaction with counselor. I saw that there were things I was not doing that I need to.

Discussion of the resume. I had been trying to develop a resume on my own so this was helpful for me.

All of them were.

What would you like to be remembered as?

Putting together a resume. This is something that a lot of people do not know how to do.

Computers – liked learning about the new technology that is out there.

Preparing for the interview.

The Resume and the Interview.

The Resume part was educational.

The Debate on to disclose or not to disclose.

All of them were very good.

I liked the mock interviews. This helped me as far as being able to learn what questions were appropriate to ask.

I liked the Elevator Speech and the emphasis on selling yourself.

I liked hearing her personal story about the struggles she went through and how she overcame them.

They all seemed okay.

The part about interviewing. I got good tips and advice.

Not really sure, I was only there for the first day and then I got sick. I enjoyed what she had to say while I was there.

2. Please list three strengths of the trainer.

She was wonderful, very knowledgeable, interacted very well with participants, very open.

Very informative

Outgoing, attention getter, very knowledgeable

A good person, new how to reach out to people.

Very down to earth, a strong women, willing to teach us and was enjoyable.

Prior working experience with clients, understanding of what some employers may expect and her enthusiasm for her chosen field of endeavor.

Energetic, motivational, good follow-up and showed concern.

Great personality.

Very enthusiastic, strong voice, outgoing

Outgoing, confident in her information and a pleasure to listen to.

Energetic, Knowledgeable and Thought provoking

Very nice, funny, she was helpful.

Very articulate and very encouraging. She is a very outgoing person.

I was not impressed by the trainer.

She knew her stuff, was able to control the audience, and was really passionate about what she was doing.

Well spoken, well organized, she knew what she was talking about.

Very knowledgeable about resumes, to the point/simple, very passionate.

She has an agenda prepared and she listened to others.

She was well spoken, acted as though they know what they are talking about and she made me feel that if they can do it, so can I.

She is strong, direct and she did not let her blindness set her back.

She showed a lot of courage in what she did. She was not a person to back down because of her disability. She did admirably well. She was persistent and energetic. She made me feel as if I could make chicken salad out of chicken shit (for lack of better words).

She was organized, knowledgeable and confident with her blindness skills.

Her presentation was good, great attitude, and her knowledge of the subject.

Very dynamic, very positive, and very friendly.

She was energetic, she had good blindness skills, she was motivational.

Very clear communication very thought provoking and very easy to listen to.

She had a good presentation, but most of the stuff I had already learned at the Commission. Buna had no new information.

She has a good training. She had good teaching skills.

She had good blindness skills. She offered me motivation to not let blindness stop me.

She was very dynamic, gets what she wants and she is a real people person.

She was very upbeat, she had a great personal story and was very inspirational.

She took a personal interest in the group, very motivating and she spoke from the heart.

She spoke well on the topics.

She was very motivational; she was very friendly and very nice.

She was good at communicating with everyone.

3. Please list three weaknesses of the trainer.

She was sometimes unable to explain clearly what she wanted (like numbering off when breaking up into groups). At times she needed help from sighted people.

Didn't see any.

Cannot name any.

I really can't think of any.

Cannot think of any.

Ability to keep her audience on a chosen subject, broken command of the English language and excessive focus on some individuals that weren't going to get anything out of the conference anyway.

Did not see any.

Can't list any.

Cannot think of any. She did not show any if she has some.

I thought she was good throughout the whole training and had no weaknesses.

I don't think she could improve any where. She was great.

I cannot think of anything she needs to improve on.

Came across as phony, NFB reference Tuesday afternoon when a consumer hinted that he wouldn't be hired because of his visual limitations. The presenter should have remained neutral not endorsing one consumer organization over another. (**Note: Endorsement was only retracted Wednesday morning when she was cornered Tuesday after the session and reminded of our conversation Wednesday morning as requested. And in speaking with those that know Buna, had I not reminded her of our conversation, the clarification that NFB wasn't preferred over ACB probably would have gone un-retracted.) Too much fluff and forced enthusiasm.

I was not that impressed. The presentation was okay, but not great. Much time was wasted and the material covered was not that good.

There were a number of times that she went off on a tangent.

Sometimes she would interrupt participants or ask them to wrap it up.

Good question. At times she could have stayed with a topic a bit longer.

None really.

None that I can think of.

Can't think of any.

I didn't notice anything in particular that she could improve upon.

She drug things out to long. He talked to her personally at one point and felt she was extremely rude. I did not care for her personality. She did not start things on time.

This is a tough question. No answer.

I cannot think of anything that I would consider a weakness.

She did not keep the presentations on schedule.

I cannot think of any.

