



MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & BLIND

# Express

giving kids the building blocks to independence

Volume X, Issue 3, Spring 2012



MSDB Foundation sends  
kids to the slopes.

**PAGES 8-11**

# THEORY OF MIND

**Tiffany Harding, Interpreter Coordinator**

**S**cenario: A child is playing with his toy truck and “parks” it in the “garage” (under the bed). He decides to go play outside.

While he is outside, his mother comes in and cleans his room. The truck is taken out from under the bed and put in the toy box. When the boy returns he goes to get his truck from the “garage.” He is horrified to find his truck gone! He goes and cries to his father that the truck is gone from the garage. Dad starts to panic thinking the family has been robbed. After a long discussion with the boy and some information from the mother, Dad realizes that all of the frantic tears were over a toy.

I’m sure you have all experienced the frustration (and the humor) when you cannot make a connection to what your child is talking about. Either they have neglected to give you a frame of reference or they explain it as if you were there and experienced everything (even make-believe) with them. Perhaps this is because the child lacks Theory of Mind. Theory of Mind (ToM) is defined as “the ability to understand others’ mental states,” and children that have not yet developed ToM often assume that you know everything they know.

Humans begin their development of ToM from the day they are born through social, verbal, physical, and emotional experiences. Children with sensory disabilities often show slower development of ToM than their peers. Language is one of the main components in developing ToM, thus, Deaf/Hard of Hearing children are at an extreme disadvantage. According to an article on the topic in *Child Development* magazine, “As people converse, the very language they use conveys their intentions, presuppositions, beliefs and knowledge.” We learn about others’ experiences and thoughts through conversation.

As caregivers, teachers, parents, and supporters of these children, we have a responsibility to flood them with language, in every possible form at every possible moment, to ensure growth and cognitive development.

Fostering ToM with language allows our children to develop their own sense of self, create natural peer associations, and develop self advocacy skills, independence and self sufficiency. They become young adults with the ability to reason with others, explain their perspective and compromise as necessary, and become everything we dreamed would be possible for them.

When we take advantage of all communication opportunities and have deep and meaningful conversations with our children, we prepare them for the brightest of futures. ■■



As children develop, they learn to see the world differently – and from another person’s point of view, not just their own.

*Reference: Schick, Brenda; Villiers, Peter de; Villiers, Jill de; Hoffmeister, Robert: “Language and Theory of Mind: A Study of Deaf Children,” Child Development, March/April 2007, Volume 78, Number 2 Page 376-396.*



## Thank You!

Thank you to Cheryl Hansen and the Sidney School District employees for the donation of \$520. MSDB Outreach parent Cheryl Hansen led a fundraiser selling Annick Coffee to benefit MSDB students. Your generosity is greatly appreciated. Our thoughts are with each of you and the entire Sidney community.



# MSDB Recommended for Full Accreditation

**M**SDb recently received recommendation for full accreditation from both the National Accreditation Council for Blind and Low Vision Services (NAC) and the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD). Both groups were very complimentary of our school: the skills and knowledge of our staff, the education and assessment processes used, the student support services, outreach services, and especially our students. MSDB was commended for having program goals and objectives that are aligned with the mission and vision of the school. Other major commendations included MSDB's strong outreach program and emphasis in the campus program on helping students to develop meaningful independent skills. The recommendations from the reports will be used to revise the school's strategic plan and guide our school improvement process over the next few years. ::



## Celebrating 100 days

Preschool celebrated the 100th day of school on February 6! They decorated t-shirts, ate chocolate covered zeros (donuts), counted out 100 treats, made necklaces with 100 Froot Loops, and made books that showed 100 stamps! Who knew 100 could be so much fun?!

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# DYNAMIC DUO

**Jim Kelly, Dean of Students & Emily LaSalle, Outreach Consultant**

**K**eeping our students safe is a priority here at the Montana School for the Deaf & Blind. MSDB regularly (every quarter) undergoes inspection; alarms warn us if anything is awry. Some dangers are hidden and precautions are exercised to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff.

Meet Champ and his handler, Steve. The dynamic duo works for Interquest Detection Canines. The MSDB administration contracts with Interquest to inspect our campus (school and cottages) and locate any illegal drugs, ammunition and firearms, alcoholic beverages, as well as over-the-counter medications and prescriptions. Champ will alert to actual substances as well as residual scents such as gun powder that may have been on a jacket during hunting season.

