



MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & THE BLIND Express

giving kids the building blocks to independence

Volume XVIII, Issue 3, Summer 2017



**How the Foundation
Supports Families**

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2017 MSDB Graduates

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Dear Families, Staff, Students, and Friends around the state and country,

We hope you are staying cool this summer and having fun where ever you are. MSDB is busy getting ready for staff and students to return in late August. The railing in the Instructional Materials Center (IMC) is getting a much-needed sanding and varnishing. The carpets have been shampooed. The grounds have been maintained. And, we have had two successful summer camps!

There are some staff changes you may or may not know about. Kim Schwabe, our former Principal, has taken a position as an Outreach Consultant. We have hired Paul Furthmyre as our new Principal! Paul is passionate about public education and about being a voice / an advocate for those who do not always have a seat at the decision-making table, especially for Montanans and for students in special education. He serves on several statewide committees and has connections across Montana through the School Administrators of Montana (SAM) organization, through OPI, and across the country. He is also the Montana Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) State Coordinator and a past President. He earned his Principal certification from Montana State University and is currently in school (this seems to be a constant with MSDB staff – we are always in school!) at Montana State University working on his Doctor of Education Program. His dissertation topic is *“Implementing Social Emotional Learning into a Secondary School Instruction Paradigm.”*

We have also said “we will see you around” to Michelle Betcher, former Outreach Consultant for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the Billings area. She will be working in the Billings School District. Also, Sean Wilkinson, Interpreter, accepted another position to be able to spend more time with his family. We will also see him around in the Great Falls community.

In April, Hollis Dolphay (Maintenance Supervisor) retired. At the end of the school year, Sarah Eyer (Outreach Consultant for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing) and Sharon Denniston (Interpreter) both retired. We will miss all the wonderful things these three people brought to our lives and the lives of our students. Along with all retirees and those who have moved on, you are always part of our MSDB community and we hope to see you around.

We will be continuing our model of “early out Wednesdays.” We will be dismissing all students every Wednesday at 2:00pm. Day students will go home and residential students will be dismissed to the cottage. Staff will be engaged in various professional development opportunities during this time.

I am excited to see staff returning on August 21st and students returning for the first day of school on August 28th. Enjoy the remaining weeks of your summer and when school starts, we will have a great year! 🍀

Wishing you peace,

Donna E Sorensen
MSDB Superintendent

Who Ya Gonna Call? Jen Wasson!

By Leann Goss, Outreach Consultant



Jen Wasson has worked for the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind for over 20 years. She has been part of so many unique opportunities for our students it is difficult to try to list them all. Presently she is a high school teacher, an Outreach Consultant, Co-director of Expressions of Silence, Head Coach of the Academic Bowl team, sign language teacher in the public high schools in Great Falls, a Union officer, and the Driver's Education teacher! She puts the needs of her students first and foremost in everything she does and frankly we do not know what we would do without her! That is why, it came as no surprise to us, that other organizations also recognize her talents and dedication. Jen was awarded the Montana Traffic Education Teacher of the Year! Congratulations Jen, it is well deserved! ❖

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Blair and Dorothy happy to participate in an annual Ice Breaker road race!

Great Falls Ice Breaker

By Darreck Hale, Supervising Counselor

April is a stunning time of year where we recognize the change in the season and the many amazing things that “spring” forth. Each year, the community of Great Falls comes together to celebrate the coming of spring in our annual Ice Breaker road race. MSDB has made a fun tradition of taking part in this event. On April 23rd both students and staff joined together to walk and run in this activity. Each participant was excited to receive an Ice Breaker T-shirt and a medal for finishing the race. Our students are always excited to have this experience and many see it as an exhilarating accomplishment. This year the weather was turning for the worst but against all odds it stopped right as we walked up to the starting line. In the end, we all ran through the finish line under a warm sun with dry clothes. We then received some sack lunches from the race sponsors and went back to the cottages to watch movies and talk about the fun we had throughout the day. Here at MSDB we strive to create memories that can be shared for a life time. It was a great day and we cannot wait to do it again next year. ❖

We Go Vgo

By Susan Davis, Outreach Consultant

At one time, medically fragile students were homebound and unable to have the experience of interacting with their classmates; however, in the age of technology “going to school” is becoming a reality for homebound students. This past year, with the assistance of MonTECH’s assistive technology loan program, one of our students was able to interact and build social connections with her classmates from home.

