



MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & BLIND

Express

giving kids the building blocks to independence

Volume IX, Issue 3, Summer 2011

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PPL Supports Transition Program
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"CHILD FIRST"

Putting the Needs of Children First in the Individual Education Process

Steve Gettel, MSDB Superintendent



ut of every thousand children only three or four are affected by hearing or vision loss. And because

there is little disability-specific training required in the preparation programs for teachers or administrators in Montana, when an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is being developed, the members of many IEP teams just do not have the knowledge or skill to adequately assess the level of performance or the educational needs of the child. That's not to say that this is the case in every school district, but for some children the teachers, administrators, and support specialists can be unskilled in assessing the language and communication of children with hearing loss. And there are less than a half dozen public school teachers in the state trained to assess the print media, Braille and orientation and mobility needs of children with a vision loss. Unfortunately, if an educational placement is made without good assessment information and a clear understanding of a child's instructional needs, then the setting and services may not be appropriate and may not meet the terms of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA requires the "least restrictive access" to communication or instruction for children who need a "Language Rich Environment" (LRE). In determining the least restrictive environment or LRE, the focus should not be on the type of educational setting but what happens in that setting.

With the pending reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, MSDB will be participating in the **"CHILD FIRST"** project being championed by the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD), of which the school is a member. The CEASD is committed to the principle that the IEP and the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) are central and fundamental to the IDEA. Every child with a disability is unique in his or her individual



abilities, background, experiences and needs. CEASD and MSDB believe that the identification of the child's needs and strengths should occur before the IEP is developed. And the development of the IEP should be based on those identified needs.

Through the **"CHILD FIRST"** project CEASD member schools are working to see that Congress recognizes the IEP as the centerpiece of IDEA and that through the IEP process:

- The abilities and needs of the child are identified and goals to meet those needs are developed before an educational placement is discussed.
- The IEP is developed by a team that includes trained and qualified professionals who understand how the needs of children with vision or hearing loss can best be addressed in the school.
- The team not only considers "special factors" but also ensures that they are provided for in the IEP. These special factors include the child's need for language acquisition, direct access to instruction through sign language or Braille, orientation and mobility instruction, access to the general curriculum as well as the core curriculum, meaningful measurements of academic progress with appropriate accommodations for testing designed to meet the needs of deaf and blind children, membership in a language community, and participation in after school programs.
- The discussion of educational placement by the IEP team must begin with a review of the full continuum of all options available to the student. This full continuum not only includes the placements available in the local school district but also the options available at special schools like MSDB.

The changes that CEASD proposes will reaffirm the emphasis on the child's IEP as a vehicle for determining the educational environment conducive to maximizing the development of the whole child and the achievement of educational outcomes. ■■

Scout's Honor

Lori Heyer, MSDB Parent

On Saturday, February 26, 2011, MSDB student Parker Wilkins received his Eagle Scout Award. This is the highest award achievable by a Boy Scout and is only given to Scouts who have earned a certain number of merit badges and completed an Eagle Scout Service Project. This is a commendable feat, as statistics show that only 2% of all Boy Scouts actually achieve the rank of Eagle Scout.

In May of 2010, Parker completed his service project. He and his fellow Scouts enlisted the help of other



Proud as a peacock, Parker Wilkins poses with his Eagle Scout Award.

volunteers from the Great Falls 1st Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and from MSDB to dig holes for two red maple trees and a hole for a time capsule on the grounds of MSDB. A combined total of 41 man-hours were logged to plant the trees. Three days later, Parker and his fellow students of MSDB buried the time

capsule flanked by the two trees. The time capsule was a coordinated project of the students and staff of MSDB under Parker's direction. Parker's grandfather, Robert Heyer of Missoula, built the time capsule, and the staff and students stuffed it full of memorabilia. The time capsule was placed inside a metal garbage can, donated by ACE Hardware of Great Falls, for protection from the elements. The trees will serve as markers to locate the capsule in the future. The time capsule will be raised in the year 2025.

Friends and family helped Parker celebrate his achievement at a formal presentation at Parker's church building on February 26. Congratulations Parker – we are proud of you! ❖

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OUR "GRANDMA" IS THE GREATEST!



Congratulations, Grandma Cecelia, you deserve this award and so much more!

Leann Goss, MSDB Teacher

On Saturday, May 14, Cecelia Eide was recognized for her dedication to the Foster Grandparent Program. She is pictured here, receiving the Presidential Award signed by President Obama in recognition for serving more than 4000 hours in the Foster Grandparent Program. The award was presented to her by an airman from Malmstrom Air Force Base at a luncheon at the Meadow Lark Country Club.