Since hiring Interquest Detection Canines about six years ago the unannounced inspections have yielded zero serious contraband. The “hits” have been on a jacket (recently used during a weekend hunting trip), some face acne wash (contains alcohol), one .22 shell (located in a storage room amongst some donated rags) and a beer bottle cap (found in a box of match box cars, probably being used as a prop!). We work hard to keep our campus safe and the folks at Interquest assist us in doing so. Awareness is a key to safety. Prevention in this instance is in the interest of the well being of our students and staff. The staff of Interquest will provide MSDB staff and students with educational information on drug abuse and measures to keep safe while at school and at home. ■■



“Champ” really lives up to his name. This team can’t be beat. Thanks for helping to keep our school safe.

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## GREEN EGGS & HAM: SEUSS-I-LICIOUS!

**Dee Blake, MSDB Teacher**

**C**elebrating Dr. Seuss’s birthday at MSDB is always fun, and this year wasn’t any different! Students from Mrs. Cross’s, Mrs. Moog’s, Ms. Philipp’s, Ms. Taylor’s, and Ms. Blake’s classes made a fantastically fun family breakfast. Each student had a specific job to assist with the preparation of this scrumptious meal. These jobs included: setting the tables, making juice, pouring drinks, melting butter in the microwave, cooking the ham, cracking eggs, making toast, buttering the toast, and cooking the scrambled eggs. If you haven’t figured out what story we were reproducing, maybe this will give you a big hint--two students had the job of adding green food coloring to our food!



Many of our students were surprised at how many people it takes to make a buffet breakfast. They also practiced their table manners and learned the importance of having patience, as it can be frustrating to wait upon the person who is melting the butter so that you can add the green food coloring to it. The staff couldn’t be more proud of how well the classes worked together!

We had many visitors that smelled the food and volunteered to try our breakfast, and we want to thank them for helping make this a wonderful and fun learning experience. Maybe we should have a science experiment next year and make some Oobleck from the Dr. Seuss book, *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*? Hmmm....stay tuned until next year! ■■

# COMPANY, CLUB GIVE SIGNING DOLL TO SCHOOL

Reprinted with permission from: Great Falls Tribune  
Staff Writer: Kristen Cates, Pictures: Rion Sanders

With its middle and ring fingers pressed down, and pinky, pointer finger and thumb shaped to make the signed words for “I Love You,” a new doll donated on Valentine’s Day to the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind showed love for deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

As part of a national campaign to get the “I Can Sign Doll” into more deaf and hard-of-hearing students’ hands, the Great Falls Lions Club presented MSDB with one of the dolls - a rabbit - Tuesday morning. The doll, designed by a company in Lodi, Calif., has malleable arms and fingers that can help teach different signs.

“It appears to be a good tool,” said Wyman Taylor, a local Lions Club member.

Taylor said Rob Hartley, a Lions Club member in California who first encountered the dolls and the company that makes them six years ago, has been working to make sure the dolls end up in the hands of children who need them. The goal on Valentine’s Day was to get the doll to at least 30 to 40 organizations that work with deaf or hard-of-hearing students, according to Taylor.

On Tuesday, he presented MSDB’s elementary children with a floppy-eared rabbit version of the doll - and told them to come up with a good name for it.

“I hope you give him a good home here,” Taylor said.

After the presentation, the students eagerly approached teacher Julie Dee Alt to see if the “I Can Sign Doll” could really sign all of their names.

Manipulating the rabbit’s fingers, Alt made it sign the names of students, such as Katie and Justin. “We really appreciate such a wonderful gift,” Alt said. “It’s just like a doll any child would have, but it gives these students a sense that ‘this is like me.’”

Alt said the doll also will be useful for teachers who are trying to teach new signs. “I think we’re going to be fighting over her for a while,” she said. ■



The signing doll, making the “I Love You” sign (above), is now named “Wyla”. The MSDB students decided to use part of Wyman’s name for her. Wyman presented the doll to MSDB, and Wyla received hugs from the start (below).





# HOME DECORATING IN CANDY LAND

**Betty Cook, MSDB Teacher**

One Friday morning, the students of the Visually Impaired Department had a group art/holiday project. Each student was given a tray and a choice of making gingerbread houses or decorating gingerbread people. There were five different houses (Chalets, Gabled



Houses, Toy Shops, Bakeries, or Regular Houses), three colors of icing (red, green and white) and a variety of candy for decorations. Each house or person could be decorated with Mini Jellies, Pucker Ups, Multicolored Beads, Spearmint Leaves, M & M's, Smarties, Skittles, or Reese's Pieces. The

gingerbread people were made by Ms. Philipp's pre-school class.