The Vgo robot works much like any virtual communication platform with students being able to see and speak to one another from distant locations; however, the robot offers far more than just seeing and speaking. With the robot, students can move about the classroom at will and even go out onto the playground with classmates during recess. From circle time to various learning stations and even a parachute activity, our student was able to experience it all through the robot.

The school staff fully embraced the idea of having a student attend virtually and the communication line between home and school was strong with schedules, projects, and activities being sent home so the student and her caregiver could complete activities around her busy therapy schedule and present them to the rest of the class. The student was able to meet her classmates in person one time and the social connections that were made beyond that through Vgo, the robot were wonderful. The laughter that resounded throughout the room as the robot “ran” under the parachute was all that was needed to assure everyone this virtual endeavor was a success. ❖



Another Exciting Job Shadow

By Jennifer Briggs, School Counselor

Anthony, a sophomore student who is visually impaired had the opportunity to visit OverHere Consulting, an assistive technology training company specializing in adaptive technology for the visually impaired individual. OverHere's mission is "Bringing technology into sight". They help people who are visually impaired or blind use technology to become more independent. Anthony job shadowed Travis Stevenson and Ed Warrell. He learned how they create music for the background of various video games. Designing web pages was another task Anthony was able to experience.



Anthony was the first person to experience a three-dimensional video game designed for individuals with visual impairments.

OverHere Consulting is an amazing company that collaborates with various businesses across Montana including the following: MonTech, Montana Independent Living Project (MILP), Blind and Low Vision Services (BLVS), Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB), National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of Montana, Montana Association for the Blind (MAB), and Montana Talking Library. OverHere Consulting also works with individuals regardless of their financial status.

Another neat experience that Anthony had was job shadowing Josh and Trevor Hughes, two brothers who developed their own video game design company known as Team Kaizen. These two brothers developed their own company while Trevor was experiencing medical issues. They knew they needed to find a way to pay for Trevor's growing medical bills so creating their own company was their solution. These two brothers, through their creative energy, surmounted obstacles and achieved great success. They were very gracious and generous to let Anthony be the first person to experience their three-dimensional video game designed for individuals with visual impairments. Anthony was able to hear the game all around him as though he were in the game. Technology can enrich the lives of people with visual impairments. MSDB thanks OverHere Consulting and Team Kaizen for providing these rich job shadowing experiences for Anthony. ■■



Students participated in Native American crafts and games presented by Salish Kootenai College students. (above and below)



SKC Does it Again

By Missy Hill, Special Education Coordinator

Salish Kootenai College (SKC) students knocked it out of the park yet again when they visited the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind on May 1. They came with a group of 25 students from both Salish Kootenai College and Stone Child College. These teachers-in-training toured our campus and spent the morning observing classrooms. Then they pulled out all the stops with games and crafts all afternoon. Our students learned how to play Native American games including Stick and Hoop, Rock and Sticks, and Run and Scream. They told stories using carved stones and played a game with carved antlers. Each student was able to design a back pack to carry their goodies home.

This group of college students spent the day smiling, interacting with students and staff, and commenting about how much they enjoyed everything about their visit.

This activity is an annual event that not only gives college students an experience of a lifetime, but also engages our students in Native American culture. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to touch their hearts and for them to impact ours.

Many thanks to these wonderful teachers-to-be. ■■

Expanded Core: What is it Good For?

By Geri Darko, Orientation and Mobility Specialist

For many years, a strategy for teaching students with visual impairments was inclusion in a regular education setting where “normal” skills would be acquired through immersion in the environment. “Core” curriculum materials (including English, Math, Sciences, Social Studies, and Languages) were adapted to provide access to students with visual impairments. However, students with visual impairments were often missing the skills needed to fully benefit from these adaptations. Why were they missing these basic skills? People gain approximately 80% of their information about their environment incidentally, through the use of their vision. This means that a person with a visual impairment could potentially miss more than three-quarters of concepts and skills that are necessary for them to become self-sufficient adults.

