

NARFE Chapter 1192
October 6, 2021 Chapter Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER President Pat Turner called the meeting to order at noon, Red Lion Hotel, Kennewick, Wash., and welcomed 20 members.

Pat asked members to stand, led the Pledge of Allegiance, and asked members to remain standing for a moment of silence for:

- Our hospital workers who continue to care for those hospitalized, especially with COVID.
- All our elected officials, no matter the political party.
- Our military and civilians defending our country – especially on our southern borders – and their families.

CHAPTER MEETING PROGRAM SaLee Charlesworth, director, active4life, was scheduled to provide a presentation on this new area program; however, shortly before the meeting, she called Mary and said she was home ill. As Mary had some background material with her at the meeting, she coordinated with SaLee to provide a short presentation. SaLee had one of her staff bring brochures to Mary for giving to members.

Mary shared with members that she'd learned about active4life when she was looking for information on the annual September All Senior & CommUNITY Picnic. In an ad for the event, she'd read that it was being "brought to you by active4life." Mary said that started a search that led her to SaLee. SaLee shared with Mary that the senior centers for Kennewick, Pasco and Richland contacted active4life about taking over coordination for the annual picnics that rotate each fall between the 3 cities. When this year's community event was cancelled due to COVID, Mary said she asked SaLee if she would provide a presentation on active4life at the October chapter meeting.

From the program's website, active4life is "providing purpose through education-driven life changing events. Our events provide empowerment, encouragement, and support. Information and opportunities to be social and make new acquaintances. An environment where you will feel safe and welcome and explore new opportunities." Further from the website, "We are committed to building strong and steadfast relationships with all that choose to share their life with us. Peace is a lifestyle experience – one that helps us grow. As we focus on the good we do through our encouraging experiences, we hope our positive and affirming words and actions will empower and motivate you to be Active 4 Life."

An example of an activity was a free movie, "Blue Hawaii," at Richland's Uptown Theater, August 10, which also included bingo, popcorn and beverages. Member Jim Partridge shared that he had friends who attended and told him they had a good time. Mary concluded by saying she would continue to look for active4life events and let members know. **(POC: Mary Binder)**

OFFICER/FEDERATION/DISTRICT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

President Pat Turner.

- Pat again welcomed everyone and said, "It is good to be together."
- Mary updated members on the passing of Rich Wilson, a long-time NARFE member who served the Washington State Federation (WSF) in several positions, including as federation president. He also was the immediate past Region IX VP. A tribute to Rich is in the 2021 annual WSF *The Federation Reporter*, which was released in late September. Several copies were at the meeting; the newsletter is also posted on the federation website. Services for Rich are October 14 and 15. Mary had details for anyone wanting this information. Mary also explained the NARFE Silver Circle program and its Wall of Fame for donations of at least \$1,000; that is, an individual's name would be put on a name plate for

the wall. Currently, 3 WSF members are included on the wall: Sandy Cagle, past federation president; Lanny Ross, past Region IX VP; and, Don Binder, Tri-Cities chapter officer and Region IX NARE-PAC coordinator. Federation President Steve Roy is collecting donations for Rich. As of last week, more than \$900 had been donated. Mary has the donation details, and they are also in the 2021 *The Federation Reporter*.

- As the Nominating Committee chair, Mary provided an update on the upcoming 2022-2024 chapter officer elections. All current officers have agreed to serve again – Pat Turner, president; Nancy Crosby, vice president; Liz Bowers, treasurer; and, Mary Binder, secretary. No other members have volunteered but Mary said other volunteers are still welcome as several current officers have held elected positions for quite a few years. Please contact Mary if you are interested and/or want more information. Also, even if it isn't for an elected officer position, anyone wanting to get more involved, e.g., in a committee, please contact Mary. Elections will be at the November meeting; installation of officers at the December meeting.
- Hospitality – Pat reported that Nancy has agreed to serve as the single point of contact for interface with the Red Lion Hotel and the sales office, including for the monthly meetings and the contract with the hotel. Pat said this will help streamline operations and be less confusing for the hotel. Pat requested that if members at a meeting had an issue with a meal, the staff, etc., to please contact Nancy to let her work the issue.
- Reminders:
 - Check the chapter website, www.narfe1192.org, for minutes, newsletters, meeting programs, updates, etc. Pat said, "Larry [webmaster] does an outstanding job of keeping things up to date on the website."
 - Check the WSF website, too, for other updates, www.narfewa.org.

