

Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired  
Public Meeting  
Saturday, May 6, 2017  
Holiday Inn Express  
508 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue  
Kearney, NE

MINUTES

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

Mike Hansen, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. The meeting began with introductions.

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

Commissioners absent: Mark Bulger, Designee of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, Omaha.

Commission staff present: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant; Carlos Servan, Deputy Director VR; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director HR; Erin Brandyberry, North Platte District Supervisor; Adrienne Moody, VR Technician.

Public Present: Jeri Whitlow and Kim Scherbarth.

It was noted that public comments are welcome during the scheduled Public Comment Periods regarding the agenda items or other relevant issues. Kathy Stephens recorded the meeting and the recordings are available on the website. The meeting is scheduled to adjourn before lunch.

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

Approval of the February 4, 2017 Commission Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Newman moved to approve the Minutes of the February 4, 2017 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Bell seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and it was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Commissioner's Report

Chair Hansen noted that he has considered taking this item off of future agendas. The commissioners keep busy each quarter reading letters and reports from the executive director. Commissioner Newman did note that he attended the April Statewide Staff meeting in Grand Island. The commissioners also assist with various NCBVI training programs.

### Report from the Executive Director

#### **Activities and efforts since February 4, 2017:**

I testified to the Nebraska Unicameral Appropriations Committee at the Budget Hearing March 2<sup>nd</sup> for our 2017-2019 Biennium Budget request. Commissioner Bulger also testified with excellent information and perspective. The Committee recommended funding NCBVI at our full request level. There are still the steps of full Unicameral review, and then Governor's approval or potential line item changes, before we know for certain how our funding will look for the next two years. Also on the funding side is the Federal budget. That is not yet finalized, for this year. It is likely we will have an update about this between now and May 6.

Director Van Zandt noted that NCBVI receives a lot of small donations throughout the year ranging from \$5.00 to \$100.00. When we receive a donation we always send thank you letters to those people. We recently received a \$10,000.00 donation. State law requires that if you receive a gift of \$10,000.00 or more, you must request permission from the Governor to accept the gift and spend the funds. We do not yet have that approval from the Governor. When we do receive permission we will be able to fully announce it and put it into our budget. The person who donated the money stated that she is aware of the good work that NCBVI does.

Renovations in the Lincoln office are nearly complete. The NBE equipment work area at the East end is done and is very good work space. Soon new tile will be laid in the pre-existing Center restroom. In mid-July, a major water pipe will be replaced in the Center. This project was needed for a long time now, but there were problems getting a bid to do the work and other issues.

Our formal Request for Proposals (RFP) for new apartments was not successful. We are seeking administrative approval for permission to pursue discussions with potential space outside the RFP process, since there were no adequate proposals. The current lease is up July 1; we did sign a five-year continuation lease so as to not be without any living space for our Center students. The lease includes language that will allow us to move if better accommodations are located sooner.

A great deal of work is being done on the AWARE client database system. Many staff members are involved with the process; they have been positive in their efforts and commitment. Go-Live is set for July 3, 2017. We will have both AWARE and eForce working from mid-May to mid-June to make sure all facets operate as required. After July 3, eForce will be available with read-only archived records.

We established a state contract with the regional provider for many of the vendors of access technology. The contract is in effect with NanoPac for purchasing technology for clients. Wes Majerus is working with Pat Fischer on a product catalog.

Chair Hansen asked if other public entities such as an ESU within the state of Nebraska able to utilize the contract that NCBVI has with NanoPac. While it is not NCBVI's responsibility, it would be good to let State Universities and others know of this contract. Director Van Zandt stated that typically the State Purchasing Division informs agencies of contracts that are available. However, in this case it is not certain. Director Van Zandt stated that she will follow up on this issue.

A major emphasis with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) now is to build a Common Intake Portal. This will enable people to apply for multiple services and entities at once and will enable workforce agencies to know when a person has applied for another service, and who might be eligible for their services. It is in the planning stage and will involve a full-scale Request for Proposals, presentations, exploration and eventually a decision. The Department of Labor has a grant to fund this endeavor.

We continue with Core Partner Meetings with Nebraska Department of Labor, Education/Voc Rehab, Unemployment, and Adult Education colleagues. We are also a part of the Nebraska Partner Council, which pulls in entities beyond the core partners to put WIOA into action across the state.

Chair Hansen asked if the Common Intake Portal is something that the various organizations in Nebraska have chosen to work on or is it a mandate from WIOA. Director Van Zandt stated that she believes that the Common Intake Portal is a mandate, but how it is accomplished is up to the states.

Continued with the State of Nebraska Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Task Force. Meetings are monthly for now, as the effort is established; then will likely change to a quarterly basis. The primary purpose is for assuring the public that state services will be accessible to members of the public. I raised the question about issues state employees have accessing state internal systems. That is not the immediate focus, but the coordinator will discuss this idea with Administrative Services and the Governor's office, which established the Task Force. They are still in process of creating a position of ADA Coordinator to be in charge.

