



# MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & BLIND Express

giving kids the building blocks to independence

Volume XI, Issue 3, Summer 2013

MSDB Foundation helps send  
Expressions of Silence to DC

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MSDB Students & Staff Support  
Alex's Lemonade Stand!

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# Alex's Lemonade Stand



FOUNDATION FOR CHILDHOOD CANCER

TM

Bethany Hundley, Dee Blake, Amanda Taylor  
MSDB Teachers

**“**When life hands you lemons, make lemonade!”  
For the past 3 years, MSDB’s staff and students have been working hard to raise money for pediatric cancer through a program called Alex’s Lemonade Stand (ALS). Alex’s Lemonade Stand was founded in 2000 by a young girl named Alex Scott who had a deadly type of cancer. Although



Twyla is all smiles for ALS!

chemotherapy was not enough to help Alex, who passed away in 2004 at age 8, she had decided that she wanted to help other kids with cancer by raising money through a lemonade stand. Since then, Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation for Childhood Cancer has raised over \$60 million and has become an international program.

For MSDB, the program is a great way to show that we care, teach our students how they can change the world for the better, and raise money for pediatric cancer. We began on May 7th with a virtual ALS kickoff and commercial contest. The technology classes created a great commercial for Alex’s Lemonade Stand at MSDB. At the virtual kickoff, our students watched other schools perform skits about selling lemonade before performing our own. To the tune of “The Lion Sleeps Tonight”, we sang and signed “In the Lemonade Stand.”

*In the stand, the lemonade stand, Alex is her name  
In the stand, the lemonade stand, Alex is her name  
Donate money, Donate money, Donate money.....  
Kick the cancer, the awful cancer, buy some lemonade  
Kick the cancer the awful cancer, buy some lemonade*



ABOVE: Katie enjoys the sunshine while selling lemonade for a good cause. BELOW: Thanks to Ms. Hundley, Ms. Blake and Ms. Taylor for their efforts in supporting Alex’s charity and making it such a great yearly event at MSDB.



Our kids performed like champs, and we were officially ready to start selling lemonade! On May 9th, we had BEAUTIFUL weather, and we opened the stand with 2 kinds of lemonade and a plethora of delicious goodies made by our life skill classes at MSDB and also donated by staff. Thanks to a steady flow of customers, we never felt TOO busy. Our policy was that customers could donate whatever they felt was fair. In 2 hours we had raised \$800!!! We are so proud of our students and thankful to the MSDB and Great Falls communities for helping us raise so much money.

Thanks to Alex, we now know we can make a difference, one cup of lemonade at a time! ☀





Seniors Elizabeth and Thyra presented a gift to MSDB at their graduation ceremony. The gift is a framed collection of the senior pictures which will hang on the walls along with all the previous graduating classes from MSDB. Congratulations, Seniors!

# MSDB TRADITIONS

**Steve Gettel, Superintendent**

The end of the school year brings a flurry of activities: prom, the senior trip, awards assemblies and of course graduation. These are longstanding traditions, and every year adds a new layer of memories and sentiment for the students and the staff. Traditions are important at any school because they are part of the foundation for school pride.

Like every school we're proud of the accomplishments of our students, from our preschoolers as they develop their early literacy and orientation and mobility skills, to our elementary and middle school students as they build competencies in the core and expanded core curriculums and broaden their knowledge of the world around them through their participation in athletics or creative arts. In high school our students develop their independent living skills and acquire the academic and vocational skills that will lead to college or a rewarding job after graduation.

All of our students have different paths to graduation but they all end up donning the same royal blue cap and gown and marching into the Mustang Center gym to strains of Pomp and Circumstance. And on May 25th we proudly graduated the 114th class of seniors in the history of MSDB. Now that is a longstanding tradition! Though there are only three students in the Class of 2013 we are very proud of their accomplishments.

