

Nebraska Commission for the Blind
Public Meeting, Friday, July 30,, 2021, 9:00 a.m.
530 North 17th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska in the Red Cloud Suite within Willa Cather Dining Hall

Minutes

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

Kimberly Scherbarth, Vice Chair of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The meeting began with introductions.

Commissioners present: Kimberly Scherbarth, Vice Chairperson, Designee of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska, Kearney; Lincoln; Becky Rieken, Dakota City; Robert Newman, Omaha.

Commissioners absent: Mark Bulger, Chairperson, Designee of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, Omaha; Brent Heyen, Executive Secretary.

Staff present: Carlos Serván, Executive Director; Carol Jenkins, Deputy Director of Services; Connie Daly, Lincoln District Supervisor; Amy Buresh, VR Counselor; Nicole Gothier, Home Management Instructor; Jeff Scheer, VR Counselor; Mike Rains, Shop Instructor; Laurie Jacobsen, Apartment Resource staff; Shane Buresh, Transition Coordinator; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Technician.

Public present: Barbara Loos, Lincoln; Brad Loos, Lincoln; Dan Bird, Omaha; Jim Jirak, Omaha; Holly Williams, client; Mykell Earl, client; Stephanie Earl; Camille O'Neal, client; Caleb Root, client.

The Notice of the Meeting was published in the Lincoln Journal Star, the State Government Calendar, NCBVI Website, NFB Newsline® and Radio Talking Book. The Notice was also sent to ACBN, NFBN, and the NCBVI List Serve.

Approval of the April 24, 2021 and June 4,, 2021 public meeting minutes.

Commissioner Rieken moved to approve the Minutes of the April 24, 2021 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Newman seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners present voted in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Newman moved to approve the Minutes of the June 4, 2021 Special Commission Meeting. Commissioner Rieken seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners present voted in favor of the motion.

Report from the Commissioners

Commissioner Becky Rieken – Becky reported that a student of hers made it to the National Braille Challenge finals again this year and she is very proud of her. She just got back from Camp Project Independence (PI) where she worked teaching six different students in the Braille class. Becky attended the NFB National Convention via Zoom and she noted that she learned a lot about

Newsline. She learned that since she is an educator she can get an educators license to teach her students.

Commissioner Robert Newman - Robert reported that he continues to serve as the President for the NFB Senior Division and he serves as Secretary of the Omaha Chapter. Robert also continues to do work for the National Senior Division of NFB. Robert is the President of Friends of the Commission and they had their quarterly meeting last week. They are working on getting some grants for Project Independence. The Friends were successful in getting a \$1,500 grant from the Belmont Foundation for this year. They also received \$20,000 from the Mammel Family Foundation for next year.

Vice Chair Kimberly Scherbarth – Kimberly noted that she is a member of NFB and she serves as Secretary for the NFB Board State Affiliate. Their at-large Chapter for NFB has been an unofficial Chapter and she worked on obtaining a Charter so now their at-large Chapter will be an official Chapter. Kimberly serves as the NFB Newsline Outreach Coordinator. During the past quarter, she had two children participate in the second session of the NFB Bell Academy at Home edition. This is an opportunity for children to work on braille enrichment and other non-visual skills. Kimberly noted that she had the opportunity to be a mentor to these families. At her work at UNK she works with students who are blind and low vision.

Report from the Executive Director

I. Administration

The Institute for Educational Leadership requested our participation in an interview about our services for transition age youth who are blind or have low vision. They were very interested in learning about our experiences in our state and how they may differ from the work of other agencies. Our agency was selected for this interview by a professional surveyor to share information about our transition programs. According to them, as they asked around, many state agencies told them that NCBVI has the most complete and strong transition services.

The amended Technology Accessibility clause is now official and up in the Department of Administrative Services web site, under the Purchasing Division. Any new contract with the state will need to follow this clause.

We continue addressing accessibility issues with the OCIO, most recently WebEx being used by all state employees and not being accessible to the blind. We have been working with Cisco, the company that runs WebEx, to address all the inaccessibility issues. The new Cisco WebEx client has been rolled out to the state of Nebraska. Cisco web developers are actively working to make the web-based platform of WebEx to use the exact same shortcuts as the WebEx client. Cisco and the OCIO are still working on making the WebEx invitations accessible, as well as working to make the WebEx client start by default instead of the web-based version.