Attended monthly Agency Directors Meetings for information on budgets, new laws, and other aspects related to managing State of Nebraska agencies.

Attended Quarterly NBE Blind Licensees Committee meeting.

Met with Voc Rehab and Nebraska Department of Education/Special Education, about PreETS services and how we can collaborate to meet the needs of students with disabilities. We have developed a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on this topic. It is not yet finalized. There is also a joint letter to schools, on Department of

Education letterhead, that informs educators about two major parts of WIOA that relate to the Schools. Those are Pre-ETS and the limitation on the use of subminimum wage. VR sent the letter to all their staff; NDE sent it to all school administrators, directors of Special Education and school psychologists throughout Nebraska. The final letter and the draft MOU has been sent to all NCBVI staff and the Board.

Presented on a panel of providers to the State Transition Conference, in collaboration with Voc Rehab and the Nebraska Department of Education/Special Education.

Developed agency policy to allow NCBVI staff opportunity to request telecommuting.

Attended the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska's Legislative Breakfast. This was a good opportunity to speak with State Senators and the staffers.

Gave a presentation about our Pre-ETS and transition programs and services to the Independent Living Committee of the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB). Also, attended the full NCSAB Conference.

Attended NCBVI State Staff Meeting.

Held conference calls with Helen Keller National Center Regional Rep, Beth Jordan, with Deaton, Flearl and Poff to discuss ideas for meeting the needs of deaf-blind Nebraskans. We are exploring an idea to develop funding for Support Service Providers (SSP). This will be continuing.

Attended and presented at the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska State Convention. Had the opportunity to meet with other providers and with consumers from the state.

Attended the Civil Rights Conference put on by Lincoln Council on Human Rights in Lincoln.

We are working on the four chapters of Rule which govern our agency. All are being reviewed in terms of changes in the law (especially WIOA) and in our procedures.

Met with Vocational Rehabilitation Director, Business Manager, Administrators, and Transition Leads to discuss collaboration on Pre-ETS and the WIOA requirements that all people with disabilities have opportunity for work that is competitive and integrated, rather than sub-minimum employment in sheltered workshops.

Ongoing work:

Weekly meetings with Leadership Team on many issues.

Attended Mayor's Multicultural Advisory Committee for Lincoln/Lancaster County

Continued work on strategies and procedures to address audit findings and recommendations.

Attended Supervisors Meetings.

Attended occasional conference calls for NCSAB Executive Committee.  
Participated in Friends of the Commission meetings/conference calls.

#### Service Statistics from Julie Buren

Since the start of Federal Fiscal Year 2017 (October 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017), we served 663 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients in all statuses. Of the active VR clients, twenty four (24) were closed having achieved their employment goals. Thirty six (36) were closed without achieving employment (refusing further services, unable to locate, death, transfer to another agency, and other). Five (5) clients were closed before a Plan for Employment was developed. There were 356 Active VR Clients as of March 31, 2017.

In the Independent Living (IL) track, 414 clients received services in all statuses. Of Active Clients, one hundred thirty three (133) were closed successfully achieving their goals; thirteen (13) were closed without achieving their goals (withdrew, deceased, and other reasons). At the end of the March 2017, there were 209 Active IL Clients. The majority of these (207) are Senior Blind. One active IL client is 37. One is under 18 years old – his IL case was closed April 14 and he was referred to VR.

#### Center's Quarterly Report 2/5/2017-5/6/2017

Currently: 8 Clients (One client will graduate at the end of April.)  
3 Three Day Stays (One of the 3 Day Stays was from West Virginia.)  
4 Students had Mini Meals

Tours: Radio Talking Book New Executive Director, two staff Easter Seals, two guests from the public, Platte Valley Christian School (24 staff and students), Golden Plains School (40 staff and students), an Industrial Arts teacher from LPS, and eight NCBVI consumers one of which was a Face Time tour.

Activities: St. Patrick's Day Research Paper, Budgeting, and Buffet Activity, the ACBN State Convention, and some Center students chose to participate in Dyeing Easter Eggs. One Center student had his little boy come and Dye Easter Eggs also. The Center students also put on an Easter egg hunt for the little boy. Some Center students also participated in a Mary Kay (make-up and skin care) activity. All students participated in a Grilling activity.

Some Center Staff Attended: Motivational Interviewing Skill Building Training, CAP Training, participated in and presented at Winnerfest, the College Workshop, and the Project Search Job Fair. One Center staff member is also getting re-certified in One Touch Self-Defense. Two Center staff are attending the Salvation Army's Volunteer Appreciation Lunch because the Center students volunteer to help the Salvation Army annually. Center staff will also attend the annual NCBVI State Staff Meeting.

