

EXPRESS

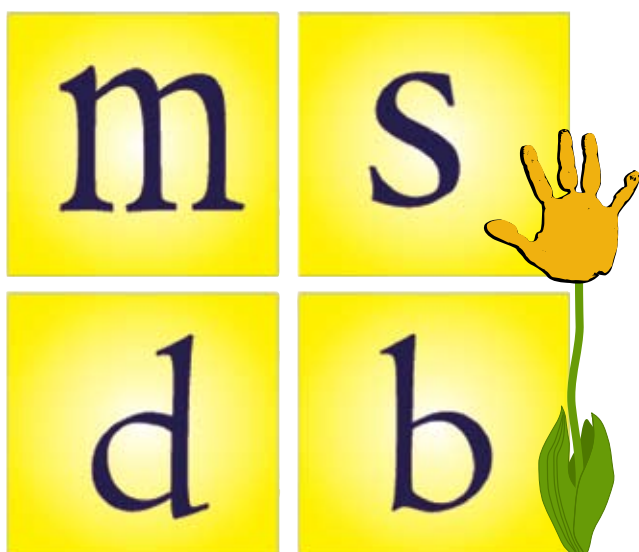
MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & BLIND

Volume IIV, Issue I, Winter/Spring 2009



**ISDB/MSDB Two
SCHOOLS—ONE WEEKEND**

EDUCATION, COMMUNICATION AND INDEPENDENCE FOR LIFE



MONTANA SCHOOL for the *DEAF & BLIND*



Kelly Olson



Steve Fugate

Meet Kelly Olson

Working at the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind, as a Teacher of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, is a dream come true for me. It is my pleasure to serve our students and an honor to be part of the staff.

I have worked with hearing impaired youth for over 16 years. In addition to my work at MSDB, I have worked for various agencies that provide services to youth with disabilities.

After working several years as a paraprofessional, I knew that teaching was my passion. It is my goal to combine my range of experience, with my compassion and enthusiasm for teaching.

I grew up in Montana. I received my Bachelors of Arts Degree from Seattle University and my Masters of Science Degree in Deaf Education from Idaho State University.

In my free time I enjoy traveling, ice skating, downhill skiing, and reading. I also like to spend time with my family and friends, and play with my two dogs.

Meet Steve Fugate

Greetings! Please allow me to introduce myself. I'm Steve Fugate, one the new VI Outreach Consultants for the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind. For the past fourteen years, I have worked for Billings Public Schools. I have a wonderful wife, Amy, of seventeen years and a terrific ten year old daughter, Madeleine.

Prior to entering the field of Education, I was an Administration Petty Officer in the U.S. Navy. That is where my wife and I met. We were both in the Navy and worked in the same office. Recently, we both retired from the military through the Navy Reserve.

I enjoy travel, playing music and spending time with my family. I stay active in Veteran's affairs and with my daughter's education, violin and figure skating. I also enjoy keeping up to date on current events and visiting family and friends across the country.

So far, I am enjoying working as an Outreach Consultant. I find working with new people and helping students to be very rewarding. There are long days "behind the wheel" going from school to school. The long days driving have significantly increased my Motrin intake. However, there is always something new to see along the way.

Look for me when I'm on campus. I'll be glad to share more about myself and would be interested in hearing about all of you.

MAP to Measure and Improve Academic Growth

By Chris Gutschenritter, Diane Moog, Julie-Dee Alt

This fall MSDB began testing students using the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment. MSDB joins more than 79 other schools and districts in Montana that are working with NWEA to measure and improve academic student growth. The MAP assessment involves using state-aligned computerized adaptive tests that are designed to identify the instructional level of each student and measure growth over time. The testing process is unique in that the level of questions adjusts to the student's ability as they progress through the test, thereby identifying a specific instructional level for each student.

Results identify skills and concepts individual students have learned, identify instructional needs, and monitor growth over time. Preliminary results are available within 24 to 48 hours after the testing is completed. Tools and resources provided through NWEA assist teachers in organizing/interpreting data and provide information about instructional needs and concepts that can guide instructional decisions for individual students. Receiving timely information and using the provided resources allows educators the opportunity to use the results of this testing process to guide classroom instruction.

