



# MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & BLIND Express

giving kids the building blocks to independence

Volume XIII, Issue 2, Spring 2015



Sample Foundation  
Funds Braille Embosser  
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Cane Club Makes  
Unique Gifts for Families  
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Students on the MSDB campus Skype with the students from Lipetsk, Russia to learn about favorite after school activities as part of the Peer to Peer Exchange Grant.



# PEER TO PEER: RUSSIAN & AMERICAN CONVERSATIONS

By Donna Sorensen, Superintendent

Several years ago MSDB had a unique experience when administrators from Russian schools for the blind traveled to Great Falls through a program called Friendship Forces. After spending a week in Great Falls, seeing the campus and meeting with staff, they returned to Russia with a plan to improve their schools. Carol Clayton-Bye, the Supervisor of the Blind and Visually Impaired Department at the time, worked long distance with several of the administrators so the group could continue learning from one another. Ms. Clayton-Bye spent the summer working closely with Svetlana Bepetehnkoba from the Lipetsk School for the Blind and began looking into the Peer to Peer Exchange Grant. They would meet through Skype to talk about best practices and the integration of students with low vision or blindness into their communities. This led to the submission of a grant application with the great topic of social integration.

Late in the summer of 2014, Ms. Clayton-Bye was notified that the grant for cultural exchange had been awarded! From there the two schools developed a plan to

share knowledge between professionals and give students an opportunity to see others using the same tools and techniques halfway around the world. The first virtual meeting of students was in October, where Russian students talked about their favorite recreational activities. MSDB students were amazed that these students knew some English and had similar musical talents and favorite television shows. Before the holidays the school in Lipetsk stayed late to share their favorite holiday songs. With the 12 hour time difference, these meetings are difficult at best. The students in Russia were sleeping during our holiday program, yet we were able to send them clips from the program to enjoy.

This spring Svetlana will travel again to Great Falls with several of those students to enjoy the Games for the Visually Impaired and tour MSDB while staying with MSDB staff as host families.

In May, Ms. Clayton-Bye, who is now our Outreach Director, will travel with a delegation from MSDB to Moscow and Lipetsk to experience their way of life and their educational approaches to integrate students with low vision and blindness into the world. ☒



# MSDB and Deaf Community

## Lose a Dear Friend

**By Julie Borgreen,  
Speech and Language  
Pathologist**

In 1981, Montanans welcomed Richard Stuckey to their state and when he passed away on Dec. 20, 2014 we had to say a gentle “goodbye”. There are not enough words to describe Rick and the gifts he brought to Montana, to the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind, to his students and colleagues, and to his family. Rick was a brilliant and well-educated man. He graduated as valedictorian from the North Carolina School for the Deaf and later received undergraduate degrees in English and Philosophy from Gallaudet University. After graduating from college, Rick joined the staff at North Dakota School for the Deaf, where he was a teacher, basketball coach, and Boy Scout Master. Always desiring to be well-read and well-educated, Rick was later awarded his Master’s Degree in Deaf Education from Maryland College. Following the move to Montana in 1981, Rick worked as the State Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf for 10 years. He then taught at the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind for 8 years, retiring in 1999.

Rick will always be remembered for the kindness and encouragement he gave



his students. He was a curious man, always seeking new information and ideas. He had a huge desire to pass on that sense of curiosity to his students. Rick enjoyed so many things – camping, fishing, working on house projects, and playing chess, among others. He had an incredible love of books and music ... a love he passed on to his children. To be certain, the most important thing in Rick’s life was his devotion to his wife (Pam) and children (Sara and Seth). They were always #1 in his life.

Rick truly was a “jack of all trades”. He did so many things and gave so much of himself to others. Rick’s loving family remembers him this way -- “Because of his outgoing nature and self-confidence – coupled with his fluency in both ASL and English – he always felt he could accomplish anything, and usually did.”

Godspeed, Rick! ❖

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- MSDB Summer Programs...

# HISTORICAL HEROS

## Remembering Louis Braille

By Dee Blake, Teacher

I would like us to remember Louis Braille and why we continue to celebrate his contributions for individuals with disabilities every January by reminding us of who Louis was, what he contributed, and what our students and staff did during his birthday month. Louis Braille was born on January 4, 1809, in Coupvray, France. An injury to his eye at age three resulted in total loss of his vision. In those days blind people faced a miserable future, usually as beggars or side show performers. Only those from wealthy families had any hope of an education and the possibility of meaningful work. Simon-René and Monique Braille were deeply concerned for their young son and did all they could to help him. It is said that Louis' father taught him the alphabet by guiding his fingers over strips of wood into which upholstery nails had been pounded in the shapes of the letters. When Louis understood the letters, his father guided his hand and taught him to write.