I was disappointed in the mock interviews. He had a mock interview at the Commission and it was much better. This area could have been more helpful with better planning.

She did good.

She had a rude way of cutting people off when she wanted to move to another subject. She had poor time management skills as nothing ever started on time.

No improvement is needed.

I cannot think of any areas that she needs improvement.

I can't think of anything except that she needs a backup watch.

I can't think of anything.

The microphones could have been improved. Otherwise it went very well.

I really do not know. I was only there one day.

4. Did the presentation enhance your learning?

For her, being associated with people with different levels of sight made her more appreciative of the sight she does have. She is amazed on what blind people can do.

Yes.

Honestly, I knew most of what was said, but it motivated her lots, so yes.

No, not really.

Barely

It sure did. He has had three job interviews since the training. This is great.

Yes. It did, but she would like to learn more. It amazed her on how positive the blind people were.

Did not learn anything.

Yes, it gave me more ideas on what I can do in order to find work. It helps him stay motivated.

Yes.

Somewhat.

Yes it did.

Yes – very much.

No.

Yes

In some respects. It was more of a social event for me.

Yes

Yes

Yes

Yes

His life approach is much like the trainers, so it was a lot of duplication of learning. A lot of what she said was not related to him personally. She did a good job trying to get people motivated.

Not for me, but perhaps it did for some people.

Yes

Yes

Yes

Not really because he already had most of the knowledge. He did learn not to use abbreviations in the resume.

I learned the computer.

Somewhat.

Not really.

Yes, it gave me a look at today's employment market.

Yes, it helped me sharpen my skills.

I learned a lot about interview mannerisms and being presentable.

Yes, I learned a lot about job searching.

Yes.

Yes.

5. If you had the option, what would you change in the training course?

Have a section of people who have been in the work force for a while and a section for people who are new to the work force. She has been in the workforce for a long time so some of the presentation was redundant.

I do not see any way to make it any better.

Too much time was spent in certain areas. More topics should have been brought up.

I don't really know.

The hotel lodging. She did not know she was going to have to share a room with someone. There was only one bed in the room with a pull out couch. This was disappointing. 6

Communications before the course outlining exactly what the course was to cover.

Shorten the breaks so she could get more in. It took too long to get people back seated after the breaks. This may not be realistic. I would like to attend another training seminar. The training should be open to sighted people for VR training.

I am not for sure.

I heard some criticism from others and we should do better on not criticizing people for their ideas. If you don't like their ideas keep them to yourself.

More interaction with the employers who were present.

Realizing this is the first attempt; let me suggest that for future planning, if possible, the groups are divided into sections based on levels of experience. For example, it might be beneficial to have those just starting out with seeking employment for the very first time spend time together discussing resume writing, appropriate dress, etc. Another group could consist of those currently employed wishing a career change and the best way to accomplish this task while on the clock at their current job. And

finally, those that have been out of the job market for several years wanting to return could consist of another group.

Meeting the employers was an important part of the Thursday afternoon session as well. However, the set up could have been better than what it was. Not only was the room noisy, but those employers we were assigned to be hard to find. I would suggest guidance as to employer location and room layout. Additionally, while it is now a no brainer, since no one from the placement committee communicated that bringing a resume would have been the politically correct thing to do; this might be a strong urge for the next session in Omaha.

Additionally, not all persons in attendance have the same travel skills. While I recognize and understand the importance of "a challenge," going forward, it might be prudent to consider a full service hotel having a restaurant, bar and meeting facilities. Remember, cost effective isn't always the best. One gets for what one pays.

I would not change anything as it was really good.

More time to do more networking.

On subject material, could have done more mock interviews. Could have covered more on discriminatory aspects of the real world. Could have covered more on learning and training skills.

I don't know.

During the mock interviews I thought they might be 1 on 1 (ie. an interview). Instead only chosen persons participated.

How the employers were set up. They should have been set up in booths.

Make sure that those who are attending are informed ahead of time of any expenses that they may incur.

Nothing that I can think of.

Section it off more instead of making it a straight 8 hours.

I don't really know. Given the people she was addressing, she handled it very well. We needed a better crowd of employers in attendance. The meet and greet did not go very well. It could have been better organized. He felt it was unorganized and should have been organized more like a job fair.

Better management of time. Have a different trainer.

Have more of them.

On the day when the employers came, they were set for a scheduled time and the whole thing started very late. Time management was poor.

We needed more time for the networking with employers.

Yes it did.

I don't know. I understand what they tried to accomplish with the employers but I did not like the format. It would have been more productive if the employers would have been lined up better.

I cannot think of anything to change.

The networking should have been set up more like a job fair. The way it was set up was very confusing for most participants.

I can't think of anything.