In addition, NWEA provides a variety of on-going professional development that builds on teachers understanding of assessment data and allows for collaboration and the sharing of resources. MSDB staff participated in several training sessions last fall to build their understanding of the MAP assessment and to expand their knowledge and use of assessment data.

The information gained from the MAP assessment will be used to facilitate student progress towards individual education, communication and independence goals. MSDB looks forward to continued association with NWEA through this process



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MSDB Foundation

Together, we can make a difference!

For more than 25 years, the Montana School for the Deaf & Blind Foundation has been able to provide vital services and equipment for the students at MSDB, thanks to the generosity of many contributors. The MSDB Foundation is committed to funding academic and extracurricular activities that help prepare students for independent lives. Please join us in that commitment by making a donation with the coupon below or online at www.justgive.org. For more information, please call 406-771-6040. Federal employees can contribute via payroll deduction by giving their employer MSDB's code #57314 for the Combined Federal Campaign.



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

~ Helen Keller

PLEASE CLIP AND RETURN WITH YOUR TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION. THANK YOU!

Yes, I'd like to help give Montana's deaf and blind children their best chance for success!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Gift amount:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$1,000 ☐ Other _____

☐ This is a memorial gift, in memory of _____

Send acknowledgement to: _____

☐ I would like more information on planned giving

Please mail to: MSDB Foundation, P.O. Box 6576, Great Falls, MT 59406. You can also give online at www.justgive.org

MSDB Foundation Completes First Phase of Cottage Remodel

The MSDB Foundation is happy to show off recent improvements that have been made to the residential complex on campus. These improvements constitute the first phase of an ongoing project funded jointly by the Foundation and the School. The two entities plan to continue to work together to remodel the entire complex over the next several years.

The Yellowstone Cottage has three wings that house the majority of the students on campus. Roughly half of the space in this cottage now has new carpeting and vinyl tile, including the wing that houses the high school boys. The boys took ownership in the project by helping move all the furnishings and appliances before the work was done and then rearranged the activity room furniture to their liking after the new flooring was installed. You can see the activity room in the accompanying photos, taken during the Super Bowl party, an annual event also funded by the Foundation.

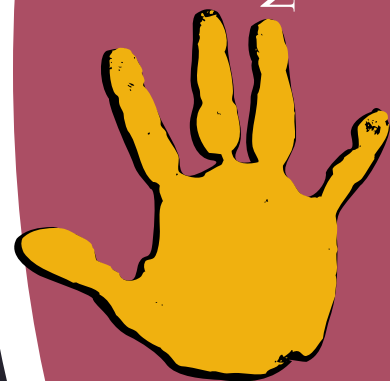
The entire Yellowstone Cottage also has new wood blinds that replaced the worn curtains. The blinds let in more light and brighten the place up.

Most of these improvements were funded by a generous \$50,000 grant from an anonymous donor. The students are very grateful for this gift, which has already enhanced their quality of life at their home away from home.

The MSDB Foundation looks forward to continuing to help create a comfortable, safe, and pleasant living environment for students, with your help!



MSDB FOUNDATION



A Picture Says a Thousand Words

by Kim Schwabe

Last year, we realized that our IEP room was becoming too small and crowded for both meetings and workshops. Therefore, we swapped rooms with our teacher's lounge. It was bigger, better, and drab! So, we thought why not renovate it with a mural representing our vision, "Education, Communication & Independence for Life". Ideas were solicited from both students and staff and presented to Mr. Tim Bechard, a local artist (and father of one of our students). He took our words and created a mural that spans one full wall and a partial wall. In the mural, Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Visually Impaired students are represented heading up the hill towards education and learning. Assistive technologies for sensory impairments are evident as are academic subjects. MSDB will be written on the partial wall in both hand-shapes and Braille. Staff and students alike are enjoying watching the mural come to life and meetings are much brighter when you can see a smiling sun and happy faces on the wall.

Thank you, Mr. Bechard, for volunteering your time and for all your hard work and talent.

MSDB Staff & Students

Family Commitment

A long time family commitment to MSDB has manifested itself again in an artistic gift to students, parents and staff.

Tim Bechard, local artist, has volunteered his time and effort to create a wall mural for the CST/IEP conference room located on campus in Bitterroot Hall. The mural depicts students at different stages of the educational process as they work to incorporate the mission and vision of MSDB into all aspects of their lives.

