



MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & BLIND

Express

giving kids the building blocks to independence

Volume XI, Issue 1, Fall 2012



Fun-Filled Fall Field Trip
PAGE 7

**MSDB Foundation Needs Your
Help to Provide Opportunities**
PAGES 8-11

Fun & Games: Deaf Enrichment Weekend

Jennifer Wasson, Outreach

MSDB's Deaf Enrichment Weekend (DEW) was held on campus on October 5-6. Thirty-three students participated in "Fun and Games." Activities included boater's safety, Taekwondo, "Shut the Box," board games, and Wii dancing.

Friday's events kicked off at 5:00 p.m. in the Mustang Center. Students played an icebreaker game, ate pizza, cotton candy and popcorn, swam, and played team activities in the gym.



Saturday's sessions started at 9:00 a.m. and were led by various staff members, a current student, community members, and a local business: Big Sky Taekwondo.

Boater's safety was taught by Grace McKnight and Thyra Wood, both of whom are certified lifeguards. Students learned how to stay warm in the water, use a life jacket correctly, and

what to do in case your boat tips over. The kids loved tipping the canoe and had a blast learning essential survival skills.

Instructors and students from Big Sky Taekwondo were on hand to teach our DEW participants skills related to this martial art form. Self-defense, exercise, and meditation were a few of the skills presented to our students. This session was a big hit and the kids have asked to have them back in the future.

Mr. Ed VanTighem taught the students how to play the game "Shut the Box." This is a game of dice which uses a counting box with numbers 1-12. Mr. VanTighem taught the kids how to find various combinations of the dice they rolled



SAVE THE DATE

Our Next DEW: March 1-2, 2013
We look forward to seeing you there!



to "shut" the tiles on the counting box that equal the total of their dice roll. A player's score is the sum of the numbers remaining uncovered at the end of his turn. The player with the lowest score wins. The kids really enjoyed trying to "out smart" each other in this fun game of math and chance.

Other activities included cards, board games, Twister, Guesstures, and Wii dancing. Learning teamwork was a lot of fun and a smile could be found on the faces of all participants. ❧

A SPECIAL THANK YOU!

A special thank you to Josef Harrison and the marketing team at **DawnSignPress** (www.dawnsign.com) for the generous donation of sign language materials to the MSDB Outreach Team. The materials will be distributed to families and staff working with deaf and



hard of hearing students to assist in meeting communication needs. At a time when our school budget to purchase materials is limited, a gift of this is greatly appreciated! Thank you DawnSignPress from our families across the great state of Montana! ❧



MOVING FORWARD: MSDB's Communication Policy

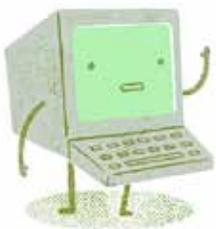
Tiffany Harding, Coordinating Interpreter

MSDB's communication policy states "The vision of the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind is to promote and maintain excellent and comprehensive educational opportunities for every deaf, hard-of-hearing, blind, low vision and deaf-blind child in Montana which shall lead to the highest potential for adult life of independence and self-sufficiency; a meaningful personal, family and community life; and a useful, productive occupational life."

In an effort to support this policy, MSDB established a taskforce in September of 2011. The taskforce searched for and reviewed assessment tools where in we could identify language strengths of staff members as well as analyze areas to improve. Through this process, the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) tool was selected.

Since then, a committee of ten people has been selected, all demonstrating high linguistic awareness and ability in sign language. In August, this team received training related to the SLPI interview and rating process. For the 2012-2013 school year, the team is interviewing any staff member who wishes to obtain a base line rating and plans to do official assessments of teaching staff during the 2013-2014 school year. Residential and support staff interviews and ratings will follow.

The SLPI team will also provide informational training to staff as well as a variety of fun activities that provide opportunities to assess language and how they can use that language knowledge to support the students they work with. MSDB wants every student to succeed, and more tools provided to staff members helps ensure the opportunity to use those tools toward "education, communication, and independence for life"! ::



For a wealth of information about MSDB as well as a detailed calendar of the school year, check out our website at:

www.msdb.mt.gov

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GRIZ KIDZ!



