



Express

MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & THE BLIND

giving kids the building blocks to independence

Volume XXI, Issue 3, Summer 2018



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GOES NATIONAL**
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Dear Families, Students, Staff and Community Stakeholders,

The end of a school year is a great time to stop and reflect on the good and the challenging things that happened since last August. We had births and deaths. We had people retire. We had people resign to take on new opportunities. We had people get married and people get divorced. We had people, both students and staff, join our MSDB family during the school year, and we will have new people, both students and staff, join our MSDB family for the fall. We created new partnerships and strengthened the partnerships we have. We increased the services we offer to students and families. We celebrated our 125th Anniversary. Most importantly, we engaged in one more year of incredible learning and growth.

So, what's ahead? What can you expect to see next year?

Administration – a new webpage, a focus on interactive social media, continued use of live stream events on our Facebook page, consistent communication with stakeholders including families, a pool that is up and running, continued beautification of our campus, and a focus on structuring MSDB to meet the needs of our students, both on campus and through outreach, and their Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams, including families.

Education – accreditation processes in full swing, a focus on transition from high school to post-high school life, continued focus on independence, growth and learning for students and staff, and growth in social language and academic language in American Sign Language (ASL); English through reading, writing, and/or speaking; and braille.

Outreach – strengthen our partnerships to increase productivity; strengthen our Deaf Mentor and Family Advising programs; increase opportunities for students, families, and school teams to visit our campus; increasing the capacity of school teams to provide accessible education to students; and strengthen ties to the school and the cottage programs.

Cottage – continue to improve our Independent Living Skills Program for high school students; a continued focus on independence and critical thinking of students; and continuing to provide a safe, happy, and healthy home away from home environment so students can grow and learn.

Enjoy your summer! Recharge and rejuvenate! We cannot wait to see you in the fall!

Wishing you peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna E. Sorensen". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Donna E Sorensen, MSDB Superintendent
V 406-771-6001
VP 406-760-1068
dsorensen@msdb.mt.gov

Important Upcoming Dates:

August 9-12, 2018 – Montana Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID) Big Sky Conference
August 13-14, 2018 – Cottage Lead CLA and Counselors meeting
August 15, 2018 – New employee orientation
August 16-17, 2018 – Olweus training for specific staff
August 16-17, 2018 – SKI*HI training for some Family Advisors
August 20-24, 2018 – Orientation for all staff
August 26, 2018 – Residential students arrive
August 27, 2018 – First day of school
September 3, 2018 – Labor day / No school

Fun Competitions with Friends from Across Montana

By Michelle Cross, Outreach Consultant and Christy Haagenon, Para educator

The 37th Annual Games for the Visually Impaired (VI), held at the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB), was a huge success thanks to the MSDB Foundation, MSDB staff, volunteers and the parents of our athletes.

The Games were held in May and started on Friday with the Pentathlon for athletes ages 10 and over. The pentathlon consists of six (6) events: 90 meter swim, 60 meter run, 100 meter run, shot put, standing broad jump and a 400 meter run (optional and can be substituted for another event).

On Saturday, athletes ages 3-21 competed in gymnastics, gym activities, endurance activities, para combine activities, showdown table and track and field events. Students with visual impairments came from across the state to compete with their peers. The look of joy and accomplishment was evident on the athletes' faces when competing in events during the Games and when accepting their medals during the closing ceremonies.

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



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Academic Bowl Team's Hard Work Paid Off on the National Level

By Jen Wasson, Teacher



This year MSDB's Academic Bowl team competed during the Gallaudet University's West Regional Academic Bowl competition in Irvine, CA, March 9-12. Members of this year's team include Brandon Arensmeyer (10th grade), Tayler Davis (9th grade), Samantha Faulkner (10th grade), Aaron Polaske (11th grade), Assistant Coach Yvette Smail Assistant Coach, and Head Coach Jennifer Wasson Head Coach.