In 1819, just six weeks after his tenth birthday, Louis and his father traveled by stagecoach to Paris. There, Louis entered the Royal Institute for Blind Youth where he would live, study, and work. When Louis was fifteen, he developed



Louis Braille

an ingenious system of reading and writing by means of raised dots. Two years later he adapted his method to musical notation.

Louis Braille accepted a full-time teaching position at the Institute when he was nineteen. He was a kind, compassionate teacher and an accomplished musician. He gave his life in selfless service to his pupils, to his friends, and to the perfection of his raised dot method, which is known today as braille.

To assist all of our students and staff at MSDB with remembering Louis, a "Touch and Play" area of the IMC (Instructional Media Center) was made available for experimentation. It included:

A braille baseball game from the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) that included braille score cards.

A packet of information about many people who were instrumental in continuing the edification of individuals who are visually impaired, blind, deaf, hard of hearing.

Orientation and mobility (O&M) devices (i.e. Mini-Guide and white canes), tactual balls, etc.

I heard many positive comments about the items and how interesting they were. I truly hope each and every one of you knows just how wonderful you are for taking the time to learn and try something new! ❖

## MSDB Celebrates Gallaudet-Clerc Day



Thomas Hopkins  
Gallaudet  
December 10, 1787



Laurent Clerc  
December 26, 1785

By Brenda LeMieux, Teacher

Thomas H. Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc are well known as the Fathers of Deaf Education in America. December 10th is the day we honor and recognize them for their contributions and sacrifices to deaf education in the early and late 1800's. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet was hearing and the first principal in a deaf school in America, the American School for the Deaf, a position he held for 33 years.

LEFT: 10 Handshapes were used in this activity.  
"V" "S" "F" "Flat O" "Open A"  
"C" "Bent V" "5" "1" "Open B"  
or "Closed 5"

Laurent Clerc, a native of France, was the first Deaf teacher in America. He was an educator in several deaf schools for 41 years. Both men founded numerous schools for the Deaf in several states.

As part of the Gallaudet-Clerc Day celebration at MSDB, the students participated in a fun American Sign Language (ASL) Handshape game. The students were divided into 10 groups and each group received one of 10 different handshapes (pictured far left) with the list of given words. The students did a great job and had fun creating silly phrases and sentences from the list of words. ❖



*“The world is moved along not only by the mighty shoves of its heros,  
but also by the aggregate of tiny pushes of each honest worker.”*

*~Helen Keller*

## Pam Boespflug honored by Montana Council for Exceptional Children

**By Denise Rutledge, Teacher and Sharon Woods,  
Outreach Consultant**

**P**am Boespflug was honored with the Distinguished Educator Award at this year’s Montana Council for Exceptional Children. This honor is awarded through nomination and peer review. Pam’s years of service and devotion to Montana Special Education proved her a very worthy candidate. During her 42 years as an educator in our state, Pam has worked with individuals with a variety of challenges with great success. Currently, Pam is an outreach consultant for individuals with visual impairments ages birth to 21 in central Montana and along the Hi-Line. She has held the offices of secretary-treasurer, president elect, president, and currently holds the office of past president in the Northern Rockies Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (NRAER). Pam presents at conferences in Montana and at the international AER conference in San Antonio, Texas. She also is a trainer for INSITE/VIISA, a comprehensive program for training individuals working with children and students with visual impairments with and without additional disabilities.

Pam’s career as a special educator spans four decades. She served as a teacher in Boulder, Montana, and, after a move to Great Falls, became the supervising teacher at Montana School for the Deaf and Blind. As the supervising teacher for the Visually Impaired Department at MSDB for many years, she was instrumental in hiring new special education teachers and assistants that could be cultivated and could grow into becoming Teachers of students with Visual Impairments (certified TVIs). She has been adept at pairing skilled special educators with families to provide home services in regards to the special needs related to visual impairments. She has mentored many special educators across the state in regards to how to make accommodations and modifications to fit the needs of this unique population of students.

Pam has worked within and helped to organize many events offered through MSDB, including Focus Goalball



**Pam Boespflug, Distinguished Service Award winner.**

Enrichment events, the Games for the Visually Impaired, and on-campus training and networking activities for families with students with visual impairments. These important activities showcase the talents and abilities of our students and assist in providing unique opportunities for families to gain knowledge regarding their students’ needs, services offered to assist them, and connections with other families to provide support.