NON-PROFIT GROUP TAKES 32 MSDB STUDENTS TO GRIZZLY GAME

*Permission to reprint article:
Great Falls Tribune*

**By Kristen Inbody,
Tribune Staff Writer**

MISSOULA— As rumbling motorcycles took the field at Washington-Grizzly Stadium and a helicopter flew overhead, Jesse, 9, and Faybion, 8, watched with wide eyes, open mouths and awed expressions. “I like the game, the band and Monte bear,” Faybion signed. Jesse added an enthusiastic thumbs up. When Monte entered the stadium, Jesse thrust out his bear hat so if the mascot looked up, he would see they matched. Faybion turned to his chaperone to pantomime the T-shirt cannon, so excited he nearly tumbled off the seat on which he stood for a better view.

The boys were among 32 students of the Montana



Jesse (left) and Faybion watch the opening spectacle at the University of Montana football game.

TRIBUNE PHOTOS/KRISTEN INBODY

School for the Deaf and the Blind who cheered on the Griz at a University of Montana football game on a field trip last weekend made possible by Griz Kidz, a nonprofit run by former UM football players to share the game-day experience with disadvantaged children. Ex-Griz special-teams star Jeff Larson of Cut Bank, now on the Griz Kidz team, said seeing the MSDB students at UM was awesome. “They’re so happy,” he said. “It’s one of our favorite groups. They’re ecstatic to be here.”

Tim Polich, a C.M. Russell High School graduate and Missoula banker, was among the founding fathers of Griz Kidz in 2005. He said Griz Kidz buys 50 season tickets every year to accommodate groups and keeps a waiting list of young Griz fans in need to match with extra tickets donated

by fans who can't use them.

While a student in Cascade, Polich played sports against MSDB teams and said it's special to connect with the school again through Griz Kidz.

The MSDB students were the first group outside Missoula to participate in the program years ago. Their inaugural game was rainy, cold and miserable, a lowscoring affair the Griz won. Polich said the kids smiled so much one would have thought it was a blue-sky day— though some said they would have liked to hear the cannon more. "It was touching to understand from their side what they really like. The first go-around, they told stories of the trip all year and immediately started talking about the next year's game," he said. "We want to show those kids they can do whatever they'd like if they set their minds to it," he added. "Hopefully it gives them encouragement to achieve whatever success they want."

'Isn't this exciting?'

Grilling burgers at a tailgate party before the game, MSDB Dean of Students Jim Kelly said the field trip is more than just football for the young attendees— it's Monte, the bus ride with friends, the tailgate, stops in Lincoln and all the rest. Nelly, 13, signed that the bus ride was fun and a chance to tell newbies what the game would be like. "The best part is the music, the people and the football players," she signed. She met players on the field after another game and said some were "cute."

Lily, 10, used a white cane and a helping hand to find her way from the bus to the school's tailgate party between the South End Zone and Mount Sentinel. She was nervous about showing off her new cane navigation skills in such a big venue but was thrilled to be at her first Griz game. "I hear instruments over there, trumpets and drums," she said, pointing toward the Grizzly Marching Band warming up. "I heard someone speak on a microphone. Isn't this exciting? This is my very first field trip, and we're going to a special kind of picnic."

The tailgate exceeded her expectations when bagpipers led a procession of cancer survivors nearby. With a blissful expression on her face, Lily jumped, clapped and said, "That's so cool! Did they see me? Was I smiling?" The 10-year-old said she is going to be in a parade and "throw candy everywhere" when she's older. Trey, 17, came back for seconds at the tailgate party with compliments for the chef.

"You guys did these up well," he said. "The food is good." Trey said was his first football game. "I saw it on TV, but I don't know that it will be fun," he said. He was excited when chaperones handed out the Griz Kidz hats. "Awesome, it matches our shirts!" he said.

Besides the hats and shirts, the students got tickets to the game and \$10 in coupons to use at the concessions stand. Then, Griz Kidz presented a check toward the transportation costs, too, and a box of Monte hats designed by Dorris LaRoque and given in honor of her 100th birthday. As Lily wore her new Monte hat, she said, "That's pretty funny. Do I look like a bear?"



