

Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired  
Public Meeting  
Saturday, November 2, 2013  
1313 Farnam on the Mall, Room 225  
Omaha, NE

Approved 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.

Julie Johnson, Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. and she welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

Commission staff present, Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant; Carlos Serván, Deputy Director VR; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director IL; Eric Buckwalter, VR Counselor, all from Lincoln; Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor; Kyndra Baring-Gulley, VR Technician, from Omaha.

Public Present: Hubert Paulsen, meeting recorder, Lincoln; Robert Newman, Karen Anderson, Barbara Loos, Brad Loos, Paulette Monthei, Mark Bulger, Kenda Slavin, Tony Olivero, Barbara Epworth, Nancy Stelter, Laurel Friesen, Cindy Bedford, Eric Stueckrath, Anna Holeska, Pramila Kalaga.

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

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was available, in both print and Braille format. The Notice of the Meeting was published in the Lincoln Journal Star, the Omaha World Herald, the State Government Calendar, NCBVI Website, NFB Newslines® and Radio Talking Book. The Notice was also sent to ACB and NFB, the NCBVI List Serve. Clients Bu Reh, Aung Tun, Oo Reh, and Pleh Meh will be preparing and serving sloppy Joes, veggies and chips for lunch. Staff assisting are Kelly Coleman and Kathy Brown-Hollins.

Approval of August 10 Minutes

Commissioner Jirak moved to approve the Minutes of the August 10, 2013 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and it was unanimous in favor of the motion.

## Presentation/Overview on Organizational Development Specialist - Dr. Nancy Stelter, Management Consultant/Coach

Commissioner Hansen reported that Dr. Nancy Stelter is at today's meeting to give a presentation on her proposal for the Organizational Development Specialist project. Commissioner Hansen noted that he, Chairperson Johnson and Executive Director Van Zandt have been in discussions with Dr. Stelter for the past several weeks and Dr. Stelter has previously done some other work for the Commission which is how the Board found out about her.

Dr. Stelter stated that NCBVI had talked to her about doing some organizational development activities for them. Dr. Stelter noted that she has spent many years doing organizational development activities for many organizations. The Commission Board has a list of all the things that Dr. Stelter has completed.

Dr. Stelter reported that the Organizational Development Project will consist of the following:

1. Meet with the Board and coordinating exactly how they would like to see the project.
2. Meet with the management staff so they understand what is going to be done.
3. Assess the problem. She recommends interviewing all staff in the agency. Once this is completed Dr. Stelter can draw a map of what the organization looks like and what is happening in the organization.
4. Compile the interviews and compile other training activities that may be available by such entities as EAP to ensure that services are not being duplicated and to ensure that we are using the resources that are already available by the State of Nebraska.
5. Results of the interviews, etc. will be shared with the Board and the Board will do an affirmation of the next steps they would like to see at this point.
6. Conduct Myers-Briggs teambuilding workshops and a follow-up leadership workshop with the management staff. Dr. Stelter noted that she has already done some work with the management staff and they had a leadership workshop in Aurora. She has also been doing some other activities with management staff since that time. Dr. Stelter recommends a follow-up at the completion of this.
7. Conduct Planning for the Future coalition meetings. This means to have staff get together and talk about what the future is going to look like at NCBVI, what their goals will be and the coalition towards those goals. (The definition of coalition is come together.)
8. Dr. Stelter will then do coaching with staff looking at leadership activities and supervisory issues that they may have. The coaching activities will be individualized.
9. Hold a Board Retreat so that everything that has been done to date can be pulled together.
10. Provide on-going team building sessions for staff.

## 11. Final assessment of the project with the Board.

Dr. Stelter noted that this is an overview of her plan for the Organizational Development activities for NCBVI.

Commissioner Jirak asked Dr. Stelter if she feels comfortable discussing costs of the project. Specifically, what the total cost of the project may be. Director Van Zandt reported that part of the activities are to be determined because it will depend on if there is mileage, the meeting locations, and how many people will take part in the sessions. The estimated cost without knowing all the specifics will be approximately \$40,000.

Commissioner Hansen noted that when commissioners were looking at some other resources, the cost per item was significantly higher. The estimate of \$40,000 is the bid for the entire process. Commissioner Hansen added that this project may last up to one year. Dr. Stelter noted that she sees the project taking a minimum of 6-8 months. It depends upon how much activity can take place over the holiday season and how fast things can get started. Dr. Stelter noted that she will work on the project until it is completed. The time frame will not dictate the cost.

Executive Director Van Zandt noted that when NCBVI does contracts they may be for a specified period of time. The contract for the Organizational Development Specialist project will have an ending date of one year. It certainly could be completed before this time. Director Van Zandt added that NCBVI did go through the bid process for this project. Director Van Zandt added that Commissioner Hansen and Chairperson Johnson did a very good job with the bid process.

The commissioners thanked Dr. Nancy Stelter for her presentation.

### Focus Topic: Employment - Nancy Flearl & Carlos Serván

The following report was provided regarding NCBVI Employment Services.

#### **NCBVI Employment Services**

The Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired is committed to provide the services needed to accomplish the client's vocational goal. The general approach is to do as much as possible, on an individual basis, for blind individual to become employed. Our rules, policy, guidance, and procedures are geared toward quality services so our consumers can obtain their goals.

Our technology specialists are dealing with accessibility issues on several employment sites. If the employers are hesitant on purchasing equipment, NCBVI buys those most of the time. As a result, we have a good relationship with several businesses and government entities.

We also have a State Wide Employment Committee that comes with ideas on increasing employment. This committee is chaired by the Deputy Director for VR

services, two staff members from each district, one technology specialist, and the director of the Client Assistant Program. For the last few years, this committee recommended to have a state wide Employment Conference.

NCBVI invests a great deal of time and money on helping clients get quality jobs. As a result, this last fiscal year we got over one million dollar of Social Security reimbursement.

Below is some information sent by the District Supervisors:

Omaha District Employment Services:

These services are individualized to the person being served.

We do community assessments with area employers to evaluate individual skills, strengths, weaknesses.

We work with each client on job readiness skills. We have them practice interviewing skills with us and with employers that we work with. They receive feedback on their interviewing skills and have the opportunity to review this and interview again to note how they are applying the information they have received and how they are presenting themselves. We also utilize existing classes at Heartland Workforce Solutions to reinforce these skills and to gain additional feedback and interview experience.

It is a team approach. As clients work with their Orientation Counselor they need to be thinking about employment and how they will apply low vision or blindness skills as well as job readiness skills in their daily life. So as they are learning the computer they are learning to research employers, how to do on-line applications, resume and thank you letters. Some consumers will have greater strengths in these areas than others; as a result we provide the level of support needed.

We have clients that are very independent in their job search and choose to be in control of the job search and keep us informed. If they remain in status 20 we are reviewing with them what they might want to do differently in order to attain employment.

We have others that need a greater amount of support. We have addressed interview skills and disclosure of their blindness and may not interview well. We do an extensive job development on their behalf and may be there as their interview. We are able as a result of being there to immediately discuss necessary job supports for them to successful find, train and maintain employment.

We co-locate at Heartland Workforce Solutions and employers are present two to three times a week. They do on site interviews. They also assist with job seeking skills classes. We are present to network with these employers.

We are always meeting with employers providing on-going education about our services and blindness. We do not approach employers about what they can do for us, but how

we can assist them in retaining important talent and presentations for HR on Diversity.