The project started as an engineering/architectural challenge. "Gluing" the walls and roof sections together with the icing was a challenge for many of the students. A few of the buildings collapsed, but with the help of staff, the



houses were rebuilt and ready for the most exciting part of the challenge. Deciding which candies would make each house most beautiful was time consuming! Some students even needed to taste the different kinds of candy to see if they would be a good addition to the house decorations. Gluing the candies on the houses became a little messy. Students had frosting on their hands and some on their faces before their houses or people were finished. There were a few students who had red or green teeth, tongues or mouths, which was a sure sign they had tasted the icing! At the end of the decorating session, all students had smiles on their faces and thought the houses looked pretty and edible! The students left the houses in the department over the weekend to dry and later took them back to the cottages. ■■



## Thank you, Northwestern Energy!

In December, MSDB gratefully received a \$2500 grant from the Great Falls Division Charitable Contributions Committee of Northwestern Energy for iPad2s and accessories. The iPads were purchased after the first of the year and have been a hit in the classrooms where they are used. Teachers are using them for developing academic and communication skills. ■■

# TURN IT DOWN!

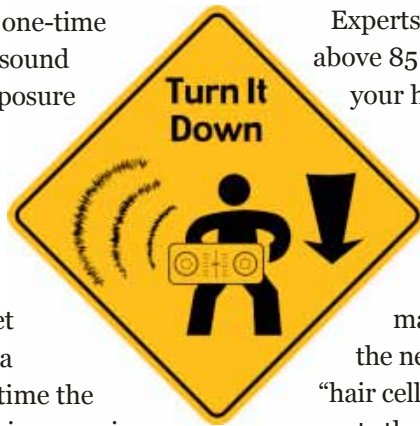
**Sarah Eyer, Outreach Consultant**

**H**earing loss may be caused by a one-time exposure to an extremely loud sound (such as an explosion) or by exposure to loud sounds over months or years.

Loudness, or sound intensity, is measured in decibels (dB). The scale runs from 0 dB (which is the faintest sound a human ear can detect) to more than 180 dB (the noise of a rocket launching). Decibels are measured on a logarithmic scale, meaning that every time the intensity increases by units of 10, each increase is 10 times the lower figure. So 40 decibels is 1000 times

as intense as 10 dB.

Experts believe that prolonged exposure to sounds above 85 dB without any protection can damage your hearing.



When adolescents and young adults fill their ears with loud music, by whatever listening device – head phones, speakers, iPods – it can cause hearing loss. Volume, not musical taste, is what matters. Loud noise destroys hair cells at the nerve endings in the inner ear. These tiny “hair cells” translate sound vibrations into electrical currents that go to the brain. Damage them and your hearing suffers...permanently. ■■

## Children Respond Best to Love and Logic

**Yvette Smail, Behavior Specialist**

**A**s I was contemplating how to deal with a behavioral situation with a student, some things that I'd learned from various trainings, particularly the Love and Logic seminar, came to mind. The Love and Logic approach assists adults in helping children develop and grow in a healthy way, provide them with confidence and dignity, and teach them how to become more responsible. I wanted to share some of the concepts because they were helpful in guiding me to the best possible outcomes.

**1. Shared control:** Gain control by giving away the control you don't need. Control is like love and respect, the more we give, the more we get. The world's most powerful people put the vast majority of their energy on what they can control beyond a shadow of a doubt - their own thoughts, feelings and actions.

**2. Shared thinking and decision making:** Provide opportunities for the child to do the greatest amount of thinking and decision making.

**3. Equal shares of consequences and empathy:** An absence of anger allows a child to think and learn from his or her mistakes. Remember that anger and frustration on the part of the adult often feed misbehavior on the part of the child.



“Love allows children to grow through their mistakes. Logic allows children to live with the consequences of their choices.” ~ Jim Fay & Charles Fay, Ph.D, co-creators of Love and Logic

**4. Maintain the child's self concept:** An enhanced self concept leads to improved behavior and improved achievement. (This one really struck me as being the most important thing to remember.) Also, remember that it is important for us to know the difference between a manipulating child and one who is hurting and desperately needs us to listen and understand.