One more thing we're proud of is our history of graduating all of our students. MSDB does not have dropouts! That's because of the hard work and dedication of our parents and staff working together to ensure our students have the support they need to be successful. ::

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# MEET THE CLASS OF 2013

## Elizabeth Price

- **Home Town:** Cody, Wyoming
- **Interests/hobbies:** Riding horses, shopping, camping, fishing, texting, riding quads, hanging out with my family and friends.
- **Favorite thing about MSDB:** I like reading and English.
- **What will you miss about MSDB:** I'll miss hanging out with my new friends.
- **What do you plan to do after you graduate:** I'm coming back to MSDB next fall and going to Great Falls Community College. I plan to take some classes for photography or nursing home.



## Thyra Louise Wood

- **Home Town:** Great Falls, MT
- **Interests/hobbies:** Swimming, photography, reading post-apocalyptic novels, hiking, camping, listening to music, writing poetry, and watching the Big Bang Theory.
- **Favorite thing about MSDB:** My favorite thing about MSDB has to be all of the memories it holds for me. The majority of my childhood was spent learning, laughing and playing with my MSDB family here, and I'll always cherish that.
- **What will you miss about MSDB:** I will miss the sense of community and the tight-knit relationships I have formed with my teachers and peers.
- **What do you plan to do after you graduate:** I am attending Gallaudet University this fall, with a full-ride scholarship and participation in the honors program. I plan to double-major in education and art, and hope to be an English teacher or a counselor at a deaf school.
- **Favorite Quote or something inspirational you would like to tell others:** "It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are." -E. E. Cummings

## Kaylee Schuster

- **Home Town:** Great Falls, MT
- **Interests/hobbies:** I love social events and opportunities. I am looking forward to supporting the Choteau Bulldogs with my new housemate, Glenn.
- **Favorite thing about MSDB:** Fellow students, staff, learning opportunities and the Christmas Program.
- **What will you miss about MSDB:** Everything.
- **What do you plan to do after you graduate:** Live in Choteau at my new home.
- **Favorite Quote:** Live in the present, the past is gone and tomorrow is not promised.



MSDB: EDUCATION, COMMUNICATION & INDEPENDENCE FOR LIFE



# MAGICAL MEMORIES: SENIOR TRIP



ABOVE: Elizabeth, Dessica, Thyra & Jim making memories at Disneyland.



## Dessica McKeehan, MSDB Teacher

Thyra Wood and Elizabeth Price, two members of the Class of 2013, recently hopped on a plane for sunny California with their sponsors, Jim Kelly and myself. The first few days after we arrived, it was sunny and delightfully hot! We took in the sites, engaging performances, and hair-raising rides at Disneyland, California Adventures, and Universal Studios. The girls' favorite rides were Tower of Terror, Cars, Space Mountain, and Transformers.

Our day at Sea World was the chilliest... go figure. Though it was cloudy and a bit chilly, the Mantra roller coaster ride still beckoned the girls to ride REPEATEDLY! We also watched dolphins play ball as they raced through the water, and even enjoyed a belly-full of laughter at the sea lion show. Later in the afternoon came the drizzling rain as our adventure ended with splashing

through puddles back to the vehicle.

Now what would a trip to California be without hitting an outlet mall? There were endless hours of stores and fitting rooms until it was time to head back to the hotel and prepare for our evening affair... dinner and a show at Medieval Times! Definitely entertaining and a bit barbaric ...just what we needed.

Overall, this Senior Trip was truly a magical time! We played hard, laughed hysterically, and ran ourselves ragged day in and day out, and still there was nothing to be had but smiles and cherished memories. Thank you to these two amazing ladies, Thyra and Elizabeth, and to Jim Kelly, my Co-Sponsor. I would also like to say a special thank you to the MSDB Foundation for all of their support in making this possible!

Congratulations to Thyra, Elizabeth and Kaylee on their graduation! ::

## A Fairy Tale Affair

### Dessica McKeehan, MSDB Teacher

*Once upon a time...* On Friday May 17th to be exact, the Class of 2013 hosted MSDB's Prom. With a bundle of pink gossamer draped about the dance floor, decorative trees with white lights, wands, crowns, and tiaras, this event was truly a fairy tale affair. But that's not where our story begins.