Tim's ties to MSDB date back to 1970 when his mother, Gail Matthews, became an elementary and then preschool teacher. Tim's dad, Bruce, was the president of the PTHA for several years and was very active in legislative lobbying for the school. Tim met his wife, Staci (Smith), also an MSDB teacher and now librarian, ten years ago when he was working on bulletin boards for his mother in the preschool classrooms. Tim and Staci have three children: Zach, a junior at GFHS; Kendall, a second grader at Lewis and Clark; and Gracie, an MSDB preschooler.

Tim has worked as a MacIntosh Operator/Production Department for the Great Falls Tribune for the past five years. He also directed children's summer classes at the Russell Museum for a short time. One of his latest endeavors is a collaborative project with his brother, Brad, designing and marketing the "Faces and Places of Great Falls" calendar, as a benefit to the Gift of Life in honor of their father, who is now deceased.

Tim's love for art began early in his youth. Tim's mom remembers that she couldn't keep paper in the house and that he once had a red crayon stuck in his nose. His first art award was for a Halloween window design in Fort Benton when he was in second grade. His "Reflections" project won an award in fifth grade and he claimed a "Best of Show" award at CMR high school. His University of Great Falls graduation art show garnered for him another "Best of Show" award and that piece, Icon, was purchased by UGF for their permanent collection.

Tim's trademark, a sun, is found somewhere in every one of his art pieces. Tim plans to continue painting murals in the Great Falls area. As a mural artist, he focuses on businesses that serve children, as well as in-home projects such as nurseries. He can be reached at sunburntillustrations@gmail.com.



Lights, Camera, Action...

by Kim Schwabe

Have you ever wondered what it takes to put on a Christmas or Arbor Day program here at MSDB? Well, when one program ends, the planning for the next one begins! Here's a brief rundown. First, Mrs. Alt reviews materials for possible program ideas. Mrs. Alt meets with Mrs. Wasson to select the theme for the program. Materials are ordered. Mrs. Wasson and Mrs. Alt identify groups to perform each of the numbers. Lyrics are sent to Ms. LeMieux so she can translate the lyrics into sign language. Mrs. Alt meets with Ms. LeMieux, Mrs. Knuth (art teacher), Mrs. Wasson & Mr. McManus (drama teacher) to discuss stage set, props, costumes, and performance issues. When Ms. LeMieux is ready with the sign translation, she meets individually with Mrs. Alt and Mrs. Wasson. Mrs. Alt usually sign directs younger students/music classes while Mrs. Wasson works with Mrs. Wilson and the older EOS students. On the VI end, Mrs. Lute & Ms. Lute work with the VIP students and various VI teachers work with their classes. Music is edited to accommodate singing or voiced speaking parts by Mrs. Alt and as soon as it is ready, it is sent out to groups and/or classroom teachers. Help is enlisted within the staff for voicing (if needed) and acting parts are handed off to Mr. McManus to coordinate. Then it is practice, practice, practice. Closer to the day of the performance, the stage is setup in the gym with backdrops, lighting & sound. Additional help is garnered to help make sure everything goes off without a hitch. Information is given to Mrs. Nelson, the education secretary, and Mrs. Cook, VI teacher, to make our performance programs (both written and Brailled). Rehearsals are planned and students are excused as necessary from classes. Additional rehearsals are added in as necessary and before you know it, the day has arrived! On the big day, kids and staff take deep breaths as they get ready. Cameras are set up to capture the performance, programs are made ready and our annual Christmas Tea is set up. Last minute checks occur as the students and audience arrive. Then, it is time; the lights go down and like magic, it all comes together with smiles, laughter, and applause.