Methods and teaching strategies began to change with the recognition that many adults with visual impairments were unable to live independently. The ideology that students with visual impairments would gain the same knowledge as their sighted peers through sharing a common set of experiences began to change. Educators recognized a lack of skills required for high school graduation in visually impaired students and the necessity of teaching these core skills. The missing pieces to the “core” curriculum for students with visual impairments were identified in 1993 and the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) was born. These skills must be purposefully taught to students with visual impairments because they cannot pick up these concepts and skills incidentally as a sighted student would. The ECC for students with visual impairments includes the following nine areas:

Compensatory skills or functional academic skills include concept development, spatial understanding, study and organizational skills, speaking and listening skills, and adaptations to the core curriculum. Functional academic skills encompass the set of skills needed by students with multiple disabilities to be as independent as possible. “The compensatory skills and functional needs of the visually impaired child are significant, and are not addressed with sufficient specificity in the existing core curriculum” (Hatlen, 1996).

Orientation and mobility is taught by a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. Orientation (COMS) is defined as “the process of using the senses to establish one’s position and relationship to all other significant objects in an environment” (Hill & Ponder, 1976). Mobility is the physical act of moving through the environment to get from one place to another. Orientation and mobility skills require specific instruction in the appropriate use of devices such as a



Maci and Billy make their purchases at the local IGA grocery store.

cane, as well as safe, efficient, and graceful travel within all environments, known or unknown (Hill & Ponder, 1976).

Social skills which have been learned through visual observation by sighted children and adults are not learned incidentally by blind and visually impaired people. Therefore, “social skills must be carefully, consciously, and sequentially taught to blind and visually impaired students” (Hatlen, 1996). The area of social interaction skills includes non-verbal communication in which students must be taught the concepts of body language and facial expressions to have meaningful and appropriate interactions with others. Students also need instruction on manners and etiquette to present socially appropriate skills in public (Bishop, 2004). Hatlen notes social interaction skills often mean the difference between isolation and a fulfilling life as an adult (Hatlen, 1996).

Independent living skills are all tasks and functions performed by a person to lead life as independently as possible in accordance with his or her abilities. Some independent living skills exist in the academic core curriculum, but are splintered, disappearing and reappearing in the learning material. Traditional classes do not meet the learning requirements of students with visual impairments (Hatlen, 1996).

Recreation and leisure skills must be planned and deliberately taught to visually impaired students (Hatlen 1996). Play situations are visual limitations of children’s observations and experiences (Bishop, 2004). Students with visual impairments need instruction in the skills necessary to stay physically fit and actively involved in recreation and leisure activities. The skills taught in recreation and leisure prepare students for competitive and non-competitive sports as well as physical activities for health and well-being that will continue into adulthood.

There are four phases of career awareness and job readiness: awareness, exploration, preparation, and participation (Hatlen & Curry, 1987). “Career awareness



Adriana uses her cane to navigate her way in a grocery store.

begins in infancy when a baby smiles, babbles, or reaches for an attractive toy; social interaction, the ability to communicate, and proactive behaviors are all necessary prerequisites for success in a chosen career" (Bishop, 2004). Communication and social skills continue to improve throughout childhood, during which children with visual impairments need concrete experiences and explanations of various jobs. Students need many opportunities to explore a variety of work situations by taking field trips, interviewing community members and using pretend play with peers to understand the importance of various jobs. As the student grows and learns, he or she continues to prepare for the world of work; learning and using functional skills such as time management, social skills, and daily living skills. Career education skills will prepare students with visual impairments for a job or career after high school. The final phase, participation, is the ultimate goal for students with visual impairments.

Within the past 20 years, the field of visual impairments has seen an explosion of technology (Bishop, 2004), including technology for auditory book readers, portable note-taking devices, and braille writers. Assistive technology gives students even greater access to the curriculum and provides the student with more independence when producing class work. Technology enhances communication and "expands the world of blind and visually impaired persons in significant ways" (Hatlen, 1996).

Sensory efficiency skills include instruction in the use of vision, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. It also addresses the development of the proprioceptive, kinesthetic, and vestibular systems. Learning to use their senses efficiently, including the use of optical devices, will enable students with visual impairments to access and participate in activities in home, school and community environments.