Vice President *Nancy Crosby.*

- Adding to the information Pat provided regarding the chapter's group sales agreement with the Red Lion, Nancy said that by agreement the chapter is obligated for 15 paid lunches. She asked members to keep this in mind when deciding whether to have a lunch meal when attending. She also asked members who need a special meal, to please let their callers know this information, or contact her. This information needs to be provided to the hotel ahead of time.
- For Caller Coordinator Darleen Wall, Nancy shared that Darleen and her husband are now living in Arizona but Darleen still wants to remain as the chapter's caller coordinator. Also, Nancy provided another reminder for Darleen regarding the importance for members to return messages left by callers as soon as possible so Darleen has an accurate attendance/lunch count to provide to Nancy. **[Note: This information needs to be provided to the hotel by 10 a.m., the Monday prior to the Wednesday chapter meeting.]**

Treasurer's Report *Liz Bowers.*

- Liz reported that all bills have been paid except for today's lunch. At the end of September, the chapter's checking account had \$687.61, the savings account, \$16,627.10, for a combined balance of \$17,309.71
- **Monies collected at the October Meeting** Lunch, \$340; Alzheimer's Research Fund, \$25; NARFE-PAC, \$16; 50/50, \$26 collected/\$13 awarded, and donated to the NARFE Alzheimer's Research Fund (\$7) and NARFE-PAC (\$6). General donations, \$0.

Secretary *Mary Binder.* For Faye Vlieger, sunshine coordinator, Mary and Johanna provided updates on cards sent and other member information:

- Johanna said she sent cards to:
 - Cathy Beecher on the passing of her husband David;
 - Joe Escamillo on the passing of his wife Ginette; and,

- Susan Smith, daughter of member Carl Gallion, who is undergoing chemo treatments.
- Johanna said she recently learned that member Patricia Dobeas had passed away. She was living on the western side of the state.
- Johanna also shared that she recently saw member Bill Hoyt with his daughter-in-law. Bill had been hospitalized and is now living at the Richland Brookdale facility. His membership had been renewed as national-only but he wants to still be a chapter member. Johanna is working to resolve this.
- Mary said she had sent a card from the chapter to Christine Wilson on the passing of her husband Rich. [See above details under Pat's President's Report.]

Newsletter/Public Relations *Mary Binder.*

- November/December chapter newsletter – articles/input due to Mary by Friday, October 8. Newsletter will be finalized/distributed prior to the end of the month.
- Recapping the chapter's September 50th anniversary celebration, Mary said:
 - At each table were a few copies of the *Senior Times* and *Tri-Cities Area Journal of Business* newspapers that have articles about the chapter's 50th anniversary.
 - She sent the link to the article from the *Business Journal* to NARFE's director of communications. The link was "retweeted" and is now on NARFE's Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn pages. It is also posted on the WSF website.
 - Further, there is reference to the celebration and pictures in the 2021 *The Federation Reporter*.
- Senior Times Expo, Tuesday, October 20, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Southridge Sports & Events Complex. Mary said this is again a drive-thru event due to COVID. Individuals will receive a "goody bag" with information from a variety of vendors. The chapter participated a year ago but did not get any direct contacts so is waiting until the event returns to in-person to participate. [Note: The spring event is scheduled for Tuesday, April 18. If an in-person event, the chapter board has approved having a chapter NARFE table.]
- The Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce monthly lunch/meeting will again be virtual. It is Wednesday, October 20, noon to 1 p.m. Program is the annual "State of the Cities" update from area mayors. Contact Mary if you want to attend and she will provide the link.
- A reminder: The annual Combined Federal Campaign runs through January 15.
- The 2022 NARFE Photo Contest entry deadline is February 28. The theme is "America in Focus." More information from NARFE should be available soon, [but basically the entry requirements are the same as in past years.]
- Applications are scheduled to be available sometime in November for the 2022 NARFE/FEEA Scholarship Program. Graduating high school seniors related to NARFE members – children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, step-children, etc. – who are planning to attend college in 2022 are eligible to apply.