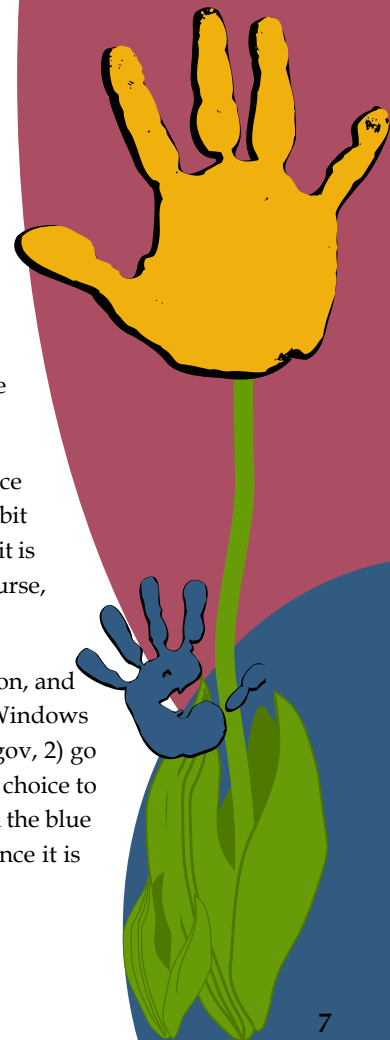


Bet you thought it ended there. But, it doesn't. There's always clean-up and getting the captured performance to an archival DVD. Depending on whether one or two cameras were used, the editing can be simple or a bit more complex. Within the editing process, titles, credits, captioning and transitions are used to make sure it is accessible and as smooth as possible. At the end, a main menu is created and it is burned to a DVD. Of course, at this time, Mrs. Alt is reviewing materials for the next program!

A DVD will be made available in the library for check-out and copies can be made for families. In addition, and for the first time, the Christmas performance is posted on our website so it can be streamed (for playing on Windows Media Player 11) or downloaded for viewing at home. Here's how: 1) go to our website: www.msdb.mt.gov, 2) go to the quick jump (on the bottom right side of the page) and select, "What's New at MSDB" and 3) make a choice to stream the video by left clicking on the blue "Christmas Program 2008" or download it by right clicking on the blue "Christmas Program 2008" and selecting "save target". Decide where to save it to your computer and once it is saved, double click the video icon and enjoy!

(Please bear in mind that the program is large (about 150MB) so a broadband connection is recommended.)

MSDB ON CAMPUS



Two Schools, One Weekend

MSDB ON CAMPUS



In early November, the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind visited MSDB. The purpose of the weekend was to provide their students as well as ours with an opportunity to meet new people and develop friendships while participating in some fun activities. Activities included swimming, bowling, BBQ, Goalball, practicing with the Expressions of Silence. Judging from the smiles on people's faces, the exchange of addresses, and student comments, the weekend was a success. MSDB Students will visit the Idaho school in April.

"We had a blast playing tackle football without pads."

— Allen Nearhoof



"Hanging out with ISDB was so much fun!"

— Max Jiron

Making Friends, Making Memories

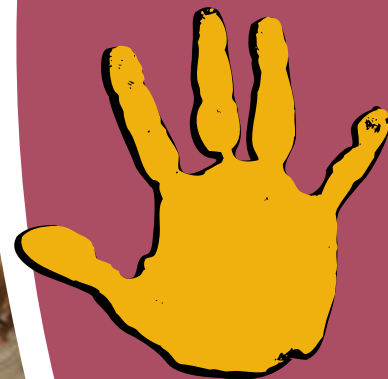
"I enjoyed that ISDB visited my school. MSDB and ISDB are best friends. " — Brooke Wood



Trying to get across the gym without touching the floor was so much fun! — Isaac Jones



MSDB ON CAMPUS



Signing Exact English Skillshop

by Emily LaSalle

MSDB DEAF/
HARD OF HEARING
OUTREACH

Skillshop is planned for the weekend of April 24th-26th in Helena, Montana! The talented & friendly SEE crew will fly in from California and share their knowledge in building your sign language skills. Check out their website at SEECENTER.ORG to register or contact Emily LaSalle at elasalle@msdb.mt.gov for more information.

Signing Exact English is a sign language system that represents literal English, to make visible everything that is not heard, SEE supplements what a child can get from hearing and speech reading. Since American Sign Language or ASL has different vocabulary, idioms and syntax from English, SEE modified and supplemented the vocabulary of ASL so children can see clearly what is said in English. This system was first made available in 1972.