The evening started with dining at the 3D Restaurant, followed by fun photos in gowns at Giant Springs! Afterward, we headed back to MSDB to continue our enchanted evening with dancing, scrumptious desserts, and the crowning of the king and queen. Thyra Wood was crowned Queen and Darrin Smith was pronounced King. Fun was had by all, and they all lived happily ever after. ::

— The End



It was fun taking pictures at Giant Springs before their big night.

# Students Enjoy Paralympic Experience: Billings

**Sharon Woods (article), Steve Fugate (photos)**  
**MSDB Outreach Consultants**

**O**n April 13, students with visual impairments and their families had the opportunity to participate in a Paralympic experience in Billings. The event took place at Skyview High School and was a collaborative effort of The Northwest Association for Blind Athletes (NWABA) and the Montana School for the Deaf & Blind. NWABA is a division of the U.S. Olympic Committee. Executive director Billy Henry brought a variety of sport experiences from his base office in Vancouver, WA. We were all honored by a guest black belt Judo instructor, Jen Deitz, who is a senior attending Billings Senior High School. Students with visual impairments and their families enjoyed playing Goalball and Judo throughout the day as well as a social hour and lunch hosted by NWABA in cooperation with Subway. Some students and families have participated in previous events and others attended and experienced these sporting activities for the first time.

Billy Henry co-founded NWABA in 2007. The vision of NWABA is to provide life-changing opportunities that

help build bridges and friendships for visually impaired youth through sports. The nonprofit organization is committed to bringing sports adapted for vision loss to communities, athletes, educators and their families in Montana. Events such as the one in Billings are free to participants and supported through volunteer efforts,

grants and donations. Both NWABA and MSDB promote sports and maintaining a healthy lifestyle through participation in athletic activities at home and school by acting as a resource for families and schools.

Many thanks to Billy and MSDB staff, Sue Stewart, Sheryl Lute, Steve Fugate, Pam Boespflug and Sharon Woods for organizing and

supervising the event. Thanks go out to Robert Deese for hosting the Judo sessions. We also thank the families and students that made this event a success. Come and join us around the state for the next event!

*For more information on Goalball and other sport opportunities go to: <http://www.msdb.mt.gov/outreach/special-events.html>. For more information on NWABA go to: [nwaba.org](http://nwaba.org) ::*



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## CONGRATS TO A SPECIAL KID!

**Sharon Denniston, MSDB Interpreter**

**O**n April 25 and 26 I had the privilege of sharing Special Olympics events with Thea Dupre. I am so proud of Thea's social skills at these events. She is so upbeat and supportive to all of the athletes. So many people know her and love her. They come up to her....all ages are comfortable engaging in conversation with her. She also is a good teacher of sign language. During lunch or other down times she always has a group around her asking her to show them how to sign this and that. She has an infectious laugh and is always patting someone on the back. When the coach asks for volunteers she jumps to it. She is a strong athlete. She got 6 blue (1st place) ribbons in her swimming and kayaking events! She was ecstatic. At the opening ceremony she was awarded with a purple shirt because she now will be on an adult team. I hope she continues with Special Olympics so that we all can continue to see her, visit with and laugh with her. She brings much joy to all. We will miss her at MSDB, but we know she will come back to visit. Best wishes to you, Thea! ::



*Thea is all smiles in her Kayak! She won six 1st place ribbons in her events at Special Olympics.*



# LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

## Denise Rutledge, MSDB Teacher

Another amazing weekend of athleticism, independence, and good spirit was shared on May 3-4 at the 32nd annual Games for the Visually Impaired. Athletes from around the state arrived at MSDB for two days of competition and fellowship. Events included a pentathlon for the older athletes on Friday and a variety of events for those aged 3 to 21 on Saturday. Saturday afternoon concluded with the awarding of medals and certificates for the participants and a raffle to help raise money for the continuation of this treasured tradition.

We were pleased with the number of athletes that attended the Games and were delighted with the number



of new families that were welcomed to our campus. Friendships were made and contacts were established between athletes, their families and MSDB. We thank everyone that made

the trip for the Games. It was a pleasure meeting you all! We look forward to seeing everyone again at our upcoming Family Learning Weekend in June.