In early March, RSA sent to us its 2020 monitoring report draft. We have sent them our corrective action plan (CAP), which was approved in early June. Our first progress report is due in October. However, we already have several of those areas that are due in October completed. Carol, Kat, and Julie are working on updating NCBVI's policies to send to RSA as part of our quarterly progress reports.

Kat completed the State Fiscal Year End. She also started to work on the new fiscal year budget.

The Center and our field services staff are back to work in their offices.

During the last quarter, I attended virtual meetings with the State WIOA partners, the State WIOA Board, the Olmstead State Steering Committee, advisory committee, and Education and Employment Committee, the NCSAB Executive Committee monthly meetings, and the Lincoln Equity and Transportation Workgroup for a 2050 forward plan.

The total number of clients served on all statuses from October 2020-June 2021 was as follows: VR - 443, OIB - 431, and IL under 55 - 77.

We had clients get jobs as: Art Teacher (Postsecondary), Automotive Service Technician/Mechanic, Cashier, Customer Service Representative, Educational/Guidance/Vocational Counselor, Elementary School Teacher, Food Preparation Worker, Human Resources Assistant, Janitor/Cleaner, Library Assistant, Mental Health Counselor, Personal Care Aide, Property/Real Estate Manager, Randolph-Sheppard Vending Operator, Receptionist and Information Clerk, Sales Representative, Secondary School Teacher, Software Developer, Special Education Teacher (secondary school).

II. Human Resources

Larry Mackey retired on June 2, after 35 years working for us. Charlie Saltzman was hired as an orientation counselor, taking Larry Mackey's position in the Lincoln district and she started the week of July 5. Kathy Brown-Hollins submitted her resignation effective July 15 due to health issues. We will all miss Kathy for all her dedication and quality services she provided to our clients. We have one orientation counselor position open in Omaha. Interviews were conducted and the job was offered, but the candidate declined.

Jeff Scheer was hired as a vocational rehabilitation counselor for Lincoln and he started his Center training the last week of June. Riley resigned his position the first week of July and we hired Suzette Casillas who started to work on the front desk on July 19. Suzette worked as the Office Manager for 18 years at Waverly Plumbing & Well Co., until the owners retired and the business closed.

Greg DeWall resigned from his position as he went to work for another entity for California. His last day of work was July 2. Mike Rains is the temporary supervisor for the Center. We posted the Center Supervisor position and already interviewed the candidates. We offered the position to Jessica Bartenbach and she will start working with us on August 16. Jessica is originally from Nebraska, went through several of our youth programs and she also did an internship before she started to work for the New Mexico Commission for the Blind, where she was a braille instructor and the last few years was supervising a small team at that Center. We had interviews for the technology manager position and selected one individual; however, after being offered the job, he declined. We are reposting this position.

Counselors received training on supported employment and field supervisors received training on common performance measures. Some staff attended the National Convention of the NFB the first week of July via Zoom.

The NCBVI Fall State Staff meeting will be held September 21 - 23 in Grand Island at the Boarders Inn and Suites.

III. Field Services

Field staff went back to provide services in-person and morale is increasing as we connect face-to-face with clients and each other. Due to being short of staff and our summer programs, all of our team members are even busier than usual. Several field staff came to support WAGES, PI, and the Robotics training. Technology specialists and some staff worked on July 20 to set up all the computers for the participants of the Robotics training for this week. Our staff also have been working with several transition clients on different jobs under work-based learning, hiring job coaches and partnering with employers. As part of getting our transition students more involved with STEM, in May, we had a week long deceptive class put together by Independence Science, a blind scientist-Dr. Supalo's company. Furthermore, this week we are having the Robotics training, and you will hear more as we have a full presentation as the focus topic.

It has been challenging being short of staff in Omaha, Lincoln, the Center and the business office. However, this gives us an opportunity to evaluate the positions and look for new opportunities working together as a team. Staff has demonstrated working together as an agency team and helped each other when needed in all areas.

We partnered with VR General to put together a Transition Job Expo, and Cristal helped with that. In addition, Aaron worked the NCECBVI Sizzlin' Summer Camp. We also put together a low vision logic program to help clients use their alternatives better.

Field staff also have been networking with stakeholders all over the state to build trusting relationships, and thus, find training and placement opportunities.