Skillshops are designed for individuals interested in learning S.E.E. and to help those already using S.E.E. to improve their expressive and receptive signing skills. Intensive work is done in groups from beginner to advanced levels. Each group is limited to approximately 15 participants. Sessions are geared for adult level, not appropriate for children under 16 years of age. They are:

- For any level of signer, beginner through advanced
- Class groupings arranged for prior as well as first time attendees
- Increase vocabulary while building skills
- Learn to sign more colorfully, fluently, and with meaning
- Fifteen (15) hours of instruction
- Continuing Education Units (CEU) will be available on site (1.5 units)
- Sessions start at 6:15 PM on the first day, and end between 2:30 and 4:00 PM on the last day.
- Be sure to identify yourself as a S.E.E. Center Skillshop participant when calling hotel to obtain special rate.

The S.E.E. (Signing Exact English) Center for the Advancement of Deaf Children was established in 1984 as a nonprofit organization to work with parents and educators of hearing impaired children. The Goals of the S.E.E. Center for the Advancement of Deaf Children are to promote: early identification and intervention; the development of improved English skills; understanding of the principles of Signing Exact English and its use; information to parents on deafness and related topics; and to foster the positive development of self concept in the deaf child by promoting the interaction of the child and family with both the deaf and hearing communities.

Team Grows By One

The Hearing Impaired Outreach Team grew by one November 18th. Danika (pictured with big sister, Michelle) was born to Outreach Consultant Cathy Jury and her husband, Jason. Congratulations to the entire Jury family.



Listening, Language and Literacy

The University of Montana, the Bitterroot Valley Education Co-op and the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind sponsored a workshop on Listening, Language and Literacy for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Participants included Speech Language Pathologists, Teachers of Children who are Deaf and Hearing Impaired, Audiologists, Parents, Family Support Specialists, Outreach Consultants & School Administrators. Over 90 participants (on site and through web stream video – from as faraway as Alaska and Florida!) learned valuable information from presenter Mary Koch. Today's technology (digital hearing aids and cochlear implants) can get sound to the brain, but that technology cannot produce understanding. Language rich environments and a commitment to communication help students to succeed in Listening, Language & Literacy.



MSDB DEAF/
HARD OF HEARING
OUTREACH

CI Circle Parents Website Starts UP

by Sarah Eyer

My parents group has started up a brand new website! It is very new, and still under construction.... but has links to lots of info and most importantly to the support group message board that has been such an amazing resource. There is also a page with links to blogs where families tell their stories. They will be added to and updated regularly. I thought you might want to check it out or pass it on, especially if you know families who want to learn more about cochlear implants. I strongly recommend that new families considering CI's for their child also join the message board. It is a wonderful place where you can ask all sorts of questions and learn so much.

Family Learning Weekend

by Emily LaSalle

Mark your calendars!! The weekend of June 5-7 is the 2009 Family Learning Weekend: Power Struggles with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teens presented by Gallaudet University. Workshops in the planning include: Literacy, What Your Audiologist Should be Telling You, and Love & Logic Discipline.

If you've never attended a Family Learning Weekend, please join us. The weekend gives all family members a chance to meet new friends, experience life opportunities through different eyes, enjoy great food (a weekend of no dishes!), and build strong connections with staff that can be a wonderful asset to your child's education and life!

Please contact Jim Kelly at 406-771-6120 or jkelly@msdb.mt.gov for advance room registration. Complete registration materials for the Family Learning Weekend are scheduled to be mailed by the second week in April.



GOALBALL WITH AN ART TWIST

by Pam Boespflug

MSDB BLIND/
LOW VISION
OUTREACH

Twice a year Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) offers two fun, intense learning events: Enrichment/Goalball Weekends. The weekends take place on the MSDB campus in Great Falls in the fall and spring and run from 6pm Friday until 3pm Saturday.

Designed to provide blind and low vision students from around Montana the opportunity to explore and develop skills necessary to address their unique needs, the weekends are shaped by input from students, parents and staff across the state.



Enrichment activities in the past have included tactual learning such as dissecting a fish, exploring 3-D models, Seeing Eye dogs, functional vision assessments, braille, and orientation and mobility. In addition, technology pieces are often demonstrated and explored. The fall 2008 weekend was held November 14th and 15th with the focus on goalball and functional vision assessments. The sport of goalball is always taught and played and something for which the kids enthusiastically wait each weekend. Having time to meet friends and rekindle old friendships is a highlight of the weekend.