On campus for this special event was Billy Henry, executive director of the Northwest Association for Blind Athletes (NWABA). Billy has been instrumental in finding donations and funds to expand the quantity and quality of physical education equipment available for students of MSDB. In addition, he has traveled the state to bring physical education opportunities to students with and without visual impairments. We appreciate his attendance at our events and his ongoing commitment to promoting individual and team sports for our students.

The co-directors for the 2013 Games for the Visually Impaired, Carol Clayton-Bye and Denise Rutledge, wish to extend their sincerest notes of gratitude to all that participated—the athletes, their families, our local business sponsors, and the staff of MSDB. ■■



## You Asked For It!

### Sarah Eyer, MSDB Outreach Consultant

In response to requests from people like YOU, the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind offered quality training in Beginning ASL in June. We were excited to have such a dynamic and experienced ASL teacher coming to Montana. Jasmine Garcia made learning ASL fun and shared valuable information that she has gained through her extensive education and personal experiences.

Jasmine Garcia grew up in a family with Deaf parents and a Deaf sister. She attended the Lexington School for the Deaf in New York and graduated from Gallaudet University with a BA in Communication Studies and a MA in Deaf Studies in ASL Teaching Field. After working in Washington D.C. and Austin, Texas, Jasmine is currently an ASL Specialist and Teacher at the Arizona School for the Deaf in Tucson.

During three weekends in June, Jasmine taught ASL for beginners which provided opportunities for more experienced signers to improve their signing and make it more expressive. The class was an introduction to the basic skills in production and comprehension of American Sign Language (ASL), including the manual alphabet and numbers. Instruction included developing conversational ability, culturally appropriate behaviors and exposure to ASL grammar. Resources such as these high-quality workshops for improving sign language skills will continue to be provided by MSDB in the future. ■■



# Montana School *for the*

## HELP US GIVE KIDS THE BUILD

### EXPRESSIONS OF SILENCE PERFORMS AT LINCOLN MEMORIAL

**150** years after the country was torn in two by civil war, MSDB's Expressions of Silence performed on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial as part of a concert series commemorating the war.

Expressions of Silence (EOS) was invited to represent Montana in the Civil War Sesquicentennial series in Washington, DC, and 14 MSDB students made the trip in April. They performed at a veterans' hospital in addition to the Lincoln Memorial.

The students learned a lot about the man whose statue they sang beneath. Skylee described it well:

"I looked around Lincoln's things in Ford's Theater. I read Lincoln's story in paper when he was killed. It's so sad. Elizabeth and I took picture of



Alysha said, "I love my Washington D.C. trip. EOS performed on the steps leading to the huge statue of President Lincoln."

Lincoln's old building where he died. I want learn more about Lincoln. We watched movie about Civil War."

Another student, Juan, wrote about their lessons of the Civil War:

"Gettysburg on the bus. We talking about Civil War so true sad many killed. We see big cannons, uniforms of many soldiers North and South. Old bayonets, bullets, pistols

use in Civil War."

Such opportunities are possible for MSDB students through a combination of their own fundraising activities and support from the MSDB Foundation. Each year the Foundation covers whatever portion of the EOS budget that the group's fundraising does not. With such a big trip taking place this year, the group did a lot of extra fundraising and were able to

### 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

## BUILDING BLOCKS TO INDEPENDENCE

fund all but 20% of the trip's costs, once students paid part of their way.

EOS is one of MSDB's gems. The students, who use sign language to interpret recorded music for their audiences, are terrific ambassadors for the school. They perform at more than a dozen community events in Great Falls each year and also travel to other cities around the state.

Every other year EOS performs for the Montana Legislature in Helena, where lawmakers develop a greater appreciation for MSDB. "They usually ask the deaf kids how they learn music," co-director Jennifer Wasson said. "We think seeing the kids helps the legislators understand the school's services better."

The April trip was the group's second visit to Washington DC and its third trip outside Montana. In 2006 they had the thrill of performing with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Oak Ridge Boys in the Salt Lake Tabernacle.

The experience of using their own language to communicate to a broader public and seeing their audience's response to the moving performance gives the deaf and hard of hearing students a strong sense of self esteem. Learning that they can communicate to a hearing audience in such a powerful way builds much confidence. As one deaf MSDB graduate put it, "EOS taught me that with hard work and determination I can do anything."