Transition Saturdays continue to take place with 10 to 15 participants each month. The focus has been on technology, self-advocacy and the importance of learning skills to be competitive.

We continue to have our partnership with the NFB Mentoring for Excellence.

Field supervisors continue to be active participants with their local WIOA Boards.

IV. Training Center

We have one staff trainee and six students in the apartments and they all are VR clients. Students are now getting in-person training at the Center.

There were seven 3-Day Stays this quarter and two have started full time training in the center. There were two commencement meals.

There were two tours with organizations from the community.

Activities: The students went to the Omaha NFB picnic in June and networked with other consumers. Students have participated on learning how to use a bow and arrow, and how to shoot a handgun. No state or federal funds were used to support this activity because the funds came from private donated funds. Students also did a fishing activity and one of them got a recognition for being able to catch the most fish.

The travel instructor is on medical leave and was out for several weeks. He just started to go back to work two hours per day and will gradually get back to his normal schedule. Charlie moved from being the Braille instructor to work as an OC at the Lincoln district, we are currently contracting with two individuals to teach braille and cane travel.

The Center students, the Center staff, and the staff trainee attended the National Convention of the National Federation of the Blind via zoom.

V. Nebraska Business Enterprise

Federal contracts:

Cafeteria services at STRATCOM is gradually getting to full service, as around 85% of STRATCOM employees are coming to work. The cafeteria is also hiring more people to assist with the increased presence in the building. Two of our clients are working there. Vending services at USSTRATCOM is also increasing the sales.

The two VA new facilities are being run by our vendors. NBE staff is also in communication with the GSA about three potential locations opening in 2022. Two are in Omaha and one is in Lincoln.

State Contracts:

Vending services are now open and operating at the new Nebraska State Patrol building located in the old Verizon building in northwest Lincoln.

A new site has been established at the new DHHS office in Geneva, a blind vendor operates this site. Furthermore, DHHS has approached NBE about operating vending services in their new office in Columbus. This site is scheduled to open in late summer or early fall. NBE is searching for a potential vendor for this site.

The State Office Building in Omaha is looking to add vending services to the first and third floors. Currently, the building has vending only on the second floor.

All sites are now reopened after some lengthy closures due the COVID-19 pandemic. However, not all sites are operating at full capacity. It is yet unknown when/if some sites will return to pre-pandemic levels.

Currently, there are 14 licensed vendors and two trainees in the vending program, all operating facilities.

NBE will hold a retreat for all licensed vendors and trainees on September 9 - 11 at Divots Conference Center in Norfolk, NE.

Focus Topic: An update on the robotics training.

Puttin' It All Together: Robotics STEM Academy

The first ever *Puttin' It All Together: Robotics STEM Academy* is being held from Sunday July 25 through Friday July 30, 2021, in the Red Cloud Suite within the Willa Cather Dining Center on UNL's main Lincoln campus. Dr. Chuck Gardner, Director of Curriculum at CYBER.ORG along with CYBER.ORG Curriculum Development Specialist Jon Ownby, have traveled to Nebraska from Louisiana to share their expertise and enhance the overall capacity for completing STEM tasks for 15 of our NCBVI transition-aged clients. These clients come from all corners of the state and span the entire length of our coverage area. Four of them have also participated in WAGES this summer and another four are currently enrolled at the Nebraska Center for the Blind.

The entire *Puttin' It All Together: Robotics STEM Academy* is taking place on UNL's campus as participants are staying in the University Suites Residence Hall and eating meals in Willa Cather Dining Center, which adds a college preparatory aspect to the program. The basic structure of the Robotics STEM Academy consists of participants spending Monday through Thursday in training for 8 hours each day, concentrating on the Robotics and STEM skills development and then spending the evenings engaged in seminars and other community outing activities, which continue the learning and create a bit of fun in the process. JB&K Services out of Colorado is providing the evening activity oversight and overnight dorm coverage. They are a Pre-ETS provider partner who has contracted with NCBVI in the past to enhance our client's leadership and work readiness skills development. They are leading STEM Academy specific activities but are also inviting and sometimes joining the WAGES group for joint experiences, such as the indoor climbing wall at UNL.