Self-determination was added to the ECC skill areas by Hatlen (2003). Children with visual impairments must learn how to appropriately ask for and refuse assistance to maintain their independence. Bishop (2004) noted "the best advocate for a visually impaired person is that person." He or she is the only person who can adequately describe the challenges, goals, and needs of a person with a visual impairment. Encouraging independence at all stages of life is the goal of teachers of persons with a visual impairment (Bishop, 2004).

In the Visually Impaired Department at MSDB, we are focusing on implementing these nine skill areas into all aspects of the school day.

Resources:

Bishop, V. E. (2004). Teaching visually impaired children (3rd ed.). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Hatlen, P. & Curry S. (1987). In support of specialized programs for blind and visually impaired children: The impact of vision loss on learning. *Journal of Visual Impairments and Blindness*, v81, n1, p7-13

Hatlen, P. (1996). The core curriculum for blind and visually impaired students, including those with additional disabilities. Retrieved November 11, 2006, from Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Web site: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/Education/corecurric.htm#What>

Hatlen, P. (2003). Impact of literacy on the expanded core curriculum, Retrieved November 11, 2006, from Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Web site: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/agenda/literacy.htm>

Hill, E., Ponder, P. (1976). *Orientation and Mobility Techniques*. New York, NY: American Foundation for the Blind. ■■



Anthony (front, right) performing with classmates in the Advanced Men's Choir at the Great Falls High School choir concert this Spring. We are so proud of you Anthony.



Montana School *for the*

HELP US GIVE KIDS THE BUILD

THE FOUNDATION SUPPORTS FAMILIES



Parents participate in simulated activities together such as a sighted guide walk across campus with blindfold and cane.

If you have never attended a Family Learning Weekend, please mark your calendars! The Visually Impaired Family Learning Weekend is June 1-3, 2018 and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Family Learning Weekend is June 8-10, 2018!

Each weekend focuses on supporting you in raising your child/ren who are deaf/hard of hearing or blind/visually impaired. We bring adults to campus who are like your children. They share their experiences of growing up and you get a glimpse into what your child/ren might also be experiencing. There is typically a teen panel where families can ask questions about their experiences. There is a parent

or family panel where families share where they are in their journey of raising these unique children. Support groups are offered for various groups such as moms, grandparents, and dads. There might be a workshop on IEPs, American Sign Language, Orientation and Mobility, and so many more.

MSDB provides a childcare program for all of your children so you can spend time being an adult with other adults. The children have a great time! One grandparent reported, "The grandkids were all happy – exhausted. They made friends. The staff that took care of them all day need big bonuses! They were thrilled over treats and prizes." Another mom reported, "My son has gained confidence and made friends."

How much does it cost you and your family to attend a Family Learning Weekend? Not a penny! In fact,



While parents are busy learning, all of the children are having fun and making new friends with various planned activities and games all weekend!

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 to www.justgive.org or mailing it to:

MSDB Foundation • P.O. Box 6576 • Great Falls, Mt 59406
For more information, please call 406-771-6040

e Deaf & Blind Foundation

LDING BLOCKS TO INDEPENDENCE

MSDB will pay you for your mileage to attend! Do you want to know how we do this? These weekends are sponsored by the Office of Public Instruction (OPI), at least one region of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD), and the MSDB Foundation!! The Deaf and Hard of Hearing weekend is also sponsored by the Gallaudet University Regional Center (GURC) – West.

Every donation you make to the Foundation supports MSDB students – both on campus and served by Outreach – and their families! Family Learning Weekends are open for professionals to attend, too. We offer OPI continuing education units (CEUs) for every workshop attended! For every donation made to the Foundation, the return on investment is immeasurable in terms of learning and growing.

Thank you for your support so that we can continue to offer these life-changing opportunities to our students, our families, and our communities! ❖



“Individually, we are one drop. Together we are an ocean.”
–Ryunosuke Satoro

MSDB Foundation Board of Directors

Scott Patera, Great Falls, President • John Musgrove, Havre, Vice President
Doug Little, Great Falls, Sec/Treasurer