The MSDB Foundation supports Expressions of Silence every year.

MSDB teachers Jennifer Wasson and Dessica McKeehan have co-directed EOS for many years. According to Jennifer, "We couldn't do it without the cottage staff members who travel with us and provide everything from chaperoning to technical assistance."

The MSDB Foundation is a big fan of EOS and feels strongly about supporting the group, helping to fund travel and other expenses to whatever degree necessary to keep them from having to limit their activities.

Juan wrapped up his trip report like this: "I had true good fun in Washington, D.C. Thank you MSDB Foundation, Mrs. Wasson and Ms McKeehan." ■■

### 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



Elizabeth, Thyra and J.G. had a great time in Washington D.C. and proudly represented MSDB.

# MSDB Goes National: ACADEMIC BOWL

**Elizabeth Price, MSDB Student (with contributions and assistance by Pam Stuckey, Communication Specialist; Jennifer Wasson & Deb Knuth, MSDB Teachers)**

**M**MSDB competed at the National Academic Bowl for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing competition at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, March 8-12th. The team had previously won 2nd place at their regional competition in Vancouver, which allowed them to move forward to nationals where they competed against the top three teams from each of the five regions in the U.S.

The Academic Bowl competition consists of a question and answer game of general knowledge and quick recall. Questions are drawn from categories including Language and Literature, Science and Technology, Mathematics, Social Studies, the Arts, Sports, Leisure, Current Events, Deaf Studies and Pop Culture.

Academic Bowl is a great experience for our students and the yearly competitions have become a tradition for our school. We are proud of our team, our co-sponsors and all their hard work & dedication.

## **Senior Elizabeth Price had this to say about her Academic Bowl experiences this year:**

*"In 2013, MSDB Academic Bowl team had a busy and successful season. Our team members were Thyra, JG, and Elizabeth, and our leaders [co-sponsors] were Mrs. Jennifer Wasson and Mrs. Debi Knuth. To get ready, we studied 2 hours every Monday and Wednesday since November. The Academic Bowl people sent us pages and pages to remember. We asked each other questions and answered as fast as we could. We had beepers at MSDB to practice pressing and answering fast. Before we left [for regionals], we had a competition with our MSDB Staff, and we knew more answers than they did. The Academic Bowl students won and beat the staff. It was fun. In Vancouver, Washington, 10 different states competed in the Regional Academic Bowl. We won second place, and we were one of 4 teams that got to go to the national Academic Bowl in Washington, DC. The competition was very difficult. We won 5 out of 9 matches. The competition was at Gallaudet University, and there were many people in the audience for the final match. We got to meet other young people, and we made new friends. We stayed at the Kellogg Conference Center, the hotel at Gallaudet University, and we rode around on subways and buses. Other sights we got to see were the Catholic Cathedral, the Smithsonian Art Museum, and California Pizza Kitchen. We did a great job in the Academic Bowl this year!" ■■*



# OUTREACH HAPPENINGS

Emily Lasalle, MSDB Outreach Consultant



Congratulations to Sidney first grade teacher Nicole Simonsen on the birth of her son, Jorgen Michael! Mrs. Simonsen is pictured with super student Tayten Bright three days before Jorgen's birth. Our MSDB Outreach Team is thankful for amazing teachers like Nicole; she gives everything she has to each student in her class. Special congratulations to Tayten; we are so proud of your hard work in school! Good Luck in second grade.



Congratulation to Joseph Kohl on his graduation from Froid High School! Joseph will spend the summer working at the Columbia grain elevator and will be continuing his education at Dawson Community College in Glendive. Joseph, it has been our pleasure to watch you grow; we wish you the best in making the world a better place!



Riata Smith changed out of jeans and a sweat-shirt to attend the Wibaux High School prom. It was a fun night as family, friends and school staff hosted a prom dinner. It's hard to say who had more fun ~ the kitchen help or the students?! ABOVE: Riata's mom gives her a smooch before the big night!