Now, about the main training. CYBER.ORG's robotics curriculum has been designed with accessibility for the blind in mind from the ground up. All participants are receiving, assembling, and programming their own BOE-Bot robots. These bots are rover-like vehicles with two front rubber wheels and one rear wheel, kind of reverse tricycle style. They can be assembled independently by blind persons with very little to no adaptation to how sighted folks would assemble them. Once together, they are programmed in the BASIC programming language in software that is both low vision and text to speech compatible. Lines of code can even be written and imported from Microsoft Word. Each of the participants is also receiving a new Windows-based PC to complete the coding and to use throughout the remainder of their school or beginning work journey's. Once the participants construct more complex circuits various sensors and components, the bots can be programmed to perform a variety of tasks. There are sensors to measure distances, measure gravity and acceleration, create led lights, output speech through a synthesized voice and speaker and much more. I believe the Board of Commissioners and other interested parties will be seeing this first hand at the culminating showcase we like to call the Robot Rally. We also have a BOE-Bot on hand for folks to check out during the focus topic session.

Respectfully submitted,
Shane Buresh, Transition Coordinator

Three students who participated in a program were present to talk about their experiences.

Camille O'Neal – WAGES – Work and Gain Experience in the Summer

Camille stated that she gained a lot of experience while working at the City of Lincoln, Lincoln Commission on Human Rights, as a rental assistant. Camille stated that she enjoyed working and interacting with people and she noted that participating in the WAGES program greatly boosted her confidence. Camille noted that she also participated in Robotics and it was fun to learn and see what Robots can do.

Caleb Root – Robotics

Caleb reported that he worked remotely for JB and K Services out of Colorado while he worked the WAGES program. Caleb stated that it was a lot of fun and working remotely went very well as he got his work done and he was able to participate in meetings. Caleb noted that his primary duty was to help them with their website.

Caleb also participated in the Robotics STEM Academy. Caleb said that the experience was meaningful to him and he enjoyed the opportunity to build the bot and learn so many skills. Caleb stated that he also enjoyed the evening activities such as rock climbing and bowling at the UNL facilities.

Mykell Earl – PI – Project Independence

Mykell stated that he had a lot of fun participating in PI. He enjoyed learning cane skills and had fun cooking. He also worked with braille. Mykell noted that he even got to take a cook book home so now he is excited to use the recipes. During the Chore Challenge, he folded laundry and got to make a P.B. and J. sandwich. Mykell stated that he also participated in a trip to the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha. At the zoo he enjoyed learning what a giraffe smells like and he got to touch a star fish. Mykell noted that they also watched a movie and prior to watching the movie, he had the job of being an usher and helped others get to their seats.

The commissioners thanked the summer programs participants for sharing their stories about the programs they participated in.

At this time, the commissioners and everyone present at the meeting went next door to hear the presentation from Chuck Gardner, Director of Curriculum at CYBER.ORG and to watch the Robot Rally.

Newsline® Update

Kimberly Scherbarth

NFB Newsline Coordinator for Nebraska

NFB Newsline has added several new publications during the past several months, including *Toastmaster* - magazine; *J-14* – Teen Magazine; *Forbes* – magazine; *Fast Company* – magazine; *Animal Tales* – children’s magazine; *Ability Magazine*; *Tech Xplore* – breaking news; plus 7 newspapers from various other states. The agenda for the July 2021 National Federation of the Blind national convention was also posted to NFB Newsline. Children who are participating in the

NFB Bell academy At-Home Edition are also able to access lesson plans on NFB Newsline. We have had two children participate from Nebraska this Summer.

This past quarter we have added six new NFB Newsline subscribers in Nebraska. As you look at the Excel spreadsheet, you will notice that the NFB Newsline Mobile usage has increased tremendously, from 32 in April, 349 in May, and 399 in June. I am uncertain why there has been such a large increase, but perhaps the updated NFB Newsline Mobile app is even easier to use. I am curious if the addition of the KNFB Reader to the app might be related. I plan to reach out to Scott White to inquire.

