



MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & THE BLIND

Express

giving kids the building blocks to independence

Volume XIX, Issue 1, Fall 2017



**How the Foundation
Supports Families**
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Yellowstone County**
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Dear Families, Staff, Students, and Stakeholders,

In October, I attended the required annual meeting of the American Printing House (APH) for the Ex-Officio Trustees of the Federal Quota Funds for qualifying students with visual impairments in Louisville, KY. Carol Clayton-Bye and Christy Haagenson attended as well and Christy was honored with the Outstanding Paraeducator Award. The main recurring theme was one of partnership. This was also true for the Council of Schools and Services for the Blind (COSB) conference that happened right before APH. I spent a lot of time thinking about the value of our partnerships; we all have individual partnerships and we have collective partnerships.

For MSDB, our most important partnership is with the students, with their families, and with the school staff that serves these students, including the staff at MSDB. You are the reason we exist. We want to continue to serve you in the best ways possible. Thank you for continuing to share your triumphs as well as your questions and concerns.

We have partnerships with our Great Falls community and with communities across the state. Our students and families live in their communities and we want to create bridges to ensure our students enter those communities meeting their highest potential for independence. We are thankful these communities support us in our work of education.

We partner with our state legislators and even our representatives in Washington DC. Legislators put policies and laws into place that protect the rights of the students we serve. We appreciate their support of our school, both financially and otherwise.

MSDB also partners with the Deaf and Blind communities and with agencies serving those who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, and deafblind. In this way, we learn from the adults who have already traveled the journeys that are students are on. We have a lot we can learn from them that can inform our teaching and our interactions with our students.

For each of these partnerships, there is so much more I can be doing to strengthen and maintain these relationships. This will be a large part of my own professional goals this year. To accomplish this, I will be depending on my administration team to support me in these endeavors. I truly appreciate how much knowledge and experience Donna Schmidt, Jim Kelly, Carol Clayton-Bye, and Paul Furthmyre bring to the team. I also appreciate the amazing staff members we have at MSDB including former staff members who have moved on or retired.

As I continue to say, MSDB is a place where magic happens. The magic happens because of our staff members and because of each amazing partnership we have. ■■

Thank you for partnering with us.

Wishing you peace,

Donna E Sorensen

We Are #MT Strong!



MEA-MFT Local #4027 at the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind recently sponsored a fundraiser to support the many brave men and women fighting the wild fires across the state.

Staff and students campus wide participated in the event by gathering numerous items to create care packages for the firefighters. Items such as foot powder, chapstick, sunscreen, magazines, cool neck wraps, beef jerky, and candy were collected. Overall, 30 care packages were made and numerous individual items were given to the Lolo Peak Firefighters. ❖

We are so thankful for our firefighters!

Denise Rutledge-Union Local #4027 Co-President

Yvette Smail- Union Local #4027 Co-President

Jennifer Wasson- Union Local #4027 Treasurer

Missie Hill- Union Local #4027 Secretary



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Kim Schwabe

WHO IS MSDB'S NEW PRINCIPAL?



Paul Furthmyre and Seth on Halloween

My name is Paul Furthmyre. I began my tenure as MSDB Principal in July. I have been in public education for the past 16 years, with the last several as principal at various schools. I started my professional career at Poplar High School where I taught Business and Computer Applications. I later moved back to my hometown of Anaconda. While at Anaconda High School, I taught one year and then had the opportunity to become the school's principal. After several years with the Anaconda School District, my family and I moved to Great Falls. I worked for Great Falls Public Schools as a middle school principal for two short years. That is my journey to this great school. I believe that someone greater than myself led me to MSDB. I could not be happier with my job and look forward to many years with this school.

I graduated from Western Montana College in Secondary Education prior to taking my position in Poplar. I have not stopped learning about my great profession since then. Since my bachelor's degree, I earned a master's degree in Educational Technology from Boise State University. I later attended Montana State University (Montana's University!!!) to obtain my Secondary and Elementary Principal Endorsement. I then began my doctoral program at MSU in Educational Leadership. My doctorate is one milestone I wish to finish in the near future.