Pam adds this award to her other accomplishments which include the Dufresne Foundation award as an Outstanding Educator, Valuable Employee, and Valuable Peer at MSDB. ■■



# The Visually Impaired Performers in the Spotlight

By **Brittany Smith, Teacher Assistant**

The third annual Singing Valentines fundraiser put on by the VIP (Visually Impaired Performers) had a special twist this year. For the past few years we have used a special selection of songs that take established songs and change the words to fit the Valentine's Day theme. An example of one of our themed songs is, "You Are My Sweetheart," which is sung to the tune "You Are My Sunshine."

*"You are my sweetheart - My only sweetheart  
You make me happy when skies are gray - You'll always know dear  
How much I love you - Oh please be my Valentine today"*

This year we offered for the first time Signing Valentines, since our school has two different populations of students. We wanted to modify valentines so that everyone can participate. I helped students learn a few signs for one of the songs, "Skinamarink." This allowed all students and staff receiving



Here is the link if you would like to watch the news spot: [www.kfbb.com/story/28089152/visually-impaired-performers-from-the-montana-school-for-the-deaf-blind-sing-valentines](http://www.kfbb.com/story/28089152/visually-impaired-performers-from-the-montana-school-for-the-deaf-blind-sing-valentines).

them to enjoy this fundraiser.

Our students were also given a huge opportunity for publicity. We submitted a request to be featured on KFBB's Community Spotlight. On Wednesday

February 11, 2015, we loaded our students into three vehicles and arrived at the news station to pre-record our news spot. Students were given the opportunity to see, hear, and feel what it is like to be in a news studio. Some were surprised by the fact that it is just a large room that has sets. Our students were arranged in a small area to ensure that we could all fit in the camera shot. One of our directors, Erica Peterson, did a great job describing what our fundraiser was and why we have the fundraiser. Students Adriana and Jarrod introduced and counted off the song, "Lolly."

All in all, our fundraiser was a huge success. We were able to share music with the community and with our campus. More importantly, we gave our students new experiences in team work. ■■



MSDB's 2015 Academic Bowl team before a match. Back row: Debi Knuth (Assistant Coach), Jen Wasson (Head Coach). Front row: Jasmin Leon, Austin Polaske, Aubrey Winans, Brooke Wood.

## HARD WORK PAYS OFF

By **Jennifer Wasson, Teacher**

This year, MSDB's Academic Bowl Team had 4 students: Jasmin Leon (Belgrade), Austin Polaske (Great Falls), Aubrey Winans (Missoula), and Brooke Wood (Trout Creek). The team is coached by Debi Knuth and Jennifer Wasson. They competed at the Oregon School for the Deaf in Salem, Oregon, February 13-16. Academic Bowl is a quiz tournament sponsored by Gallaudet University in which students must answer questions from many categories: Social Studies, Science and Technology, Deaf Studies, Current Events, Math, Pop Culture, Sports, Language and Literature, and Math. This is a timed, highly-competitive event, with multiple rounds and rules governing how questions are answered and by whom.

The teams were divided into two pools, Buff and Blue, and MSDB ranked 3rd in the Blue Pool, winning 4 out of 7 matches. (There was a 3-way tie for 3rd place and MSDB was the top team in this 3-way tie). This gave them the opportunity to compete in the "Wild Card" competition, which involves taking a timed test. If they are one of the top four scoring "Wild Card" teams out of 10 in the nation, they will be able to go to Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. for the National Academic Bowl in April. We are very excited—our team did very well and we wish them the best of luck!

After a few days of grueling and tough competition, the team toured Portland the day after the competition. They toured the city, visiting Voodoo Donuts, Powell's City of Books, and dining at a few restaurants, while taking in the sights Portland and that area of the country have to offer. ■■



Blind and low vision students learn the fundamentals of Goal Ball during the first annual Paralympic Event in Kalispell.

# Paralympic Event in Kalispell

By Jane Garrison, Outreach Consultant

**T**he first Paralympic Experience for K-12 students with visual impairments was held in Kalispell on January 31. Thanks to the Northwest Association for Blind Athletes (NWABA), five students and their family members were able to experience numerous sporting events including Goalball, Javelin Throw, Discus Throw, Relay Baton Hand Off, Beep Baseball and Beep Kickball.

Stacey Gibbins, Director of Programs for NWABA in Vancouver, WA, flew and drove the day before the event with a huge duffel bag full of special equipment to use for these events. Early the morning of the 31st Stacey was taping the gym floor at Hedges Elementary in preparation for Goalball training. As participants came streaming in Stacey quickly assessed different ability and age levels to determine the best way to include everyone in the fun. Events lasted 6 hours, including a tasty lunch provided by NWABA for participants. By the end of the event families had made connections, shared experiences and stories

about raising a child with a visual impairment, and the kids were pretty much tuckered out.