The next Goalball/Enrichment Weekend is March 27 & 28th and the focus will be on Art with different media experiences provided. Opportunities that will be provided include: exploring a sculpture provided by the CM Russell museum and creating clay artwork, painting with texture and line foundations, drawing with various media and constructing collages. Submitting artwork to the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) calendar will be encouraged. If a student's piece is chosen he/she will be invited to attend a ceremony in Louisville, Kentucky at the APH Conference in October. We would love to see a Montana student attend.

A limited amount of Cottage space for housing families attending the weekend is available. If you are interested in staying on campus please let us know at least two weeks before the weekend. Contact your Outreach Consultant for registration information.

Northern Rockies AER CONFERENCE

by Kerri Norick

The Northern Rockies Chapter of the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) will meet at the Bozeman Holiday Inn in Bozeman, MT, on October 14 - 16, 2009. It attracts professionals in the field of blindness from Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. Consumers, teachers, parents and other professionals working with blind and visually impaired are very welcome to attend. This year's convention will feature programs on cortical visual impairment, braille instruction for teachers and para professionals, GPS/Trekker Breeze for the Orientation and Mobility Specialist, deaf blindness, depression, Vocational and Educational Services Panel and computer instruction at the Bozeman College of Technology. There are a substantial number of scholarships available for those who would like to attend but cannot afford it or have no financial support from an agency. These scholarships should be applied for as soon as possible by contacting Kerri Norick, Chapter president, at 539-7346 or e-mailing knorick@msdb.mt.gov

Loaf and Jug: A Hand Up

by Carol Clayton-Bye

As visually impaired students grow they need ample opportunity to explore the community. Often times the community is unaware of the complex needs of students with visual impairments and that many skills are learned by watching someone else do the task. The staff at the 38th Street Loaf and Jug in Great Falls realized this and began asking questions on how they could help our students. They knew these students needed a different approach to learning but they weren't quite sure of what to do. Loaf and Jug staff quickly looked to the instructor for guidance in assisting their customers when students entered the store to make small purchases during Orientation and Mobility lessons.

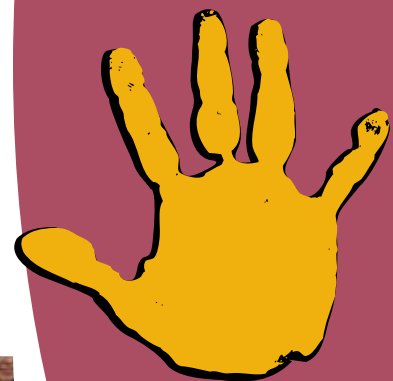
Many great skills can be learned within the small store. Students quickly explore the candy aisles and pop coolers only to realize they have hundreds of choices. Questions arise about where the items come from, how they get in the coolers or on shelves. The Loaf and Jug clerks are willing to take a moment to explain how they get their products, where the money goes and all of the basics of how their store runs. These questions quickly lead to students' better understanding what a job is and what workers do.

After interacting with MSDB students for many years, Loaf and Jug employees decided to come to the Visually Impaired Department. In an effort to get to know and better understand the needs of their young shoppers, Loaf and Jug managers and employees began putting on a yearly Christmas party for students in the Visually Impaired Department. During the party, Loaf and Jug employees work with students to make Christmas ornaments, open gifts, and play games. They also read stories to students and listen intently as braille readers and low vision students read their favorite Christmas stories aloud. The Christmas party has had a great affect on students in the Visually Impaired Department as well as staff at Loaf and Jug.

Through this act of generosity and kindness, a great collaboration has begun. Students continue to stop into Loaf and Jug while employees of Loaf and Jug continue to share stories and knowledge with our students. Curiosity and interest have been sparked in the students, as well as Loaf and Jug staff. Our relationship continues to grow. The staff at Loaf and Jug is not giving our kids a hand out; they are giving them a hand UP!



MSDB ON CAMPUS



Academic Bowl

by Jennifer Wasson

MSDB's Academic Bowl team will travel to the California School for the Deaf- Fremont on February 12, 2009 to compete in Gallaudet's West Region competition, February 12-15.

The Academic Bowl team is comprised of first year members Katie Gilge (Havre), Katarina Kawalski (Bozeman), and Max Jiron (Great Falls). Team captain, Allen Nearhoof (Great Falls), will attend his second year of competition this year. Assistant coach, Debi Knuth, and head coach, Jennifer Wasson prepare the students for competition.