Although my education and work experience help shape who I am, my life centers around my three children. My daughter helps keep me busy with her commitment to academics and volleyball. You will find her on a court most of the year; whether for school, club, or just playing in grass tournaments during the summer. My oldest son is all boy and makes sure to take any spare moment I have. He plays almost any sport but enjoys football, wrestling, and lacrosse the most. My youngest son keeps me, well, young. He is a very witty individual that loves to be the entertainment in our house. He enjoys basketball and lacrosse. All my kids are involved with fine art programs as I believe in arts education. I love to share my children with the students and staff with whom I work. MSDB is no exception. I often find my own children learning sign language or braille while visiting me at work. It would give me a great sense of accomplishment if one or more of them would follow my footsteps in education, especially here at MSDB.

I found that formal education prepares you for a good portion of the principal's job but on-the-job training is critical. My experience as a principal has allowed me to develop my own theories and thoughts about effective instruction. In my opinion, literacy is the most important part of a student's education. At MSDB, I am finding that is true with our students as well. Our students need to be exposed to literacy (language) in multiple ways. This is my undertaking for this school year, to develop a literacy approach that meets the needs of all students at MSDB. Enough about me! It's about the students! ❖❖

COURTESY RULES OF BLINDNESS

Shared by Geri Darko, Orientation and Mobility Specialist

White Cane Day was celebrated on October 15. When you meet me, don't be ill at ease. It will help both of us if you remember these simple points of courtesy:

1. I'm an ordinary person, just blind. You don't need to raise your voice or address me as if I were a child. Don't ask my spouse what I want—"Cream in the coffee?"—ask me directly.
2. If I am walking with you, don't grab my arm; let me take yours. I'll keep a half-step behind, to anticipate curbs and steps.
3. I want to know who's in the room with me. Speak when you enter. Introduce me to the others. Include children, and tell me if there's a cat or dog. Guide my hand to chair or describe the location of the chair so I can find it on my own.
4. The door to a room, cabinet, or to a car left partially open is a hazard to me.
5. At dinner I will not have trouble with ordinary table skills.
6. Don't avoid words like "see." I use them too. I'm always glad to see you.
7. I don't want pity. But don't talk about the "wonderful compensations" of blindness. My sense of smell, touch, or hearing did not improve when I became blind. I rely on them more and, therefore, I get more information through those senses than you do—that's all.
8. If I'm your house guest, show me the bathroom, closet, dresser, window and even the light switch. I like to know whether the lights are on.
9. I'll discuss blindness with you if you're curious, but it's an old story to me. I have as many other interests as you do.
10. Don't think of me as just a blind person. I'm just a person who happens to be blind.



Kaelyn crosses the street while a truck goes through the intersection on her parallel street.

The Montana Association for the Blind, Inc.

For more information, visit <https://nfb.org/white-cane-safety-day>. ■■



Some Foundation Board Members, MSDB staff, and friends work together to raise funds for MSDB. (LtoR) John Musgrove, Bonnie DeNoma, Hollis Fudge, Mark Willmarth, Taylor Willmarth, and Will Stroud

DRIVE 4 UR SCHOOL

By Doug Little, Foundation Board Member

On October 14th, MSDB and Bison Ford collaborated in a fundraising event called Drive 4 UR School at the Fairgrounds in Great Falls. Bison Ford provided eight new Ford vehicles for the event, and MSDB provided several Foundation volunteers, staff and outreach consultants to help with the fundraiser.

During the event participating individuals were able to take the new Ford vehicles for a test drive and fill out a simple form. With every test drive, Ford Motor Company donated \$20 to MSDB. At the end of the day the fundraiser had recorded over 100 test drives. A special thanks to Bison Ford and to the many volunteers who helped raise more than \$2000 for MSDB. ■■

The Prison Braille Project

By Carol Clayton-Bye, Outreach Director

Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) Outreach has worked hard to assure students needing braille have access. We have worked to get staff within the school trained on braille and offer Untangling the Dots Workshops for public school teachers/staff needing support and training in braille.

Several years ago, the principal at Core Civics Crossroads Correctional Center in Shelby attended one of those workshops in hopes of learning more about braille and working collaboratively with MSDB. Her goal was to offer inmates an opportunity to learn a skill where they could gain certification and employment upon release. Our goal is to make braille at MSDB more cost effective and available to students needing braille worksheets, classroom assignments and other daily classroom materials with a quick turn around time.

The Principal, Janice Stromberg, was selected as a grant recipient to attend the 2016 Prison Braille Network Forum in Louisville, Kentucky, while Carol Clayton-Bye attended the Council of Schools and Services for the Blind Conference. Together, we worked to start a program with a win-win outcome. MSDB Retiree Pam Boespflug was on board to volunteer in order to support the program since she knows how critical the need for braille can be to a student not able to read print.