Presently, "Grandma Cecelia" works with children in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Department at MSDB. She has been working as a

foster grandparent for 7 years. Her work has always involved helping the preschoolers. This year she is with the preschool class for part of the day and also works with the kindergarten/1st grade class for part of the day. She is patient and kind and always has a warm smile for everyone she meets! The children love her, and the teachers rely on her assistance each and every day. She looks forward to working more with preschool in the future. She is a vital part of our daily program, and we are so proud of the work she has done and grateful for her tireless dedication and endless generosity! ❖

When Life Gives You Lemons...

Amanda Taylor, MSDB Teacher

At MSDB, we have adopted a saying from Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation for Childhood Cancer: "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." Alex Scott, who was diagnosed with pediatric cancer shortly before her first birthday, decided that she wanted to have a lemonade stand to raise money for the doctors that helped her, so they could help other kids too. Later that year she opened her first lemonade stand. Since then it has become a worldwide charity event and fund raiser. Students in Ms. Blake's, Ms. Moog's, Ms. Philipp's and Ms. Taylor's classes participated in Alex's Virtual Lemonade Stand. It is a community service event in which students and schools around the world raise money for and awareness of pediatric cancer. Our principal let us know about the event, allowed our students to come up with their plan for the lemonade stand, and supported us throughout this learning process.

Our students were motivated to raise money to help other children and immediately began planning for their lemonade stand. They helped create posters to advertise our event, set up for the event, make the lemonade, serve lemonade and baked goods, and collect donations for their Alex's Lemonade Stand. They were able to practice communicating with students and adults, counting money, serving people in our community, and sharing responsibilities. Each of them verbalized their sense of accomplishment in the



MSDB students and staff generously gave of their time and "piggy banks" at Alex's Lemonade Stand. Donations went towards the battle against childhood cancer.

hard work they put forth and have already started planning for next year's lemonade stand.

We feel a strong sense of pride that we were all able to come together and help others. We hope that this event has inspired our students, staff, and others in the community to realize that one person – one kid – can make a difference! We hope to see you next year at our annual Alex's Lemonade Stand. ❖

Independence... Just a Step Ahead

Geri Darko, Orientation and Mobility Specialist

The 2010-2011 school year has flown by and students are showing great improvement in their independent travel skills. We've been working on many skills since school began and we continue to build on those skills to help students become more independent when traveling. As the weather warms up, this summer will be a great time for students to get out and pound the pavement to explore their neighborhoods and practice their orientation and mobility skills.

Ask your child to explain the numbering system in Great Falls. These are the facts that help students plan routes to businesses around town. Here's a little cheat sheet for you to check your child's answers:

- Streets run north and south; avenues run east and west.
- Central Avenue divides the city into north and south. Avenue numbers get larger as you travel away from Central Avenue.
- Park Drive is the dividing line between east and west. Street numbers get larger as you travel east or west from Park Drive.
- The first numbers of an address tell which block the building is on.
- The last numbers of an address tell where the building is at on the block (at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end).
- Odd number addresses are on the north side of the avenue or on the east side of the street.
- Even number addresses are on the south side of the avenue or on the west side of the street.

Independence is a large part of the vision at MSDB. Part of that independence develops when students learn how to plan trips to get a haircut, get their own groceries, visit a friend, or attend a social event independently. Here are some ways families can help students learn to become more independent when traveling:

1. Encourage students to take their canes with them each time they leave their home. Remember, the cane is a necessary tool that helps your child stay safe and independent. If your child has a white cane, they should carry it with them at all times. Carrying it with them ensures that it will be handy when a situation arises and a cane is needed for safety and independence. The white cane also identifies a person with a visual impairment.

2. Use cardinal directions to describe where you are going as you leave your home and travel to familiar areas with



your child.

3. If your child does not live in Great Falls full time, help them learn about the numbering system in his or her hometown.

4. Ask students to help you plan the route from home to the store or a friend's house.

5. Allow children to lead the way as you walk through the grocery store or shopping mall. Give short "assignments" to your child and allow him or her to search for specific items on your shopping list or a specific store in the mall.

6. Talk with your child about street safety and when he or she should cross the street. For a visually impaired person, the safest time to cross the street is during a lull in traffic or when the person hears a surge of parallel traffic going through the intersection. My students who use white canes should always have the cane in front of them and visible to drivers at all street crossings.

7. Inquire about your child's orientation and mobility lessons. Ask questions about where he or she travels during these lessons and what he or she is learning. Encourage your child to use these skills, because practice will help them become more independent when traveling.