Former Griz football players Shane MacIntyre, left, of Missoula and Jeff Larson of Cut Bank meet Trevin, 9, on a MSDB field trip. Former players operate Griz Kidz to give children the chance to experience a Griz football game.

Practicing new skills

At a UM concessions stand, Brandon, 11, carefully counted out coupons three times as he bought a hot dog and pop with chaperone Bill Andrews. Buying and budgeting were among the skills MSDB students practiced on the field trip, along with socialization, teamwork, patience and navigating a crowd of 26,000 people.

"There are a lot of challenges they face with the stairs and crowds, but it's a successful activity the kids really enjoy," chaperone Maeona Lee said. "We want to teach them there are things they can enjoy. It impedes them if we don't let them have those opportunities." Lee said the game is a confidence boost for students and a special memory for years to come. "I know the kids who have graduated still reminisce about Missoula, the shirts they had and whether the Griz won," she said. It's a story they share with parents, too. Trey found that his first game was indeed fun— and he noted that he got to take home a Grizzly souvenir pop cup.

In the game's final quarter amid a cheering crowd, Lily listened for the cannon. When the crowd's roar reached a fevered pitch as UM's Chris Lider tied the game with a 42-yard field goal in the fourth quarter, Lily smiled in

— **GRIZ KIDZ! CONTINUED ON PG.16**

INDIAN EDUCATION FOR ALL

Denise Philipp, Teacher

In 1999, the Montana Legislature passed into law the Indian Education for All Act to recognize American Indian cultural heritage. The Office of Public Instruction

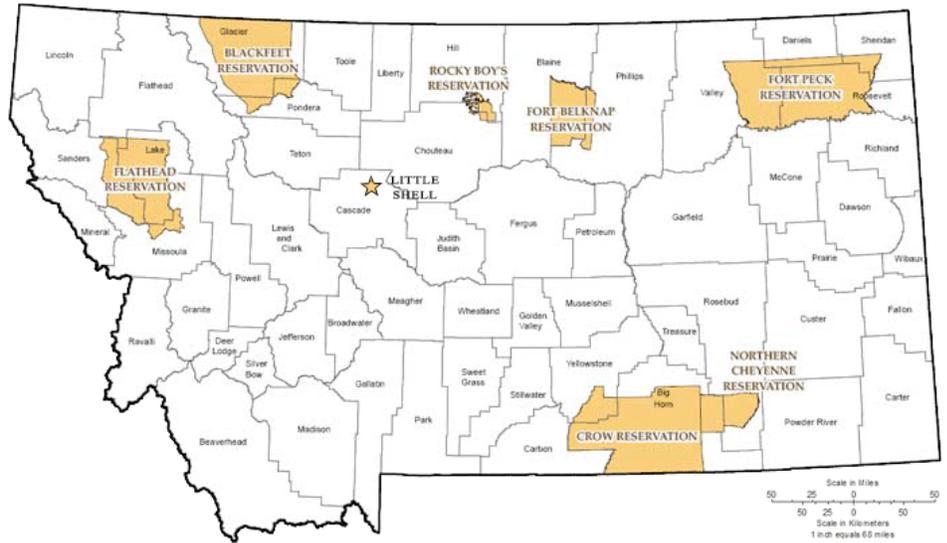


Allyson (left) works with teacher's assistant to create a tactile map.

has worked with tribes in Montana to create a list of "Essential Understandings" that should be taught to students in our state.

Native American Awareness week was held in Great Falls during the last week of September.

This provided a good opportunity for



Map provided by MT Office of Public Instruction.

For more information visit: www.opi.mt.gov/Programs/IndianEd

MSDB students to learn more about Indian culture in Montana. In honor of the celebration, some of the students in the Blind and Low Vision Department learned a chant to remember the names of the reservations in Montana, then

created tactile maps highlighting the reservations. Other students read tales from the Blackfeet.