At this time, 12 inmates are working toward certification from the National Library of Congress in Literary Braille, which normally takes between 18 months to several years. The prison has a Braille Transcription Room where they have six computers and six Perkins Braille to complete lessons. They also are equipped with the Braille Repair kit and have been cleaning and repairing braille for MSDB. If you are interested in supporting this program or in need of braille materials or repairs, please contact Carol Clayton-Bye at cclayton-bye@msdb.mt.gov with subject line (RE: Prison Braille Program) or call Carol at 406-771-6091. 📠



Carol Clayton-Bye and Janice Stromberg worked together to start a Prison Braille Project in Montana.

Hands & Voice Conference: Parents and Professionals Learning Together

By Moriah Cochran, Parent



Moriah and Vena stand in front of a vertical Hands and Voices banner.

In September, I was able to escape the Montana wildfire smoke for a weekend by traveling to Galena, Illinois, to attend a Hands & Voices (H&V) Leadership Conference. Vena Dagnall, another Montana parent and member, also attended. We had a great time learning together.

The theme was "Transforming Systems with Family Engagement: The Hands & Voices Way." The conference was open to parents, professionals, leaders and program guides. We learned more about the H&V organization, ways to be an effective leader, and how to involve families. Some of the classes included the following: Chapter Management, The Art of Leadership, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infusion, Supporting Families Without Bias, Engaging with Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EDHI) coordinators, Family Leadership Opportunities, and Promoting Positive Behavior in Children with Hearing Loss.

There were also three plenaries: Who am I? A Deaf Identity Crisis, Confronting Bias in Collaborative Terms, and Engaging Family Leaders in a Diverse World.

The classes and plenaries were amazing! It was a wonderful opportunity to learn and network with other parents and professionals. I came home feeling very excited and slightly overwhelmed about the future of H&V here in Montana. If you are not a member and would like to be or need more information please do not hesitate to reach out to me at moriah.cochran@yahoo.com. 📠

Indian Education for All (IEFA) Week Celebrated

By Missie Hill, Special Education Coordinator

Students celebrated Indian Education for All (IEFA) week from September 18 - 22. The week began with a guest speaker from The First People's Buffalo Jump State Park located nearby in Ulm. This was followed by various activities in classrooms throughout the week, such as art projects, recreational ideas for travel, and Native American legends. The students had a wonderful time.

We completed the week with the whole group getting together to erect our very own tepee. This tepee was made by the Salish-Kootenai tribe and the poles were blessed prior to arriving. Last year the students and staff decorated the inside with their hand prints. We needed to honor those from different tribes by not having specific colors or designs on the outside so we went crazy on the inside.

Then, as a group, we put the tepee up in the common meeting area of the Bitterroot building on campus. The tepee will be moved to its new location by our dining room after the snow melts. It will be up until the end of November, which is National Native American Heritage Month. Thanks to all who helped out and supported this fun and educational week!! ❖



Students work together to construct a tepee during the National Native American Heritage celebrations.

Miss Konkler's Elementary Science Gets Hands-on

By Lace Konkler, teacher



Angelina & Johnny show off the two fossils they dug up together. Great Team work!

Douglas receives instructions from Will regarding the fossil dig activity.



Last year, Curriculum Specialist Jessteene Clifford aligned several available science-related resources to create a construct for our teachers to reference that target our deaf and hard of hearing students. This has provided me with some wonderful opportunities to make science much more hands on than last year! Every week there is a new topic.

We begin the week by learning the vocabulary and making connections with photos and real life experiences. We practice the vocabulary while working in class on things such as drawing diagrams, completing a worksheet, or watching a video that provides context and examples for students. Students love coming to class Thursdays and Fridays, as these are generally our hands-on experiment days.

So far, students have had the opportunity to dig up their own fossils, create their own crayon rocks, make an exploding volcano, create elephant toothpaste (as a volcano experiment) and make a delicious snack that represented the layers of the earth. While two days of experiments or activities is not always feasible, I have noticed it has helped students grasp the concepts more easily and they are utilizing the information I am teaching in other classes.