8. If you have questions about orientation and mobility, please contact me. ■■



MEET THE 2011 GRADUATES

Denise Philipp, MSDB Teacher

The Montana School for the Deaf & Blind honored five graduates on Saturday, May 21: Tray Cook (from Great Falls), Justin Farrington (from Butte), Erin Jessen (from Billings), Matthew Lamb (from Great Falls) and Alex Wermeling (from Great Falls). The rainy weather could not deter families, friends, and past MSDB graduates from joining in the celebration of the completion of their high school adventures. The ceremony included a speech from MSDB teacher and coach, Gary McManus, a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted the graduates' lives, the bestowing of various awards and scholarships, the unveiling of the senior gifts to the school, and the actual commencement exercises and conferring of diplomas. We wish our seniors the best of luck in their future endeavors. Some are journeying on to college, and we will welcome back others next fall into our transition program.



ERIN NICHOLE JESSEN

Hello! My name is Erin Nichole Jessen. I have attended school at the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB) since I was in the 7th grade. My teacher's name is Dessica Wilson; she is a great teacher. She is also one of the directors for our performing group, Expressions of Silence (EOS). I have had fun performing with EOS for six years. I also enjoy hanging out with my friends at the MSDB cottages. I will be thinking about all of the staff and students over the summer now that I have graduated. I am proud of my family for supporting me at MSDB. I plan to go back to MSDB as a transition student in the fall; I want to stay for one more year at school. Thank you all for helping me learn and become successful!



ALEX JACOB WERMLING



- **Interests/hobbies:** Football, basketball, stock car racing, weight lifting.
- **Favorite memory about MSDB:** Milk and Cookies and the Bison/Rustler rivalry in Bechard's classroom.
- **Favorite high school accomplishment:** Captain of the varsity football team.
- **What do you plan to do after you graduate:** I'm

attending MSU Bozeman in the fall. I'm pursuing a degree in Construction Engineering.

- **Something inspirational you would like to tell others:** Never let life become boring.
(Alex attended GFPS full time and MSDB for preschool and kindergarten)

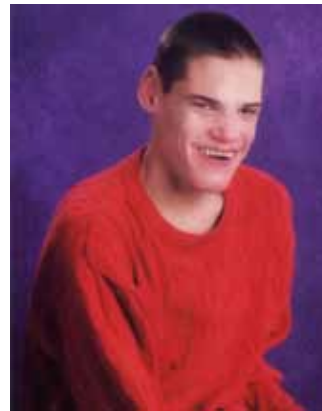
JUSTIN RYNE FARRINGTON



- **Interests/hobbies:** Music production and guitar repair
- **What will you miss about MSDB:** McManus' gym class
- **Favorite thing about MSDB:** the friends and staff
- **What do you plan to do after you graduate:** work and college
- **Something inspirational you would like to tell others:** Pain is weakness

leaving the body.

MATTHEW STEVEN LAMB



- **Interests/hobbies:** swimming, riding ATV's, hiking
- **Favorite thing about MSDB:** Being surrounded by people who accept me for who I am and the one-to-one contact with students and staff.
- **What will you miss about MSDB:** Being in an environment that is loving and accepting.

- **What do you plan to do after you graduate:** Come back to MSDB for post high school program.
- **Something inspirational you would like to tell others:** Everyone has strengths and weakness, focus on the strengths and see how far you can go.

TRAY JAMES COOK



- **Interests/hobbies:** Technology, and I like to play videogames.
- **Favorite thing about MSDB:** Prom of 2010.
- **What will you miss about MSDB:** I will definitely miss all my friends.
- **What do you plan to do after you graduate:** I plan to go to college, and pursue a career as VI technology

teacher, and an entrepreneur.

- **Favorite Quote:** "Attitude + Ambition = Achievement"

4-H is Worth a Shot

Maeona K. Lee, Supervising Counselor and Dorothy Nutter, Lead Houseparent

One of the newest clubs that was introduced to the residential students this year was 4-H. The students who got parental permission to participate in 4-H this year were involved in several projects, including photography, riflmanship and archery. They also participated in gardening. The students in riflmanship and archery attended a class each week to learn the rules of these sports and to practice honing their skills. Those two classes were taught by volunteers who have experience in the sports. Safety is practiced at all times during these sessions. Those students who were in photography learned techniques such as how to take a good picture, whether it is of scenery, animals, people, etc. The staff in the residential program worked with the students in this photography group, assisting them in making an album of their pictures.

Since starting the 4-H club the group has also designed



Juan takes aim at a target during archery practice.

a flag. This flag will be displayed at the fair along with some of the projects the students have worked on. Several of the students also made posters depicting what they did this year. Even though the students will be in their hometowns when the Great Falls fair is in session, their 4-H items will be displayed there and ribbons can still be awarded. The students also worked on a booklet to record what they have learned, and throughout the school year, the 4-H students from MSDB could attend off campus group activities along with other 4-H clubs in Great Falls. Dorothy Nutter, a Lead Houseparent, was the

main 4-H Leader. Maeona Lee, Supervising Counselor, helped with the group as well. Students appeared to enjoy participating and were excited about their MSDB 4-H Club.