2021 NFB Newsline Stats

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
Number of Subscribers:	2086	2088	2089	2099	2103	2103	
New Subscriptions:	3	2	3	2	4	0	
<u>Telephone Usage:</u>							
Total calls:	1137	1058	1028	947	976	1023	
Average call length:	13.45	12.34	11.38	11.74	13.34	12.34	
Percent local calls:	49.07	42.15	37.81	42.1	43.36	39.36	
Total call minutes:	15287	13060	11702	11113	13019	12622	
<u>Online Usage:</u>							
Web Sessions:	6258	5284	5719	5422	5454	5247	
NFB-NEWSLINE Mobile Sessions:	44	58	44	32	349	399	
NFB-NEWSLINE Alexa Sessions:							
In Your Pocket Deliveries:	1820	1674	1885	1763	1931	1516	
NLS DTB Deliveries :							
Podable Deliveries:							
Email Deliveries:	568	556	602	581	582	551	
Total Online Accesses:	8690	7572	8250	7798	8316	7713	
<u>Total Content Accesses:</u>							
Content Frequency:	8.36	8.12	8.16	8.68	8.04	8.73	
Nebraska Newspapers:	4127	3524	3626	3516	4082	3606	
Nebraska Local Channels:	32	15	38	40	24	48	
Local Weather and Emergency Alerts:	185	243	259	224	268	243	
National Newspapers	1280	1142	1272	1210	1229	1063	
International Newspapers:	5	0	1	0	0	0	
My Newspaper:	85	66	69	73	76	85	
Breaking News Online	102	122	211	129	171	120	
Nmagazines:	31	22	41	43	37	49	
TV Listings	559	517	508	546	440	523	

Break

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Complaints or issues – Jerry Bryan

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

New Business

Officer Elections

Commissioner Newman moved to elect Commissioner Bulger as Chairperson. Commissioner Rieken seconded the motion. There were no additional nominations. Commissioner Bulger accepted the nomination via a previous phone call. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners present voted in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Newman moved to elect Commissioner Scherbarth as Vice Chairperson. Commissioner Rieken seconded the motion. There were no additional nominations. Commissioner Scherbarth accepted the nomination. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners present voted in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Newman moved to elect Commissioner Heyen as Executive Secretary. Commissioner Rieken seconded the motion. There were no additional nominations. The Vice Chairperson will confirm with Commissioner Heyen that he accepts the nomination. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners present voted in favor of the motion.

Discussion of SFTP Secure Data storage

The OCIO has set up a Secure FTP for the commissioners to use to store data and share files. This SFTP Access will replace the thumb drives that the commissioners have been using to share documents, etc. Kathy Stephens was also granted access for administrative assistance, as well as Larry Oleson for technical assistance. The commissioners discussed how to move forward.

Kathy Stephens reported that she contacted the OCIO to get some training on how to upload files and folders into the SFTP and how to delete them. Kathy noted that the initial process of getting everything from the thumb drive to the SFTP could be a little time consuming, as each file will need to be uploaded. After this initial process, uploading new documents should be quite efficient for the commissioners. Kathy volunteered to upload the files and folders from the current thumb drive to the SFTP and she offered to walk the commissioners through the process of uploading files and folders for future use.

Public Comment

Connie Daly – Connie mentioned that she heard earlier that the Friends of the Commission got a \$20,000 grant from the Mammel Family Foundation for Project Independence 2022. She stated that this is awesome and she thanked the Friends of the Commission for all the work they have done. Connie noted that this money will really help with the success of Project Independence in 2022.

Commissioner Becky Rieken – Becky noted that she really liked the T-shirts that the Friends of the Commission provided for Project Independence this year. They were yellow T-shirts that said “Soaring to Independence” and they had a picture of an eagle soaring. The left sleeve of the T-shirts also stated “The Friends of the Commission Believe in You.”

Final Announcements

The next NCBVI Commission Board meeting will be held on November 6, 2021 in Omaha. The Focus Topic will be “Job Duties of the Deputy Director of Finance and the Business Office”.

The Summer programs luncheon and ceremony will be held at 11:30 a.m., following the NCBVI Commission Board meeting for all Commission Board members to attend.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the November 6, 2021 Commission Board meeting, please email it to the NCBVI Commission Board at ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant
NCBVI

Kimberly Scherbarth, Vice Chairperson

Staff Quarterly Reports for July 30, 2021 Commission Board Meeting

Lincoln District Activity Report – Connie Daly

We hosted a Retirement Celebration for Larry Mackey. We hired Jeffry Scheer to work as a Rehabilitation Counselor II. His background is working in Behavioral Health with youth. We hired Charli Saltzman to work as an OIB Orientation Counselor II. Charli started at the agency as a VR Tech. She was the Braille instructor in the center. She has a passion for working with the older blind. We are very excited to have them as part of our district.