WSF *President/Legislative/NARFE-PAC Chair Steve Roy;*

VP/DVP I/Federation Reporter Editor Mary Binder; Alzheimer's Coordinator Lorie Bennett.

- Editor, *The Federation Reporter* – Mary said the annual edition has been finalized and distributed electronically to those who have email addresses with NARFE and allow distribution of such information. It is also posted on the WSF website, and Mary had a few black/white copies available at the meeting. She shared that her goal for the publication is to provide members/prospective members an overview of the federation – who does what; what chapters are in the federation and where they are located; information about upcoming events, etc. **[Note: Members took all the black/white copies Mary provided.]**
- For WSF President Steve, Mary highlighted the September 29 WSF virtual annual meeting:
 - Having an annual meeting is a bylaws requirement. Besides Mary, Pat and Nancy also attended the 4-and-a-half-hour meeting.

- Guest speakers were Jessica Klement, NARFE staff vice president, policy and programs, and Dave Bowman, NARFE senior membership director. Mary said their presentations would be posted on the WSF website along with the meeting minutes. Jessica reinforced NARFE's top legislative priorities, which are the same as those emphasized during Grassroots Advocacy Month in August. She also emphasized the importance of contributing to NARFE-PAC, especially with elections coming in 2022. Dave provided information on NARFE's efforts to expand its social media platforms and programs to hopefully improve contact with current employees, in particular, and get them to join NARFE. A highlight in his presentation was information about FEDHub – “the online community exclusively for NARFE members.” Mary said FEDHub is scheduled to launch soon. **[Note: See the October NARFE Magazine, page 56, for details.]**
 - President Steve's state-of-the-state update was primarily a recap of/highlights from *The Federation Reporter*.
 - Looking ahead, the WSF is planning a conference for sometime in 2022. If in May as is in past years, it most likely will be virtual. If later in the year and can be in person, the conference will also most likely include training sessions, e.g., for treasurers, editors, etc., as there have been requests for such sessions. Also in 2022, there will be an election for WSF officers. There is a nominating committee in place, so information regarding the elections will be coming from the committee.
 - The NARFE national conference is scheduled for August at the Westin-Kierland Resort in Scottsdale, Arizona. The deadline for submitting amendments to NARFE's bylaws and standing rules is November 19. Mary has the details for submitting an amendment.
- Mary reported that in her DVP District I role, she has been contacting/working with the district's other 5 chapters. Some are trying to return to in-person meetings; others are still not able to do so. Mary thanked members at the Tri-Cities Chapter 1192 meeting for their support and attendance, which are helping to keep the chapter strong and viable.
- Alzheimer's Chairman Lorie highlighted information from a recent report she received from NARFE Region IX Alzheimer's Coordinator Leland “Wally” Walbruch:
 - As of August 31, the NARFE fundraising national total was \$13,961,552.06.
 - During August, members raised \$12,924.01, up \$4,843.42 from August 2020.
 - However, since July 1, the beginning of the new Alzheimer's Association's fiscal year, NARFE raised \$26,574 compared to \$28,446.23 last year, so down \$1,872.23.
 - Lories said hopefully, with more chapters returning to in-person meetings, fundraising will increase. In-person contact is so important.

Legislative Mary Binder.

- Federal updates:
 - 2022 COLA announcement will be made soon. All indications are that while it will probably be higher than in recent years, it will be offset by inflation, including the increase in healthcare premiums. **[Note: 2022 COLA is 5.9%, per announcement Wednesday, October 13.]**
 - At the September meeting, member Terese Pratt asked why lowering the cost of prescription drugs was not one of NARFE's top legislative priorities. Mary and Service Officer Ellen committed to researching the question and providing an update at the October meeting. At the meeting, Ellen highlighted information from a letter NARFE President Ken Thomas recently sent to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer on this topic. President Thomas wrote, “As you negotiate the final language of the Build Back Better Act, I ... urge you to maintain provisions that would help lower prescription drug prices for all Americans,

and specifically to preserve the provision requiring Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) plans to take advantage of lower prescription drug prices that would be negotiated by the Department of Health and Human Services.” So, lower prescription prices is something NARFE is monitoring. Ellen had copies of the letter at the meeting. [Terese was not at the meeting. Ellen will send her a copy of the letter.]