Center Supervisor: Continues to speak to all NCBVI districts on Center changes and updates, continues to participate in monthly Center Director's conference calls, and is working on the AWARE adaptation, testing and training teams. The Center Supervisor also

spent a week at the Louisiana Center for the Blind gaining ideas on ways to improve Center Training in Nebraska.

Additional Notes: We had Hy-Vee come and give two seminars to the students on “Eating Healthy on a Budget” and “Good Nutrition.” The Center students and staff attended the Parent Bill of Rights hearing as well as NCBVI’s Budget hearing. Shari Bahensky spoke to the Center students about CAP (Client Assistance Program). Julie Johnson spoke to the Center students about Guide Dogs. Four Center students attended the Project Search Job Fair, which was specifically for the Pre-ETS (Pre-Employment Transition Services) age range. We had two representatives from the ACBN speak to the Center students on the ACB as well as the upcoming state convention.

The Center has two SOS employees working with a couple of Center students on ELL (English as a Learning Language) as well as College Prep. The Center is focusing a lot of time on budgeting, job exploration including informational interviews and job shadow experiences, and college prep skills because we have a good number of Pre-ETS students in the Center.

The Center staff will be having a retreat on May 3-4, 2017 to work on improving services and training at the Center.

There are still some final small remodeling projects that need to be completed in the Center and hopefully it will be completed soon.

#### Lincoln District Activity Report April 24, 2017 by Connie Daly

AWARE is coming and a number of our team has been involved. I have been part of the adaptation and education team. Cheryl Livingston and Charli Saltzman will be trainers and have participated in the Train the Trainer and User Acceptance Training. We will be testing the system in the next few weeks. It has been very time consuming and we are confident that it will be well worth it. Nancy Flearl has helped out the Lincoln District by providing new counselor training for Stephanie Wagle. Stephanie benefitted greatly from this and we really appreciate the support.

We purchased four ads in the Senior Lifestyle Advantage magazine. The first one ran in March. It is also available online at [www.seniorlifestyleadvantage.com](http://www.seniorlifestyleadvantage.com). Eric has done a video about WAGES to use in recruitment of students. He continues to tweet and post pictures of events that are happening at our agency. He designed a poster that describes an employee engagement program called the “4 Keys to Excellence”. He will start on a center video and a new center brochure.

We partnered with Nebraska VR to host a Project Search Job Fair for students with disabilities. We had over 200 participants at the Cornhusker Marriott. The participants were able to complete assessments for different job skills such as: auto detailing, construction, clerical, customer service representatives, food service, etc. Business partners developed the assessments. Educators were also present and assisted students with navigating the job fair. They had the opportunity to have a mock interview and learn

about job seeking skills. It was very organized and exciting to be part of the team. One of our contributions was to hire Aaron Davis as the keynote speaker. We had seven clients in attendance.

Stephanie was part of the planning committee for both the College Workshop and Winnerfest. She worked both programs as well as other team members. We had a teen group and two kid's groups this past quarter. We also had two Group Home Teachings for adults. We will rotate the Teen Group and the Kid's group every other month.

We have several clients that are attending NCECBVI. Shane and Stephanie had a very successful meeting with them about these clients and we are going to collaborate with them on finding internships in Nebraska City.

Larry Roos and Nancy Coffman attended the NE Brain Injury Conference. Nancy Coffman and Charli Saltzman attended a training offered by the State of Nebraska called a, "Better You in Two." John Schmitt and Stephanie Wagle attended the Transition Conference.

We had clients' business plans approved as Photographer, Artist, Farmer, Mental Health Therapist and private vendor. We have approximately six clients working with Abilities Fund. We have referred many clients to Easter Seals for benefits counseling. These services have been a great benefit to our clients.

We had clients get jobs as a Food Service worker, NBE vendor, Mental Health counselor, Customer Service Representative. We helped a person maintain work as an assembler.

#### Highlights Omaha District May 2017 by Nancy Flearl

Employment: 2 as Food service workers, receptionist, 2 Customer Service Reps, Switchboard Operator

For each employment situation, we are looking to see if there is some certification need that we can assist consumers in attaining.

All counselors continue to work with group sessions 2 -3 times a week with transition students working on pre-transition vocational skills.

Had an increase in VR referrals this past month.

Staff have been meeting with VR and other core partners to discuss employment strategies. They meet Thursdays.

We have been reaching out to schools as the school year ends about students participating in our transition programs over the summer.

Kelly and Larry and other staff will be doing a group training with Vision teachers on the GPS apps for teaching mobility so we are providing consistency between what the school is doing and what we work on.

We have been working with HKNC, Bob and Pearl on a potential pilot project for SSP (Support Services Provider).

Tim and Larry attended the college workshop

Tim has worked with the parent network. The April meeting was a follow up to the college workshop. We had disability student services from Metro Community College come in and discuss skill needed to be successful in post-secondary education.