Gary McManus, Great Falls
Nan Miller, Helena
Debra Redburn, Bozeman

Donna Sorensen, Great Falls
Shawn Tulloch, Bozeman
Laura Walker, Great Falls

Meet Our MSDB Foundation Board Officers



Scott Patera • President

Our Foundation President is Scott Patera. He has worked with NorthWestern Energy since 1979 (38 years). He is married to Sheila and they have six kids, one of whom attended MSDB. This is one reason Scott is such a dedicated board member and supporter of our school. He was a teacher for seven years at Butte Central and Belt. He is an active member in a number of civic organizations in Great Falls: Great Falls Chamber of Commerce, Great Falls Development Authority, Rotary Club of Great Falls, Confero Sports Foundation, Upper River Missouri Heritage Foundation, and Business Advisory to The Great Falls Public School – Business Departments. Scott coached a number of sports for Youth of Great Falls for basketball, touch football, and Little League baseball. He also coached at the University of Great Falls (Lady Argos) from 1999 to 2002. Scott has been a Foundation board member since 1992. ❖



John Musgrove • Vice President

The Foundation Vice President is John Musgrove. John has been married for 55 years to his wife, Susan, and they have one daughter, Kelly. He was a teacher for 25 years in Havre and a legislator for 8 years, and is retiring from both. John has been a Foundation Board member since 2009. He enjoys the summers in White Sulphur Springs. ❖



Doug Little • Secretary/Treasurer

Our Foundation Secretary and Treasurer is Doug Little. Doug is married to Whitney. He was a school teacher and coach; but is now a stay-at-home dad with their two adopted girls, Aliona and Lucia. Doug has been a board member since 2016. ❖

36th Annual Games for the Visually Impaired

By Michelle Cross,

Co-Director, Games for the Visually Impaired

The 36th Annual Games for the Visually Impaired was a huge success on May 5th & 6th, thanks in part to the MSDB Foundation, MSDB staff, volunteers and the parents of our athletes.

The Games started on Friday, with the Pentathlon for athletes ages 10 and over. The weather was spectacularly sunny and hot! The pentathlon consisted of six (6) events: 90 meter swim (thankful that GFHS let us use their pool, as MSDB pool is out of commission), 60 meter run, 100 meter run, shot put, standing broad jump and a 400 meter run (optional and can be substituted for another event).

On Saturday, athletes ages 3-21 competed in ParaCombine activities, gymnastics, gym activities, endurance activities, Showdown table and track and field.



Zayden is competing in goal ball blocking. In this event participants are timed to see how many times they can go from standing to blocking position on the floor in one minute.

Students with visual impairments came from across the state to compete and achieved success. The look of joy and accomplishment was evident on the athlete's faces when competing in the events during the Games and when accepting their medals during the closing ceremonies.

We would also like to thank everyone who donated items or secured items for our annual VI Games Raffle. The monies raised from our raffle go right back to the MSDB Foundation. The MSDB Foundation supports and funds the Games for the Visually Impaired consistently every year. Some of the items that were raffled off this year included: 2 tickets to Silverwood, handmade pottery, gift baskets and gift bags, Walmart gift cards, \$100 cash and many, many other items.

The Games for the Visually Impaired are held each spring at the Montana School for the Deaf & Blind campus in Great Falls. Athletes from around the state compete in track and field, gymnastics, gym activities, swimming, ParaCombine activities and our Showdown table. This is a competitive event for blind and visually impaired students ranging in age from 3-21.

The VI Games is an uplifting and confidence-boosting weekend for participants, and the MSDB staff provides of support for the kids. Volunteers are willing to swim and run with athletes. Any Montana student with a visual impairment is welcome to participate in this event. For more information on future Games for the Visually Impaired, please see our website at www.msdb.mt.gov for dates and Guidelines. You can also contact Michelle Cross at mcross@msdb.mt.gov for additional information. ❖

By Satin LaRance, Student

When it comes to a competition, you expect to win, right? At VI Games, I didn't care if I won or not. I at least got some exercise those two days. That counts for something, right? I didn't expect to get so many awards. I received at least six awards. I received three second place ribbons, a participant ribbon, and a first place ribbon for Para-combine. I also received another first place medal for Pentathlon and I tied with, the one, the only...Kaelyn! I would have never guessed I'd have won first place, let alone I actually tied with someone! I believed that I'd done horribly at the activities. I did hope everyone else got something because they clearly did better. (Yes, I'm hinting about the certain gazelle – Drew) that jumped an inch above his own height, and beat all the other kids in running. He demolished all of us in the activities, so he deserves some major publicity in this. VI Games was great! ❖

Student Perspective of the VI Games

2017 MSDB Graduates



Shaylene Tatyana Jay Potts

Do you have a nick name?
Shay

Where are you from?
Alberta, Canada

What was your favorite subject in school?
Science

What was your favorite part about living on campus (in the cottages?)
The food!