If you have any questions about either of the articles on this page, please feel to contact us. Maeona K. Lee, Supervising Counselor, at 771 – 6116, mlee@msdb.mt.gov or Dorothy Nutter, Geyser Lead Houseparent, at dnutter@msdb.mt.gov. ■■

MASTERING THE MSDB GREENHOUSE

Maeona K. Lee, Supervising Counselor and Dorothy Nutter, Lead Houseparent

The Residential students were involved in another new adventure this school year. It was gardening, which included going to gardening classes, working in our MSDB greenhouse, visiting a greenhouse out of town, and showcasing their plants. Yes, the MSDB greenhouse was back in use! The Residential students worked together with volunteers from the Master Gardening program here in Great Falls as well as MSDB's Residential staff. They cleaned up the greenhouse, assisted in any repairs it needed, planted their seeds, took care of the plants on a rotating schedule and eventually took their plants home with them at the end of the school year.

The gardening class, which was also open to the public, was taught by a local Master Gardener, Bob Ford, and continued until the end of May. The students especially enjoyed the last class, as it involved live snakes. The local ACE Hardware store donated the items needed to get the greenhouse up and running, including seeds, and other local



Master Gardeners helped the students with their gardening.

The Master Gardeners were excited to be a part of the MSDB greenhouse project and hope this was a great learning experience for the students. Maeona Lee, Supervising Counselor, and Dorothy Nutter, the Lead Houseparent in the Geyser cottage, worked together to support this new adventure. We're happy to report we had some "green thumb" success! ■■



Kitty and Jessica make cookies.

TIPS TO MAXIMIZE AUDITORY LEARNING

- *Provide auditory information first
- * Everyday activities provide the perfect "connection" to get children listening to meaningful information
- *Take advantage of the nature of games. They provide opportunities for taking turns, asking questions, answering questions, and listening to the turns of others.
- *Remember the adage "Garbage in-Garbage out." Use natural speech patterns and appropriate prosody in your language model.
- *Number 1 rule for auditory learning: **MAKE IT FUN!**

MSDB POINTS THE WAY TO AUDITORY LEARNING

Kitty Griffin, Outreach Consultant

Technology in all aspects changes constantly. I felt the effects of new technology very painfully when my trusty computer system failed. All components had to be replaced so that they could "communicate" with one another. That meant I had to learn a lot of things over again. Similarly, amplification equipment for better hearing is changing at a very rapid pace. The use of devices to help people hear better has a long history. One of the great pioneers for better hearing was Helen Beebe. Back in the 1940's, Beebe's first client was Mardie. She wore a body style hearing aid weighing about two pounds. Before the advent of even this new technology, Beebe was recorded helping children hear better by speaking into a kitchen funnel connected to flexible tubing. She continued her work in making the most of the children's residual hearing throughout her life.

Some of the newest technology has to do with digital hearing aids, implantable middle ear and brainstem devices and the ever changing technology surrounding cochlear implants. Cochlear implants were approved for use in adults in 1985 and were not approved for use in children until 1990. At that time, a CI had one electrode, offering the simple choice of "sound on" or "sound off!" Today, up to 24 electrodes are placed and precision mapping techniques offer children and adults a wide range of frequencies. Spoken language is now accessible to

many people with hearing loss.

Auditory-Verbal Therapy teaches people using these devices to understand speech and to learn to speak. MSDB is pointing the way to better hearing and keeping pace with technology by sharing the latest information about this approach at its Family Learning Weekend slated for June 10-12.



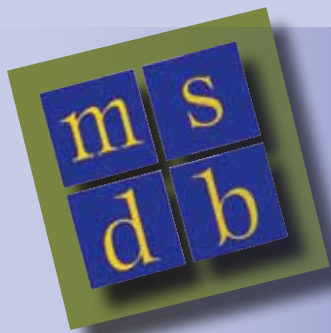
Jessica plays the fiddle.

Mary Koch Cline, a nationally regarded Certified Auditory-Verbal Therapist (AVT), will be presenting information for families with children who are learning via auditory methods.

MSDB has also provided continuing education on Auditory-Visual learning to Outreach Consultants, including webinars such as SMART EARS. To learn more about auditory learning, you may access listening sites such as www.advancedbionics.com, and www.cochlear.com. Look

for reputable sites including those of large organizations such as ASHA (American Speech Language and Hearing Association) at www.asha.org and the A.G. Bell Association for the Deaf, at www.agbell.org and the Listening Room www.hearingjourney.com/listening.