The entire department joined together on Friday under Ms. Cook's guidance to make fry bread. ■■



Plains Indians Buffalo Hunt

By Trevin, Katie and Twyla: 4th Grade, Social Studies Class

Mrs. Knuth created a herd of buffalo for us to hunt. She had brown paper bags with different treats representing parts of the buffalo. Red licorice was sinew used for making thread and string for our bows/arrows which we made from the horns. A 3 Musketeer bar was the liver, a pink marshmallow was the heart which we ate as we offered our thanks to the buffalo for sacrificing his life for us and jerky represented the meat that feeds our families. An egg was used as the stomach so we would understand about the membrane. We later cooked and ate scrambled eggs with our beef jerky. We drew our hunting story on the hide (paper bag). We learned many things using the buffalo hunt for our final Indian Studies activity. It was fun and exciting. ■■



Katie draws her bow.



Gracie signs in to cast her vote. Below, Anthony carefully tallies the outcome.

Election Day at MSDB

Written by Ms. Blake's Life Skills class

On November 6th, 2012 M.S.D. B. had their own presidential mock election. The candidates were Democrat Barack Obama and Republican Mitt Romney. We built an election booth from a refrigerator box donated by Eklunds in Great Falls that had "Please No Talking signs," an American Flag, and inside was a desk with two boxes. The boxes were made accessible with each candidate's name on it in large print and in Braille. Both the Blind/Visually Impaired and Deaf/Hard of Hearing departments were invited to participate in our mock election. Every participant had to sign their name, were given two slips of paper with each candidate's name, directions on the process were given, option of closing the door was made available, and all voters were given a sticker that said, "I Voted."



We had 74 participants that voted and our results were Democrat Barack Obama with 42 votes and Republican Mitt Romney with 32 votes. Our results did not match who the voters of Montana chose, but they did match the outcome of the United States of America's popular vote...Democrat Barack Obama.

As you can see by the pictures, we had a great hands-on learning experience with the voting process. We will definitely do this in four years. See you then! ❖



Halloween POETRY

"Spooky Costume"

I want to be a zombie,
just you wait and see.

I first need to do my laundry,
or a ghost I will have to be.

Written by:

Jason, Brandon, Traci and Eileen
(pictured left to right above)
- 5th grade Language Class

FALL FUN!

The Preschool from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Department went on a field trip to **Tilleras Nursery**. They went on a hay ride, made a scarecrow, found their way through a hay maze, and picked out a pumpkin. It was a fun autumn adventure!





Montana School *for the*

HELP US GIVE KIDS THE BUILD

HELP US PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS LIKE ERIN

For years Greg and Jeanie Jessen of Billings had watched children from their community thrive at the Montana School for the Deaf & Blind, so when their daughter Erin reached 7th grade and no longer had access to a special class for students with hearing loss, they made the decision to send her to MSDB. **“We knew it was the right choice for Erin,”** Jeanie said.

Since graduating from MSDB in 2011, Erin Jessen has remained at the school in its post-high school transitional program, learning additional living skills that will help her live a more independent life when she moves back to Billings in the spring. Erin is deaf and has cerebral palsy. “She’s thrived,” her mom said. “MSDB helps kids succeed and finish high school.”

According to Jeanie, MSDB’s small classroom size and dedicated staff have been very helpful for Erin. “The first day we walked in, the wonderful teachers put us right at ease. Erin hasn’t had a bad teacher; they’re all there because they want to be.”

Erin uses sign language to communicate, and being in school with other deaf people has helped develop her language skills a great deal. “I like having more deaf people to talk to, and having deaf friends,” she said. She enjoys building her vocabulary, in particular, but her hunger for learning whatever is interesting or useful to her is evident. “I always like learning new things. I learn a lot here,” she said.

Erin’s cerebral palsy gives her limited use of the left side of her body. At MSDB she’s gained independence by learning



“Erin built her confidence as her independence increased, and she’s just taken off,” according to Erin’s teacher, Dessica McKeehan.

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

With your help, the Montana School for the Deaf & Blind Foundation has been able to provide funds for services and equipment for

the students at MSDB for 30 years. The MSDB Foundation is committed to funding academic and extracurricular activities that help prepare students for independent lives. ❖

Donate at justgive.org or by using the enclosed envelope.