We hosted Robotics Train the trainer event in Lincoln, May 3 and 4. We are providing the training next week. Robotics is a job exploration program that allows blind youth the opportunity to explore STEM careers.

We worked with Independence Science to create a week of training for a UNL student who is in a STEM program. They provided training to her using the Labquest equipment to conduct a number of different experiments including dissecting a Cow's heart.

We had clients get jobs as an agriculture worker, an administrative assistant, a medicaid worker.

We had four supported employment clients that got jobs. Three are in janitorial and cleaning services and one is a Laundry worker.

We had five Work Based Learning experiences and one On the Job experience this summer. We have six students at WAGES.

Omaha District Activity Report – Nancy Flearl

General Update:

It is always busy, but especially during the summer months.

Omaha staff have worked the first few days of WAGES.

Kelly has been busy with planning Project Independence along with the PI Committee. We have seven participants for the program this year.

Adrienne participated in the Robotics training and will be working the Robotics program at the end of July.

Tim and Kelly have met with some vision teachers over the summer. They have done some planning on teaching JAWS skills and their future collaboration.

Larry and the Tech team have been working on training on Fridays. The trainings have been on ways to trouble shoot technical issues. Aaron Sands will be providing an in-depth training on MAC IOS to the team and several other NCBVI Staff in August. More and more consumers are choosing MAC Book for school. The technology team will be working on July 20 to set up all the computers for the participants of the Robotics training for the week of July 26. Several tech team

members tuned into the NFB convention to learn about emerging technology and updates from technology specialist in the field.

NBE:

The blind licensees in our district are doing well with their sites, as people are returning to their offices. National Park Services is still not open and not bringing staff in for training as they did prior to Covid-19, business is improving at U.S. Immigration and Homeland. Staff have been staying in touch as the Licensees work with these sites as they come out of Covid-19.

Omaha staff have been working with NBE to get bids for internet connection for select vending machines at Offutt. This is always a complicated process of working with appropriate vendors with clearance, and then the vendor Force 3 that worked with the firewall.

Omaha Positions:

We just finished round three of interviews for the Orientation Counselor II position. We again only had 14 applications. As we all know, it only takes one to be the best fit. We do have a candidate that will be coming for their second interview on July 22.

Kathy Brown-Hollins did make the difficult decision to submit her resignation effective July 15. She just is not in the position with her health to continue working. It is a sad day for us all at NCBVI to see Kathy leave us. We have valued the dedication, skill, belief in blindness that she has brought to consumers.

Employment:

We have had several students working this summer in a variety of jobs as a part of their work-based learning. The staff have been touching base and working closely with job coaches and employers.

Tim has been doing a lot of business outreach and is developing some wonderful partnerships with Blue Cross & Blue Shields, Amazon, Holiday Inn, Marriott and The Farnam Hotel. As a result, several consumers have had some great interviews. Stay tuned as I think we will see people gain employment soon as a result of these efforts.

Likewise, Adrienne has been visiting with the businesses that she has worked with for work-based learning opportunities about hiring consumers that are job ready.

We continue our work with employers and partners attending placement related meetings. We have had individuals placed or assisted in retaining employment as Social Worker for a Long-Term Care Facility, Mental Health Therapist, Computer Information System Manager, Videographer, Food Service Worker, Gym Attendant and an IT Network Manager.

It has been tough being down several position with Kathy Brown-Hollins out; but I am so humbled by the wonderful team I work with every day.

North Platte District Activity Report – Erin Brandyberry

Networking: (Include any instances where you networked with employers, service agencies, schools, potential clients, etc.)

Cristal assisted with planning the VR Job Expo that was held for transition students. Cristal has done employer outreach with BlueCross BlueShield, Culver's, Greeley Nursing Home, Children's Rehab, Plum Creek Market and West Pharmaceuticals. Cristal has attended monthly meetings for Employ Kearney. Ashley has participated in monthly meetings for Dawson County interagency. Ashley has done employer outreach at the Branding Iron Café, Runza, Pizza Hut, Gothenburg Animal Clinic, Peterson's Market, and Café Diner Gothenburg. Angie has networked with the Department of Labor, Cirrus house, and OHD.