MSDB's team competed during regionals and left with a record of 5 wins and 2 losses. They made it to the playoffs and, as a result, competed for a spot in Nationals as a wild card team. Also, Aaron Polaske was honored with the All-Star Player award which recognizes his hard work and excellence during the Regional Competition.

Our team then advanced to the Gallaudet University National Academic Bowl competition held on campus in Washington, D.C, April 12-17, 2018. This is the 16th year we have competed in the Gallaudet University Academic Bowl competition. We've had a pretty great track record



throughout the years, bringing home multiple trophies and accolades. Gallaudet University describes the competition as "an exciting event which promotes academic excellence among deaf and hard-of-hearing students, as well as, giving students the opportunity to make friendships with other students who also have a hearing loss." Every year, Gallaudet University hosts four Regional competitions for up to 80 teams of Deaf and Hard of Hearing high school students. Twenty (20) teams will then advance to the National competition held at Gallaudet every year.

During the school year, team members meet weekly to study and practice together. They have a special bond with each other, as well as with the coaches, which makes the team very dynamic and special. Competitions are hard work, but the team also has the opportunity to tour the cities they visit. During their down time, they tour museums, monuments, and special landmarks.

This is a great group of students who not only excel academically, but also represent MSDB with flying colors! The coaches are honored to work with such exceptional students throughout the year!



For highlights from the national competition visit <https://www.gallaudet.edu/youth-programs/academic-bowl>.

Meet Our Amazing Team...



Brandon Arensmeyer, 10th grade, second-year player:

"Making it to Academic Bowl Nationals was the best part of my school year this year. It was a ton of hard work with tons of studying, but worth the experience. While we did not take first, it has given me great motivation to try even harder to make it again next year and hopefully be the top team. Spending four days in Washington, D.C., was so much fun. My favorite things to see in there were the National Monuments and seeing the White House in person. Touring Gallaudet was also very interesting. I cannot wait until next year! GO MUSTANGS!!!"



Aaron Polaske, 11th grade, third-year player:

Q: “What did you do to prepare for competitions?” • A: “We met as a team every Thursday and studied information together. Then on our own we would choose for ourselves something we wanted to learn about and give that information to the rest of the team.”

Q: “What motivated you for next year’s competition?” • A: “The competition at Nationals was rough and the skill level of the players was through the roof, but playing against them gave me an idea of how to practice and even what to practice. I think next year we will be more prepared to give the teams at Nationals a run for their money.”

Q: “What did you do for fun?” • A: “During the trip there were “off days” which is when we didn’t have any matches, or the matches were all done. On those days, we would tour the city we were in to see what it has to offer, or visit some crazy place that I would never do if not for this team, like Disneyland or Universal Studios.”

Q: “Did you like the experience?” • A: “As much as Disneyland sounds fun, the best part of the competition for me was playing in the matches. Studying so long and being able to put that to use is an amazing feeling! Being able to see a question pop up, which you know for a fact, one of your teammates easily knows even if you don’t, is awesome! So, YES, I enjoyed the experience.”



Tayler Davis, 9th grade, first-year player:

“My name is Tayler Davis. I am 16 years old, and I’m currently a freshman. This year Mrs. Wasson asked if I wanted to try-out for the Academic Bowl team. I didn’t know very much at first about Academic Bowl, but I knew it was related to Gallaudet University.

If I joined, I knew I would get the experience of going to competitions. I talked to my family about my goal of going to Gallaudet for college, and I decided to try out for the team with excitement. It was a great decision. I was selected for the team, and I am glad that I joined Academic Bowl.

When we made it to Washington, D.C., for the National Competition, I was excited to meet the other teams I would compete against. I was filled with excitement, motivation, and nervousness at the same time. I was really having fun! I really enjoyed going there. I got to see and experience amazing things such as the White House, Martin Luther King Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, and many other places. My favorite place to go was the Martin Luther King Memorial near the lake that is surrounded by cherry blossom trees.