Deaf & Blind Foundation

OVERCOMING BLOCKS TO INDEPENDENCE

to shower and dress herself, open jars and crack eggs with one hand, and use the city bus system's paratransit van to get to the Vocational Rehabilitation office, where she is doing some part-time office work. This and previous work experiences have assured her she can communicate with hearing people on the job, using texting and her iPad. MSDB's transition program has also taught her how to be responsible by getting to work on time and how to manage money. Next year she hopes to work at the Voc Rehab office in Billings or with a similar program offering independent employment for people with disabilities.

The Jessens know the benefits for Erin at MSDB have outweighed their own experience of missing her. "The house parents MSDB tends to hire are some of the warmest people," Jeanie said. "If your child has to live away from home, this is very important. Erin's sad attitude about leaving home changes the second she sees the house parents waiting for her on the bus." In recent years video phones have made long distance communication between Erin and her family far easier. "It's really hard to let them



Going to Griz games, performing with Expressions of Silence, and bowling, skiing, horseback riding, and ballet are some of the activities Erin has regularly participated in at MSDB and with Eagle Mount.

move 3 hours away but you have to realize it's best for them, not you," Jeanie said. "It's the right thing to do."

Erin agrees. "I love it here," she said. "I'm sad I can't stay after this year." But then she talks about her plans for next year, and her enthusiasm does not fade.

Students like Erin are able to have educational opportunities that help them gain as much independence as possible because the MSDB Foundation helps provide those opportunities.

Please join us in this good work by making a contribution using the enclosed envelope or online at www.justgive.org.

Best regards,


**John L. Musgrove, President
MSDB Foundation**

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Just 15% of the MSDB Foundation's budget goes to administrative costs. When you support the Foundation, you are supporting programs for kids.



Montana School *for the*

THANKS YOU FOR

We are most grateful for your contributions, which make such a difference for the students at MSDB.

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Deaf & Blind Foundation

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Brett Weber
Vanessa Wester

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*(Those with established memorials
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Virgil & Nancy Hall
Carol Shipley

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 recorded a gift incorrectly we apologize. Please drop us a note so we can correct our records. ■■

REACHING OUT ACROSS MONTANA

The Outreach Department for the Blind and Visually Impaired has expanded its trainings and activities. There are still plenty of opportunities to join us for upcoming events:

January 22, 2013

Butte Kiddie Jamboree

February 9, 2013

Kalispell Kiddie Jamboree

March 21-22, 2013

Focus event

March 22-23, 2013

Enrichment/Goalball Weekend

April 10, 2013

Great Falls Kiddie Jamboree

April 20, 2013

Glendive Kiddie Jamboree

May 3-4, 2013

Games for the Visually Impaired

June 7-9, 2013

Blind and Visually Impaired Family Learning Weekend

July

Summer Camp

Contact your MSDB Outreach Consultant for more information or call MSDB at 1-800-771-6000.



Sadie Cabrera and Ryan Boespflug made new friendships at the Kiddie Jamboree.

KIDDIE JAMBOREE

**Barb Balko,
Outreach Consultant**

On October 24 children from birth to age six, their families, and MSDB's outreach vision consultants met in Missoula to host the first Kiddie Jamboree to be held this year in Montana. The Kiddie Jamborees were designed to provide the opportunity for young children with vision loss to play, learn and network with each other in a nurturing, educational and very fun environment. Cognitive, fine motor, gross motor and language/communication skills were addressed. The "Jams" were also designed to provide an informal setting for parents, caregivers and educators to unite and exchange practical information.

Sherry Cabrera, mother of two-year-old Sadie, attended the event and shared her excitement for the opportunity to participate in the Kiddie Jamboree. "What an incredible

day! The Kiddie Jam helped me to explore new ways of interacting with Sadie. It was a time of discovery of new materials and ideas. Thank you so much! Sadie and I really enjoyed it and made many new friends...you all did an awesome job!"