This year's team has been practicing all winter to compete at this year's competition. The students practice using the buzzers, learn how to study the material and answer the difficult questions, and learn how to work together as a team. Topics the students will encounter include mathematics, science, social studies, geography, English, literature, art, deaf studies, pop culture, and current events.

Once in California, the students will meet 15 other teams. They will be split into two pools (Buff and Blue) and compete against 7 teams. From there, the top two teams from each pool will compete for the top four spots. Last year, MSDB took first place and traveled to Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. for Nationals!

The coaches and the school are very proud of these four students and the effort they have been putting into the practices for this year's competition. Go Mustangs!



MSDB 2008—2009 Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY

- 13 Travel Home - School in Session
Early Dismissal (students released at 12:30 PM)
- 16 Travel Return
- 17 Classes Resume

MARCH

- 2-6 Criterion Reference Testing
- 13 Travel Home - School in Session
Early Dismissal (students released at 12:30 PM)
- 16 Travel Return - School in Session
- 24 End of 3rd Quarter - 45 days
- 27-28 Enrichment/Goalball Weekend

APRIL

- 8 Arbor Day/Music Program
- 25 Prom
- 9 Travel Home - School in Session
- 10-13 Spring / Easter Break
- 14 Travel Return—School in Session
- 17-20 ISDB/MSDB Weekend @ISDB

MAY

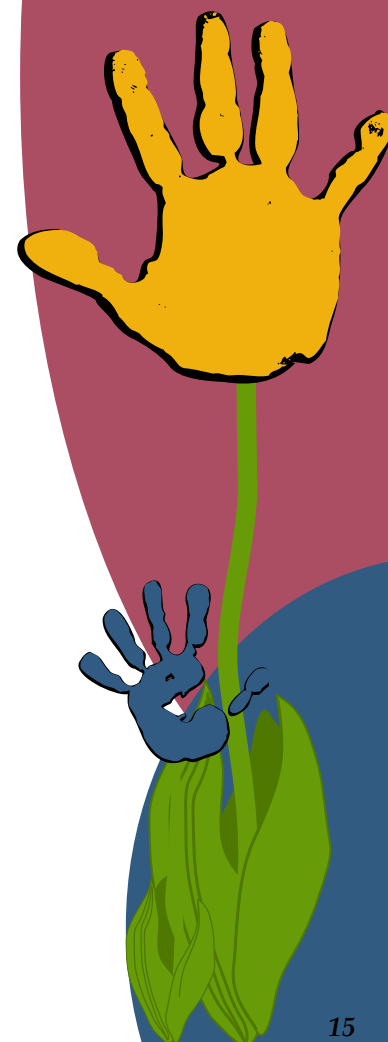
- 1-2 Games for the Visually Impaired
- 8 Travel Home - School in Session
Early Dismissal (students released at 12:30 PM)
- 11 Travel Return - School in Session
- 23 Graduation 2:00 PM
- 25 Memorial Day - No School (Cottages Open)
- 29 Awards Assembly 10:30 AM
End of the Semester - 43 days
Travel Home - Last Day of School, Students released
at 12 PM for the summer Teacher Check-Out Day

February						
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March						
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29	30	31				

April						
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May						
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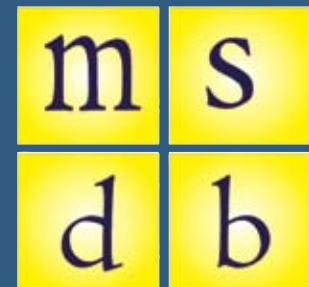
The MSDB Express is published three times a year, and is graciously funded by the MSDB Foundation, Inc. In addition to this print version, the current edition can be found on the MSDB home page at: www.msdb.mt.gov

THE MAGIC TREE HOUSE



Mrs. Darko and Ms. Clayton-Bye's class embark on an adventure similar to Jack and Annie in The Magic Tree House Adventures. We have gone back in time to the place we now call Great Falls, Montana. We are with Lewis and Clark as they portage around the majestic falls. Come join us on our adventure.

MONTANA SCHOOL for the *DEAF & BLIND*



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