Cheryl has been doing attend various health fairs for Seniors Citizens.

Kathy has been working with AWARE and Winnerfest, was on the planning committee for the College Workshop

Kathy and Tim have been attending the State Leadership Program. This program ends in August.

Larry has been doing tech assessment with transition students and their family. This has driven home the point of needing skills and accessible software. Many students cannot keyboard, have poor spelling, read very slowly either needing screen enhancement software or screen enhancement is enlarged to the point they are not efficient.

He has also been working with several job jeopardy cases and the IT Departments.

Monique and Tim busy with all the purchase orders getting ready for ACBN, NFB convention and WAGES.

We did attend the VR and DD Services meeting on March 30<sup>th</sup> about closing shelter workshops by March 2019. We have already had several referrals this past month relating to this.

#### North Platte (NP) District Highlights February through April by Erin Brandyberry

The past quarter has been very busy with many exciting things happening. The North Platte district has done a great job of networking and building community relationships while still doing a great job serving their clients.

The North Platte district completed another motivational interviewing follow-up training via Zoom video conferencing at the beginning of April which was very beneficial in developing skills. We had a great state staff meeting in April and greatly enjoyed the presenters that we had this year.

We had a client gain employment at Dunkin Donuts in Kearney.

Erin, Cristal, Diann, and Angie attended the transition conference that was held in Kearney in February. We learned about several opportunities for NCBVI to increase our

relationship with the schools to enhance the services that are provided to transition students.

Diann has assisted with planning the Winnerfest, college workshop, and currently the PI program. She has worked Winnerfest and college workshop programs. Fritz also worked the Winnerfest program. Diann will represent the North Platte district on the NCBVI transition committee.

Erin attended the second session of the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute (NRLI) in San Diego in March and gained some great information as well as spent some quality time networking with other professionals.

Erin moved from working out of the Kearney office to the North Platte office on April 17<sup>th</sup>.

Fritz and Laura had a booth for NCBVI at the Cerebral Palsy Experiential Walk where they were able to spread awareness and advocate for the blind and visually impaired. Fritz and Laura are having a booth at an adaptive equipment children's expo in Kearney on 4/27/17 which is being put on by Tree Top physical therapy. We are excited about opportunities like this where we are able to network and reach children at younger ages.

Erin, Adrienne, and Cristal have been participating in AWARE trainings to prepare for the new case management system. Erin and Diann attended the ACB-N convention in Omaha as first time attendees which enhanced our philosophy.

Erin, Cristal, and Deanna have attended community connections meetings in Kearney on a monthly basis where they are able to network and inform other agencies about the services that NCBVI provides. Diann attends a monthly meeting of community service workers in North Platte.

Project Search monthly meetings have been attended by Cristal in Grand Island and Diann in North Platte.

Angie is participating in the regional planning meeting for WIOA in the Scottsbluff area to identify the needs of the Scottsbluff area and for NCBVI to be a resource to other community agencies. Angie also participates in a monthly meeting with community agencies to discuss strategies for meeting the regulations of WIOA.

Cristal attended the Agri-ability advisory council board meeting in Kearney, which is held annually. Cristal and Jan attended a task-analysis training that was sponsored by Nebraska VR.

Deanna's position on the statewide brain injury advisory council moved from the position of a technical advisor to a full time council member, which now gives her voting rights. Deanna also attended the annual brain injury conference in Kearney. Deanna continues to serve on the Kearney area aging coalition, which meets monthly. She also is a part of a pilot program for the Aged & Disabled resource center. She is serving on the statewide

advisory board as well as serving for the Kearney area. Deanna attended the AFB leadership conference; a meeting for OIB program managers, which she found very beneficial. She has also participated in two conference calls about the 7OB report to increase our efficiency in what we report on the 7OB. Deanna has done a presentation at the Nebraska VIPS group and had a booth at the Day of Caring in Hastings.

Laura created a packet with brochures and business cards that she mailed to doctors office that they are able to hand out to clients as they see fit. Since then we have seen a significant increase in referrals, which has been very exciting.

We have a client who attended FYI last fall and has become a great advocate for our agency. He regularly is telling people about the great services our agency has to provide and has asked NCBVI if he could have a supply of our business cards, brochures, etc. We have been very engaged in networking in our district and working towards building relationships with others in the communities we serve.

#### Bob Deaton Highlights

NCBVI Telecommuting Policy issued March 30.

Current efforts are focused on preparations for state staff meeting and revising NCBVI rules.