Upcoming Regional Kiddie Jamborees throughout MT

Kerri Norick, Outreach Consultant

This year the blind and visually impaired outreach staff is partnering with early childhood Part C providers to travel to Yellowstone, Silverbow, Missoula, Flathead, Cascade and Dawsen counties to provide early intervention for young children throughout the state. Kiddie Jamborees are scheduled throughout the 2012-2013 school year in the towns of Billings, Butte, Kalispell, Glendive and Great Falls. ■■

PARALYMPICS & GOALBALL STATEWIDE

Sharon Woods and Pam Boespflug, Outreach Consultants

The Northwest Association for Blind Athletes (NWABA) and the Montana School for Deaf and Blind collaborated in hosting sports events in Glasgow, Culbertson, Sidney and Billings. NWABA is a division of the U.S. Olympic Committee. Executive Director Billy Henry (a Montana native) brought a variety of sport experiences from his base office in Vancouver, WA to Eastern Montana.

On Thursday and Friday, October 4th and 5th, Billy Henry and MSDB Outreach Consultants introduced Goalball to PE classes at Irle Elementary in Glasgow, Culbertson Elementary and Westside Elementary in Sidney. Goalball is now an international sport but was first developed for blinded veterans returning from WWII. Low Vision and sighted elementary students and their Physical Education teachers learned the basics of the game. At the beginning of each class students and teachers were a bit tenuous about playing this game where all players wore blindfolds. Class ended all too soon for most of the students who enjoyed this challenge and developed a new respect for their peers with a vision loss. Thanks to Bryan Hallock, Chris Olson and Mary Liebach, PE teachers who warmly welcomed this opportunity and helped make this a successful fun experience.

Students with visual impairments and their families had the opportunity to participate in a Paralympic experience in Billings on October 6th. The Northwest Association for Blind Athletes (NWABA) and MSDB collaborated in hosting the event at Skyview High School. Students enjoyed playing Goalball and Judo and riding tandem bicycles. For some students this was their first experience with these activities. After playing Goalball for the first time, one participant commented, "This is addicting!"

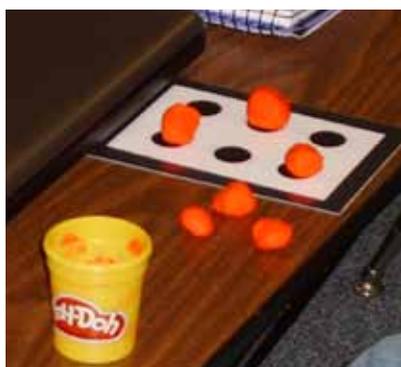
Billy Henry co-founded NWABA in 2007. The vision of NWABA is to provide life-changing opportunities for visually impaired youth that help build bridges and friendships through sports. NWABA is committed to

bringing sports adapted for vision loss to communities in Montana. Both NWABA and MSDB are resources for student athletes, families and schools. The organizations promote sports and maintaining a healthy lifestyle through participation in athletic activities at home and school. NWABA is a non-profit organization. Events are free to participants and supported by volunteers, grants and donations.

Many thanks to Billy and MSDB staff, Sue Stewart, Sheryl Lute, Steve Fugate, Pam Boespflug and Sharon Woods for organizing and supervising the event. Thanks to Robert Deese for hosting the Judo sessions. We also thank the families and students that made this event a success. Come and join us around the state for the next event! ❖

For more information on Goalball and other sport opportunities go to: www.msdb.mt.gov/outreach/special-events.html or for NWABA go to: nwaba.org

UNTANGLING THE DOTS



Participants at UTD did a variety of fun activities geared toward helping students develop awareness and interest in learning braille.

Kerri Norick, Outreach Consultant

Untangling the Dots: On October 18 & 19, the MSDB Outreach staff and the Department for the Visually Impaired hosted Untangling the Dots (UTD) 2012 – the annual workshop for persons providing instruction to Braille students. (The need for this training arose from the 2006 adoption of a state regulation called Montana New Rule 1.)

The keynote speaker for this year's workshop was Jan Zollinger. She

presented on teaching Braille literacy through the arts. Participants not only learned new methods of teaching, but they learned how to incorporate music, dance, singing and movement when teaching Braille literacy. UTD drew in over 25 participants from all over the state. Braille instructors worked diligently on their Braille transcription lessons with the help of MSDB staff.

The next UTD will be held in March of 2013 in conjunction with the Spring Focus/Goalball Enrichment activity. ❖

USE YOUR SMARTS...