MSDB is devoted to providing this information to families and continuing to be the leader in the education for children who are deaf, hard of hearing and/or visually impaired. We promise to keep you posted on what's new to help you navigate the challenging, changing world of technology for deaf and hard of hearing students. ☐☐



Montana School *for the*

HELP US GIVE KIDS THE BUILD

*“Alone we can
do so little;
together we can
do so much.”*

~Helen Keller

The MSDB 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 to ***www.justgive.org***.

OR MAIL YOUR
CONTRIBUTION TO:

MSDB Foundation

P. O. Box 6576

Great Falls, MT 59406

For more information,
please call 406-771-6040



India learns budgeting skills.

PPL and MSDB Foundation Support Transition Program

After graduating from high school in Livingston, India Hayes spent the 2010-11 school year at MSDB as a Transition student, learning how to live independently and taking the next steps toward meeting her educational and career goals. She plans to become a veterinary technician and is currently working at the Prime Cut restaurant while deciding where to attend college.

India and the others, including recent MSDB graduates, who joined her in the Transition Program during the past school year benefitted from funding from a valuable partnership between the MSDB Foundation and PPL Montana. PPL contributed \$6300 for the

Deaf & Blind Foundation

ENDING BLOCKS TO INDEPENDENCE

Transition Program, which is one of many MSDB programs they have supported since 2006.

The highly individualized Transition Program uses academics, life-skill building, and job coaching to help students prepare for college or the work world. Each student works to gain the particular skills they need to meet their post-high school goals. Through cooperative arrangements with local businesses that give students employment opportunities, India and her classmates worked at jobs in Great Falls while living in “apartments” on campus and learning to manage their financial lives.

Young people with hearing or vision loss need extra help in achieving independence, and the unemployment rate among deaf and blind people is extremely high. MSDB is preparing its students to meet the challenges that await them in life beyond school, and the MSDB Foundation and PPL Montana are happy to be part of that important effort. ■■



ABOVE:
LaKendra
on the job
at Kranz
Flowers and
Gifts.
LEFT: India
works in the
kitchen at
Prime Cut.



Mr. Gettel Makes a Splash!

Yvette Smail, Behavior Specialist

The latest 20/20 reading challenge celebration took place on May 17th and was a tremendous success. The celebration recognized the students who met the goal of at least 20 minutes of reading on 20 days out of each month, from January through April. Students keep track of their reading time using their monthly reading calendars, with supervision by parents at home, house parents in the cottage, or by school staff. The kids who met the reading goals got the opportunity to dunk Superintendent Steve Gettel in a dunking booth. Several of our students rose to the occasion and were very excited at the opportunity to dunk Mr. Gettel. It was a beautiful warm day, but the same doesn't hold true for the water that was in the tank! After the reading calendar group were finished dunking, the adults were also given the opportunity to dunk Mr. Gettel by donating \$10 or more to our MSDB Foundation. Needless to say, many adults enjoyed donating money to the Foundation and keeping Mr. Gettel in the water!

The celebration was successful as a motivator to get our students reading regularly, and beyond the dunking, it included a broad range of fun activities for all of the students, in order to continue to reinforce the importance of reading. All students were able to participate in activities such as sidewalk drawing, the bean bag toss, and basketball. They enjoyed lemonade and popcorn donated by the Junior and Senior classes. There was a catch to all of this fun – having to pay for these activities with stickers. The stickers were given to students who were “caught” using sign language consistently, but if a staff member or student were caught not signing, the person that caught them got to take a sticker from them. Students and staff from the visually impaired department were given stickers for good and consistent usage of the technology available to them. It was truly a fun way to encourage students and staff to use sign language and technology to further their successes, while celebrating the value of reading. ■■