The Paralympic Event exposes students to different sports and provides the opportunity to learn more about the Paralympic games. Besides the benefits of physical activity students learn more about their own capabilities and hopefully leave feeling more confident and ready to take on the unique challenges they face as individuals with vision loss.

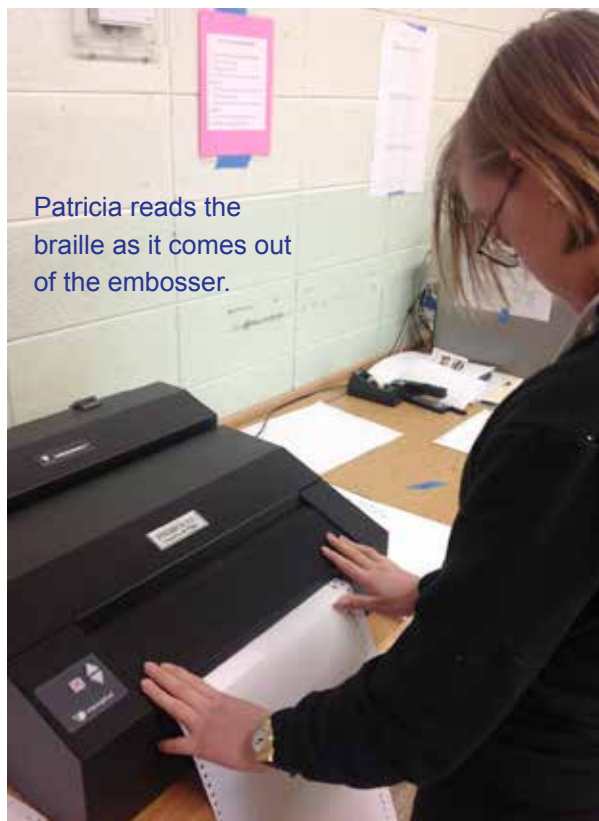
We are very fortunate in the state of Montana to have this quality program brought to us. Thank you to Billy Henry, Executive Director of NWABA and Stacey Gibbins. Thanks also to Barb Balko, Vision Outreach Consultant serving the Southwest region of Montana, for assisting. A special thank you goes to Katy Rolf for being the perfect role model to the younger participants. Last but not least, a huge thank you to parents for braving the cold winter weather and giving up a Saturday that could have been spent at home in front of a nice warm fire to bring their children to this great event. ■■



# Montana School *for the*

## HELP US GIVE KIDS THE BUILD

## SAMPLE FOUNDATION FUNDS BRAILLE EMBOSSER



Patricia reads the  
braille as it comes out  
of the embosser.

The staff and students in MSDB's Blind and Visually Impaired Department are excited about their new braille embosser/printer. This specialized piece of equipment is capable of embossing in braille and printing in ink alongside the braille and is used to produce a large volume of educational materials for students who are blind. Their sighted teachers or parents can read their homework in print or read their text along with them.

Providing braille materials is an expensive, labor-intensive undertaking. MSDB's transcribers are constantly busy transcribing documents from print into braille. Braille textbooks are prohibitively expensive – they can cost as much as \$900 a piece – so they transcribe the texts into braille and print them on the embosser a chapter at a time, as the students need them. Anything a student needs to read must go through this process: worksheets, school programs, lunch menus. Even menus from some of the students' favorite restaurants have been transcribed into braille and embossed.

The tactile graphics the embosser creates are vital for math texts and worksheets. The graphics make it possible for the transcribers to create tactile bus maps to go with the braille bus

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

With your help, the MSDB Foundation has been able to provide funds for services and equipment for the students at MSDB for over 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

schedules the older students use to get around town. They have even created braille trail maps of the ski hill at Showdown Ski Area for use by students who participate in Showdown's Ski P.E. program.

Students can connect their computers and electronic braille devices to the embosser to "print out" their homework and other documents.

Denise Rutledge is a teacher in the Blind and Visually Impaired Department. She is looking forward to trying some new technological applications for blind students that will be compatible with the new embosser. "We are eager to see what new opportunities the new equipment creates for our students," she said.

The old machine broke down last year and was sent in for repairs but is no longer supported by its manufacturer. While it was being repaired, the department had a bit of a crisis trying to provide materials for its students, and once it was back on



Mrs. Soliz can have anything transcribed into braille and embossed for her to read.

campus the heavy demands placed on it made the situation untenable, so the MSDB Foundation submitted a grant proposal to the Sample Foundation for a new embosser, and they provided the \$14,000 to purchase it. Now the old and new machines can share the load, giving the new machine a longer life, and providing a backup if one needs to be sent in for repairs.