Diane Moog, Teacher

Smart Board technology has been used at MSDB for a few years now and has greatly enhanced educational opportunities for our students. Recently our grant writer for the MSDB Foundation worked with our principal, Kim Schwabe; our elementary supervisor, Julie Dee Alt; and myself to put together a proposal to obtain a grant to purchase more Smart Board equipment to be used on campus. As a result we have two new Smart Boards, which have helped facilitate the expansion of Smart Board technology to all the classes at MSDB.

A Smart Board is an interactive whiteboard and a valuable classroom teaching tool. It allows the teacher to connect the classroom computer to a whiteboard. This means that the student is able to interact with the

material presented by moving and manipulating items. This is a critical advantage of the Smart Board. Studies have proven that movement and multisensory activities integrated into the learning process greatly impact the learning process. The concepts taught in this manner tend to be the ones that are remembered and used as building blocks for additional learning. They are also very motivating for the students, and that is a great bonus in using Smart Boards.

As a frequent user of the Smart Board, I have found them to be another tool for not only group instruction, but also individual work. It allows me to work with one group while another works independently on an activity at the Smart Board. I am able to capture their work via a picture. This is great for documenting their work and also having a back up for a student who may have missed that particular activity. I am also able

to compose teaching Power Point presentations and use them through the smart technology.

Thanks to the MSDB Foundation and its generous anonymous donor, there is now a Smart Board in each of the four main educational areas of the Bitterroot building, as well as one for use in the computer lab or library. Teachers are using them for a variety of lessons and activities. The students are thoroughly engaged and are eager to return to class sharing the new learning. As time progresses, the technology will be integrated into more and more areas and levels. ❖



Preschoolers learn a new letter of the alphabet each week and do activities that relate to that letter. Can you guess the letters we have learned this month?



ANSWERS: Mushrooms and marshmallows for letter Mm, and a new nose for Tyler for letter Nn.



Sign Language Workshop

Nadiene DeCoteau of Frazer, Montana, practices expressing herself during the sign language workshop, "Language From a Deaf Child's Eyes." Thirty participants, including families of deaf and hard of hearing students, speech and language pathologists, interpreters, classroom assistants, family support specialists, teachers and MSDB family advisors, benefited from the knowledge and experience of presenters Cathy Copeland and Char Harasymczuk. Thank you to our presenters and our participants for a successful workshop! ❖

White Cane Day

Celebrates Independence, Educates Others

Geri L. Darko, Orientation & Mobility Specialist

White Cane Day is celebrated each year on the MSDB campus. This day gives students with visual impairments the chance to show off their independent travel skills to students and staff at MSDB and from other schools as well. This year, students and staff from the Visually Impaired Department imparted their knowledge to first graders from Lewis and Clark Elementary. First grade students were separated into three groups and participated in three separate experiences: writing and decoding Braille, sorting containers with lids and matching socks using only their tactile sense, and using a white cane for safe travel while under blindfold.



Students in the Visually Impaired Department assisted children in all of these activities to help them be successful at each station. Many students from Lewis and Clark noticed how much different it felt to do everyday tasks without using their vision. One first grader asked, "When will we get to work with the kids who go to school here?" She was surprised when the teacher replied, "All of the kids who are helping you at each station are students who go to school here."

Students and staff from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Department also joined our celebration to listen to the latest cane-tapping hit from the Visually Impaired Performers (VIP) and to enjoy a cake decorated like a pedestrian crossing sign. The afternoon was fun and exciting for students who were here to show off their abilities and to the staff involved who got to see the shining smiles of our very independent students! Thank you to all who helped plan and set up White Cane Day 2012, to everyone who took the time to participate in all the activities, and especially to our students for your willingness to educate others in our community. ❖

ONLINE LEARNING

Betty Cook, Teacher

This year there is a very unique and interesting class in the Visually Impaired Department. Two students are currently taking a Pre-Algebra class online. There is a nationwide shortage of teachers of the visually impaired, particularly highly-qualified teachers of high school math and science. So MSDB is working with the Washington State School for the Blind to access online video instruction offered to students in Montana, Kansas and Washington. This is a new experience. We are finding that collaboration with WSSB is successfully providing instruction we might not otherwise be able to offer.