I couldn't ask for more from my students than to come in, participate and have a good time while they are learning. The smiles and shock on their faces is more than enough to tell me they enjoy learning Science this year! ❖

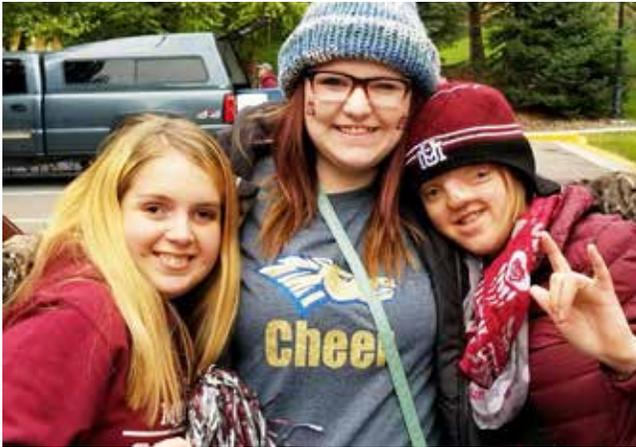


Montana School *for the*

HELP US GIVE KIDS THE BUILD

SUPPORT YOUR SCHOOL WITH PLANNED GIVING

By Laura Walker, Attorney at Law



As the new Finance Committee Chair for Montana School for the Deaf and Blind Foundation, Inc. (MSDB Foundation), I recently had a unique opportunity to help with our finances by selling valuable gold coins a generous donor had left to us in their will. Proceeds from the sale will help provide much needed services to the school, especially in this year when the school is facing budget cuts.

These services include improvements to the school, training for the teachers and staff, providing travel for students and much more. However, I began to wonder if many people knew that leaving money and property to the MSDB Foundation in your will or other manner that transfers the asset after death is a great option to help out the school. I also wondered if our donors were aware that such gifts may also provide the donor with tax savings while still allowing them to utilize their assets during their life. We generally call this method planned giving.

About Planned Giving

Planned giving is a way that you can benefit the school that will also maximize the benefit to the donor. These gifts become part of your legacy, and they continue to do good things in your memory. By utilizing planned giving, you can accomplish your charitable goals while utilizing tax benefits the government provides to support nonprofit organizations.

Bequests

You can leave any amount of money or property to the MSDB Foundation, through your will or living trust. With the help of a professional advisor of your choosing, simply include language leaving your desired property, or percentage of your estate to the MSDB Foundation. Some sample language to include could read:

- I hereby give, devise and bequeath Twenty-Five Thousand and No/100 dollars (\$25,000.00) to the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit organization located in Great Falls, Montana, for its general use and purpose.
- I hereby give 10% of my estate to the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit organization located in Great Falls, Montana, for its general use and purpose.



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 justgive.org or using the enclosed envelope.

MSDB Foundation • P.O. Box 6576 • Great Falls, MT 59406

For more information, please call 406-771-6040

Deaf & Blind Foundation

PLANNING BLOCKS TO INDEPENDENCE

• I hereby give my coin collection to the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit organization located in Great Falls, Montana, for its general use and purpose.

• In addition, if you'd like to devise any money or property to the school for a specific purpose, that can be done as well. For example, you may want to designate the money be used to upgrade technology that the students use, or to provide scholarships for graduating seniors. An example of such language could read:

• I hereby give \$10,000 to the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind Foundation, Inc., to be used to provide outreach services to the rural Montana students in their own communities.

Beneficiary Designations

You can also name the MSDB Foundation as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy, or of any account you wish the MSDB Foundation to receive.

Naming the MSDB Foundation as a beneficiary on a retirement asset, such as an IRA account, may also benefit both the donor and the school by lessening the tax burden on the family. If the IRA were given to your family, much of the value may be lost through estate and income taxes.



By designating the MSDB Foundation as the beneficiary of all or part of your IRA (using a beneficiary designation form provided by your custodian), the full value of the gift is transferred tax-free at your death and your estate receives an estate tax charitable deduction.

Appreciated Assets

Gifts of stocks and other assets, such as home or rental property, that have appreciated in value can offer significant tax savings by saving capital gains tax when the asset is gifted to the MSDB Foundation.

MT Tax Credit

Until 2019, credit against state income tax liability in the amount of 40% of the present value of any planned gift to MSDB Foundation's permanent endowment CAN BE GIVEN up to a maximum on \$10,000. Credit against state income tax liability in the amount of 40% of the present value of any planned gift to a permanent endowment up to a maximum amount of \$10,000 per year per taxpayer.