MSDB prides itself on giving students the tools they need to overcome as many of their limitations as they can. One of the most powerful tools is literacy, which in the blind world means braille. With this crucial

piece of equipment the Sample Foundation is helping MSDB continue to open up the world for students who don't see it with their eyes, but with their fingers and their minds. Over the years, their partnership with MSDB has made a real difference in the lives of Montana's deaf, hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired students. ■■

## 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



Members of the Jogging Jokers modeling their new team shirts that were generously sponsored by the Great Falls Voyagers and MSDB Foundation.

# WE'RE RUNNING TODAY!

By Bethany Hultz, Teacher

“We’re running today, right??” Trevin asked me eagerly in mid-October. The week before, I had mentioned that sometime soon I wanted to start a running club after school. Until that moment, I didn’t have any intention of October 21st being the kickoff day. Two students and I ran that day, and within a week we were a club with a name and a bunch of passionate runners.

The Jogging Jokers have been up-and-running since October and we have been growing like crazy! Every Tuesday and Thursday, students from both departments and some dedicated staff show up in the IMC ready to run. We have students from 2nd to 12th grade who join us and we average 12 students on a typical afternoon. More than 20 students have come at least a few times.

Sue Stewart, Brandi Voss and I are the main coaches and we have several dedicated cottage staff members who come with students as well. Donna



Jogging Jokers members Juan Diaz and Angelina HomeGun sprint down the sidewalk during our Valentine’s Day Mix & Match workout.

Sorensen, MSDB Superintendent, has also been a regular at club and is reminded by students to come whenever she’s out and about in school. Having both staff and students participate allows for the modeling of healthy lifestyles and keeps the adults active too! We never want to disappoint our students by not doing our best.

It has been amazing and inspiring to see the students improve their fitness. Several students could barely walk a half mile at the beginning and can now run-walk 2 or 3 miles during a workout! I love having students tell me excitedly on Tuesdays and Thursdays

that TODAY is running club. We run, walk, do body weight exercises, do plyometrics, play games and have even tried Zumba. The students have been tallying their miles since mid-November and reached 250 miles as a team from November to February.

We have been incredibly fortunate to have the support of MSDB staff and of the community. So far this year, there have been multiple donations to the club for club running shirts, supplies, fun activities and more. We have received grants and donations from our own MSDB Foundation, the Great Falls Voyagers, the Shopko Foundation and the Big Sky Fit Kids program. From February to May, we operate under the Big Sky Fit Kids program. We hope to attend and compete in the Big Sky State Games with some of our students this summer. We will also be on the lookout for community races to join! ::

*If you’d like more information on the club, please e-mail Bethany Hultz at [bhultz@msdb.mt.gov](mailto:bhultz@msdb.mt.gov).*



# Celebrating 100 Days

By Leann Goss, Teacher

Students celebrated the 100th day of school in many different ways on Tuesday, February 3. Counting each day we come to school is just one example of how to make math concepts come to life. Some teachers keep a jar for pennies and each day that we come to school the



students add one penny to the jar. When we have 5 pennies we can trade it in for a nickel, or 10 pennies for a dime and when we get 100 we have a dollar!

Some teachers use small wooden sticks and bundle them once they have 10 so that counting them each day is made easier and the students learn how to count by 10's. It is with great anticipation that we await day number 100. Imagine the excitement on day 99 when we know that the very next morning when we walk into school it will finally be the 100th day of school! To celebrate some classes made donuts, some counted Mardi Gras necklaces and made posters, and others used Froot Loop cereal to string 100 pieces

of cereal onto a yummy necklace. Now some of the classes are counting backwards from 80 until we reach the end of the school year and summer vacation! ■■



**Indian Education**

Montana Office of Public Instruction  
Denise Juneau, Superintendent

## Understanding Cultural Differences Improves Services

By Emily LaSalle, Outreach Coordinator

If the names of the Indian Reservations were not on this map would you be able to correctly identify the reservation name and the tribe(s) that live on them? Do you know that treaties between Tribal Nations and the U.S. Government are still valid legal documents and that Tribes are sovereign nations? Each Montana Tribe has a distinct and unique cultural heritage. Did you know that in 1968 near Wilsall that the grave of a two year old boy was found after being buried approximately 12,000 years ago? It is referred to as the Anzick Site and is one of the oldest human burials in the Americas and the largest assemblage of Clovis artifacts ever found.

Recently, OPI's Indian Education Division held their Indian Education for All (IEFA) Best Practices Conference in Bozeman. For three days teachers were educated about the distinct histories and traditions of Montana American Indians. It was an honor to listen to each American Indian presenter share their cultural heritage.

I invite you to check out the culturally relevant resources on the IEFA website not only to benefit the students of Montana, but to educate yourselves as a Montanan. Next year's IEFA Best Practices Conference is scheduled for February 21st -23rd, 2016 in Billings. Join us, you will be amazed.