Projects: (Include any information on special projects that you worked on that go above the typical work you do each day with your clients.)

Angie conducted a Fall Prevention Workshop. Aaron, Angie, Ashley, and Cristal worked the WAGES program first two days. Erin has worked closely with Shane on coordinating the WAGES program. Aaron worked the NCECBVI Sizzlin' Summer Camp. Aaron presented a seminar on technology for the WAGES participants. Erin, Fritz, Angie attended Low Vision Logic Program for Seniors. Erin and Ashley coordinated the Pre-ETS low vision logic program. Aaron will be working the Robotics camp as a trainer.

Training: (Include information on any trainings you attended during the time period.)

VR counselors received training on supported employment. Erin received training on common performance measures. All district staff met for continuous improvement project.

Client Outcomes: (Include information about client outcomes such as employment, clients attending programs, clients graduating from school, etc.)

Angie had two successful closures this quarter, one at the League of Human Dignity and the other as a Mental health practitioner. Angie also had a client complete a 3 day stay at the center with plans to start center training in September. Angie has one client completing an OJT. Cristal had one client successfully graduate project search in Kearney, 3 clients doing community based WBLEs, and 1 client doing an OJT. Cristal had 1 successful closure as a fast food worker/cook. Ashley has 1 client doing a community based WBLE. The North Platte district had 4 students sign up for the WAGES program, 3 students sign up for the Robotics program, and 1 student signed up for Project Independence.

Center Activity Report – Mike Rains

Currently: Six VR Students in the apartments

No Students are Older Blind

We have one new Staff member (Jeff) starting his training and participating in Center training classes. This includes the use of sleep-shades and learning non-visual techniques in each of the classes

There were seven 3 Day Stays this quarter and two have started full time in the center.

There was one 2-day stay that did observations in shop class only

There have been no mini meals.

There was 2 commencement meals.

No virtual tours with agency consumers.

One in-person tour with agency consumers.

Two tours with organizations from the community.

Observations: There were no observations this quarter.

No volunteer activities this quarter.

Activities: Students have participated in two activities on learning how to use a bow and arrow and the other how to shoot a handgun. No state or federal funds were used to support this activity because they came from private donated funds

Guest Speakers: No guest speakers this Quarter.

Center Staff: Since our last report the staff have been providing in-person instruction in the Center, and we are trying to get back to full capacity. The Center's braille instructor has now accepted a new position in the Lincoln district. We are now in the process of hiring a person to fill this vacancy. The travel instructor is on medical leave and hopes to return soon. For the two staff that are gone, we have contracted with two teachers to fill-in during these vacancies. All Center staff are back and providing one-on-one and small group instruction. Things are slowly returning to normal with some staff and students wearing masks at their choice or if they have not been vaccinated.

Center Supervisor: Has resigned and I, Mike Rains, am over-seeing that the center continues to run smoothly while we hire a new supervisor. The new Center supervisor is tentatively starting on August 9th. Her name is Jessica Bartenbach. I am also glad to have the Center students and staff back in the training center. As the community reopens, I am looking forward to getting events, activities, and volunteer opportunities for our clients back on the calendar.

Additional Notes: The staff and students are back in the training Center and are back doing in-person training. Students and staff emotional states are on the rise and their morale is improving as more businesses are opening up and students are able to go out and explore and travel.

We all have had experience with virtual training via Zoom, and this has added a component to the abilities of the staff and students to do webinars to further their experiences. Students were able to participate in the NFB National convention during July via Zoom. Students are also partaking in Destination Employment via Zoom each month. Staff are still able to provide training to a student when their health or schedule will not allow them to make it in person. They can do vocational seminar over the internet if they are gone that day as well. So far, this has had a positive outcome because with remote learning they are not missing too much training.

The Center currently has six students, and none of them need one-on-one attention even though we have students with multiple disabilities. This has allowed students to be more evenly spread out in the classes.

The total number of students attending the Center does not include staff trainees because they do not stay in the Center Apartments. We have 10 Center Apartments and so 10 students can attend the Center regardless of how many staff trainees we have. Nebraska consumers always have priority when attending the Center over consumers from other states.