#### Quarterly Report on Transition Activities by Shane Buresh

There has been quite a flurry of transition program activity sense the last quarterly commission board meeting. The week following the last meeting, Dr. Van Zandt, a host of other commission staff and I attended a statewide Transition conference put on by NDE entitled "COUNT ME IN! Connecting For Success". I heard there were more than 200 teachers, para's, VR, NCBVI and other professionals present. Dr. Van Zandt presented as part of a luncheon panel discussion of various adult service providers, and all of us attended a ranging mixture of breakout sessions. Highlights included a keynote by Denise Bissonnette, "Beyond Barriers to Passion and Possibility", in which she talked about creating job opportunities based on the person's skills not finding a job that already exists as a match; a panel of positive collaborative efforts between VR and schools; a workshop on how to utilize transition tools provided by NDE; and a presentation about how to utilize video as a way to motivate students and track their success. The workshop concluded with a comedian who talked about stress reduction and how to incorporate humor as a way to defuse situations. I have subsequently attended a transition advisory committee meeting with many of these same statewide transition personnel.

As we moved into March, we held the spring Winnerfest the first weekend, which was entitled "Blind & Socially Savvy Strengths Series: Harnessing the Power of Emotional Intelligence for Self-advocacy and College Success". This workshop was designed and presented by the folks from the International School of Protocol. There were 19 Pre-ETS individuals who attended. This event was a tremendous companion to the fall Winnerfest presented by Dale Carnegie. While it reinforced skills like working a room and public speaking, this curriculum had the students dig deeper within themselves and try to develop and utilize their own personal emotional intelligence. Students worked on everything from

verbal and non-verbal communication, to concepts such as time management, relationship building and how to properly utilize technology, which is highly relevant for both future work and college settings. A particular highlight was the college recruiter fair reception. The students prepared one-minute speeches to utilize in meeting the recruiters and they not only visited booths but also, navigated a reception style situation learning how to navigate both mobility wise and socially with food and drinks. There was also emotional intelligence sessions specific to blindness skills development. The Winnerfest concluded with a dining experience, which simulated either a more formal business or social situation dinner which allowed the students to utilize their newly acquired food etiquette skills.

Three weeks later, we held the 2017 College Workshop, which was once again jointly sponsored with NABS (National Association of Blind Students). 17 Pre-ETS and adult college students attended this weekend event. Our keynote speaker was Henry (Hoby) Wedler, PH D. He is a blind chemist and owns his own consulting company. He spoke to everyone about the importance of being assertive, following their dreams, taking risks and not accepting limits that others place upon them. He empowered everyone with discussions about how they can do STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) or other classes that are traditionally not thought to be accessible to blind persons. He even lead each student through several science hands on demonstrations to underscore the point.

Other highlights included, presentations by our own tech team, a memory techniques and study skills seminar by Dale Carnegie, presentations by WINAHEAD and Education Qwest, 1 touch self-defense demonstrations, discussions by blind college students and parents, blind persons talking about how to get involved in extracurricular activities, philosophical discussions and a dorm style cooking skills activity.

One additional event in March was that I attended a meeting of a new advisory committee I was asked to join at UNL. It is a committee for a grant given to both the teachers of deaf and blind preparation programs by the OSEP office entitled the Mid-Plains Professional Upgrade Partnership – Sensory Disabilities, which is designed to recruit and train educators. This Advisory Board will meet annually until the project's completion in 2021 to review progress, evaluate program data, and provide suggestions.

Speaking of new committees, I have decided to form an internal to the Commission transition committee. This committee will consist of myself and a counseling staff member from each district and a rotating representative of the supervisors group. The goal of this committee is to bring consistency and collaboration to our transition efforts statewide. We will be holding the inaugural meeting of this committee mid-May.

While we are discussing statewide projects, we are continuing to work with Dr. Meers on the best practices guide he is pulling together for us. He has a 33 page document ready to present to the staff and he attended the state staff meeting to give us a preview. By the time of your meeting this guide should be released for use by commission staff and consumers.

During this quarter much energy has also been spent on future summer based programming. There is of course WAGES, which will begin on June 2<sup>nd</sup> with a work place readiness seminar from the folks at the International School of Protocol. The program will proceed through consumer convention time concluding on July 16<sup>th</sup>. This summer students will be working full time schedules without a skill training component, but many of the other activities are still intact. Project Independence will be at the end of July running from the 30<sup>th</sup> through August 3<sup>rd</sup>. The theme this summer is inspired by the parallel between the 150th birthday of our state and the pioneering spirit the students must possess to claim their own stake in life. The theme is "We Put the PI in Pioneer: Exploring our Future Frontier. In addition, the next week we will be holding the second reBoot Camp in Lincoln. This summer students and their teachers will be offered JAWS Basics training for two and a half days and exciting activities during the evenings.

One exciting new venture this summer is a collaboration effort between NCBVI and NCECBVI. We will be conducting several OJE work opportunities in the home communities of several of the NCECBVI attendees who are also our clients, but who have significant additional disabilities to their blindness such that they may not be as successful as we would hope for at WAGES itself. We are jointly developing and staffing these work sites and we will be funding the salaries of the students and their work readiness skill assistants. It is the hope that perhaps in subsequent summers these students may be able to attend the full program.