We do job development more specific to the types of jobs and Industries for which consumers are seeking employment.

We are a member of the Omaha Chamber of Commerce. Some of the activities we have participated in are coffee and contacts, after hour events, network at noon, Big O Show, Small Business Ambassadors, TIPS (the sole purpose of TIPS is the share leads, referral, tips, information about businesses). We track new businesses and businesses that are expanding through the Midland Business Journal.

More and more entry level jobs are being outsourced to temp agencies. They often hire temp positions (Customer Service, Production, Data Entry and Clerical). We have been in contact with the temp agencies in our area to discuss how we can partner with them. We have active relationships with Manpower, Snelling and Labor Ready.

We work in partnership with other placement professionals to host job fairs and network events for employers. This allows our consumers to participate and for employers to see how we work to meet their employment needs. We purposely invite employers that have been great at employing individuals that are blind to the networking events to speak to wonderful candidates that they have had and how we have work in partnership with them.

We have been a resource for interpreters for training, low vision and access technology, scripting for access technology, paid on the job training.

#### North Platte District Employment Strategies:

We do individual training on career exploration/vocational assessment, job search, networking, resumes/applications, interviewing skills, soft skills, technology, and independent living skills- i.e. cane travel, home management.

C.O.R.E. training

Tours, 3-day stays, referral to Center Training

Attendance at state wide employment conferences

Attendance at Vendor's Retreats

Information and assistance with NBE and Self-Employment

We also work on doing outreach: Jan Brandt is on Workforce Development Board; participate on Project Search in several communities; meeting with specific employers for job retention or interest; and be part of local Chamber of Commerce.

Furthermore, we have met with general VR agency in each office to introduce new staff and encourage general networking with their counselors

Working on partnering more with One-Stop Career centers and local businesses/business groups

We don't do as much direct employer contact out here and staff would like more training on that. It is difficult because we don't have the numbers that other districts and offices have so it had made more sense to us to be involved in the community and make direct contact when we have someone who is interested in that business/field.

### Employment Activities Lincoln District

Our district started a new strategy in April, 2012. Each of the Rehabilitation Counselors joined a networking group. We joined the Chamber of Commerce, LIBA, Lincoln Human Resource Management Association and the Norfolk Rotarians. We each attend regular meetings and events. We bring clients to these events as well. We have hosted many tours and meetings as a result of our efforts. We hosted a large ribbon cutting here in Lincoln during our employment conference. We have hosted networking events for the Chamber of Commerce and LIBA. We have made contacts that have asked for opportunities to help us. We are starting a Business Advisory Council in Lincoln. It will have a board of five people and four subcommittees. The subcommittees are Internships, Business Liaison, Job Seeking skills and our Kid's group. We have 10 people working on the committees and we hope to recruit ten more people.

We continue to be involved with Project Search. There are four Project Search sites in our district. We are exploring starting an adult project search.

We teach a job class every week for clients that are actively looking for work. We cover all aspects of job hunting. We have brought in speakers to talk about how to network, how to fill out a job application ...etc. We have also brought in programs for the Lincoln District and Center clients on identifying your networking style.

### Focus Topic Presentation

Several employers and employees of different companies were in attendance at the meeting and they presented on their experiences and partnership with NCBVI.

Anna Holeska, Store Manager at Michael's Arts and Crafts.

Anna stated that she was approached with the idea of bringing a visually impaired individual on staff. After speaking with her supervisor they decided it would be a great idea. They then brought Tom aboard on their team as a replenishment associate which was a 5 am to 10:30 am team. This team would unload trucks and bring the freight from the backroom onto the floor. Tom has been working at Michaels for approximately one year at this point. In the past few months she was approached by Tom's counselor about getting Tom more hours and other challenges. At that time they introduced Tom to the frame shop which involves a lot of detail work. Anna stated that Tom is doing excellent work in the frame shop. Just like any other associate, when Tom arrives at work he is given instructions for the day as to what needs to be done and then he gets to work. Anna noted that this has been a great experience for her.

Eric Stueckrath, CEO Outlook Nebraska, Inc.

Eric stated that Outlook Nebraska is a 501 C 3 non-profit organization in Omaha. They manufacture paper tissue and towel products. They are also looking into some additional services such as training in general education, technology and other basics. Individuals from the community come in to receive training. So far, it has been mainly individuals experiencing age related blindness and wanting to get some independence back. ONI is very open to helping individuals. ONI does not have a lot of structure.

They ask what an individual wants to accomplish and then as time goes by they add to that list. As individuals gain confidence they want to try new things. Along with these services, the employment end has continued to grow. ONI employs about 44 people who are blind within the converting division as well as administration. They have individuals who are transferring from entry level positions to higher skill set positions to management level. Individuals are positioning themselves for success by taking business courses or looking into obtaining degrees.

Eric stated that he has an appreciation for NCBVI as they continue to grow their relationship. NCBVI has been very good in finding individuals to work at ONI. Eric stated that NCBVI staff does a very good job. Eric stated that he really wanted to take a moment to thank Nancy Flearl because he sees Nancy at a lot of different events and he feels that it hard to truly understand the dedication that she has for people in the community and around the state who are blind.

Pramila Kalaga, Ergonomist for Alegent Health.

Pramila stated that she has known Nancy Flearl for over 20 years as she worked for VR for 10 years before her current job. Her role at Alegent is to prevent injuries and create environments where people can work safely. Work accommodation is also a part of her job and Nancy Flearl has been a great partner with her when it comes to accommodating employees with visual impairments. Correct accommodations has helped some of their staff keep their jobs be it in accounting positions, executive positions or front line work. One of the things with health care is that they are trying to move away from paper records and move to electronic health records. It has been a challenge in some ways, but a huge bonus is all the adaptive assistive technology that is available. Pramila stated that the thing she really appreciates about the work of the Commission is the technology that has been put in place for the employees who need it. This has allowed Alegent Health to keep some of their valuable employees. The assistive technology has opened the doors to a lot of individuals who have disabilities. Pramila noted that a front line nurse at Alegent Health who is visually impaired works at a computer. She meets with patients in her office and she will call a patient before their procedure to explain the procedure to them. They also have nurse navigators who have office jobs who focus on prevention and wellness.

Nancy Flearl added that the assistive technology that they have used is zoom text and magic for the nurse navigator. For the pre-surgical nurses they have used some talking devices such as blood pressure cuff, talking thermometer and talking scales. In the office jobs they might use a CCTV, Zoom Text or Magic. Often times they also use a scanner to scan hard copy so they can enlarge it to review paper.

Commissioner Hansen asked Anna Holeska of Michael's Crafts if any adaptive equipment has been used to allow their employee to be successful and have there been any problems that have come up.

Anna noted that no problems have come up as a result of Tom working at their store. Anna added that no additional accommodations had to be made for Tom as they

already have high standards for safety. Anna added that Tom is more hearing impaired than he is visually impaired. Tom has good central vision but no peripheral vision. A few times they have had an interpreter come in to help with giving Tom instructions as putting together frames is somewhat verbal. Anna added that Tom is a very good employee.

Carlos Serván noted that he sent the commissioners a short introduction about Employers. NCBVI is committed to invest in clients and counselors and supervisors find ways make things work for the client. NCBVI looks for at the results than the costs. Also, the leadership of Executive Director Van Zandt has allowed this to happen.