I hope by this article to give you all an idea of how easy and beneficial it can be to support our school through planned giving. I encourage you all to discuss any of these options with your professional advisors. If you need any assistance or have any questions concerning planned giving, please feel free to contact the Foundation office at (406) 771-6040, and we will assist you in any way that we can. Please remember MSDB Foundation in your wills and trusts. ❖



Planned giving helps change lives of children of all ages who are served by MSDB across the state of Montana.

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

~Helen Keller

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**We also recognize the
dedication and effort of all
current MSDB Foundation
Board Members and we
thank all past members
for their service**



We have made every effort to confirm this record. If we have failed to record a gift or record a gift incorrectly we apologize. Please drop us a note so we can correct our records. ❖

Kicking Off the 13th Season with GRIZ KIDZ

By Dean of Students Jim Kelly and Cottage Counselors Cheri Turner and Audra Huguelet

On September 23rd, MSDB's residential students, day students, & staff, headed to the Washington-Grizzly Stadium at the University of Montana (UM) in Missoula to attend the Montana Grizzlies vs. Eastern Washington Eagles football game.

This trip is made possible by Griz Kidz, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit charitable organization, comprised of former UM football players. Each football season the Griz Kidz purchases a block tickets for every game to donate to different youth organizations across Montana. This is the 13th consecutive year our school has benefited from the Griz Kidz' generosity, allowing our students and staff the opportunity to visit UM's campus and see a football game. They also give each participant a \$10 food voucher to buy food at their concessions stand, Griz gear, and a Griz hat. In addition, MSDB's Foundation provides the charter bus, snacks, and money for treats at the game.



We may be biased, but we feel we bring them luck. Since we've been going the Griz' record is 11 wins and 2 losses!

Staff and students traveled by charter bus to Missoula to attend the game. Along the way we stopped at our favorite pit-stop, the Hi-Country Beef Jerky store, in Lincoln, MT. Once the we arrived, we were greeted by Jim Kelly, Dean of Students, and his family; along with Donna Schmidt,

Business Manager, and her family for an awesome tailgate party. Everyone enjoyed the warm chili and corn chips, which were served from Jim Kelly's Griz van, during the pre-game celebration on such

a cold and windy day. After eating, the game began and it was a nail-biter!

All MSDB game goers had a fabulous time at the game. And although the Grizzlies lost that day, 48-41, we feel like winners each and every time we are fortunate enough to be the recipients of the Griz Kidz' generosity. Thank you, Griz Kidz, for making this possible! ❖

They Had an A-Mazing Time!

By Cottage Counselor Cheri Turner and Cottage Life Attendant Tabatha



After hiking through the maze, a ride in the wagon (left) was enjoyed by Maci, Lily, and Tabatha while the cow train was Angelina's choice (right).

On October 7, the MSDB residential students visited the Applestem Corn Maze and Pumpkin Patch in nearby Vaughn. The students participated in a variety of activities from exploring the maze to interacting with farm animals. An exciting time was had by all.

There were two mazes in which to partake. Some students enjoyed the small maze by practicing their navigation skills. Other students wanted a larger adventure and took on the large maze.

There were also two rides that were enjoyed by all. The first was a wagon pulled by a tractor, in which the students and staff enjoyed riding together. The second ride was a train made of metal barrels that were painted to look like cows and several of the younger students enjoyed this ride.

The farm animals were a huge hit with everyone. Many students enjoyed interacting with the miniature horse and the goats. Others enjoyed watching the baby pigs chasing each other around their pen.

All students and staff had a wonderful time visiting the corn maze. A sincere thank you to the MSDB Foundation for providing the funds that made this trip a reality. The Foundation helps provide exciting activities such as this to our students and we greatly appreciate it. ❖

“WILD” About Montana

By **Jessteene Clifford, Curriculum Specialist**

One of the best reasons to live in Montana is the fact that we have so much wilderness to explore. Students from MSDB were able to experience some of WILDs of Montana early this fall with a trip to “Montana WILD” in Helena, MT. Thanks to a grant from MT WILD secured by teacher Erin Barr, students have gone to their amazing facilities to experience some of the native “WILD” life of MT for the past two years.

These encounters are excellent for the reinforcement of a variety of skills students are focusing on including life skills such as interacting with the public, improving orientation and mobility, using an interpreter, as well as academic skills of observing and recording data and acquiring facts about native MT animals. Our first adventure was to come face to face with some bears! Knowledgeable volunteers

explained the difference between black bears and grizzly bears. Did you know that bears will eat almost anything even grease from chain saws? It was exciting to be able to touch and explore real bear skulls, pelts and claws.