If you would like materials on Love and Logic Parenting, please contact Debbie Metge, Behavioral Counselor in the residential program, at 771-6120. If you would like materials on Love and Logic in schools please contact me or Sally

Tilleman, Guidance Counselor, at 771-6000. ■■



# Montana School *for the*

## HELP US GIVE KIDS THE BUILD

### MSDB FOUNDATION SENDS KIDS SKIING

**T**hrills and spills on the slopes are part of winter for MSDB students again this year, thanks to the support of an anonymous private foundation that has partnered with the MSDB Foundation. Providing the opportunity for kids with vision and hearing loss to learn to ski is one MSDB puts a high value on. But even with the limited season of two days on the hill, the school's tight budget does not easily accommodate the expenses associated with skiing, including the rising fuel costs of bus transportation. In cases like this, the MSDB Foundation works to bring in funds to help cover costs.

MSDB finds creative ways to teach its students as many things as is practical, helping them to enlarge their world and to move through that world with as much ease, self-assurance and independence as possible. Skiing provides a wonderful chance for the students to expand the possibilities they see for themselves. Since the school began participating in the Showdown Ski P.E. program a couple of years ago, the staff has watched students push themselves into new levels of confidence and self-reliance.

Blind and visually impaired students, in particular, benefit tremendously from opportunities to engage in physical activities that teach them independent mobility and confidence so they can get around more easily on



their own. Skiing is an excellent activity for teaching them the balance, agility, timing, listening, orientation and navigational skills they need to make their way in the sight-oriented world.

According to the U.S. Association of Blind Athletes, blind and visually impaired people who participate in sports tend to be higher achievers and more competitive than those who do not, with far higher employment rates.

MSDB teams with Eagle Mount to provide guides for blind students. This is a wonderful partnership that makes it possible for students of all abilities to benefit from the skiing experience.

Deaf and hard of hearing students have different

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

**W**ith your help, the MSDB Foundation has been able to provide funds for services and equipment for the students at MSDB for 30 years. The Foundation is committed

to funding academic and extracurricular activities that help prepare students for independent lives. Please join us in that commitment by making a tax-deductible donation at [www.justgive.org](http://www.justgive.org) or mailing it to:



# Deaf & Blind Foundation

## ENDING BLOCKS TO INDEPENDENCE

challenges with skiing, but the benefits for them are similarly self-esteem-boosting. If they can ski, they can believe in their ability to do many things.

Here's what one MSDB student, Brooke, wrote about the skiing program:

*I love to go to skiing because it is fun to go fast and to learn how to ski on a mountain. I hope it will happen again in future. I love watching kids from MSDB, making their days fun and happy. We have strong good feelings about skiing, because it makes us look like we are brave kids! I want to say 'Thank you so much for letting us go skiing and for helping us have good days.' ❄*



ABOVE: Brandon rides the "magic carpet" to the top of the slope.



LEFT: An Eagle Mount volunteer uses a harness and tethers to help guide a student who is visually impaired.

### MSDB Foundation

P.O. Box 6576 | Great Falls, MT 59406  
For more information, please call 406-771-6040

***"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."***

*~Helen Keller*



# Fun on the slopes

Skiing and Snowshoes - who could ask for more on a beautiful winter day in Montana? MSDB students thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to participate in the ski program. Thank you Showdown Ski Resort, Eagle Mount Great Falls, the MSDB Foundation and its anonymous donor.







The APH Portable Sound Source III Barb is holding helps Katie orient on the race track. It's just one of the many inventive ways to use this device.

# I Love to Snow Shoe

**Barb Balko (Katie's Mom), Outreach Consultant**

**K**atie Rolf is an alumnus of MSDB. She graduated from Sentinel High School in Missoula, Montana in 2003. During her time in public school, she received support from the MSDB Outreach Program for the Visually Impaired. Katie participated in many on campus activities, including the MSDB Goalball Enrichment Weekends, Family Learning Weekends, Games for the Visually Impaired and the Summer Skills Camps. She is 27 years old now, and has adjusted well to her life as an adult who is blind.

Katie has her own business called Katie's Kookies. She makes gourmet dog biscuits and sells them to the Good Food Store and also has many private customers. Katie bakes three flavors of Kookies for dogs. "I have Peanut Butter and Honey, Herb & Cheese, and Diet Bones for your pudgy puppy if you have one!" says Katie.