When I was at Gallaudet campus I remember calling my parents and telling them it was one of the best days of my life. I will gladly to join the team again next year if I have the opportunity. I had a great time learning and competing with other teams. I was able to remind myself how hard I have to work in school so I can go to Gallaudet University and fulfill my dream of going there for college.”



Sam Faulkner, 10th grade, second-year player:

“Academic Bowl is truly what I would call an unforgettable experience. It has done for me so many good things that, honestly, I wish I could continue Academic Bowl after High School.

First off, not only is traveling to different states amazing, but competing gives just as much of a thrill. For me, competing brings out a side of me that wants to learn as much information as possible. It makes it so satisfying when you get a question right. It makes me proud of myself.

Secondly, I love the connections that I make with team members. We usually all have something we can bond over that brings us all together and makes the trips that much more.

Lastly, are the coaches. Most importantly, the coaches make the traveling such a fun and hilarious experience. They are a huge part of why MSDB’s Academic Bowl Team is amazing. They are able to balance pushing us to do our best, while making sure we have fun. If we didn’t have such amazing coaches, Academic Bowl wouldn’t be half as good.”

Overall, Academic Bowl is one of my all time favorite things to be involved in, and fortunately, I still have two more years to be involved!

MSDB Senior Elsa Jones, receives the Zach Culliton Merit of Distinction at Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art

By Tim Culliton Submitted by Lynda Loney, Interpreter

The Zach Culliton Merit of Distinction is given each year during the Great Falls Public Schools Student Art Exhibition reception at the Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art to an art student who has distinguished him/herself in a meaningful manner in the face of difficult challenges. Those challenges need not be purely physical. Overcoming economic, emotional, developmental or other challenges would be equally considered along with a student's ability to inspire others through their self-determination and positive acts.

Zach Culliton, son of Tim and Terri Culliton, was 19 years old when he died from the cumulative effects of Duchenne's muscular dystrophy, a degenerative neuromuscular disease that he was diagnosed with at a very early age. Zach distinguished himself over the years as a person who accepted his challenges with humility, and as someone who refused to be defined by his illness. Zach displayed a love of art at an equally early age and pursued this passion throughout his life. He entered as a student at the Montana State University's College of Technology (now known as Great Falls College-MSU) in the fall of 2007 after graduating from Great Falls High School, where he participated in the Advanced Placement (AP) Art Program.

The award is intended to not only honor Zach Culliton's memory, but to encourage and promote, by example, the attributes of courage and determination that he expressed. Mrs. Cortni Harant, Elsa's ceramics teacher at Great Falls High, felt Elsa embodied the characteristics of the Zach Culliton award and nominated her to the Square. Mrs. Harant states, "Elsa has demonstrated herself to be quite the budding young artist over the past two years, particularly in ceramics, and has an infectious smile and honest, meaningful laugh that brightens the studio. She will be missed."

The recipient is selected by a committee comprised of the Paris Gibson Square Museum of Arts' Executive Director, Curator of Art, Curator of Education and Tim and Terri Culliton. Congratulations, Elsa!
To learn more, visit www.the-square.org



The Class of 2018 Continues Senior Traditions

By Michelle Cross, Outreach Consultant

Senior class trips are a long standing tradition at the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) and it is up to the students to make them happen! The 2018 graduating class worked hard for the past four years to raise the money for their trip. With guidance from their class sponsors, Michelle Cross, Dorothy Nutter, and Sean Wilkinson, it was the students' responsibility to work the school concession stand during sporting events, maintain the MSDB's pop machines, sell MSDB wristbands, and sell Christmas wreaths to save for a senior class trip. All their hard work paid off with a great adventure in California. We all boarded the plane bright and early on a Friday morning. When we arrived in California it was sunny and warm, perfect weather to explore Downtown Disney. We spent two days at Disneyland and California Adventures. The students said their favorite rides at Disneyland and California Adventures were Cars (my favorite), Star Wars, Soaring and really all the rides. What a great adventure for all of us to remember for a lifetime! I am so glad that all the students had a magical time on their Senior Trip. We would like to especially thank the MSDB Foundation for their support in making this trip possible. I would like to send a special thank you, to my Co-Sponsors Dorothy Nutter and Sean Wilkinson, for all the support during the past four years.