Cindy Bedford, Employee at Cox Communication.

Cindy stated that she was diagnosed with \_\_\_\_ when she was 22 years old and in her last year of college at the University of Portland and ready to start applying for jobs. At this time she became very scared and did not tell anyone. She was working at US Bank in Portland, Oregon. She really liked her job but things just started getting harder and harder to do the paperwork. She ended up quitting this job and moved to Nebraska where her parents and a lot of her family live. At this time she started her own business at a Coffee Shop with the help of her family. She did this for about six years as she began having trouble reading money and seeing faces. Cindy noted that she also had no blind skills at this time. In 1999 Nancy Flearl came to her coffee shop and left her card. Cindy began talking to Nancy and began learning Braille. The time came where she quit her coffee shop because it became too difficult. Cindy noted that she wanted to learn more blind skills and did receive some home skills, etc. Cindy stated she was not yet ready for the cane and stopped seeing Nancy Flearl for quite some time. Cindy noted she stayed home for about 8 years after that thinking she could not get a job. Then came a time where she got tired of staying in her house all the time not doing anything. She began to feel miserable. Her husband called NCBVI and stated that Cindy needed to get counseling. She ended up meeting Chad Weber who was a very positive influence on her. She saw how well he did and began to think she could do the same. She worked with Chad for over a year on blindness issues and skills and he talked her into going to Center training. Cindy stated she did then complete nine months of Center training which went very well for her. After she completed Center training she began applying for jobs. She attended a job fair and ended up getting the job at Cox Communications about two months after she completed Center training. Cindy stated that NCBVI has really helped her a lot in regaining her confidence and making her feel like she could get a job. After she began working at Cox Communications, Jonathan Ross, who formerly worked for NCBVI and now works for Accessibility.net, does all the scripting for her on her JAWS screen reader program. This makes it possible for her to do her job just as everyone else does. Cindy stated that NCBVI really opened up her eyes and helped her realize all the capabilities that she has as a blind person.

Laurel Friesen, Employee of Hy-Vee Stores.

Laurel stated that she started out not accepting her blindness. Then she started working with the Omaha NCBVI office. This was when she was introduced to the



Center training. This helped her realize how blind she really was. Laurel thanked everyone at the Center and her field counselor for all the encouragement they gave her. Laurel stated that Center training was a lot like boot camp, but she made it through. Laurel thanked Carol Jenkins for giving her the skills she needed to get her job at Hy-Vee. At Hy-Vee her job is to be a helpful smile in the entryway of the store and she hands out ads to customers if they want them. If they don't want an ad, she just gives them a smile. When a person goes through orientation at Hy-Vee, they need to know everything about the store, such as where all items are located.

Nancy Flearl noted that the Hy-Vee HR Director informed her that she has never had anyone as prepared for an interview as Laurel was. Laurel noted that she received her one year name badge recently and she has received two raises.

Director Van Zandt thanked the clients for coming to the meeting and presenting. Director Van Zandt also thanked the employers for taking their time to come and present at today's meeting.

At this time Chairperson Johnson announced that Vice Chairperson Jirak would run the meeting as a favor for her. Chairperson Johnson noted that it is easier for her to interact when she is not watching the time and thinking about running the meeting. This happened also at the August meeting and it worked out good for her.

### Public Comment

Paulette Monthei – Paulette noted that she has a couple of quick questions for clarification purposes.

Paulette asked if the consultant service was going to be funded through the Program Income/Social Security income reimbursement dollars. Director Van Zandt reported that Program Income must be spent before NCBVI can spend any grant money. The extra income allows for NCBVI to do some of these extra projects. The social security reimbursement will be spent on rent, salaries, etc. until it is all spent. At this time we will begin spending money from the grant.

Paulette mentioned that she believes that NCBVI is wrapping up the Mississippi State Study and she inquired as to how this information may tie into what NCBVI is planning to do with the consultant. Director Van Zandt noted that the Mississippi State Study has been completed and it is now in draft form. NCBVI will receive a final copy soon. It has not really been talked about to have this study as a part of the Organization Development piece, but the results of the study will be shared with Dr. Stelter and everyone else. Commissioner Hansen added that the Statewide Needs Assessment that is being completed by Mississippi State deals with a lot of external items. The Organizational Development Specialist project deals with internal items. Paulette noted that this was also her thought process. Paulette stated that she feels it would be good for the consultant to have the information from the survey.

Eric Stueckrath – Eric invited individuals to set up a tour and visit ONI to see some of the things they are working on. They have a lot of growth plans with the facility they purchased last November. They purchased a 300,000 square foot building and they added a few tenants. They plan to continue to consolidate the building into a campus wherein they can offer better services to individuals who are blind.

### Break

A break was taken at 10:30 a.m. The meeting resumed at 10:42 a.m.

### Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Oltman reported that she attended the NFB-N Convention in North Platte. She worked with some seniors on basic blindness issues during convention. Commissioner Oltman noted that she also spoke with a couple of individuals over the phone regarding sewing services.

Commissioner Hansen reported that he also attended the NFB-N Convention. During the convention he gave a Commission Board update. Commissioner Hansen has also been working with Chairperson Johnson and Executive Director Van Zandt on the Organizational Development Specialist project.

Chairperson Johnson reported that she attended the Nebraska Business Enterprise Retreat at the Holiday Inn Downtown in Lincoln. She noted that the retreat was very informative and the presenters did an excellent job. During the retreat the vendors held the Election of Officers; therefore she was able to meet the new Board members. Chairperson Johnson stated that the vendors were very happy to have a commissioner present at their retreat. Chairperson Johnson noted that she will also attend the NCSAB Fall Conference in Denver.

Commissioner Walla stated that he has truly enjoyed being on the Board for NCBVI. His term expires 12-31-2013. He especially enjoyed attending the NCSAB Conference in Bethesda, Maryland and the ACB and NFB National Conventions.

Commissioner Jirak reported that he has been working with Commissioner Walla and ACB-N President Paulette Monthei on the development of a draft evaluation tool for the executive director. Commissioner Jirak also worked on putting together today's agenda. Commissioner Jirak noted that he will also be attending the NCSAB Fall Conference in Denver.

### Report from the Executive Director

#### **Executive Director's Report November 2, 2013**

We welcome new staff here today:

Eric Buckwalter, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in Lincoln, just started and is in Center training.

Kyndra Baring-Gulley, VR Tech in Omaha, started August 19. She will have Center training early next year. Kyndra came to us through the State Re-Employment Program.

Ashley Pinkelman was the Omaha VR Tech and now is VR Counselor in Omaha.

We completed another quarterly update to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Monitoring Review Corrective Action Plan. As was the case last quarter, most items have been fully resolved. We have received approval of our Cost Allocation Plan from the U.S. Department of Education/Indirect Cost Group. The federal Rehab Services Administration reviewers are looking at it now. All parts of the process should be completed soon.

We continue to work with Wes, Bill, State officials on aspects related to accessibility problems of various state systems applications. Wes has been working diligently to remedy the problems for the long term. A more complete report from Wes is provided further on.

I attended the Anniversary Celebration for Lincoln ACB's Give A Lift cab coupon program. The ACB honored me with a Certificate of Appreciation. I attended the NFB of Nebraska State Convention. At the NFB-N invitation, I also spoke and conducted a public forum as a part of the meeting.