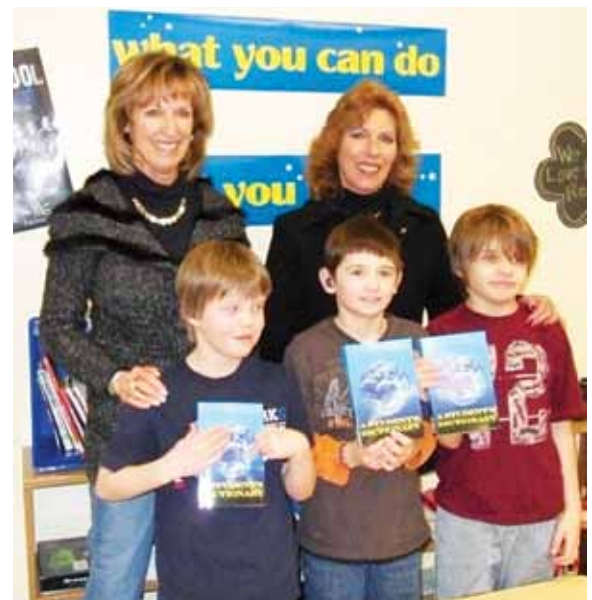
The Dictionary Project Comes to MSDB

Shelley Garretson, Interpreter

The Dictionary Project is a national nonprofit organization with the goal of providing every third-grade student in the United States with a dictionary. This project was founded in South Carolina in 1995, and the Great Falls Rotary Club has been involved with this program for six years now. By doing this, the project hopes “to have a positive impact on education in this country and empower children to become skillful communicators and resourceful leaders.” The Great Falls Rotary Club delivers approximately 1,500 dictionaries to 54 schools in Great Falls and the surrounding areas.

The Dictionary Project focuses on third graders because most schools teach dictionary skills in the third grade, and children of this age are also just beginning to make the transition from learning to read to reading to learn.

The Dictionary Project firmly believes that children need a dictionary to accomplish their schoolwork in a proper fashion and become effective users of the English language. As part of the bigger picture, the organization also believes that literacy is crucial to the economic success and prosperity of the country. ■■



We thank Mrs. Denise Gray for presenting our third graders and their teachers with dictionaries on February 25.

Meet the Littlest Graduates

Leann Goss and Denise Philipp, MSDB Teachers

MSDB's Preschool Graduation ceremony was held on May 19. Teachers Leann Goss and Denise Philipp presented preschool diplomas to two very special graduates, Hayden from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Department and Davi Jean from the Visually Impaired Department. They have both been with our programs since they were about 18 months old! Thanks to a lot of hard work and the families' commitments to the programs, both children are more than ready to meet the challenges of Kindergarten next year! We are all so very proud of Hayden and Davi Jean and know they have the foundation that they need to continue to be successful students and friends to others. ❖

DAVI JEAN

Your interests/hobbies: Laundry, cooking, play with my dog (Zeus)



Favorite thing about MSDB:

Arts and crafts and projects

What do you like to learn in school: I like to learn everything.

What do you

plan to do after you graduate (for the summer): I'm going to go camping at Seeley Lake when it is warm. I'm going to spend 2 nights at my Aunt Wendy's house.

Something you would like to tell others about you: I love going to gymnastics.

HAYDEN

Your interests/hobbies: I like to write with chalk and ride my "Cars" bike.



Favorite thing about MSDB:

Playtime with my friends!

What do you like to learn in school: Reading books

What do you

plan to do after you graduate (for the summer): Play in the dirt with Grandma and Grandpa with my new pink bucket and blue shovel!

Something you would like to tell others about you: My school has a swimming pool!

MSDB Helps Train Voc-Rehab Staff

Sarah Eyer, Outreach Consultant

In May, the Montana Vocational Rehabilitation staff met for their yearly training in Butte. A number of organizations and agencies collaborated on a presentation on serving Montana's deaf and hard of hearing population. Staff raptly listened to each of the presenters and gave rave reviews. Bob Ellesch, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, spoke about the role of a deaf counselor and gave some historical background on serving d/hh graduates. Current President of the Montana Association of the Deaf, Char Harasymczuk spoke about deaf culture and shared valuable information related to serving d/hh

consumers. Adan Burke, from the CSD-Z telecommunications company out of Minneapolis, demonstrated video remote interpreting. Sarah Eyer, MSDB Outreach consultant, spoke about post-high school transition and what counselors can do to assist their deaf and hard of hearing clients in high school and beyond. Sarah stressed collaboration with other agencies and parents, as well as providing information on the myriad Transition Services and supports available from MSDB. Susan Sperry from the Montana Telecommunications Access Program (MTAP) spoke about being late deafened and the impacts that has on a person's life. Connie Hiatt, also from MTAP, spoke about raising a deaf daughter and how VR has assisted her in helping her daughter achieve her goal of attending Gallaudet University. Dr. Kathy Laurin and Leslie Mullette from MonTech joined Connie Phelps of MTAP in presenting about hearing loss, hearing aids and assistive listening devices. The training was well attended and enjoyed by all. ❖

Hearing Screenings Aid Athletes

Kathy Johnson, Audiologist

Many years ago, the founder of Special Olympics, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, was checking on her sister Rosemary Kennedy. Rosemary was developmentally disabled and lived in a group home in another state. Mrs. Shriver was shocked to find out that Rosemary had several health problems that had not been dealt with. Since her sister's physicians were not always treating her health problems, Mrs. Shriver

wondered what was happening with other developmentally disabled adults in the US.