My thanks to the staff of the Indian Education Division for the hard work and dedication each one of you put into such a meaningful and successful conference. We are fortunate to have such high caliber employees touching young and old lives throughout our state. ■■

**For more information please visit  
[opi.mt.gov/programs/indianed/IEFA.html](http://opi.mt.gov/programs/indianed/IEFA.html)**

# MSDB Interpreters Go Beyond the Classrooms

By Sheryl Lute, Coordinating Interpreter

**M**SDB provides comprehensive sign language interpreting services for all students who need and/or request them. Services are provided for the Great Falls Public Schools where students are mainstreamed into four different schools. Each school has its own unique daily class schedule, which can make for some creative coordinating to get all students' interpreting needs covered at all times during any given day. Interpreters are also provided for other activities for students and staff during the school day such as school assemblies, staff meetings,



Skylee (bottom left) with Interpreter, Lynda Eddards at cheerleading practice. Interpreters are ready on and off the court or field to interpret comments from fans, coaches, teammates, and referees.

at cheerleading practice for an MSDB student who is a cheerleader for District C Divisional Basketball Tournament. Then Lynda travels to East Middle School to interpret a 50 minute Science class. After that she goes to Lewis and Clark Elementary school to interpret for a 4th grade student. Finally it is lunch time! Lynda has lunch and prep time at MSDB but by 2:00 she has to be on the road again to Great Falls High School to interpret for an Art Workshop until the end of the school day. Lynda then gets some time off the clock to be with her family; however, it's back to work at 7:00 pm to interpret cheerleading for a District 'C' Divisional Basketball Tournament, which may go until 10:30 or 11:00 pm.

Not all days start and end this way, but it shows the

workshops, in-services, special speakers, school programs, camps, student team meetings with parents and school personnel, family learning and enrichments weekends, just to name a few.

Interpreters are also provided for students wishing to participate in extracurricular and after school activities. Extracurricular activities can include a variety of events such as school sports, cheerleading, school clubs, school field trips, Special Olympics, Eagle Mount, hunter safety classes, tutoring, among others.

## Glancing at one interpreter's schedule for a day...

Lynda Eddards starts her day at 6:45 interpreting for 2+ hours



Kyle Pettis (center of circle in black) stands with the coach of the 7th grade East Middle School football team to facilitate communication for athlete, Brandon Arensmeyer, who is among these players.

dedication our interpreters have in making it possible for some of our deaf and hard of hearing students to fully participate academically as well as fulfill their interests and abilities in extracurricular activities throughout the school year. An inspiring news segment featuring students from MSDB participating on athletic teams at Central High School can be viewed at this link: [www.krtv.com/story/28039100/gfcc-and-msdb-make-a-great-team](http://www.krtv.com/story/28039100/gfcc-and-msdb-make-a-great-team)

Lynda and fellow interpreter, Sandra Van Tighem, are interviewed along with the students.

MSDB currently has a fabulous Interpreting Team of eight full-time and one half-time interpreters! Each one has a big heart for our MSDB kids and is continuously working to develop their interpreting and American Sign Language (ASL) skills in order best meet the needs of students and staff. Three of us hold national certifications through Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), six of us meet the Office of Public Instruction's State Standards for Educational Interpreting and two are almost there. We are held to an Interpreting Code of Professional Conduct and are required to earn yearly continuing education units related to our field of interpreting – we are always learning. Not only is the interpreting team busy with their full schedules of interpreting, all are involved with MSDB in other ways such as being class sponsors, serving on the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI): American Sign Language Rater Team and various other committees, supervising students before and after school as they arrive and depart, leading American Sign Language classes, among other duties. Many of us also work as community interpreters (medical, church, college, etc...) and do pro-bono interpreting work.

Each staff member at MSDB has full and overflowing schedules that keep us busy along with our own families and 'life'. It's nice that we can all be a supportive team for each other as we work and learn to better serve our students. We all work towards the same school motto: "Education, Communication and Independence for Life." ■■





(left) Teacher, Dee Blake assists Cane Club members Katilyln, Alyson, Bella, and Ally shape their clay into envelopes; while Pa Dues works with Holly individually (right).