Bill and I attended a Fiscal Management Conference in Washington DC, put on by RSA. It was very informative and helped us continue to fine-tune our operations in the business office.

I continue to attend meetings with Center, Field offices, our Administrative Team, NBE Vendors Committee and Vendors Training Conference, State agency directors, Lincoln/Lancaster Multicultural Advisory Committee, Nebraska Department of Education Transition Advisory Council. I attended the Transition Summit in Grand Island. We also had the North Platte District meeting this past quarter, which I attended.

We held a Leadership Retreat with Dr. Nancy Stelter for our supervisors and managers. We continue individual coaching sessions, to follow up and continue building our individual skills as well as the team as a whole.

Staff members are doing some work with areas outside their normal routine. For example, Mike Rains worked the FYI program in North Platte. Mitzy Buchanan and Sahar Husseini spent two days with Omaha Counselors, visiting programs and clients. Others are working together in different ways. There is a lot of work statewide to improve communication, enhance understanding, and to strengthen the agency as a whole.

Bob and I met with the newly hired Director of Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, John Wyvill. We want to continue the partnership that has developed over recent years.

We are exploring options for our Lincoln offices, to find space that is more up to date. This includes Lincoln District, the Center, and Administrative offices. The formal process requires a lot of work to log our needs, submit request for approval from State Building Division, and if approved go through a formal Request for Proposals process. Even if all goes well, it is not likely that a move will occur until July 1, 2014.

We received additional funding from Social Security (SSA) Reimbursements. We invest in our clients, and work hard to provide the counseling and training needed, and have a great system for tracking the work done. Thanks to the excellent work of all NCBVI staff members, during the federal fiscal year that ended October 30<sup>th</sup>, we received over \$1.2 Million dollars in SSA Reimbursement. This is the most we have ever received and is more than many, much larger agencies receive.

### Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

Data collection is complete on the employer survey (10), the staff survey (19), consumer survey (81), and key informants (8). Data from existing data sources has been collected. The researchers are working on the final draft report of the study. We expect to receive the document in the next week or two.

### Field Services

Final figures for Federal Fiscal Year 2013 (October 1, 2012 through September 30, 2013), we served 942 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients in all statuses. Forty two (42) were closed having achieved their employment goals. Thirty nine (39) were closed without achieving employment (refusing further services, unable to locate, transfers to another agency, disability too severe to benefit from VR, deceased and other).

In the Independent Living (IL) track, we have served 614 clients in all statuses. Two hundred fifty nine (259) were closed successfully; forty two (42) were closed without achieving their goals (withdrew, moved, deceased, and other reasons).

### Nebraska Center for the Blind

Total Full-time Clients Served between 1996 through October, 2013: 216

Competitive Employment: 123

Homemakers: 23

Students: 45

### Results:

Of the clients that finished training and schooling;

85.3 Percent are employed (competitive employment and homemaker)

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

13 percent are homemakers

21 percent are students from the total number  
11 percent are not working

Activities:

We are going to be ready for our QR codes for Thanksgiving Luncheon.  
We are going to use this QR project to teach our clients how to use them, also it is a project for our tours from outside to get and store our information quickly, and also it will be a way to model this to other service organizations such as museums or other places we need to access the written information.

August

Photography work-shop  
Descriptive Movie

September

Sushi activity  
Art on the Green  
Two tours to business community

October

GED Party to celebrate a client completing their GED  
Apple picking Nebraska City  
Japanese art and history show Sheldon  
NFB state convention  
Pumpkin carving  
Halloween luncheon

North Platte District by Sarah Stewart

November 2013 Commissioner's Meeting Quarterly Report- North Platte District

The North Platte District has had a busy back to school season. Staff attended several IEP meetings and assisted college students with preparations to begin or return to school for the fall semester. I attended the management retreat held September 11<sup>th</sup> at the Aurora Leadership Center and got some good insight and tools to use as a supervisor. I look forward to working with Dr. Nancy Stelter more with some individual coaching sessions.

Thanks to a great deal of coordination by Sherrie Bruegman and with the help of Jamie Forbis and Scott Pavelka, the North Platte Kitchen remodel was finished just in time for our fall FYI/ CORE program held September 16th-19th. The kitchen looks great and is now much more functional for trainings. We had 7 participants in FYI/CORE, including 2 Vocational Rehabilitation and 5 Older Blind clients. We had a particularly enthusiastic and cohesive group this time which made for a very successful program.

As part of efforts to establish better working relations between the center and field staff, Mike Rains from the center joined us for the week of FYI/CORE training. I'd like to

thank Fatos Floyd and center staff as well as administration for their support of this effort and making arrangements to cover Mike while he was in North Platte. Mike was wonderful with the clients and staff enjoyed working with him. It was a great experience for all and I hope we continue to find ways to support center and field staff in understanding each other's perspectives and working more closely together.

On September 26<sup>th</sup>, we were invited to speak to the Central Community College Occupational Therapy Assistant students as part of their Disability in the Community course. A former client joined me and we had a great discussion with students about our services and the clients' experiences in our programs.

Three clients from North Platte District participated in the Vendors' Retreat held September 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> in Lincoln.

We held our Annual North Platte District Meeting in Kearney on October 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Carlos Serván, Bob Deaton, and Wes Majerus joined us from Lincoln and all North Platte District staff was able to attend. We received training on reading eye reports from Dr. Diana Lind from Lind Eye Care in Kearney. Joni Thomas, Director of Independence Rising (formerly Center for Independent Living in Grand Island) explained the services they offer. We also had Denise Wright and Teresa Coonts from the Nebraska Department of Education provide training and facilitate very helpful discussion regarding IEP's and effectively partnering with schools. We also discussed district and agency issues and planned our 2014 events.

Scott Pavelka and Jamie Forbis plan to attend the Transition Summit held in Grand Island on October 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Sherrie Bruegman, Josie Rodriguez, and Jan Brandt will participate in the Advanced Word training offered through Southeast Community College on October 9<sup>th</sup>. Jamie Forbis will be attending the Life Coach Training offered by the Lincoln District on October 30 and 31<sup>st</sup>.

The upcoming quarter will hold some challenges for our team in providing coverage in our area. I will be going on maternity leave for 12 weeks sometime after the middle of October. Bob Deaton and Carlos Serván will be graciously taking over supervisory duties while I am gone. Angie Hoff, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the Scottsbluff office will also likely be at least part time on leave due to an injury to her leg. She plans to continue office/paperwork duties but has been restricted from working in the field as the risk of further injury while getting in and out of vehicles and client homes is too great at this time. Scott Pavelka from our North Platte office will be covering the Scottsbluff area during this time. All counselors and support staff in our district will be pitching in to make sure client needs are met. We are lucky to have a great team that will pull together to help one another out during this time.

We had 4 successful closures in the North Platte District this quarter including a Certified Nursing Assistant, Maintenance and Repair worker, Machine Press Operator and job retention for a Dental Hygienist.

### Omaha District Update by Nancy Flearl

We have had the following people placed in employment since the last meeting: Academic Counselor, Dishwasher, Sales and Loan Officer, Equine Vet Tech, Stocker, Production Worker.

We helped maintain employment: Therapist, Secretary, cataract surgery for a Tow Truck driver.