Did you have a job while you were in high school?
Work study job-multiple things around campus like working in the preschools, doing librarian assistance, doing janitorial work and helping in the kitchen

What do plan to do after you graduate from high school?

Maybe college later, but I am enjoying my time with my daughter, Zeven for right now.

What do you think you will be doing in 5 years?
Taking Zeven to kindergarten.

Please share a favorite memory of school or of your family growing up:

My favorite memory from school is struggling to wake up in the mornings, but I did it anyways because school is important. Growing up, I loved traveling with my family. I did a lot of traveling between Canada and Montana.



Patricia Ruth Levy

Do you have a nick name?
Patrick, Hulk, P

Where are you from?
Born in Poland.

Lives in Darby, Montana.

What was your favorite subject in school?
English

What was your favorite part about living on campus (in the cottages?)

Seeing my friends full-time

Did you have a job while you were in high school?

No.

What do plan to do after you graduate from high school?

Go to Missoula College and the University of Montana

What do you think you will be doing in 5 years?
Hopefully getting a job and living on my own.

Please share a favorite memory of school or of your family growing up:

My favorite memory from MSDB was playing a prank on Mrs. Was son with a mouse! Growing up, I have loved hanging out and spending time with my 4 nephews and one niece.

Preschool Graduates



Congratulations to Paisley (left) and Charlee (right) for graduating from the preschool programs at MSDB!

Senior Trip 2017

By Sue Stewart, Teacher Assistant and Denise Ruthledge, Teacher

After raising money for the past four years, Patricia Levy and Shaylene Potts (the graduates of the Class of 2017), used these funds towards a senior trip to California on April 30 to May 5, 2017. After flying to LAX, we took a shuttle to Anaheim and checked into our hotel. Then, we went straight to downtown to Disneyland and to eat at Goofy's Kitchen. This restaurant featured character dining, so Minnie Mouse, Chip, Dale, Daisy and Donald Duck came by to check on our meal. We feasted at a buffet



2017 Graduates, Patricia and Shay, enjoying Disneyland with class sponsors, Denise Ruthledge and Sue Stewart!

that included an amazing assortment of foods like peanut butter and jelly pizza and macaroni and cheese pizza.

We spent two days at Disneyland and two days in California Adventure. In the evenings we watched fireworks, the Main Street Electrical Parade and the World of Colors. The World of Colors was breathtaking! It involved fountains, lights, projected images, and fire all set to Disney music. We spent one day at Universal Studios and went to Harry Potter Village--that was amazing. We went on the tour bus to see the movie sets and we even got to see some live movie action. Along our journey, we met many characters and had our pictures taken with Anna and Elsa from Frozen, Beetle Juice, Bart and Homer Simpson and many more. One morning, we tested out Uber and took a ride to Huntington Beach and back again. It was the first time either graduate had dipped their feet in the Pacific Ocean!

We accomplished a lot in California and will always look back on the trip with fond memories from the time we all screamed inside the Walking Dead attraction to when we were in awe as it snowed on us in the live musical production of Frozen. We will remember how our tummies (and hearts) felt as we raced on roller coasters and took steep plunges into pools of water. Sue Stewart and Denise Ruthledge would like to thank Shay and Patricia for such a great trip! We will never forget how amazing both of you young ladies are and we wish you the very best as you complete graduation and begin the next adventures in life. We would all like to thank the MSDB Foundation for their support in making this trip possible. ❖

Our Senior Trip to Disney Land

By Shay Potts, Graduating Senior

Patricia and I, MSDB's graduating seniors, had the opportunity to go to Disneyland May 1st. We were up and ready to go at 3:00am. Once we arrived, we checked in at La Quinta Inn to settle in. After one day of resting we went to Disneyland. At Disneyland we went on Splash Mountain which I thought was really awesome and Patricia got soaked. We then went on the Star Wars ride and to the colorful water show which according to me and Sue was amazing.