I look forward to report on these and other projects in my next report. Until then we will push forward toward a summer of possibilities for the blind youth of Nebraska.

#### Technology Program Report by Wes Majerus May 6, 2017

The technology program continues to prepare for its second instructional seminar for transition-aged youth. The workshop will be known as reBoot 2.0 and its focus this year is on JAWS for Windows. Students will learn JAWS basics and proceed into word processing and editing and finally to use of the web. Dates are August 10 through the morning of August 12. NCBVI has secured the Southeast Community College Enterprise Computing Lab that is located at the Jack Huck Continuing Education Center at 68th and O Streets for the training.

Much of this quarter's work has been concerned with the roll-out and adaptation of AWARE. The three-time-a-week adaptation morning calls with Alliance staff started in late February and concluded in late March. The adaptation team also entered the shells of 580 cases into the system in early April. There have also been several training opportunities throughout the quarter. I participated in a web conference-based training on the AWARE database as well as on-site trainings for system administrator training, train the trainer, and test team training.

On March 7, the Office of the CIO converted NCBVI's network to the New World Network. This did not change hardware inside our offices, but added redundancy and rerouted traffic. We were hopeful that being an early agency to convert to New World would be beneficial as we move closer to AWARE. Overall, the upgrade went as planned, but there

are lingering side effects. The OCIO overlooked our WIFI network when doing the conversion, so now our WIFI does not allow us to access some resources readily. This has been reported, but will not be fixed until bugs are worked out of routing hardware. We received a special exemption to have our Lexmark copier as oppose to using a machine from Copy Services. In the beginning we were unable to receive electronic scans of faxes or scan documents via email. This has now been fixed. Currently, the machine cannot send its meter reads to our vendor, Solution One. I continue to work on ways to fix this issue.

Recently, a contract has been made available through the State for purchasing from NanoPac, Inc. This will allow for the procurement of items, which NanoPac has the exclusive right to distribute in Nebraska. This includes Duxbury, VFO (AISquared, Freedom Scientific, and Optelec), Humanware, and Kurzweil Educational Systems. I am working with Pat Fischer of NanoPac to get the product catalog into a more streamlined format.

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

January 20 – April 17, 2017

1. Carrie DeFreece completed Center training and has assumed her regular, full-time duties.
2. Temporary staff for WAGES has been hired and in place.
3. Laura Lavaley has given notice that she will be resigning towards the end of May, as her Husband has received a job offer in another town.
4. Participated in a webinar, for HR people, to update us on open enrollment. Open enrollment will be from May 9-23, 2017 and there will be no major changes to any of the benefits this year.

#### Kathy Stephens – Quarterly Highlights

Working on year-end inventory – scanning of fixed assets. The scanners that are currently being used by the State of Nebraska are on their end of life cycle. The batteries are not holding a charge for very long. The company that originally sold the scanners is no longer in business; and therefore, replacement batteries cannot be ordered. Administrative Services is looking into a new scanning option for 2018.

Worked with Office Innovations and Surplus Property to surplus many items in the NBE Storage area.

Attended State Staff Meeting at Fairfield Inn in Grand Island.

Working on staff travel arrangements and registrations for several different conventions, conferences and trainings coming up.

Staff Appreciation gifts were received and distributed to staff. This year the gift was an insulated hot/cold thermos.

Working with Wes Majerus to find a more efficient way to record Commission Board meetings. We will be testing a “Voice Memos” app that is used with an iPad. This will bring our recording system up to date with state of the art technology and enable us to manage the task without hiring a person to operate the process at every meeting. We purchased a high efficiency microphone that synchronizes with the iPad; Audacity will be used to fine-tune the recording for high quality sound.

#### Business Office - Bill Brown

AWARE implementation including Training and Case note and Vendor Book issues  
Orientation/Training of Carrie DeFreece  
Preparation for Agency Budget Hearing  
Pull together and report Agency Key Indicators for FFY 2016  
Closing of NBE Vendor Retirement Accounts  
Starting the User Acceptance Testing phase of the AWARE project.

The commissioners thanked Director Van Zandt for her report.

#### Unfinished Business

##### Budget and Biennium Update

Director Van Zandt reported that NCBVI is doing well in our budget. We are still spending from carryover that we had before. The WIOA now requires 15 percent of your full vocational rehabilitation funds and 50 percent of the supported employment funds must go for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). This is a huge amount of funds especially since a majority of blind people tend to be in the older age ranges. Some state agencies are having a lot of trouble spending 15 percent. With our programs, NCBVI has always had the emphasis on transition. The 15 percent is statewide; it combines the Voc Rehab General agency and NCBVI. Therefore, NCBVI has been having more meetings with Voc Rehab to work together. If state agencies do not spend the required amount they will be penalized by the federal budget.