Nebraska Business Enterprise Activity Report – Eric Buckwalter

VENDING SITE UPDATE

US StratCom and Vending

Cafeteria services continue to be offered. Cafeteria services are now approaching full capacity. Vending services continue as well. Both have seen an improvement in business with the increased personnel in the building. The cafeteria continues to search for employees.

Nebraska State Patrol

Vending services are now open and operating at the new Nebraska State Patrol building located in the old Verizon building in northwest Lincoln.

DHHS-Geneva

A new site has been established at the new DHHS office in Geneva, NE. A blind vendor operates this site.

DHHS-Columbus

DHHS has approached NBE about operating vending services in their new office in Columbus, NE. This site is scheduled to open in late summer or early fall. NBE is searching for a potential vendor for this site.

Omaha State Office Building

The State Office Building in Omaha is looking to add vending services to the first and third floors. Currently, the building has vending only on the second floor.

GSA – Lincoln/Omaha

NBE Staff is in communication with the GSA about three potential locations opening in 2022. Two are in Omaha and one is in Lincoln.

COVID-19

All sites are now reopened after some lengthy closures due the COVID-19 pandemic. However, not all sites are operating at full capacity. It is yet unknown when/if some sites will return to pre-pandemic levels.

NBE LICENSEE UPDATE

Currently, there are 14 licensed vendors operating vending facilities. There are two trainees in the vending program, both operating facilities.

VENDING SITE COMPLAINTS

There have not been any vending site complaints in the past quarter. NBE Operators were reminded at their quarterly meeting that NCBVI holds all contracts with various facilities, and licensees are representing themselves, other licensees, other blind vendors, and NCBVI statewide.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Credit Card Readers

NBE staff and contractors continue to work on installing credit card readers. Many of the remaining sites have had low volume of employees do to the pandemic.

Micro Markets

NBE continues to explore the possibility of micro markets. Several of the locations we have approached about this have declined to change their facility.

LOOKING AHEAD

NBE is looking outside the box to help vendors whose sites saw a drop in capacity adjust their business model in order to keep providing quality services, without sacrificing income.

With the purchase of new machines, NBE is placing a higher emphasis on clean and well maintained machines. Instruction is being offered, as needed, on an individual basis.

NBE will hold a retreat for all licensed vendors and trainees on September 9th – 11th at Divots Conference Center in Norfolk, NE.

Business Office Activity Report – Kat Carroll

This past quarter, I have worked on the following projects:

- Updating existing policies and writing new policies in response to the Monitoring visit last September.
- Completed the State Fiscal Year End.
- Continue training new Accountant I, Nicole Amen.
- Continue training Cathie Guida on front desk duties.
- Hired a new front desk person to replace Riley, who left us 7/7/2021. Suzette Casillas comes to us from Waverly Plumbing and Well Co. where she worked for 18 years until the owners retired and closed the business.
- Continue to improve the new Internal Budget Report for FFY 2021 that shows budgeted, year to date expenditures, projected fixed expenditures for the remainder of the year, and remaining funds to spend on client services and extras such as vending machines and technology. Present this information to Leadership and Supervisors on a monthly basis to ensure we are planning for the best use of our available funds.
- Work on the budget for the new State Fiscal Year
- Work on the RSA 17 quarterly report, updating the policy and training Nicole Amen to review this report.
- Work on improvements to client supply inventory tracking.
- Work on improving communication between the Business Office and the Field Supervisors. We had a very productive meeting on 7/15 and agreed upon some new procedures that should help both areas be more productive.

Kathy Stephens – Highlights

I have working been with Surplus Property to have items hauled to State Surplus. I am also working with Surplus Property and NBE to dispose and surplus many unusable vending machines.

I have been working on year-end inventory for the technology items that NCBVI has in E1. This is an on-going project. Our year-end inventory report needs to be submitted to DAS Material Division before August 31 each year.

The NCBVI Fall State Staff meeting will be held September 21 - 23 in Grand Island. The meeting will be held at the Boarders Inn and Suites. I have worked with the hotel on putting together our contract. A final rooming list needs to be submitted to the hotel by August 18, 2021.

I attended the Diner Advisory Board meeting at the Deterence Diner with Executive Director Carlos Serván.

I set up and attended the Special Commission meeting, which was held on June 4 for the approval of a Final Order.

NCBVI returned one of our Lincoln state vehicles to TSB due to low usage. I scheduled maintenance, as needed, on our other Lincoln vehicles.