Special Olympics then launched the Healthy Athletes movement, which is dedicated to providing health screening in several areas to help monitor

the health status of developmentally disabled children and adults. What they found was disheartening. Even though most of these athletes qualify for help with their medical care through Medicaid or other programs, significant numbers of the athletes were found to have eye problems, foot problems, dental problems, hearing problems, and other significant issues. It would seem that although they could pay for care, they weren't getting it.



Special Olympics

Healthy Athletes

Healthy Hearing

This occurs more often in the adult athletes, especially those living in group homes or by themselves, rather than in the children who were living at home with their parents. Studies showed that not only were special needs people less likely to get taken to the doctor, the physicians were also less likely to treat problems with the developmentally disabled. It would seem that when families make the transition to adult services from the family pediatrician who has cared for their child since birth, and the transition to a group home from the family home, there is a gap in the medical care received by their disabled family member.

Healthy Athletes programs are attempting to bridge this gap by identifying athletes that need help and identifying people in their communities who can give that help.

This year, Healthy Hearing Montana screened approx. 200 Montana Special Olympics athletes, and we found 10 that needed immediate medical care for their ears. In addition, about half the athletes had wax problems or other more minor problems with their ears.

We hope that by identifying the need, someone in the athletes' home communities will ensure that they get the care they need to live healthy lives. Also, we have a lot of fun!

For more information on Healthy Hearing Montana please visit: www.specialolympics.org/Healthy_Athletes ❖



Matt Hansen of Sidney, Montana, won the Richland County Spelling Bee for second graders.

Congrats Matt ~ we are so proud of you!

(Photo courtesy of the Sidney Herald)

Thank You, Mr. Harris

Emily LaSalle, Outreach Consultant

Congratulations to Tim Harris, the Director of Special Education for the State of Montana, on his upcoming retirement. Tim has been in the special education and other disability related fields



for over 30 years. His job titles have varied – a Regional Services Coordinator, a Co-op director, an assistant director of an independent living center, a special education monitor for OPI, the Early Assistance Program manager and then state director. His goal has always been to improve services in the education for students with special needs, including working with parents and schools to improve their relationships. Mr. Harris has been a friend to the Montana School for the Deaf & Blind for many

years. We, the staff and students at MSDB, thank you, Tim, for the many ways you have helped us. We appreciate your advocacy for our program. Enjoy the future; bask in your new position as full time Grandpa! ❖



THE GAME OF LIFE

Richard Aguon, Lead Cottage Houseparent

Here in Obsidian Cottage high school students are continuing the process of learning to live independently. The students started playing “The Game of Life,” which will assist them in handling their finances when they venture out into living on their own. They are learning how to manage their money by depositing checks, balancing checking accounts, paying bills, and learning how to maintain a budget. The game will also help them to identify their needs and wants and to experience delayed gratification by avoiding impulse buying in order to save their money for something.

The students are learning how to manage their time for schoolwork, social activities, cooking, shopping, and extracurricular activities. They’re learning all the steps for planning and making dinner: planning a menu, determining what food items they need to shop for, making a shopping list, shopping for the items on that list, staying within

a budget to purchase the items on the list, comparison shopping with the help of the newspaper, and the different methods of preparing a full course dinner and how to use the kitchen appliances.



Many additional life skills are increasing the students’ independence. Properly caring for their clothes, including doing laundry, and dressing appropriately for work, as well as school and social functions. They are learning proper grooming and self care skills. They have learned how to efficiently clean and sanitize the bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchens in their apartments. This includes organizing the kitchen and washing their dishes. They’re learning social skills appropriate for their age, including reinforcing good manners and how to advocate for themselves. Those in

apartments with roommates are learning how to equally divide the chores, make decisions and resolve conflict, as college students living in residential facilities need to do. We are very pleased with the progress they have made. ■■

MSDB MASH-UP!



MSDB supported the Kenya "Book and a Buck" project, and was able to donate 3 large boxes of books as well as money for shipping to a school for the deaf in Kenya.

MSDB is always buzzing with activities and there simply isn't enough room to include an article on EVERYTHING that's kept us busy over the second-half of the school year, so here's a pictorial "lowdown" on what's also "been up" at the school...



These buckaroos roped themselves up a good time at Prom.



Snow fun!

The entire school went skiing at Showdown Ski Resort two times. Some of us skied more than others!





The Seniors took a trip to Disney World and had a dog-gone good time!



The MSDB Academic Bowl Team supported each other well.



Students had fun in the sun at summer camp.



MSDB celebrated "Read Across America Day" with two kinds of "Green Eggs and Ham" – first the book, then you cook.