Next, eager students lined up to be able to try their hand at archery. We have several excellent shots! The most fascinating part of the day was the trek around Spring Meadow Lake to observe native bird life. Using binoculars and attentive ears, MSDB students were able to locate and record a variety of birds including robins, mallards, magpies, flickers and chickadees. The staff at MT WILD will use this information to oversee the bird populations around Spring Meadow Lake. Our students were happy to help out and are definitely “WILD” about Montana WILD. ❖



Shawn, Johnny, David, Jessteene, Brenda, Julie-Dee, and Gracie participate in some bird watching along with a few MT WILD staff.



Blair takes a shot at archery.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

By **Gary McManus, Retired Teacher and Coach**



Jeffrey Meuli, a 1985 MSDB graduate from Conrad, now lives in Billings and has resided there for 12 years. He works for Mark Rite Lines where he welds and builds barrels for paint.

Jeff was married twice before, his kids are all grown, and he has one grandchild.

Jeff played basketball and competed in track. Jeff says, “I was on an awesome team and had a great coach: Gary McManus!”

His greatest memories were when he and four other boys placed 3rd in district track against 10 teams. “We worked hard to get our goal to a get a trophy,” he says. ❖

What is MSDB doing?

By Donna Sorensen, Superintendent

I've had several people ask me about our language and communication philosophy recently. Teachers in the *Deaf and Hard of Hearing Department are learning about bilingual teaching strategies and listening and spoken language strategies. We have a journey ahead of us in both of these areas. The learning is exciting and we will continue to learn! However, some people, both on campus and off campus, have expressed concerns that MSDB is becoming too ASL. So what is the real story?

The real story is that MSDB continues to be a Total Communication school. We have not engaged in discussions about changing that philosophy. For a little history, the philosophy of total communication emerged around 1970 after hundreds of years of oral-only education dictated by the Milan Conference in 1880. (See <http://hearinghealthmatters.org/hearinginternational/2016/the-international-deafness-controversy-of-1880/> and scroll down about halfway to the Second International Congress section). The philosophy of Total Communication was an effort to begin incorporating signs into educating students who were deaf or hard of hearing. The best explanation of the philosophy can be found here <http://www.handsandvoices.org/comcon/articles/totalcom.htm>

Total Communication is a philosophy of educating students who are deaf or hard of hearing using a variety of methods, communication strategies, and languages as it benefits the students. The philosophy morphed into signing and talking at the same time, which is known as SimCom or simultaneous communication.

So what's happening at MSDB?

Here are some things I believe about students who are deaf or hard of hearing:

1. Families are the best teachers of their children and have the expert knowledge of their own child. Families are the initial language and communication decision-makers until the child is old enough to express their own desires and preferences in ways that others can understand them. Information is power and we do our best to give families all the information we can and we support their decisions.
2. Every child who is deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind must develop fluency in English to their highest potential because we live in the United States. English can be written, read, and/or spoken.
3. Every child who is deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind should have opportunities and experiences in English-only environments. Our students live in a hearing world and in this country, which means English. Our students must be able to communicate in that environment. Each student should have opportunities to practice writing, reading, spoken language and/or lip-reading here so they know what works for them in various situations for the future.
4. Every child who is deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind should have opportunities and experiences in ASL-only environments. Our students deserve to know there are others like them in the world and they use a different language – ASL and they have a history and a culture.
5. Once students leave our campus, they are able to decide where they feel comfortable. If our students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind want to focus on interacting with the “hearing” world, they should have the language (English) and the skills to do that. If our students want to focus on interacting in the “deaf” world, they should have the language (ASL) and the skills to do that. If our students want to go back and forth, they need to know both languages (ASL and English) and both cultures (hearing and Deaf).
6. We should give our students EVERY tool (English, ASL, reading, writing, math, science, social studies, literature, emotional development, learning in their own fields of interest, theory of mind, critical thinking skills, and so much more) we possibly can to facilitate them being independent and accomplishing their own personal goals. Once they leave us, they are able to choose what and where and how they interact and learn in the world of their future.
7. Finally, I believe in equipping staff with the knowledge and skills to be better teachers (and everyone is a teacher to some degree) for our students. All staff members are professionals who make choices every minute about language and communication – what language, what topic, and what modality to use with each student based on the class, the environment, their own abilities, and their unique knowledge of the students they are working with. Students have the benefits of working with everyone on campus and each person brings something different to each interaction. How cool is that?