Director Van Zandt reported that there is a federal budget now. The Grant Awards should be coming soon. Director Van Zandt noted that Business Manager Bill Brown does a good job of reporting on the budget to the Leadership Team and the information is passed on to the supervisors.

#### Nebraska NFB-Newsline®

May 1, 2017

Jamie K. Richey, Out Reach Coordinator

Things have been busy with Nebraska NFB-Newsline®. StarTran continues to release updates to the new routes, which requires constant updating on Newsline. Some Nebraska publications have experienced issues the last couple of months, but the national office in Baltimore has worked to get them back up and running quickly. Three new publications have been added under the Breaking News category and include: the New

York Times Online, the International Business times and the McClatchy DC. Also added is the Rome News-Tribune a local daily newspaper of Rome Georgia.

Nebraska NFB-Newsline® currently has 1,969 subscribers; seven were added in February, two in March and six in April. Subscribers listened to 16,179 minutes of content via the phone in February, 18,289 in March and 16,528 in April. Out of those calls, 55.01% were made using the local number in February, 55.02% in March and 54.91% in April. This means that over half of the calls to Newsline are made through the local number! Newsline was also accessed through the web, the mobile app and through email 4,643 times in February, 5,987 times in March and 5,295 times in April. The most popular content accessed were the Nebraska publications followed by the national publications.

This concludes my report for this quarter. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you and happy reading!

#### Client Assistance Program (CAP) Complaints or issues February-April 2017

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

Shari Bahensky met with the Nebraska Center for the Blind Staff as well as the Center clients in March to share information regarding the Client Assistance Program and Hotline for Disability Services. Shari plans on meeting and sharing information/resources with the North Platte area office this summer.

Shari attended the NCBVI State Staff meeting in April and has also been attending the Supervisor Meetings.

#### Anonymous Staff Suggestion Box Comments

Chair Hansen reported that there were three items in the Anonymous Staff Suggestion Box. Chair Hansen stated that for confidentiality reasons he is not going to read all of the suggestions verbatim.

1. There is some perceived favoritism with a client receiving more support than other clients.

Chair Hansen noted that the deputy director and supervisors have periodic case reviews that would catch something like this if it were occurring. Additional support and benefits to a client would need to be authorized.

Director Van Zandt stated that every client works with their counselor and the supervisor to develop an individualized plan for employment. This is important because what each client needs is going to be different. If someone is going to law school there will be more expenses than for someone who is going into a job that does not require so much training.

Every client plan will be different. We encourage everyone to be fair and supervisors certainly know that they need to make sure that favoritism in favor of someone does not happen. Also, if someone has a client that they are not fond of they should not do less for them. Neither of these practices is acceptable. The services will differ depending upon the clients' goal.

2. The next suggestion was a comment regarding a staff member of NCBVI. The comment was a staff member complaining about another staff member. There were no specifics given other than the person's name. Chair Hansen stated that his comment to the person who submitted this is that submissions like this are typically not helpful. If someone has a problem with another staff member they should reach out to them in a professional manner. This is a more productive way to deal with the situation. If for some reason this is not an option, they should reach out to the staff person's supervisor. Suggestions such as this are not actionable by the Board.

3. All employees who request the generation of purchase orders should be required to learn how to do purchase orders so they will know which information is needed and understand the method required by the State of Nebraska. This will cut down on the misinformation provided to VR technicians resulting in duplication of efforts that cause delays in other work, wasted time and inefficiency.

Director Van Zandt stated that when a staff member indicates that a purchase order needs to be generated, they usually delegate it to a VR Technician to complete the process. If training is needed, we can certainly provide training. Director Van Zandt stated that she does not know if this is a statewide need or just a few people who need some training. Director Van Zandt stated that they will encourage the supervisors to discuss this with the staff in the offices they supervise.

#### Nebraska Business Enterprise (NBE) Update

The new operator who took the Department of Roads in February doing catering and vending is doing well.

Our two newest operators will get their license in the next few weeks.

We will be adding more Nebraska Department of Corrections vending locations in Lincoln and Omaha as we can get new operators to run them.

We are training a couple of candidates, one in Omaha and one in Lincoln to see if they will become vendors.

We are looking for several more clients to begin training due to the vending opportunities we are working on.

Carrie DeFreece, the NBE Business Manager II, started her job in February and is working with staff to see where we can improve the program and help the licensees.

We were contacted by Offutt Airbase to meet with them in May. We are looking at a cafeteria that seats 340 people; 3,500 employees; and 26 break rooms for snack machines. The cafeteria would serve both breakfast and lunch. This is a result of negotiations we started five years ago. We will do everything under our expertise to run this location and would start operating it by December 2018.