- Reminder! It continues to be important to contact our legislators regarding support to legislation affecting federal employees/retirees pay and benefits.
- State updates:
 - Mary reminded members to vote in the upcoming election, November 2. Some members shared that they’d already received their state voting pamphlets. Typically, voting is down when it is not a presidential election, but with many issues and candidates running for local positions, Mary emphasized the importance of voting.
 - Liz and Mary will be attending the Washington Policy Center’s annual Eastern Washington dinner/fundraiser, Friday, October 15, The Davenport Grand Hotel, Spokane. More than 1,000 people typically attend. Scheduled guest speaker is Dr. Ben Carson, former HUD secretary during the Trump Administration.

NARFE-PAC *John Wetterling*. John prepared a report for the meeting. Highlights included:

- The third quarter of the 2021/2022 congressional cycle ended September 30. PAC reports should be posted soon on the NARFE website, including contributions and distributions. John will provide updates at the November chapter meeting.
- Although the 2022 elections are still more than a year away, NARFE is starting early to “bolster fed-friendly candidates for reelection.” John encouraged members to donate at chapter meetings, by mail or by being a sustainer (a monthly contribution via a credit card).
- A reminder about NARFE’s PAC goals for 2021/2022:
 - Raise \$1.85M in member contributions;
 - Disburse \$1.35M for political purposes; and,
 - Send NARFE members to 120 local events.
- Regarding proposed USPS changes to health benefits for current and retired postal employees, that is, pulling most of these employees and retirees out of the FEHB program and putting them into their own plan, bill sponsor Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) said at LEGcon21 that the new postal reform would not raise our FEHB premiums.
- John encouraged members to stay abreast of issues with information in the Issue Briefs section under Advocacy Resources on the NARFE website.

Alzheimer’s *Larry Williams*.

- After months of talking about it, the local Walk to End Alzheimer’s is right around the corner – Sunday, October 10. The event kicks off at noon at the bandshell, Columbia Park, Kennewick. There will be a short ceremony at 1 p.m., with the 2-mile walk beginning at 1:30. Those who are vaccinated are encouraged but not required to wear masks; those not vaccinated must wear masks. Social distancing plans are in place. Larry said the chapter’s team has 6 members, 5 of whom are planning to do some or all of the walk. Those donating at least \$100 will also get a T-shirt.
- The program for the chapter’s November meeting is the annual chapter “white elephant” fundraiser for the NARFE Alzheimer’s Research Fund. The fundraiser will follow the same format as in recent years – members bring items, tickets will be on sale for members to use to bid on items, that is, place tickets for each item they want to “bid on” in a bag placed with each item. The winning ticket will be drawn at the end of ticket sales. NO WEAPONS allowed. Bring cash and/or checkbook. Nancy and Delayne Kruschke offered to help Larry.

Webmaster *Larry Williams*. Larry updated members on NARFE’s new chapter website initiative using the WordPress-based system. He said the NARFE-hosted system for the past few years

for chapters to plug into is “rudimentary,” so he has opted to continue with the website set up the chapter has used for many years as it is local, independent from NARFE and very customizable. However, he is basically a “single-point failure” with the system, which is not good. At one point, Lorie Bennett was trained to be his backup, but her training was awhile ago. Lorie volunteered to continue as the backup and would work with Larry to get “refreshed” on procedures. Larry thanked Lorie and will work with her. He shared that he’d prefer to stay with the current system as he is familiar with it and would not have to learn a new one, but also understands the need to have backups. He asked members to consider volunteering – either as webmaster or additional backup. **[Note: Larry said that after the meeting, Randy Grekowicz volunteered to work with him.]**