Ashley Pinkelman completed her training at the Orientation Center and started in the field on October 7<sup>th</sup>. We welcome Kyndra Baring-Gulley who started in the Omaha Office as the VR Tech on August 19<sup>th</sup>. She brings a wealth of knowledge as her previous work was with the Department of Labor. She will start her 6 weeks of center training in January. It is nice to be fully staffed once more.

We have Carol and Ashley working with Winnerfest this fall.

We attended the Big "O" Show on October 9<sup>th</sup>, and did outreach to area employers that were present, both large and small businesses. We have been meeting with individual employers to follow up on our contacts as a result of this event.

We are a part of a placement group, Metro Area Placement Professionals. We put on a job fair for employers to meet their hiring needs. This was on October 4<sup>th</sup>. We did discuss disability awareness month.

This past few months we have been working with individuals that have after doing background checks realize this is a major stumbling block to their being hired. We have been working with Heartland Workforce Solutions for current list of employers that hire felons, Crossroads ministry that provides on-going support and tapping into resources for bonding if it should become necessary to facilitate hiring.

We have had an increase in referrals over the past several weeks. Cheryl Poff has been doing a lot of outreach in the community.

We have also received a number of referrals of individuals that are in their 20's and never have heard of us and yet attended school in Nebraska.

Kelly and Kathy continue to work with Teens Adventures in Blindness (TABS). They did a scavenger hunt in the Old Market. A student that attends TABS went to a water park and was denied entrance basically due to her vision. When we discussed the situation and the parent and our office contacted the facility and mayor action was taken. The TABS group did attend that park in August.

Elaine worked with Hand and Hand in attending the Farmer's Market in downtown Omaha in September. Several interpreters are working with deaf blind individuals to encourage them to be more active in the community. It is exciting to see how this blossomed from their contact with hand and hand.

Larry, Monica and I attended the Vendors' Retreat in September with several clients. September 27<sup>th</sup> was Staff Appreciation Day. We celebrated it on October 11<sup>th</sup> with a combined Staff Appreciation and Boss's Day luncheon. Ashley was still in training and with the Vendors' Retreat not all staff were available on September 27<sup>th</sup>. We had Tail Gate foods that Friday and I am so grateful for this awesome team I work with.

We had Mitzy Buchanan and Sahar Husseini shadow staff on October 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. They had a chance to shadow staff as they worked with clients, tour Heartland

Workforce Solutions to see the work we do as we co-locate at that location. They also had the opportunity to tour Outlook Nebraska, Inc.

We had Equal Opportunity Commission present at our October office meeting and Pat Fischer demonstrated new technology to staff. We welcomed Pearl to our meeting and the two of us had the chance then to tour The Boystown Vision Services and meet with Kristal Platt to discuss Camp Abilities. A number of the students that attended Camp Abilities in July are mutual clients of NCBVI.

We are again doing the temp job with Omaha Steaks. We have 10 people working this job to give them current working experience and in some cases to evaluate their work skills.

This is short and sweet but a taste of what we have been doing since October.

### Lincoln District by Connie Daly

We hired Eric Buckwalter to replace Conchita Hernandez. He started Center training on October 28<sup>th</sup>.

We only had two people for our GATE program so we made it two days rather than three. Our kid's group met and had a shopping expedition. We are meeting with Lincoln Public Schools to strengthen our relationship on November 4.

We have had a few meetings with our Business Advisory Council. We have 14 individuals on the council. They represent, Securcomm, Referral Institute Nebraska, Arbonne International, Greta's Gourmet Butcher, Farm Bureau Property and Casualties Insurance, Christian Heritage, LIBA, Congressman Fortenberry's office, Kelvin Kemp CPA and Leadership Resources. We have decided to work with three clients initially to find employment. We applied for and received confirmation that they will be a recognized volunteer group.

We hosted two networking events at our office for the Small Business Network meeting of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and LIBA. We had 40 to 50 people attend each meeting. They were offered tours of the center and learned more about the capabilities of blind people. We were able to initiate an On the Job Training position as a result of the events.

We had clients of our job class attend the Business to Business trade show sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. We are taking some clients to a tailgating party on Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>. One of our Business Advisory partners invited us so that he can introduce us around.

My team had training from Kris Thaller, owner of Coaching Dimensions. Wes Majerus, Jan Stokebrand, Monica Tripp and Ashley Pinkleman also attended. It was very powerful training about how to focus on our life's intentions.

We had two individuals get jobs in food service. One of our clients entered the Peace Corps and she is serving in Morocco.



## Business Office - Bill Brown

Here is what I have been working on since August:

- Trying to put together an opportunity to test the AWARE Client Data System
- Putting together a proposal for New space for the Lincoln facility, including Admin, Nebraska Training Center, Lincoln District Office, and NBE space
- Submit and receive full approval of our Cost Allocation Plan
- Work on an Acceptable Time Certification form for staff that work for only one grant.
- Distribution of Program income to best leverage federal Carryover and Grant Expenditures
- Attend RSA Financial Management Conference
- Work with Staff on policy for Meals/Light snacks for meetings, ongoing
- Close out Federal Grants and establish new Business units for FFY 2014 Federal Grants
- Work with Dr. Stelter in retreat and Organizational Leadership project
- Work on SAM (System of Award Management) update, which required that we update the SAM System (not finished yet) DUNS Registration changes, and CAGE code registration changes to deal with the DUNS Registration issues.
- Attend a couple of sessions of Software Rollouts for Business processes (working with Wes on those too)
- Establish a State Volunteer Group for Business Advisory Committee
- Work on establishment of an Agreement with Kansas to provide Orientation Center services to Kansas Clients

## Kathy Stephens – Administrative Assistant

Excel 10 Training – Basic and Intermediate

Word 10 Training – Advanced

Inputting Contracts in to E One for next fiscal year.

White Cane Safety Day Governor's Proclamation Signing

Travel arrangements for commissioners, staff and clients.

## Wes Majerus, Technology Program Manager

This has been a quarter with a great deal happening in the Technology Program. Below are program highlights in a number of categories.

### **Operations**

Two conferences took place during the quarter. In September, Larry Oleson and I participated in the Vendors' retreat in Lincoln, NE. Larry presented on the trends in vendor technology and answered some questions during the Friday afternoon session. I operated a table in the Vendors Showcase on Saturday wherein we showed iOS devices, Braille displays, handheld magnifiers, and notetakers. On October 25, Jan Brandt, Nancy Coffman, and I presented on the strengths and weaknesses of the Macintosh computer at the 2013 NFBN State Convention in North Platte. We outlined reasons for picking a computer platform, as well as provided statistics on computer platform usage. In addition, we discussed the pros and cons of using a Macintosh as

compared to Windows and demonstrated various features of the Macintosh operating system.

I continue to investigate and support new and emerging technologies. Apple released its iOS 7 upgrade in September. I tested the upgrade after its release and then gave the staff the go-ahead to upgrade their phones a few days later. I continue to support issues with these upgrades as they come about. The Tech Specialists and I are also working to put Microsoft Office 2013 on four Windows 8 laptops that we purchased for client training. These computers are housed in each of the three offices where Technology Specialists are based, as well as the Center Tech Lab. We hope to have technology specialists analyze the software to determine its usefulness for clients and develop strategies for circumventing any barriers that come up in the new version. Apple has also released OSX version 10.9 Mavericks, the newest version of the Macintosh operating system. Tech specialists have upgraded clients' computers to new versions, and we will also upgrade the four Macintosh workstations we have to the new version for evaluation. I have worked with the State Office of the CIO to deploy an Exchange-based Shared Calendar. A few days ago, I received word that the calendar is ready, and will begin testing it and training staff on its use. We hope that having an agency-wide shared calendar within Outlook, where our individual calendars are hosted, will make managing events and appointments more straightforward and avoid double-booking of days and events.