Tuesday we went to Universal Studios. The first ride was a 3-D Harry Potter ride. It felt like you were in the middle of the Harry Potter Movie soaring through the rides with the characters in the movie. The people in front of us were flying with brooms and those who were sitting behind us were chasing us from behind. Also, the roller coasters had steep drops and wicked turns.

Another cool aspect of our California trip was going on a tram ride where we saw different movies. It felt like we were part of the movie like Fast and the Furious, Jurassic Park and various others that contained flash floods and earthquakes.

The final fun thing we did was go to the beach. The water was warm and the waves were huge. I wanted to go out and out into the ocean but Sue reminded me that the ocean could be unpredictable and not to go too far out. I wanted to bob with the waves forever and I enjoyed it when the waves pushed down on me. Overall I enjoyed the trip and I wish my family could move to California so I could go to the beach all the time! ❖

Student Perspective of the Senior Trip 2017



Prom 2017 "A Night in Paris" was a huge success! Both staff and students had tons of fun. The students rode in a limo to the Montana Club where they ate dinner and returned to MSDB to start prom. Good food, good friends, good music, good times. Our 2017 Prom King was Juan and the Queen was Miracle!

Every Drop Counts!

By Jim Kelly, Dean of Students



Geri Darko bravely and generously donating blood!

The Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) held its 3rd Annual American Red Cross Blood Drive. This year we had 18 people prepared to donate and of those 18, we had 13 productive donations. The five individuals who were not able to donate may have been denied for a variety of reason: low iron, low pulse, too close to the previous donation or some other reason. This happens often and we certainly appreciate their willingness to try. Each individual donation is split into thirds. This means 39 people will benefit from the MSDB blood drive – which is awesome! We plan to have another opportunity next spring, so please come out to donate blood if you can. Your donation saves lives! ■■

Schulte's Student of the Month

Every town has it's share of convenience stores but not many towns are lucky enough to have a store like Great Falls' own Schulte's 38th Street Store and Coffee House. In business since 1989, they are best known for their deli chicken and family like customer service! Their community outreach always includes noticing the great work of students in their neighborhood schools, and for one week of each month a student at MSDB is selected. Teachers nominate students for the Schulte's Student of the Week award and that child gets to go to Schulte's every day for that week and get a free treat! The store owners proudly display that student's name on their marquee for the neighborhood to see. It's a great honor and one that we all celebrate with the student! ■■



Jordan earned Schulte's Student of the Month in April. Jordan has been a welcome addition to the Visually Impaired Department. He is genuinely excited about all of the things that he is learning about in technology with Mrs. Rutledge. He generalizes his skills across settings and practices them at home and his public school classes independently. Jordan's natural curiosity has prompted him to take on additional new skills such as learning to braille. Jordan is a great role model of other young students and has developed some strong friendships in his first couple of months at MSDB.



Congratulations to Johnny for earning Schulte's Student of the Month for May! He has improved tremendously in the classroom on his academics and being respectful towards his teachers, the staff at the school, and his peers. He is being a good friend and works hard.

Staff Changes



Diane with the four teachers she mentored this school year. (L to R) Caroline, Brittney, Diane, Mackenzie, Lace

Mentoring at MSDB • Diane Moog

My name is Diane Moog and I have been teaching within the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Department for 30 years. Over the years, I have worked in a variety of positions including Teacher, Supervising Teacher, Principal and this past year I assumed a new role as Teacher Mentor. This position was created and I was thrilled to be selected to fill this job. Over the past summer, I attended training on how to be the best mentor I could possibly be.

MSDB had many positions to fill due to staff retirements, teachers moving out of state with their spouses, and folks who chose to pursue careers elsewhere. The school felt that with all these new staff members, we needed a person that could help them become part of the MSDB community and provide support in their day to day work. I assisted four teachers and supported a handful of other staff members in both departments. I learned so much from my work with all these individuals. My goal in working within my caseload was to provide the support these staff members needed to feel they were a vital part of our community. Together we strived to make each and every day meaningful to our students. The new staff members brought a breath of fresh air to our school and their enthusiasm was contagious! I am very grateful I had this opportunity. 🍀