Tanner, from Sidney, would like to introduce to you Mrs. Farr, the Sidney Chamber of Commerce Teacher of the Year! Walk into Mrs. Farr's kindergarten classroom and a child's world is transformed to a loving environment where each breath a student takes during the day is a learning experience. As an adult I have the privilege of observing the care and dedication Lynette puts into each student and the way she goes beyond teaching a subject; she fills in the small details of why and how we do things. Mrs. Farr's classroom is filled with manners; the children walk out of her classroom and live what they have learned. Kindergarten is a year full of fun, learning and growth. In Mrs. Farr's room it is so much more than that; thank you Lynette for touching so many lives! Just think of the adults they will become and pass along everything they learned from you.



Matt Hansen (photographed with super mom, Cheryl Hansen), a fourth grader at Westside Elementary in Sidney, participated in the annual 4th grade presentations on states. Matt cleverly enticed the audience to answer trivia questions on Arizona with taffy as a reward for correct answers.

# GO GOALBALL!

**Pam Boespflug, MSDB Outreach Consultant**  
**Steve Fugate (photos)**

**M**SDB Outreach consultants who work with visually impaired students use the game of goalball as one way to teach skills to those with vision loss. Goalball requires using hearing and touch rather than vision. The heavy ball has bells in it and rolls across the floor while two teams lie on the floor with blindfolds and try to block the ball with their bodies to keep the opposing team from scoring.

Gary Johnstone, PE teacher at Poplar Elementary School, took our invitation to play goalball and expanded on our ideas. Billy Henry, Northwest Association of Blind Athletes (NWABA) Director, and I spent time introducing goalball to students along the Hi-Line, but Gary exceeded all expectations and taught us. I met with Gary once and explained the game of goalball, asking if we could come and demonstrate it to his PE classes. Gary came up with the idea of turning this into a unit of study. We provided him with some directions for playing goalball, a drawing of the layout of a goalball court, a goalball and some blindfolds. Gary then developed a unit for K-4th grade students and taught goalball related skills across a unit that lasted 3-4 weeks.

Gary stressed that every day, class was different. In Phase I the students sat in two lines on opposite ends



of the gym with blindfolds on and lights dimmed. Gary had the students concentrate on listening to the sound of a goalball or basketball approaching them. They were to remain sitting, block the ball, retrieve, then throw the ball without bouncing it. In Phase II the students played lying down, stretched out on lines marked on the gym floor with tape. They practiced rolling balls back and forth, closing up the gaps so the balls didn't get across the two ends of the gym floor. The sense of touch was addressed in Phase III when many very soft balls were used. The students had to concentrate not only on the quiet sound of the ball coming but also the soft touch of the ball. They learned to identify where the ball touched, then retrieve the ball and throw it back to the opposing line. By the time Billy and Pam arrived the class was in Phase III with very active classes. Everyone was involved in a modified fun game developing skills used in goalball. Billy talked to the class about the history of goalball and how it is currently being played. The students were pleased to have us observe their new skills and fun game. ■■

## Speech & Debate: Eli is Great!

**Contributed by Eli's Mom, Mary Cornell**

**E**li Cornell is a sophomore at Flathead High School, has a 4.0 GPA, and runs on the cross country team. He has many interests and activities outside of school including rock climbing and skiing. Eli is also visually impaired but has found many ways to compensate for his impaired vision. This last winter he successfully competed for Flathead High School in Speech and Debate and qualified for the 2013 National Forensics League Tournament. He was one of six students from Flathead that qualified. He competed in International Extemporaneous. In this event a competitor receives a topic on a current foreign issue or event. They have 30 minutes to prepare a 7.5 minute speech which is evaluated and judged. The Nationals Tournament will be held in Birmingham, Alabama, this June. ■■



**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](http://www.msdb.mt.gov)**



# COSB OUTREACH FORUM



Steve enjoying a mock space mission at COSB.



**By Steven Fugate, Outreach Consultant**

The Council of Schools for the Blind Outreach Forum (COSB) was held this year in April at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Representatives attended from all across the country, from coast to coast. Some of the topics discussed at this year's forum were: Guidelines for Specialized Assessment, Technology Curriculum, Data Collection and Utilization, and Partnering with Universities and programs to help meet the need for more certified Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVIs) and Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) throughout the United States.