### **Accessibility**

I have worked on a number of projects on the accessibility front. I continue to work with the Edge (Payroll and Financial Center, Employee Development Center (Cornerstone), and the Employee Work Center (Workday) to test them for accessibility. Though no further work has been done with Cornerstone, I am hopeful that we can renew our dialog and move forward with testing of the system at some point. We have made several attempts to reach out to staff at Administrative Services to move forward with testing of Cornerstone, but have not received any responses that would lead to a resumption of testing or resolving problems. I continue to be a part of Workday's accessibility Council, and test new versions of the software when they are made available. I assisted Workday in fixing a defect in their system and am hopeful that they will have it completely resolved by the time of Open Enrollment. We will assist with some of the testing of the Edge (formerly NIS) system as it undergoes a major upgrade. Our focus will be those areas that touch the work of our staff, including procurement and Employee Self Service. The upgrade will happen over a number of months, and we will perform intermittent testing as modules of interest are converted. We have provided recommendations to the State as to how the rest of the system can be tested.

We have worked with the NIS system for over ten years now, on its evolution from NIS to EnterpriseOne to Edge. Though this past work was not always easy or straightforward, NCBVI's continued involvement has educated members of the Edge team that work in State Accounting. We were invited to the kickoff meeting where this latest round of upgrades was announced. When we asked about accessibility, both the consultants to the State and State employees expressed its importance and outlined a

testing plan that left us optimistic that accessibility would be a part of the entire upgrade project. The newly-upgraded system goes live in September 2014, and we are assured it will have accessibility features included.

## **Training**

The Commission has offered training in Word 2010 and Excel 2010 to Support Staff, Administrative Staff, the Center Tech Instructor, and Technology Specialists. We have worked with an instructor from Southeast Community College who is an expert in Microsoft Products and has been willing to explore ways of using the products with the keyboard. For the most part, the Basic and Intermediate Word classes, as well as Basic and Intermediate Excel classes worked well in this manner. As the features in these software packages get more advanced, JAWS seems to have a more difficult time interacting with the software. We hope to offer the Word 2010 basic class to field staff in the future.

In December, I will start a year-long training being offered by the San Diego State University Interwork Institute. The training is the Executive Leadership Series of the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute. A total of four weeklong sessions are to be held, three in San Diego and 1 in Washington DC. I have spent some time getting things in order for this training and look forward to learning more about being a leader in the VR field.

## Dave Robinson, Personnel Officer

Kyndra Barring-Gulley joined the agency on August 19<sup>th</sup>, assuming the Vocational Rehabilitation Technician position, previously vacated by Ashley Pinkelman. Kyndra comes to us through the State Re-Employment program.

Ashley Pinkelman has completed her Center training and has now joined the Omaha team in her new role as Voc Rehab Counselor.

Scott Pavelka was promoted to Rehab. Counselor II, effective July 1, 2013. He was the last Counselor hired under the previous policy of understaffing the Counselor positions, if the New-Hire didn't have their Master's degree. All New-Hires into Counselor positions from this point on will be hired directly into the Counselor II classification.

Management re-evaluated the Lincoln front desk position, currently being occupied by Joyce Thompson, as an S.O.S. temporary and it was decided to re-classify it from a Vocational Rehabilitation Technician, to a Secretary I position. The position was advertised internally and no applications were sent in. The position was advertised externally on October 28, 2013 and will run through November 5, 2013.

Sarah Stewart began her extended medical leave on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, in anticipation of the birth of her child. Baby was born on October 28<sup>th</sup>. Sarah expects to return to work, sometime in January 2014

Eric Buckwalter was hired as a Rehab. Counselor II, to replace the position vacated by Conchita Hernandez. Eric started with the agency on October 28<sup>th</sup>. Once his training is completed, he will join the Lincoln District team.

Commissioner Hansen inquired about the social security reimbursement money that the agency received. NCBVI received \$1.2 million in social security reimbursement money. Commissioner Hansen stated that this either means that the agency closed a lot of cases or a few cases that we spent a lot of money on. Director Van Zandt reported that it was a little bit of both. Because of the way the data must be collected and the record keeping, this is not reflective of the cases that were closed this past year for example. Then there is a waiting period before the claim can be submitted. Chairperson Johnson asked what the plans are to spend the \$1.2 million dollars. Director Van Zandt reported that the agency has been spending the money for a while now. Some of the things NCBVI purchased are new ergonomic chairs for all staff who requested one, foot rests for staff as requested, remodeling of several of the NCBVI offices, Word 10 and Excel 10 training for staff, new office furniture, a possible new case management system, new vending machines for all the rest areas along the interstate, and other staff training.

Chairperson Johnson inquired about the possibility of receiving the Executive Director Report prior to the meeting as a move toward more efficient use of time. This way the Board could read the report prior to the meeting and ask questions if necessary. Commissioner Hansen asked Director Van Zandt about her thought on this. Director Van Zandt noted that in order to complete her Executive Director Report she must receive a report from the administrative and management staff. Therefore, currently she is often composing her report a few days before the meeting. Director Van Zandt stated that it may be possible for her to forward the Board her report in draft form with the understanding that items may be added to her report. The commissioners were all in agreement with this.

## **Unfinished Business**

### **Budget Update**

Director Van Zandt noted that many of the budget items have already been discussed. With that in mind, the agency has been spending a lot of its social security reimbursement funding. Director Van Zandt noted that NCBVI does have funding at a time when a lot of entities are struggling. This is because of the good work that everyone is doing.

Commissioner Hansen stated that he understands that the federal shutdown did not affect NCBVI because of the good financial situation that it is in. Director Van Zandt reported that the other part of this was the sequester. NCBVI was cut about five percent of federal dollars, but thanks to the cushion that we have and the planning this has not caused a major problem.

Chairperson Johnson inquired as to if all NCBVI staff positions are now filled. It was noted that NCBVI has a vacant part-time secretary I position vacant. This position is located in Lincoln. Currently, the position is being filled by a SOS temporary employee.

## NFB Newsline ® Update

Nebraska NFB-Newsline®

October 30, 2013

Jamie K. Forbis, Outreach Coordinator

This quarter has been busy here in Nebraska! In August and September I had the privilege of speaking to participants of NCBVI programs and recently I spoke at the Senior Division workshop of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska as well as the general session of the state convention of the NFBN. I've worked with subscribers over the phone to get Newsline on their iPhones, iPad's and Victor Reader Streams and answered general questions about Newsline and its features. New materials for NFB-Newsline® have been released which provide up-to-date on accessing Newsline on the phone, on the web and on the go. These materials are available in large print, braille, on CD or via email.

As reported in previous quarterly reports the Kearney Hub and Grand Island Independent had been experiencing issues with pulling down content for NFB-Newsline®. That issue has been resolved as of Tuesday, October 29, 2013! Both papers are now back up and running with full content available! As newspapers change to different online systems this problem may continue, however, the staff in Baltimore is now aware of the issue and can respond to the problem sooner.