We were also contacted by the VA for operations of vending in Omaha and Lincoln. Once again, this is as a result of negotiations from four years ago.

We have other opportunities coming with U. S. Department of Agriculture in North Platte and with I. N. S. in Grand Island.

The committee of blind vendors will be having elections of officers on May 19, 2017 at their quarterly meeting.

#### Public Comment

There was no public comment.

#### Break

A break was taken at 10:35 a.m.  
The meeting resumed at 10:58 a.m.

#### New Business

##### Discuss and Act on the approval of the Executive Director's time certification

Commissioner Bell moved to continue with the current method being used for the Director to submit her Personnel Activity Report to the Board. The Director submits her Personnel Activity Report via email to the entire Board for their review. It is an automatic approval unless a question or concern is raised by a Commission Board member.

Commissioner Newman seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken and all voted in favor of the motion.

##### Discuss & Act on the Approval of Employee in-state and out-of-state Travel

State law requires all travel of staff of state agencies to be pre-approved. This includes travel in-state and out-of-state. Currently for out-of-state travel all staff must complete a form that says where they are going, why they are going there, the cost, how it will be funded, etc. and this must be pre-approved by their immediate supervisor and by the executive director. This is done by all staff for out-of-state travel.

Supervisors manage in-state travel by getting itineraries from staff and reviewing them on an on-going basis. However, staff is not required to check with their supervisor every morning to get an okay for in-state travel as this would not be manageable. Discussion was held with Administrative Services to determine how the agency could comply with the law regarding in-state travel. Administrative Services recommended that each year the Board of Commissioners would have a motion to pre-approve travel that is related to the purpose of the staff person's position.

Commissioner Bell moved:

The Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired approves all employee in-state business travel and/or out-of-state business travel within 60 miles of the border of Nebraska in any adjoining state, which relates directly to the provision of services to a client, i.e. employer visit, medical appointment, service referral, employment interview, etc. All other out-of-state business travel is approved if granted approval by the Executive Director of the agency. This motion is in effect until the next meeting of the Board of Commissioners after April 1, 2018.

Commissioner Rieken seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

#### Discuss and Act on the approval of the Executive Director's participation on the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB)

Chair Hansen asked Director Van Zandt to describe her involvement with the NBPCB. Director Van Zandt stated that the NBPCB is an entity that certifies orientation and mobility instructors and certifies Training Centers for the blind that use the structured discovery approach. The NBPCB also provides certification and training in the UEB Braille system. They usually have a quarterly conference call meeting. Sitting on the NBPCB Board does not take much of Director Van Zandt's time except on the rare occasions that she is asked to assess a Training Center. It was noted that Director Van Zandt is not compensated for her NBPCB duties. If Director Van Zandt is asked to travel she uses vacation time and NBPCB pays for her expenses. It was also noted that NCBVI does pay a fee every several years to have the assessment completed on the NCBVI Center for the Blind. Also, Director Van Zandt is not involved in the assessment of the NCBVI Center.

Commissioner Newman moved to approve Executive Director Van Zandt's participation in the National Blindness Professionals Certification Board for the current term. This is to be approved on a year by year basis. Commissioner Bell seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners were in favor of the motion.

Director Van Zandt reported that she also sits on the Executive Committee of NCSAB and she participates in a conference call once per month. Director Van Zandt also attends the NCSAB Spring and Fall Conferences.

#### Public Comment

There was no public comment.

#### Typical Final Announcements

The next NCBVI Commission Board meeting will be Saturday, July 29, 2017 at the Best Western Plus in North Platte. The Focus Topic will be W I O A.

#### Executive Session for Executive Director Evaluation

Commissioner Bell moved to go into Executive Session at 11:11 a.m. to conduct the evaluation of the Executive Director.

(Ref. Open Meeting Act; 84-1410. Closed session; (d) Evaluation of the job performance of a person when necessary to prevent needless injury to the reputation of a person and if such person has not requested a public meeting.)

Commissioner Newman seconded the motion.  
A roll call vote was taken and all Commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Bell moved to come out of Executive Session at 1:04 p.m.  
Commissioner Newman seconded the motion.  
A roll call vote was taken and all Commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

#### Act on the retention of the Executive Director and her Salary

Commissioner Newman moved to retain Dr. Pearl Van Zandt as the Executive Director of the Commission. Commissioner Bell seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all voted in favor of the motion.

Chair Hansen asked the commissioners to submit to him in writing their comments regarding the executive director's performance for the past year. He will then share the comments with the entire Board and then forward them to Director Van Zandt. The comments will be placed in the Executive Director's personnel file.

#### Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:07 p.m.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the July 29, 2017 Commission Board meeting, please email it to the NCBVI Commission Board at [ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov](mailto:ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov).

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant  
NCBVI

Mike Hansen, Chairperson  
NCBVI Board of Commissioners