Katie is also very athletic. This January, she participated in the Montana Special Olympic Winter Area Games, which took place at the Lost Trail Ski Resort in

western Montana. She participated in the Snow Shoe Event. Totally blind, Katie competed against other athletes with special needs on the 100 meter snow shoe track. The Portable Sound Source III device, which is available through the American Printing House for the Blind (APH), was used to provide direction and guidance on the track. Katie concentrated and stayed focused on the sound of the Portable Sound Source III, which enabled her to negotiate the track and cross the finish line successfully.

Katie feels that competing in Special Olympics is important to her. She says, "It is fun, it gives me good exercise, and competing builds strength in my arms and legs. I love being with my friends at the Special Olympics dinner and dance!" In addition to competing in winter sporting events, Katie also rides her Morgan horse, Chick, in the Montana Special Olympic Summer Equestrian Trail and Equitation Events. She has won many gold, silver and bronze medals and she plans to continue competing.

Through Katie's endeavors I have noticed an increase in her self-confidence, balance and coordination and overall well-being. I am very proud of her and will continue to encourage her active participation in all athletic and social opportunities. ■■

# Cottage Student Council: SERVING THE COMMUNITY

**Maeona K. Lee,  
Supervising Counselor**

**T**he Cottage Student Council was started during the 2008 – 2009 school year. The mission is to promote morale, spirit and cooperation with the student body, faculty, administration and community. All students regardless of age who live in the Residential program can be members of the Residential Student Council. They attend monthly meetings and pay \$5 dues each year. They also participate in at least one community service project and one customer service activity each year.

The officers of the Student Council include the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. The adult sponsors work with them one on one to learn the duties of their office. There are always at least 2 adult sponsors at the officers' meetings, and all staff on duty is encouraged to attend the regular monthly meetings. During the Student Council meetings the sponsors promote respect for and safety of all individuals at MSDB and in the community, and they encourage self advocacy and a sense of responsibility. The students themselves are learning how to conduct themselves at group meetings as well as learning that they are a part of this organization and that they have a "voice" in what is happening.

The Residential Student Council has been involved in a variety of activities. Some of the community service projects they have worked on include working with the



Red Cross to make emergency care kits, a canned food drive, a "Safety Starts With Us" grant where the students created emergency kits for the School's vehicles and their own parents' vehicles. Included in the kit

was a wooden "hazard ahead" sign that the students made. They also participated in a time capsule project and wrote letters to soldiers stationed overseas.

The students have raised funds



# LET'S COMMUNICATE

**Steve Sangwin, MSDB Teacher**

One of the biggest challenges our deaf and hard of hearing students face is using standard English grammar and syntax. Our students use a variety of communication modes: Signing Exact English (SEE), Pidgin Signed English (PSE), Manually Coded English (MCE), American Sign Language (ASL), spoken English, and others. Each system has different rules or guidelines that essentially govern it or determine the difference of one from the others. As an English teacher, what I'm looking for is improvement in our students' abilities to move between the different modes of communication while maintaining, most importantly, the belief that all modes are viable and none is better than the other. They're different! MCE is the communication mode I mostly employ in my classroom, since harvesting standard English syntax and grammar is my charge.

A metaphor I've used with our students, time and again, is the toolbox: we need to be able to use a variety of tools to perform different tasks. My students used to wrinkle their faces up, pondering why a hammer isn't a good tool, for example. I have a selection of tools in my classroom drawer, so we might actually look at a hammer and compare it with a pair of pliers, which would be lousy for pounding a nail in for example. The kids would laugh, watching me attempt to do that. I'd say that the pliers are a good tool and so are screwdrivers, wrenches, torches, saws, and more. We have to decide



which tool to use in a given situation. More importantly, we need to realize that there are different tools to use for different situations.

Most of what we learn in any class applies to our lives at large, and my students and I talk about this all the time. The net purpose of any teacher is to teach herself or himself out of a job—ultimately, we want our students to learn how to teach themselves, since they will be moving on. If we accomplish this, then we've taught them to love learning. The message is the same and doesn't change: we're all different, we have different needs, we have different likes, and we experience different things, but we have this one place (our world at large, our city, our school...) in which to make it happen. ■■

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## Cottage Student Council: Serving the Community

by selling bags of candy, as well as having bake sales and car washes. They also were able to take the proceeds from the pop machines to put towards a fundraising project. Just recently the group sold Student Council T-shirts. The design was developed by the Student Council members themselves.