Service Officer *Ellen LeVee.*

- Ellen reported on the upcoming NARFE FEHB program open season, November 8 through December 13. On average, premiums are increasing 3.8 percent. Ellen provided several copies of the new rate charts.
 - She encouraged members to use the NARFE and OPM tools available to compare plans.
 - She said some members who have the “Self + One” option may find it cheaper to change to the “Self & Family” option.
 - She also highlighted that almost 30 plans are now offering some type of Medicare Part B reimbursement, e.g., the Blue Cross/Blue Shield basic plan (but not the standard plan).
 - Ellen said she is working to find out about virtual opportunities the providers may have in lieu of the normal in-person health fairs. She said she hopes to have more information at the November chapter meeting.
- NARFE webinars – Ellen provided a handout with information on 4 upcoming NARFE webinars specifically dealing with health benefits and open season. She shared that she has watched several of the archived NARFE webinars and has found them informative and helpful.
- For those with FEGLI, premium changes for some members became effective October 1. Some will see increases, others a decrease, and others will remain the same. One member at the meeting said the plan for his wife would be affected, but the one for him would not.
- Ellen encouraged members who have questions to contact her. She also encouraged members to use the NARFE Federal Benefits Institute. She shared that there is an easy-to-complete form to email to the Institute. Her experience has been that the Institute staff or their contracted experts are very responsive and helpful.

Membership *Johanna Caylor.*

- NARFE’s 2021 Fall Membership drive started September 1 and goes thru December 31. [Members receive \$10 for each new member they recruit and are entered into a drawing for prizes.] Details are in the September *NARFE Magazine*, page 46.
- Health Fairs – Johanna said the only local fair scheduled is in Walla Walla, Corps of Engineers, Tuesday, October 26, 9 to 11 a.m. Liz will assist Johanna at the fair. Johanna also said Ellen was most welcome. President Pat asked Johanna to ensure she coordinated with Ellen on health fairs/open season activities as Ellen is the new service officer. Johanna reported that she had packets ready to take to other local area federal offices. **[Note: After the meeting, Johanna was notified by Mary Lynn Schmid, senior account manager, BC/BS Federal Employee Program, that the Walla Walla health fair had been cancelled.]**

Sunshine *Faye Vlieger.* See Secretary’s Report.

Caller Coordinator *Nancy Crosby* for *Darleen Wall.* See Nancy’s VP report.

Old Business John reminded and encouraged members to go to the NARFE website for information, that there is much there. He also said there is a lot of information in the electronic NARFE *NewsLine*.

New Business None.

Announcements

- Pat highlighted a phone conversation she had recently with an individual who basically just wanted to discuss NARFE, its position on issues, the current political climate, etc. Pat said she enjoyed the conversation.
- Pat also shared that she was watching a Mariner's game recently and saw an ad for the FEHB program and federal BC/BS. She said she was excited to see this information in a commercial during a major sporting event.
- Johanna shared that she got a call from a member wanting information on hearing aids, in particular, hearing aids that did not squeal. It was suggested that the member call the NARFE Federal Benefits Institute.

Open Discussion No open discussion.

Free Lunch Drawing Mary Binder.

50/50 Drawing June Ollero, \$26/collected; \$13/awarded (\$7 donated to Alzheimer's Research Fund; \$6 donated to NARFE-PAC).

October Birthdays Johanna Caylor.

October Anniversaries Lorie/Leon Bennett.

Next Chapter Virtual Board Meeting Monday, November 15, 10 a.m. All chapter members welcome. Non-board members – contact Nancy Crosby if you want to attend and she will send you the Zoom link.

Next Chapter Meeting Wednesday, November 3, Red Lion Hotel, Kennewick. Doors open at 11:30 a.m. for social time; meeting begins at noon followed by the program.

November Chapter Meeting Program Annual Chapter White Elephant Fundraiser for the NARFE Alzheimer's Research Fund. Pat said this is one of her favorite chapter meetings. Members were reminded to bring items to the auction, and cash and/or checkbook to purchase bid tickets for items, and/or donate to the NARFE Alzheimer's Research Fund.

Closing Remarks *President Pat.*

- Happy Halloween, and if you are driving while the trick 'r treaters are out, please be careful.
- Ensure your vehicles and home are ready for winter. Colder weather is here!
- Remember to vote by November 2.
- And, most importantly, mask up, remain vigilant, and always remember, family first.

MEETING CLOSED 1:32 p.m.

Prepared by:
Mary Alice Binder,
Secretary