One of the hot topics was ways to help provide parity to visually impaired students in the area of national and state assessments. It seems like problems still persist in providing adequate materials and technology to meet the testing needs of these students. Presenting math and science materials appears to be one of the ongoing problem areas for both test developers and administrators. There is some hope that advances in tactile technology may allow for a more level playing field with tactile representations of concepts and presentation of materials for the student with special vision needs.

There was also discussion of a more unified technology curriculum, where students can continue to learn using the most up-to-date equipment and specialized programs available. It appears that some of the more

populated states – Texas, Washington and Kentucky – are working toward a more comprehensive approach to teaching and introducing technology to their students.

Additionally, participants discussed the ways that data collection is accomplished in each state. Everything from how weekly consultant-generated reports are used, to the use of data by individual states and schools was discussed. From the input of the representatives present, it would appear that the general types and frequency of data collection is fairly uniform.

A final “hot topic” was ways to encourage and develop relationships with colleges and universities to increase the programs for educating TVIs and COMS nationwide. It appears that states with larger populations are more likely to develop these partnerships, compared to smaller states. Regardless of whether you are from a large or small state, the short supply of trained professionals in this field is a reason for concern.

Overall, it was a lively and useful Forum. Some of the fun activities that participants were able to engage in were: a mock space mission, where we were able to assume roles as part of a mission team and complete a space-oriented mission. We also were able to attend the world premiere of “Space Warriors,” which was filmed at the Space Camp in Huntsville. Some of us were even able to drive up to Ivy Green in Tusculumbia, Alabama, and visit the childhood home of Helen Keller. ■■

## Introducing MSDB's New Guidance Counselor

**Jennifer Briggs, Guidance Counselor**

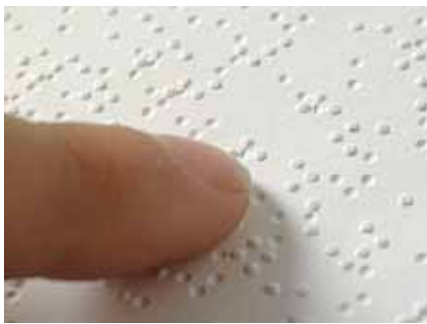
My name is Jennifer Briggs, and I recently moved to Montana from Iowa. I am the new Guidance Counselor and I am looking forward to working with the students at MSDB. My previous counseling experience was at Camelot Schools in the suburbs of Chicago. I also have experience teaching on the Navajo reservation in Arizona. In my spare time I enjoy playing tennis and spending time with my one-year-old daughter, Magdalena. My goals at MSDB are to make a difference in the students' social and academic lives, as well as to help them with their aspirations. ■■



# Summer Braille Reading for Parents

Sharon Woods, MSDB Outreach Consultant

Summer oftentimes brings a little slower pace and relaxation. Parents and caregivers may want to take some of this time to learn more about Braille, especially if their child is or may become a Braille reader. Braille is not a second language but more of a code invented by Louis Braille. When he became blind, in the early 1800's,



people did not think those with blindness could learn to read. Louis Braille developed a strong desire to

access the world of letters and words that sighted individuals could read. Over time and with a highly creative and intelligent mind, he invented the system of raised dots we call Braille today.

Starting at a very young age, children develop literacy skills by watching and imitating the important people in their lives. We have known for a long time that parents are the first best teachers a child has. It may seem daunting to learn Braille, but with the help of available resources and your child's teacher of visually impaired, you can learn to support and encourage your child's Braille reading by learning Braille. ■■

**Visit these resources to learn more:**

- <https://nfb.org/braille-initiative>
- <https://nfb.org/images/nfb/publications/fr/fr15/issue3/f150308.html>
- <http://www.afb.org/section.aspx?FolderID=2&SectionID=6&TopicID=97&DocumentID=1252>
- <http://www.tsbvi.edu/resources/2276-ten-tips-to-help-you-teach-yourself-braille>
- <http://www.dotlessbraille.org/>



## ARLEE STUDENTS GET NEW DOCUMENT CAMERAS

Barb Balko, MSDB Outreach Consultant

MSDB provides a Technology Loan Program that is available to schools throughout Montana. The program is designed to loan special technology to children on a short-term basis. The available devices range from low vision magnification to electronic braille note takers and embossers; all of these support students with visual impairments in their educational environments. The program allows schools the opportunity to determine whether an item would be beneficial to a specific student before making the decision to purchase technology.