The customer service activities they have been involved in have been a hand-washing demonstration and a lesson in proper dental care. The students also participated in the "Safe

Driving Teen Week."

The Student Council also includes social activities. The students took an all day bus trip to Holter Lake for a day of fishing. The students and staff worked together to plan this activity – from getting their fishing licenses to having a workshop on fishing safety and responsible citizenship. The students also had an afternoon of casting practice, and dug for their own worms. They signed a contract for responsible behavior. One

of the other fun activities the students just recently participated in was an all-cottage Valentine's party. During many of the meetings the students participate in a fun activity such as making microwave s'mores, making pretzels, or taking pictures of their own milk mustache.

Student Council has been a great organization for the residential students. The staff and students have learned skills which can be used for their entire lives. ■■

# History of Orientation & Mobility: Moving In the Right Direction

**Geri Darko, Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist**

Imagine you are a blind child in the 1700's. What is life like for you? You might be a beggar on the streets. In many cases it is survival of the fittest and you may be killed because of your weakness. This is the story about how the education of individuals who are blind began and how the orientation and mobility aspect of that education evolved over time.

Imagine being a blind child in 18th century Paris. You and a group of children like you are given dunce caps and

instruments you don't know how to play. You are told to play them to "entertain" an intolerant crowd, which ridicules you. Luckily, one compassionate observer does not think this display is entertaining. Valentin Haüy happens to be eating lunch at a café and your embarrassment becomes his inspiration for establishing the first school for the blind. In 1786, Haüy opens the Institute for Blind Youth in Paris. Attending this school as a child with blindness, you are given an education in reading, writing, music, and vocational skills. Rather than being a beggar, you gain



MSDB's original school building when it was in Boulder, MT, in 1902.



skills that will help you become successful in adulthood.

As a child with blindness during the same era in the United States, your opportunities for success

are limited as well. That is, until 1829,

when a man named Samuel Gridley Howe establishes a school in New England that becomes known as the Perkins School for the Blind.

The profession for educators of children who are blind is slowly growing during this time period. A man in Austria named Johann Wilhelm

Klein publishes a textbook on the instruction of the blind, which becomes an important guide. Haüy, Howe, and Klein are considered the three great founding fathers of the education of the blind. Aren't you thankful for their efforts as a child with blindness?

The profession of Orientation and Mobility (O&M) is still very young, but innovation is in the air. In 1860, Sir Francis Campbell is experimenting with a long cane for "foot travel" at the Perkins School. Eventually, blind children and adults everywhere will be traveling more safely as a result of his work.

While the winds of change are blowing around the world and educators are becoming more aware of the needs of students with visual impairments, the first ten students are enrolled in what was originally named The State Deaf and Dumb School, in Boulder, Montana, in 1893.

As the 20th century begins and



World War I breaks out in Europe in 1914, many soldiers become blind as a result of their injuries. After the war ends in 1918, Dr. Gerhard Stalling begins training dog guides in Germany for those blinded in the war. In 1929, Dorothy Harrison Eustis establishes Seeing Eye, Inc. in Nashville, Tennessee. The first White Cane Ordinance is passed in 1930, granting blind pedestrians protections and right-of-way while carrying a white cane, and the following year Lion's Club International begins promoting the use of white canes for people who are blind.

In 1937, the Montana Legislature votes to move the state school from Boulder to Great Falls. In 1943, the Legislature approves the official name of the school – Montana School for the Deaf and Blind – and the school is placed under the direction of the Montana Board of Public Education.

During the 1930s and '40s, orientation and mobility for students with blindness is still not widely taught in classrooms around the country. However, this skill set is becoming more important in the lives of wounded veterans. In 1943 Richard Hoover develops a long-cane foot travel system with the help of Warren C. Bledsoe at Valley Forge Army Hospital, and in 1947 Bledsoe helps train the first six O&M specialists at Hines VA Hospital in Illinois. These "Original Orienters" include John Malamazian, Stanley Suterko, Alfred Dee Corbett, Edward Thuis, Lawrence Blaha, and Edward Mees.

The role of the O&M specialist and certification requirements are defined in 1953 at the Gloucester Conference, held by the Catholic Guild for the Blind in Massachusetts. These standards are expanded upon in 1959 at a national conference held by the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), and university programs are developed to begin training professionals to work with children with visual impairments.