Our students spent the first week reviewing algebra concepts since WSSB didn't start classes until the following week. During this time, a tech person from WSSB and MSDB's IT manager, Josh Rutledge, co-ordinated efforts to have all the computers, passwords, microphones, document cameras, whiteboards, etc. ready for the students. There were a few small glitches to resolve the first week, but everything has been working very smoothly since then.

The class is working out of the textbooks that were sent from WSSB. Additionally the class is encouraged to watch Khan Academy videos and practice exercises outside of class. The students have demonstrated mastery on all concepts taught in class thus far. These include order of operations, basic algebraic expressions, recognition of basic properties such as the commutative, associative and identity properties, coordinate plane graphing, and operations with

positive and negative numbers. For the remainder of the school year they will be working on operations with rational numbers, expressions and equations, inequalities, ratios and proportions, percents, linear functions and graphing, powers and nonlinear functions, real numbers and right triangles, distance and angles, surface area and volume, and statistics and probability.

The WSSB teacher, J.J., is a high energy lady who is very enthusiastic about algebra and the technology involved in this class. She seems very pleased with the setup of the class and has commented frequently how quickly our students are covering the material. It is very exciting to watch the progress of the students in the class - both their progress in pre-algebra knowledge and in their computer problem solving skills. ❖

$$\begin{array}{r} 6x + 15 = 3x + 8 \\ -3x \quad -3x \\ \hline 3x + 15 = 8 \\ -15 \quad -15 \\ \hline 3x = -7 \\ \frac{3x}{3} = \frac{-7}{3} \\ x = \frac{-7}{3} \end{array}$$



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—GRIZ KIDZ! CONTINUED FROM PG.5

anticipation of the “boom” that marked another Griz score. That moment was the best for MSDB student Doug, 15, who said, “It got really exciting tied 20-20. Everyone was cheering.”

His friend JG, 16, said seeing the Griz compete was great, though there was reason to believe he appreciated the cheerleaders’ performance more. Across the field with another group of students, Jesse and Faybion gasped as their picture appeared on the stadium’s huge screen near the game’s end.

Jesse signed that he liked “watching the football” and that the Griz were doing a good job. But as



Thea, 20, signs “GRIZ” on a Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind field trip to Missoula.

hard as the MSDB students cheered for the Griz, the Southern Utah Thunderbirds ultimately won 30-20. With the loss, the Griz players didn’t stay on the field to sign autographs and pose for pictures with young fans, as they do after home victories. “I wish the Griz hadn’t lost,” Patricia, 14, said as she used a white cane to find her

way through the crowd streaming from the stadium. “The best part was getting scared by the cannon. When everyone was cheering at once, that was good.” The end-of-the-game cannon blast eased Lily’s disappointment at not meeting the players, too. “I was going to tell them, ‘Good job,’ but now I can’t,” Lily said. “I can’t wait for next year.” ❖

Celebrating Our Students!

Sally Tilleman, Guidance Counselor

Students at MSDB have so many wonderful things to celebrate, so the school is dedicating 30 minutes a month to do just that, celebrate. We are celebrating the accomplishments of our students and staff, taking the time to recognize exceptional behavior in and out of the classrooms. We are focusing on reading and activity logs that encourage our students to continue the education process outside of the classroom and into their daily lives. In addition, we are recognizing students who have been acknowledged by the staff for their kind acts towards peers and adults, as well as for following the monthly social skill that MSDB has



chosen for each particular month. MSDB, supported by the families at home, is paying particular attention to the skills that help students be successful in their communities and personal lives. If you notice the students walking around with bracelets that state “Caught Being Good,” make sure you acknowledge their hard work.

We aren’t limiting the celebrations to the students – we are also looking to recognize staff that work very hard to make MSDB the absolute best it can be for our students. We are blessed with a large number of staff that dedicates endless hours to their positions at MSDB and we want them all to know that their hard work is recognized and appreciated. We are so proud of all that the students and staff at MSDB have to offer, and we will continue to celebrate everyone’s efforts throughout the year. ❖