## Cane Club Getting into the Christmas Spirit

By Michelle Cross, Teacher

Gary "Pa" Dues introduced our Cane Club members to the art of pottery. Pa graciously came to two of our Cane Club meetings, donated all materials and instructed our students on how to make Christmas wall hangings. Students molded clay by following directions. They pinched the clay to create

an envelope and used stamps to personalize their gift. Cane Club members really enjoyed using their hands to create unique gifts for their families. Pa then took the pottery and fired it in his kiln. The following Cane Club meeting the students got to decorate their pottery with glitter, stickers and other items donated by Pa. We appreciate Pa's time and the energy spent in working with Cane Club. ■■

## SUPER SUE!

By Denise Rutledge, Teacher

**C**ongratulations to Sue Stewart! For those of you that don't know Sue, let me tell you a little bit about her MSDB background... She has been working at MSDB for the past 24 years and during her employment here, she has devoted extensive time towards improving her skills to best meet the needs of our students. In the first few years of her employment, she took classes from Nancy Getten to better understand the role of using braille within the educational environment. She also completed coursework through the Hadley School for the Blind to become certified in Blindness Basics. In 2008, she was presented with the opportunity to enroll in the "Braille Certification Training Program" through the Library of Congress (in conjunction with the National Federation of the Blind). For the past six years, she has been working on the 20 lessons required to receive certification. The final project for this class is a 35-page manuscript submission with correct collation, formatting, grammar and spelling completed



in literary braille. This intense coursework certifies the individual to transcribe literary braille. Just after returning from our winter break, Sue jubilantly arrived to MSDB to announce her successful completion of this coursework!

If you think Sue is taking a break to celebrate this

accomplishment, you don't know Sue! She has jumped into registering for classes to become knowledgeable about the transition to the Unified English Braille (UEB) code. In March, she will attend a national conference in San Francisco to address the changes that UEB will bring for our students. Meanwhile, on campus, she continues in her daily duties as a paraprofessional in the Blind and Visually Impaired Department in the mornings and as MSDB's media clerk in the afternoon. Sue has held the position of media clerk for the last couple of years. This job entails many challenges, including the ordering of all materials for all Montana students with visual impairments!

Again, many congrats to Sue for her investment in MSDB and for her dedication in advancing her own skills so that she can improve the lives of our students with visual impairments across the state of Montana. If we all had HALF of your energy, Sue, there's no telling what we could accomplish! ■■

# Welcome to MSDB



**M**y name is Tabatha Soliz. I recently joined the MSDB family as a teacher in the Department for the Visually Impaired. I grew up in Burlington, VT.

I graduated from the University of Vermont with a degree in early childhood education. I am currently getting my certification as a teacher for students who are visually impaired from the University of Massachusetts at Boston. I will finish my course work in December. My favorite subjects to learn about and teach are English and braille.

In my spare time, I enjoy reading, crocheting and taking long walks with my guide dog. The more I can be outside, the happier I am. I also love spending time with family and friends. ❖

**M**y name is Jaime Williams; I am the new Accounting Technician at MSDB. I have three boys, ages 19, 11, and 7. I have lived in Great Falls most my life. Some things I like to do in my spare time are to take my boys to Belt Creek to splash in the water, build dams, shoot at paper targets, and just enjoy the weather when it is warm. I was born deaf and regained my hearing around age 3 or 4, but have had issues with my ears and sinuses since. I'm thrilled to be a part of the MSDB team and to be learning ASL.

I have experience working with adults and children with varying degrees of special needs. I've earned associate degrees in Accounting, Business Administration-Management, Science, and Arts at MSU in Great Falls. In December I earned my Bachelor in Science for Business Administration at MSU-Northern in Havre and received the 2014 Student Excellence Award. Other awards I've received include Accounting Student of the Year and Winner of the Business Problem Solving Competition. ❖



## Let's Play Ball

Sixth grader, Blaine Frisbie, running back for the Lambert Junior High football enjoyed playing on the new football field at the Lambert Sports Complex.



## Skis, Boards or Shoes?

No matter what the students chose they all had a blast at their annual day of skiing, snowboarding, and snowshoeing at Showdown Resort! MSDB Staff and Eagle Mount of Great Falls had most students skiing independently by the end of the day! Kaelyn is seen here hitting the slopes with an Eagle Mount Volunteer.