Last fall, KaitiyLyn and Dallas Ellison of Arlee were provided an Epson Document Camera through the MSDB Technology Loan Program. KaitiyLyn, a first grader, and her brother Dallas, a kindergartner, had difficulty seeing printed materials unless they were magnified at both far and near distances. They needed to explore technology and access vision supports to help them experience success in the classroom. By borrowing the Epson Document Camera, both Dallas and KaitiyLyn were able to use the technology in their own classrooms where they were the most comfortable. The camera was a huge success. As a result, Arlee schools petitioned their community for financial support to purchase two new Document Cameras for their school.

Deb Espinoza, the Braille specialist working with these students, described the impact of the loan and the fundraising effort. "I was so impressed with the generosity of people. They came forth and donated generously, allowing us to collect enough money and purchase two new cameras within only one month after asking for donations. The kids have benefitted so much from the generosity of donors. Because of the Document Camera, KaitiyLyn has been able to complete all of her homework on time. I thank you so much and for the support of the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind." ■■



# ANTHONY WINS NATIONAL ANTHEM CONTEST!

Contributed by: Lindsay Bell-Martinson, Montana Amateur Sports / Big Sky State Games



Way to go Anthony, what an honor!

**REPRINT, Big Sky State Games Press Release:** The 4th Annual Big Sky State Games National Anthem contest winner is 12-year-old Anthony Cox of Great Falls. He said it was a “great honor” to be chosen to sing at this year’s Opening Ceremonies.

Anthony attends the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind in Great Falls as a blind student. His interests are in the direction of music. He sings in the Great Falls Young People’s Choir and in the Visually Impaired Performers singing group at his school. He also plays the violin and is a percussionist. He likes to play on the iPad, listen to books on tape and watch descriptive videos. Anthony and his family thank everyone who voted for him.

The 4th Annual National Anthem contest began in March. Over the course of six weeks contestants posted a video of themselves singing the National Anthem to YouTube or Facebook. A panel of professional judges together chose the top five singers, and voting for the winner was open to the public May 8-15.

Anthony Cox will sing the National Anthem at the 28th Annual Big Sky State Games Opening Ceremonies on Friday, July 19 at Wendy’s Field at Daylis Stadium in Billings. ❖



**MSDB also  
congratulates  
our 2012/13  
retirees:**

**Bill Sykes,**  
Business Manager,  
30 years

**Sue Swartz,**  
Cottage Attendant,  
40 years

**Rita Campbell,**  
Library/Outreach  
Clerk, 10 years

**Nancy Getten,**  
VI Teacher/  
Outreach,  
31 years



## Students in Transition...A Fond Farewell

After many wonderful years and memories at MSDB we are sad to see the following students exiting MSDB and transitioning to their new lives outside of the school. They enriched our lives with their presence. All the staff and students wish them well in their future endeavors. ❖

Students who exited MSDB in 2012/13 are: **Eula Biehl**, left; **Amy Underdahl**, above left; **Erin Jessen**, above right; and **Thea Dupre** (pictured on page 6).



MONTANA SCHOOL  
FOR THE DEAF & BLIND

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## SUMMER CAMP IS A BLAST AT MSDB!



Students from across the state enjoy attending MSDB summer camps. The summer camp for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing took place in June, while the camp for Blind & Low Vision took place in July. Activities included fun and games, swimming, camping, horseback riding, arts & crafts, a trip to the water park and much more! Plan to join us next year for this exciting and fun-filled MSDB tradition. ☘

**BACK TO SCHOOL: MSDB - AUGUST 26 | GFPS - AUGUST 28**

The MSDB Express is published three times a year and is graciously funded by the MSDB Foundation. The current and past editions of Express can be found on the MSDB website at: [www.msdb.mt.gov](http://www.msdb.mt.gov).