In other news; new stats are now available for NFB-Newsline® in each state. Usage on various devices as well as yearly tracking is now available. The down fall to this new system, however, is that stats for the current month are not available. So, this report will only contain stats for August and September and the stats for October will be sent when available on November 1<sup>st</sup>. To give you an idea of the lay out of the new stats I've pasted below the entire stats list for August and September. You will notice that some stats aren't available yet, but will be available in the near future.

### August, 2013

Number of Subscribers: 1681

New Subscriptions: 5

Total Call Minutes: 17538

Call Frequency: 35.86 minutes.

Total Online Accesses: 1893

Total Content Accesses: 4667

Content Access Frequency: 9.57 minutes.

Calls: 1245

Average Call Length: 14.09

Percent Local Calls: 47.17

Web Sessions: 145

NFB-NEWSLINE Mobile Sessions: 149

In Your Pocket Deliveries: 0

NLS DTB Deliveries: Coming Soon Data Not Available

Podable Deliveries: Coming Soon Data Not Available

E-mail Deliveries: 1599  
Nebraska Newspapers: 2502  
Nebraska Local Channels: 100  
Local Weather and Emergency Alerts: 83  
National Newspapers: 630  
International Newspapers: 0  
My Newspaper: 147  
Breaking News Online: 34  
Magazines: 120  
TV Listings: 486

### September, 2013

Number of Subscribers: 1693  
New Subscriptions: 12  
Total Call Minutes: 13866  
Call Frequency: 37.80 minutes.  
Total Online Accesses: 1991  
Total Content Accesses: 4281  
Content Access Frequency: 10.09 minutes.  
Calls: 1143  
Average Call Length: 12.13  
Percent Local Calls: 47.76  
Web Sessions: 135  
NFB-NEWSLINE Mobile Sessions: 147  
In Your Pocket Deliveries: 0  
NLS DTB Deliveries: Coming Soon Data Not Available  
Podable Deliveries: Coming Soon Data Not Available  
E-mail Deliveries: 1709  
Nebraska Newspapers: 2639  
Nebraska Local Channels: 62  
Local Weather and Emergency Alerts: 73  
National Newspapers: 623  
International Newspapers: 4  
My Newspaper: 127  
Breaking News Online: 25  
Magazines: 69  
TV Listings: 440

A couple of things to note; the call frequency tells us how often subscribers are calling into NFB-Newsline®. So for example subscribers called into Newsline in August on average every 35.86 minutes in Nebraska. The second stat to note is Content Access Frequency. This tells us how often subscribers in Nebraska are accessing content other than over the phone such as through the mobile app or online. In August subscribers accessed content every 9.57 minutes through these devices. Not bad for a state our size. As noted above it will also now be easier to get year-end reports to track the progress throughout the year. So be looking for a nice long report in January!

Discussion was recently held via email on the role of the Nebraska NFB-Newsline® Outreach Coordinator and I just wanted to reiterate that the Outreach Coordinator position in Nebraska is voluntary. When funds are available I can request reimbursement of my time, but I am not paid on a regular schedule for my time as coordinator. Also my position is to work directly with subscribers, promoting Newsline across the state and passing along any content concerns to the national office in Baltimore. Our partnership with the Nebraska commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired allows Nebraska to receive new publications when funds are available thanks to the generosity of NCBVI. Dr. Van Zandt has been working diligently with the Baltimore office to add the Norfolk Daily News, and hopefully this publication will be available to subscribers in Nebraska very soon.

I also want to thank the Board of Commissioners, Dr. Van Zandt, Kathy Stephens and Wes Majerus for allowing the voicemails to be forwarded to my Newsline account. This has made things a lot easier and I'm able to respond to subscribers sooner. Staff at NCBVI have also been excellent in directing all Newsline queries to my Newsline account instead of contacting me at my office at NCBVI. I appreciate everyone's cooperation with this matter.

This concludes my quarterly report of Nebraska NFB-Newsline®. As always if you have any questions don't hesitate to contact me at (402) 471-8102, via E-mail at [newsline@ne.nfb.org](mailto:newsline@ne.nfb.org) or through Twitter @NFB\_NEWSLINE\_NE. Thank you and happy reading!

Commissioner Hansen stated that he feels that there are two things in the Report that are worth highlighting. Commissioner Hansen stated that while Jamie does a good job in providing statistics each month, Newsline just implemented a new reporting system wherein we will be able to get more detailed statistics. The other big news is that the Kearney Hub and Grand Island Independent are now on Newsline.

Director Van Zandt reported that it has been requested that the Norfolk newspaper be added to the Newsline system. A request to have the Norfolk paper added was made both verbally and in writing. The Norfolk paper is one that covers the whole Northeast part of Nebraska. It is also a daily paper. Currently there are some issues on how the newspaper itself does its formatting for the paper. NCBVI pays \$35,000 to Newsline and when we add another paper it is \$10,000 for the first year for the setup and then for each year after it is \$5,000.

#### Client Assistant Program (CAP) complaints or issues

1. As a result of a CAP case it was discussed that IL money could be used to purchase a computer and the Commission could contract with someone to provide training. The equipment will need to make a significant impact on the individual's ability to live independently.



2. As a result of a CAP case, discussion was held on clients returning for additional post-secondary degrees after the Commission had previously paid for one. Staff was advised to read the Academic Support Services email on the w-drive, review the Rule and not tell clients the Commission doesn't pay for a second degree. Staff should take the time to review the need for an additional degree. Is it disability related? Needed for advancement? Needed to get a job?
3. Spoke to a supervisor regarding a CAP case about the importance when a person is currently working and applies for services to really explore with the individual what services they need from the Commission and why? Help to maintain current job? Help to advance? Help to find a different job? Don't be quick to assume they don't need the Commission's help because things have changed so much in the job seeking world.
4. Worked with Carlos and drafted a Background Screening Policy for Clients.

Chairperson Johnson asked if the background check is required for all clients. Carlos Serván reported that the background check would only be conducted only when appropriate.

#### Nebraska Business Enterprise (NBE) Update

NCBVI opened a new vending location in Omaha at a military processing building. A current vendor took that location on temporary basis and we are looking for a client who would like to take that site.

Don Ward spoke at the Dept. of Roads Annual Manager's conference about NBE and the rest areas. He answered several questions regarding our program.

During the last week of August, the Chair and Vice Chair of the vendors committee attended a national training sponsored by RSA in Baltimore. The focus of this conference was on how to get and how to keep federal contracts.

NDOR Master Rest Area contract update. It has been signed and we have new lower rates. As part of the new contract, we are purchasing new vending machines.

The state purchased a new building in Lincoln, 1526 K Street. We learned that the state ask PEPSICO to put a couple of machines in that building for state employees. After some checking, Dr. Van Zandt wrote a letter to the Building Division asking to give us the chance to put our machines; and that we will be waiting when a RFP is out to submit a proposal.

DOR cafeteria contract was not completed as Roads wanted to make changes. We put an original proposal which DOR accepted, but then they did not want us to sell items already written in the RFP. Thus, we decline the new offer with those amendments.

We had the annual training for vendor by the end of September in Lincoln. This training was well attended and the feedback is that the vendors and clients got good information.

A vendor wants to leave a couple of rest areas by the Ashland exit on I-80. We sent an announcement to see if any vendor will be interested on running those locations.