The networking with employers should have been like a job fair and not a cocktail party. Booths for the employers would have been very helpful.

It would take me a long time to think of something.

It could have been longer so things were not so rushed through.

It should be longer than three days, perhaps five days so it would not be so rushed.

I don't know. I was only there one day.

6. Would you recommend this training program to others, and if so why? -If not, why not?

Absolutely, excellent training.

Yes

Yes I would. Even if you think you know the material, you still will learn something out of it. Also, it was very encouraging and motivating.

Yes, because maybe others could benefit more than she did.

I would be very selective in choosing who I would recommend this course to. Those individuals would likely be described as being near the bottom of the employment totem pole.

Definitely, I got to see that there is hope for us out there. She would like to find work to keep herself busy and not be stuck feeling sorry for herself.

Definitely, would bring a bus load to it.

Yes, I don't know.

Yes, if anyone has difficulty in finding work or motivating themselves, this seminar helps.

Yes, it gives you a good overview of employment and how to better yourself for looking for a job.

I would only recommend it if I had assurances that my suggestions were going to be implemented and ACB's employment task force were involved in the presentation process.

Most definitely. Because it was very helpful. It really opened her eyes and gave her a good understanding about things.

Yes, because it was very informative.

No

Yes, it did give me a lot of clarification on stuff.

Yes, if you are looking for ways to enhance a career.

Yes. I liked the idea of learning about the different aspects of the job hunt. It was motivating and I got re-energized.

Yes, especially those fresh out of high school or those going through job training programs.

Yes, it gave me a source of knowledge that I can accomplish anything. It also gave me motivation to change my career major.

Yes, it was very good.

Sure.

Depending on what changes were made. For him, much of the information was redundant as he has had college training in some of the areas. Therefore, for people in college – probably not.

Yes, because it helped me further in pursuing my associates degree in computers.

Yes, there is valuable information for those starting out in the job market.

I would recommend the training for those new to blindness.

Yes, because it was very educational and effective.

Yes, I suppose, if they did not have as much training as I had.

Yes, It was useful.

I would recommend the training only to individuals new to blindness.

Yes, it was very informative.

Yes, the debate offered two great opinions on disclosure.

Yes, it may motivate people to plan for the future.

Yes, it was good.

Yes, because it was a great learning experience and helped gain insight on what she wants to do with her life.

Yes. It would be a good learning experience.

Comments:

I do not go to much training wherein people are blind very often. She has some sight. As for the networking event, it should have been set up more as a job fair. It was confusing to try to find the employers when everyone kept moving around all the time. More time should have been allowed for this section. 30 minutes was not enough time.

No comments.

No comments.

No comments.

A lecture describing her thoughts on the subjects to set the audience up to embrace the concepts in a manner which would allow them to gain the most knowledge from the time spent. As it was, she was hard to follow and understand her expectations as they related to employment. Finally, in the last couple sessions a very few were catching on. This may have gotten the attention of her audience, thus curtailing so many people from trying to comment on their impressions when mostly they just needed to talk instead of learning and growing from her experiences.

There should be more programs that blind people can go to so we do not feel sorry for ourselves.

Counselors need to get clients more involved in blind programs.

The training was very good.

I have no comments.

I think there was a lot to learn.

I was glad that I had the opportunity to attend.

To avoid the obvious NFB favoritism, I am also including ACB's contact information for their employment committee. The excuse that John had no knowledge of an ACB employment committee shows, justified, or not, some

unwillingness of the agency to not ask questions and seek input from consumer groups on this topic outside the Federation.

I thought the training was awesome.

I have no comments.

No guidance or information about the layout of the room for interviews. Some of the employers were “jokes.” He ended the conversation by saying I was pissing him off and that he was ending the conversation.

At some times it seemed rushed, especially during the networking.

I would like to see more employers from outside of Lincoln to be present. Have training in Omaha.

I was impressed, especially at the beginning. I reinforce the use of separate booths for the employer interviews.

None.

As long as you start young you can better prepare for the future.

I really enjoyed the training.

No more comments.

I feel that there are a lot of qualified people within the Commission could have taught the seminar with better skill and knowledge. She got off track too often.

The training was very good and they should do more of them.

The training was well presented and it was positive experience.

Time management needs to be improved. We wasted a lot of time.

The interview portion with the employers should have lasted longer.

No additional comments.

I would like more technology training.

It was good.

The only thing I did not like was the way the networking with employers was set up. They should have had booths. Some of the employers acted non-interested in being there.

It was well organized and I enjoyed the interaction.

No comments.

I thought it was a wonderful program, one of the best she has ever been to. I hope there are many more.

I would have liked to attend all three days but I got sick and had to go home after the first day.