# Mrs. Cross' Work Experience Class Goes on an Outing

By Michelle Cross, Teacher

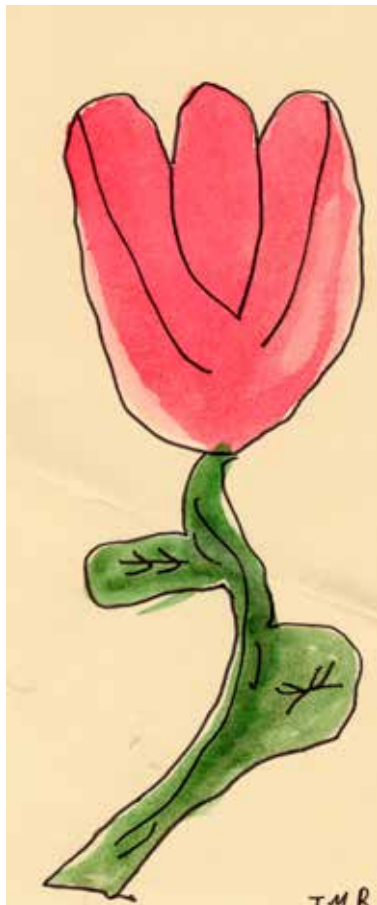
Work Experience class has been a learning adventure. Students have been busy engaged in jobs since the beginning of the school year. Their jobs on campus include: collecting shredding materials, shredding, delivering mail, delivering newspapers, crushing pop cans, ordering and delivering supplies to staff, replacing snow salt containers and laundry. This year my work experience class added the Snack Shack to our list of jobs to increase our student's knowledge and get real world experiences. The students have enjoyed all aspects of their new job including keeping track of inventory, purchasing inventory, being a cashier and cleaning up after closing for the day. Since adding the Snack Shack, our students now earn a wage during their job duties in the Snack Shack and once a quarter, they go out into the community to purchase items that they need. The students make a budget, talk about wants versus needs and make shopping lists. They use social skills and their orientation and mobility skills in their community outings. It was an awesome experience to witness our students locating their shopping items and being so excited with their purchases. ■■



Adriana (top) and Cecelia(left) make purchases with money they earned themselves.

## A Work of Heart

"Thank you Tayten of Sidney, Montana for the beautiful Valentine's Day painting. I appreciate the artwork and the nice note (with great handwriting!) that you wrote. Every day is better with you in my world. Emily, the luckiest outreach consultant!"



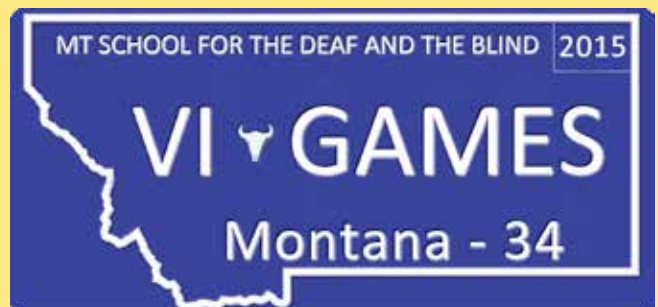
## SAVE THE DATES



EOS will host their annual fundraiser performance on Friday,

**April 17th  
at 7:00 pm**

Mustang Center



**MSDB Campus: May 1-2, 2015**



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FOR THE DEAF & BLIND

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# MSDB Summer Programs... Hope to See You There!

**MSDB** offers a variety of enriching summer programs for children and their families. *Family Learning Weekends* offer opportunities for families to draw support from one another as well as from MSDB staff and other experts. *Summer Camps* are a chance for kids who attend school in their home communities and those who attend MSDB to come together for a week to socialize with their peers, develop independence, and learn new communication and technology skills.



## SUMMER CAMPS

Week-long camps for children who are Blind and Low Vision, or children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing are offered to students from across the state and offer skill-building in the key areas of communication, social interaction, independent

living, and the use of technology.

The camps include structured leisure and recreational activities, including trips to the local water park, Great Falls White Sox baseball games, and exploring the historical, art and children's museums in Great Falls. The Montana School for the Deaf & Blind has a complete recreation complex where campers swim, bowl, and enjoy other group activities. For the blind and visually impaired students, learning these activities can be powerful accomplishments.

**Summer Camp for the Deaf/HOH: June 21-27, 2015**

**Summer Camp for the Blind/VI: July 12-18, 2015**

## FAMILY LEARNING WEEKENDS

One Family Learning Weekend is designated for families of deaf and hard of hearing children, and one is for families of blind and visually impaired children. These popular weekends include dynamic national speakers and a wealth of information on learning to relate to a child's disability. The weekend provides opportunities for families to learn about their child's sensory impairment, share their experiences with other families, and communicate with one another in a warm and caring atmosphere.

**Learning Weekend for the Deaf/HOH: June 12-14, 2015**

**Learning Weekend for the Blind/VI: June 19-21, 2015**

The Montana School for the Deaf & Blind provides room, board, entertainment, and transportation to and from the Great Falls campus at no cost to the student. Summer programs are co-sponsored by MSDB, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI), and the MSDB Foundation. ❖

***For more information please visit the MSDB website [www.msdb.mt.gov](http://www.msdb.mt.gov). Click on Campus, then Summer Programs. You will find further explanation of each event along with applications and program booklets. For additional information you can also call MSDB at 1-800-882-MSDB or email us at [info@msdb.mt.gov](mailto:info@msdb.mt.gov).***