MSDB – Leading the Way for Deaf and Blind Children

Steve Gettel, MSDB Superintendent

The Montana School for the Deaf & Blind has always been committed to providing consultation, training, and specialized instruction that ensures Montana has a full continuum of education options for children with vision or hearing loss. During the past six years the school has been working with the Office of Public Instruction, the legislature, The Montana Council of Administrators of Special Education, and Children’s Special Health Services on a strategic plan to increase the quality of and capacity for services across the state and at our campus in Great Falls.

In recent years the school has been a key player in the writing and adoption of administrative rules establishing criteria for the qualifications of instructors of Braille as well as educational interpreters. Working with our constituents, we’ve been successful in securing legislative appropriations that increased the size of MSDB’s outreach program and allowed for more consultation and technical assistance to more families and school districts. And through our collaboration with the Maternal Child Health Coordination Section of the Family and Community Health Bureau, the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening program, and Part C service providers across the state, MSDB has been providing home-based early intervention services to more than 35 families across the state each year. This past year outreach staff utilized video conferencing to reach teachers and intervention specialists across the state and provided training in the use of early learning curriculum for blind and deaf-blind infants and toddlers.

In the coming school year MSDB will provide four



**“Education,
Communication
and Independence
for Life”**

enrichment weekends, giving children from public schools across the state the opportunity for targeted learning and social activities with the students and staff at the MSDB campus. We’re developing additional opportunities for students from local districts to have more access to the staff, students and programs on campus and working to improve campus services and consultation for students with cochlear implants. The school continues to provide transition programming for post high school students and is developing short-term placements at MSDB to meet the individualized needs of this population. And starting next year, to reduce the time that residential students have to spend away

from their families, the school will increase the number of “travel weekends” so that students go home about every other weekend. In nearly all of the opportunities that the school provides, students and families receive financial support from the MSDB Foundation.

MSDB continues to improve the high quality education



for children at the school here in Great Falls. Nearly all of our classroom teachers have specialized training in the areas of deaf or blind education. This provides students with full access to instruction through Braille and sign language, as well as support for speech and language development, as part of the Language Rich Environment in our schools. Support services including orientation



and mobility, classroom interpreting, and physical and occupational therapy have always been available to the students who attend school at MSDB. Recently support services have grown to include a behavior specialist and additional guidance counselor as well as a consulting audiologist for outreach services. And through our interagency agreement with the Great Falls Public Schools, students attending MSDB have access to a wide variety of classes in the mainstream setting. Over the past four years we have implemented assessment for progress monitoring to measure the academic growth of our students. In all grades tested this past year, more than 72% of the students achieved 50%

or more of their targets for growth in the area of math. More than 58% of elementary students tested in reading attained 50% or more of their targets for growth.

The strong specialized academic program at MSDB and varied outreach services are central to maintaining a continuum of educational placements for all children in Montana. The school's commitment to improving

services and supporting students, families, and schools across the state is evident by the 3.5% annual growth in service contacts since 2002.

One of the goals in MSDB's current strategic plan is to work collaboratively with our education partners to improve the statewide system of educational services for deaf and blind children. I've described some of the school's work that demonstrates our ongoing efforts to see that improved outcomes for children with vision and hearing loss are a reality, regardless of where they go to school. And the school is steadfast in supporting choices and providing options for access to quality education for children. ■■



For a wealth of information about MSDB as well as a detailed calendar of the school year, check out our website at

www.msdb.mt.gov



MONTANA SCHOOL
FOR THE DEAF & BLIND

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Social-Emotional Literacy in Deaf Children

What is Emotional Literacy?

Emotional literacy is the ability to identify, understand, and respond to emotions in oneself and others in a healthy manner.

What Is Social-Emotional Competence?

- A sense of confidence
- Ability to develop good relationships with peers & adults, make friends, and get along with others
- Ability to persist at tasks
- Ability to follow directions
- Ability to identify, understand, and communicate one's own feelings and emotions
- Ability to constructively manage strong emotions
- Development of empathy

Identifying Feelings in Self and Others

- Learn words for different feelings
- Learn to recognize how someone else feels from facial cues, body language, "tone" of signs/voice, and situational cues
- Learn how to control anger, relax, and calm down

Considerations for Deaf Children

- Deaf children see emotions through facial expression and body language.
- Deaf infants depend on tactile sensations, direct contact, and visual input for communication.
- In order to become competent in all aspects of childhood, deaf children need to actively communicate with their parents using visual language from an early age.
- It is important for deaf adolescents to feel connected with other deaf peers or adults through school programs, recreational programs, or other organized activities.
- Positive, supportive social relationships predict the deaf child's future emotional intelligence and cognitive strength over their lifespan.

Information compiled from: Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. Asiah Mason, Ph.D., Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, Gallaudet University. Inspired by original article in the California School for the Deaf Newsletter (permission to reprint given by CSD Editor). ■■