### Public Comment

Kenda Slavin – Kenda asked how many vendors NBE currently has in the Blind Vendor Randolph Shepperd Program. Carlos Serván informed Kenda that there are currently 14 vendors. Kenda also asked how much money has been allocated to purchase the new vending machines. Carlos Serván informed Kenda that approximately \$150,000 will be used to purchase the new vending machines.

Barbara Epworth – Barbara stated that she is a little bit concerned about Dr. Van Zandt's report being only published to the Board. One of the reasons she comes to the meetings is to hear Dr. Van Zandt's report about things. If the report is left out she will be disappointed. Commissioner Hansen noted that what the Board was discussing earlier was not that Dr. Van Zandt would not give a report at the Commission meetings, just that she would give an electronic copy of the report to the Board ahead of time so they could review it before the meetings and be more prepared to ask questions.

Karen Anderson – Karen asked if it is correct that the entire report from the Executive Director is located in the Minutes of the meeting. Commissioner Hansen responded yes it will be and it always has been.

Paulette Monthei – Paulette asked if the Minutes of the Board meetings are available on Newslines. Yes they are.

### Lunch

A lunch break was taken at 11:40 a.m. The meeting resumed at 12:30 p.m. Clients Bu Reh, Aung Tun, Oo Reh, and Pleh Meh prepared lunch. Staff assisting was Kelly Coleman and Kathy Brown-Hollins.

Nancy Flearl noted that another part of NCBVI services is doing outreach to minorities to raise awareness about the Commission's services to all Nebraskans. In that regard, four clients from Burma and Thailand prepared today's lunch.

### Commissioner Recognition

Vice Chairperson Jirak noted that at the end of 2013 there will be two vacant positions on the NCBVI Board. The Governor will be reviewing the applications for replacements and will make new appointments before the end of the year.

Commissioners Darrell Walla and Nancy Oltman will be transitioning off the Board as their terms will expire December 31, 2013. They are both termed out meaning that

cannot seek re-election. The commissioners thanked Commissioner Walla and Oltman for their service and loyalty while serving on the Board. As gratitude of appreciation they were each given a special cookie that said "Thank You..." on it.

Commissioner Nancy Oltman was appointed as a NCBVI Commissioner in May 2003 as she replaced Commissioner Nichelle Ferreyra who resigned. Commissioner Darrell Walla was appointed as a NCBVI Commissioner in January 2006. They both served two full terms as a NCBVI Commissioner.

Commissioner Oltman stated that she truly appreciated the opportunity to serve on the Board. Commissioner Walla also stated that he enjoyed the opportunity to serve on the Board.

#### Discuss & Act on Organizational Development Specialist

Vice Chair Jirak noted that the Commission Board heard the proposal regarding an Organizational Development Specialist from Dr. Nancy Stelter this morning and now it is time to make a decision.

Commissioner Hansen moved to accept Dr. Nancy Stelter's proposal and work towards getting a contract signed with her for her services as outlined in her proposal. The Board of Commissioners will be the individuals employing Dr. Nancy Stelter.

Commissioner Walla seconded the motion.

Commissioner Walla noted that he feels that this proposal will be good and leave a legacy on NCBVI.

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

#### Discuss & Act on New Executive Director Evaluation Tool and the manner in which it will be carried out

Vice Chair Jirak, Commissioner Walla and Paulette Monthei worked on developing a new executive director evaluation tool. Vice Chair Jirak noted that he did forward the proposed evaluation tool to Director Van Zandt prior to today's meeting.

Vice Chair Jirak noted that the evaluation tool is a three part process. One of the processes would be to have commission board members interact with staff during the State Staff meeting to get their opinion on how things are at the agency. The second part of the process would be to formulate questions and have the executive director address those questions. The third part is the collection of all of the documentation throughout the year (ie. State Plan, Action Plan, Budget, etc.) It was noted that this will be an organized, logical approach to what is already being done. The executive director will be aware of what they are being evaluated on.

Chairperson Johnson reported that the Commission Board needs to develop an Executive Director Job description for NCBVI. If there is already one in place it will need to be reviewed and updated.

Commissioner Hansen noted that he does like the direction that this new evaluation process takes us. He also noted that down the road the Board may determine that it needs to be revised to better suit their needs. All commissioners agreed that the evaluation tool can be flexible. Commissioner Hansen noted that he likes the direction that this tool takes us realizing that after the tool is used a few times it may be decided that it may need to be adjusted.

Director Van Zandt added that the draft document itself could use some editing to better reflect the needs of NCBVI. For example, the very first part talks about timing and general introductory items. Director Van Zandt suggested that this be revised to be specific to NCBVI. It was agreed that grammatical changes could be made without changing the substance of the document.

Commissioner Oltman asked Director Van Zandt if she has a preference as to if the evaluation takes place in a public or an executive session. Director Van Zandt stated that she feels that the person in the position has the right at the time to say what they prefer. It may be different from one year to the next. Director Van Zandt added that in general she thinks that having the discussion in executive session is more appropriate.

Chairperson Johnson asked what timeframe will be used for the evaluation. If this evaluation tool is approved will this tool be used solely or in conjunction with what has been done in the past few years? Director Van Zandt noted that she does not feel anyone will be upset to not have a survey to fill out this next year. Also, whatever the Board decides about the process, the Board should write up a message to all staff and consumers to include the full document so everyone knows the process that will be used for the evaluation of the Executive Director. Then, at the same time, let everyone know that the Board does want to hear from them at any time. Individuals can contact the Board directly to provide input. It was the consensus to not conduct a staff survey in conjunction with the executive director evaluation for the next evaluation period in light of the Organizational Development Specialist Project that will occur.

It was the consensus that the commissioners use their own evaluation tools for the upcoming May 2014 Executive Director evaluation as has been done in the past. Each commissioner should collect their own data, use their own judgment, gather statistics and ask questions as they interact with staff members.

Commissioner Hansen moved to adopt the new Executive Director Evaluation Tool and have it become effective on July 1, 2014 with the understanding that revisions be made to make it specific to NCBVI. A job description and an Action Plan are also to be included.

Commissioner Walla seconded the motion.

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

Director Van Zandt commended Vice Chair Jirak, Commissioner Walla and Paulette Monthei for developing the Executive Director Evaluation Tool.

## **New Business**

### Discuss & Act on Proposed Dates & Focus Topics for 2014

The following dates and Focus Topics were decided upon for calendar year 2014. The locations for May and August are proposed locations and are subject to change if the need arises. All meeting dates are scheduled for a Saturday.

February 1, Lincoln - Low Vision Training/Services

May 3, Kearney - no focus topic due to annual evaluation of the executive director

August 2, Norfolk – Guide dogs and how the agency works with clients with guides.

November 1, Omaha - The collaborative process between civic/consumer organizations to further advance independent living and employment of blind Nebraskans

### Public Comment

Mark Bulger – Mark stated that as Darrell and Nancy get set to leave the Board he wants to express his personal appreciation for all they have contributed. He added that he feels that Darrell and Nancy have represented the consumers very well while serving as a Commission Board member. Mark thanked Darrell and Nancy for their service.

### Final Announcements

There were no final announcements.

### Adjourn

The November 2, 2013 Commission Board meeting adjourned at 1:18 p.m.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the February 1, 2014 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

Julie Johnson, Chairperson  
NCBVI Board of Commissioners