I hope this clarifies what is happening at MSDB. We are adding to our toolboxes by learning about bilingual education strategies. We are adding to our knowledge by expanding our own language and skills in ASL. We are continuing to emphasize learning English with our students in reading, writing, and/or spoken language.

I'm excited about our journey. I'm excited that we are adding ASL to the amazing things we are already doing with English. I'm excited about all the other educational opportunities we provide to our students such as Mindfulness training, social-emotional development, intra- and interpersonal skills, communication, independent living skills, and for our students who are blind or visually impaired the Expanded Core Curriculum. MSDB is an amazing place for students.

In the 1995 movie *Dangerous Minds* there is this quote,

“The mind is like a muscle. If you want to be really powerful, you got to work it out. Each new fact gives you another choice. Each new idea builds another muscle. And it is those muscles that are gonna make you really strong.”

We want all of our students to be really strong! I think you want that too!

**In most literature and research, a capital “D” in “Deaf” refers to people who identify with Deaf Culture. In this article, I use a capital “D” for titles and for Culture. For students, I use the lowercase “d” because they are in school and learning about Deaf Culture. When they graduate, they can determine for themselves how they identify with Deaf Culture. I also use person-first language when talking about students. ❖*

Running with a Vision

By Sharon Woods, Outreach Consultant

Deegin McNiven sees himself as an individual with abilities. He does very well in school and is well liked by his peers. He is a typical sixth grade student at Laurel Middle School. It just happens that Deegin has an eye condition causing him to be legally blind and extremely light sensitive.

Yes, he has some accommodations in his curriculum and instruction in the form of technology use for near and distance vision, as well as braille and orientation and mobility instruction added to his day in school. But he does the same work as his peers in content and volume. Sometimes, it takes more time for him to complete his work but that did not stop him from adding to his load. Deegin joined the cross country team. He has a passion for running and is experiencing a high level of success placing at the top of the pack at the finish line after each race.

This sport is perfect for Deegin. The entire team walks the race course prior to each meet giving Deegin a chance to note obstacles. His coach or a volunteer walks the course with him pointing out areas of concern as needed. He is also provided a person along the course that alerts him to hazards along the race. His fellow runners give him a heads-up as well. Has he ever fallen or run into something? Yes, of course, but the most important fact is that he keeps running. Running is a freeing experience. Deegin loves it, his school and community support his access to the sport, and his family is behind him all the way. ❖



Running is a freeing experience for Deegin.





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0-3 Jamboree in Yellowstone County

By Sharon Woods, Outreach Consultant

The cuteness factor was high during an event held at University of Mary-Billings. Occupational therapy students, professors, and Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind outreach consultants worked together to host this event for infants and toddlers in the area with visual impairments. Lack of typical vision at birth can interfere with development. This event gave little ones opportunities to move through a variety of stations specifically designed to promote developmental milestone achievements. Families were able to interact with their child at each station. There were opportunities for parents to meet each other and a mentoring parent for support. This was not work but play with a purpose! Everyone had a wonderful time. Thank you MSDB Foundation for supporting this event allowing us to provide refreshments. ☘



“Play with a purpose” promotes developmental milestone achievement.



Outreach Consultant Emily LaSalle, pictured here with students in Sidney who joined the slime craze.

After 35 Years on Campus, Kim Goes to Outreach

Dear Families and Friends,

A song once said, “you never know where the road may lead you.” Well, my “MSDB road” has taken me into the classroom, into administration and now onto the highways of Montana as an Outreach Consultant for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

It has been my privilege and honor to serve as your Principal for the last few years. I miss seeing everyone on a daily basis, especially the children who made me smile more than you can ever know. However I am enjoying traveling the roads of Montana, visiting families and schools, learning new things and building new ties. I feel as if I am a “freshman” again, slowly but surely, learning my new role and duties. It has been exciting to experience the myriad of areas Outreach Services consults on and supports. The nicest thing of all is that I still get to see smiles on the faces of OUR students, whether at MSDB or at their local schools, who are working hard to meet their potential with the support of their teachers and families.



Kim now enjoys taking her work to the students as an outreach consultant.

So, until we meet again whether at Deaf Enrichment Weekends, Family Learning Weekends, in-services/ training opportunities, or over a shared cup of coffee, I wish you safe travels and warm winds.

-Kim Schwabe, Outreach Consultant ☘