Hello! My name is Rebecca Stroud, and I'm the new ASL Mentor here at Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind. You might recognize me as a Cottage Life Attendant. Last year I worked in the Shoshone cottage, and earlier this year I worked in Rising Sun. I now have this new position of mentoring staff members in ASL, which started

late this past year. I've spent much of my time thus far preparing for next year and mentoring one-on-one, as it was too late to start doing classes. Next year I plan to offer several classes using the ASL@Work curriculum, as well as continue to offer one-on-one sessions to those that want that. Stay tuned, you should get an email in your inbox late October, early November! I'm also available through the summer if any of you would like to practice your sign language skills. Just send me a shout out in my email (rstroud@msdb.mt.gov); I'll be checking it frequently. Have a wonderful summer! 🍀



WooHoo!! I am finally graduating, I mean retiring. I have been in school for so long, that I was beginning to wonder if I would EVER "graduate". Now I am thinking about going back to take some college classes. I am a life-long learner and can think of many things I still want to learn. I am very interested in natural healing and I plan to garden and live a simple, but spiritual life.

What an awesome career interpreting has been!

I have learned so much and the variety of classes, kids, teachers and coworkers has helped me to see things from many perspectives. I thank everyone who has been involved in the education of our deaf kids.

I became familiar with MSDB after my son was identified as deaf, but I was living in Butte so he was in the public school there. He eventually moved to Great Falls to attend school at MSDB. It broke my heart to let my son live separately from the family, but gratefully in time, I was able to move to Great Falls and be hired at MSDB.

I have interpreted in elementary, middle and high school classes. The Deaf students are amazing in numerous ways. Working with kids, who are honor students, blows me away. Kids who have a variety of obstacles and challenges makes me think deeper about everything. I know that I will always be an advocate for Deaf people.

It feels that Deaf education is on the cusp of wonderful advancements. It has been exciting to see more Deaf people hired at MSDB to act as role models and mentors for us all! It is stimulating to hear the discussions on the importance of developing ASL as we work with students who need the visual access of meaningful language.

I plan to stay in Great Falls and want to support Deaf kids and the community in a "less work and more play" manner so you will see me around. 🍀



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FOR THE DEAF & THE BLIND

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Summer Science Fun!

By Denise Rutledge



Dominik is making a huge bubble with his string and straw bubble wand.

Please! Try this at home and see if you get the same results!

Giant Bubble Recipe:

6 c water

½ c dish soap

½ c corn starch

1 T baking powder

1 T Glycerin

Students in the Visually Impaired Department took advantage of the nice weather one afternoon to do some yard clean-up, ride adaptive bikes, and complete a bubble experiment. The students followed a recipe for making homemade bubble solution and then tested out this solution against the store-bought solution. They concluded that the homemade solution was superior to the store-bought in both quantity and quality of bubbles. ❖



Kaelyn looks on as Ms. Jarvey makes a large bubble with a hula hoop.



A group of student surrounding a kiddie pool filled with bubble solution. Kaelyn is creating a giant bubble using a homemade bubble wand of yarn and straws.



A special thank to Bryce and Jamie from the Sidney Best Western Golden Prairie Inn and Suites! We had so much fun at our "spash party!" Thank you for the use of the pool, we truly appreciate your generosity! • Emily LaSalle, Outreach Consultant

A Proud Moment

By Missie Hill, Special Education Coordinator

Our very own MSDB senior, Shaylene Potts, received her Eagle Feather in a ceremony on May 23, 2017. She was surrounded by family and friends from MSDB. There were 70 seniors receiving their Eagle feathers and families filled the cafeteria at Paris Gibson Educational Center.



The Eagle Feather is a sacred gift given to Native American students prior to graduation. It represents strength and wisdom. According to an elder, the feather can be held and one can speak to the Creator and he will listen.

The ceremony consisted of gifting blankets to excellent scholars and then blessing the beaded eagle feathers before presentation. The students were congratulated and smudged (smoke from burning sage was wafted all around them) by an elder, the director of Indian Education, the high school Indian Ed teachers, and Superintendent Tammy Lacey from Great Falls.

Shay was very nervous, and very proud of her accomplishments. She is truly one of a kind. Congratulations Shay! ❖

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.
"To be removed from this mailing list, please contact Paula Mix at pmix@msdb.mt.gov"