The first of these is the Peripatology Program at Boston College, in 1960, quickly followed by one at Western Michigan University. AFB publishes *Orientation and Mobility Techniques: A Guide for the Practitioner*, by Everett Hill and Purvis Ponder, in 1976 and *Foundations of Orientation and Mobility*, by Richard Welsh and Bruce Blasch, in 1980. These books will continue to be used in the training of O&M specialists into the new millennium.

In 1984 two organizations consolidate to become the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), which becomes the central processing office for O&M certification applications. If you are still imagining yourself as a blind child, you should feel excited about the changes that have occurred in the short history in the education of blind children. Hopefully, you feel encouraged that educators are still learning about the importance of independence for a person with a visual impairment.

Flash forward to the year 2012. In this day and age, children with visual impairments

are given many opportunities to become independent and successful adults. There are many training programs available for teachers who are interested in educating children with visual impairments. Orientation and mobility specialists can be found at street crossings, in shopping malls, grocery stores, residential neighborhoods, business districts, huge cities and small rural towns teaching the essential components of independent travel. You can learn more about these programs and the qualifications necessary to be a certified orientation and mobility specialist on the following websites:

- [www.orientationandmobility.org](http://www.orientationandmobility.org)
- [www.aerbvi.org](http://www.aerbvi.org)
- [www.acvrep.org](http://www.acvrep.org)



Alyson practices using proper cane technique.

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**References:** • Blasch, B. B., William R. Wiener, & Richard L. Welsh. *Foundations of Orientation and Mobility*, Second Edition. New York: AFB Press, 1997. • Kelley, Pat. "Historical Development of Orientation and Mobility as a Profession." 1999, <http://orientationandmobility.org/profession.html>, Feb. 29, 2012. • "Valentin Hauy." Nov. 7, 2011, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentin\\_Ha%C3%BCy#References](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentin_Ha%C3%BCy#References), Feb. 29, 2012. • "200 Years: The Life and Legacy of Louis Braille." 2009, <http://www.afb.org/louisbraillemuseum/braillegallery.asp?FrameID=193>, February 29, 2012. • "MSDB-A Short History." Florence S. McCollom and Betty K. Van Tighem



MONTANA SCHOOL  
FOR THE DEAF & BLIND

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# Cochlear Implants and MRIs: A Cautionary Tale

**Kathy Johnson, Audiologist**

**M**ost parents of children with Cochlear Implants (CI) probably remember your implant team telling you that your child should not have an MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scan. You may have even received a card to carry that notifies medical personnel, as well as one for scanners at the airport.

In fact, no one with a CI should even be in the room where the MRI scanner is located, as the powerful magnet in the scanner can start to pull on the CI magnet on the processor and the magnet under the skin.

Both Cochlear Americas and Advanced Bionic websites are very clear about this: "NO MRI SCANS UNLESS THE MAGNET UNDER THE SCALP IS REMOVED." This is true whether or not the person with the CI is wearing the processor.

Unfortunately, due to a series of misunderstandings, a CI recipient in Montana was placed in an MRI machine. The physicians had looked into the CI issue, but the information from other medical personnel wasn't clear. One of the international websites indicated that it was fine to have an MRI without first surgically removing the magnet and actually showed pictures of MRI scans done with a CI in

place. Therefore, the patient was urged to go ahead with the procedure, against her better judgment.

Because of the strong pull of the MRI magnet, her internal magnet was pulled out of its plastic casing. This was very painful, and the patient stopped the procedure. She had to have surgery to replace the magnet and start over with the healing process before she could wear her CI again.



Fortunately, the CI wires were not pulled out and the CI is working fine again. But this patient wants to be sure that all of the other CI wearers in Montana know not to have an MRI no matter who tries to talk you into it.

I know parents will watch out for their children, but what if your child is older and away from home? This same CI wearer was involved in a rollover car accident prior to the MRI scan. Her CI processor flew off and stuck to metal in the car. Fortunately, she was okay and was able to tell medical personnel that she

had a CI and they needed to look for her processor, but she was worried about what could have happened if she had not been conscious.

For this reason, she bought a medic alert bracelet to wear. She does not want to accidentally be given an MRI ever again! This seems like great advice for all CI wearers in case they should ever be in a situation where they can't speak for themselves. ■■



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