The Arbor Day Program was on April 20th and the students of MSDB had a great performance that was followed by the senior class planting the 2018 Senior tree. Every year, the Senior Class gets to have a tree planted in their honor. The Class of 2018's tree is in front of the Mustang Center.



Seated: Adriana, Standing (left to right): Skylee, Drew, Alyson, Juan, Donny, and Elsa. They are pictured in front of a lake with a pirate ship in the background.

Our Amazing Guest Speakers for Family Learning Weekend

By Emily LaSalle, Outreach Consultant

Our thanks go to Pam Snedigar, Sheri Cook and Shelby Bean, from Gallaudet University, for the inspiring presentations at our Deaf Family Learning Weekend in June. The audience of family members, caretakers and staff were touched as each presenter filled our hearts and minds with their experiences of growing up in a hearing world.

Pam Snedigar is a CODA, “Child of Deaf Adults”. She shared her upbringing as the eldest child of deaf parents. Without the support of deaf parents, she mentioned she would not be as educated as she is today. Her parents understood the importance of education, because they had to persevere to obtain what they had. Her message was about sharing languages of all kinds, among all family members. Pam is currently the Director of the Gallaudet University Regional Center – West, a long time sponsor of the Family Learning Weekend. Her office is located at Ohlone College in Fremont, California.

Sheri Cook introduced us to the term “Bi-Cultural” – belonging in both the Deaf world and the hearing world. Sheri has found peace at being Bi-Cultural. In order to help others find their way sooner, Sheri stressed the importance of early language exposure and acquisition in a deaf or hard of hearing child’s world. By filling our homes with reading, stories, games, everyday experiences, we can expose our children to an early start in communication and language skills. Sheri is currently the Director for the Gallaudet University Regional Center – Midwest, hosted by John A. Logan College in Southern Illinois.

Shelby Bean was born into a football family in Colorado (Go Broncos!). His motto is “Ball is Life.” Born with Goldenhar Syndrome, Shelby endured sixteen surgeries. Shelby grew up mainstreamed and gained confidence in himself with his skill as an athlete. After graduating high school, Shelby had the opportunity to play football for Gallaudet University, and thus was exposed to sign language for the first time in his life. American Sign Language (ASL) did not come easy for Shelby, yet having deaf peers exposed him to newfound camaraderie he hadn’t yet experienced. Shelby currently is the defensive coach for the Gallaudet football team influencing young deaf and hard of hearing students of all ages. He is also an Admissions Counselor for Gallaudet University, located in Washington, D.C. To learn more about the main campus and its four regional centers, visit www.gallaudet.edu.



Salish Kootenai College Annual Visit

By Missie Hill, Special Education Coordinator

Excitement rang through MSDB as May 21st arrived and brought with it students from Salish Kootenai College (SKC) located in Pablo, MT. As they have done for several years, SKC students came to observe our school and share activities with our students.



After a morning of attending classes with MSDB students, SKC’s third year students were filled with questions such as, “How many students are served here?,” “What is a typical day like?,” and “How can I work here?”. The students enjoyed time with our children at lunch, and then it was time for the activities.

SKC students outdid themselves this year! There were four stations that included horse hair braiding, a hoop and arrow game, making Ya-Ya dolls, and a story stone. The room quickly filled with loud and happy chatter. Students from both

schools were having a great time. One teacher stated that it was the best visit yet.

The whole day was summed up in a comment from Michael Munson, the SKC professor in charge of the project. Munson stated, “I love coming here and seeing how happy the students are and how much they have grown. I also notice that the teachers truly enjoy their work here and love and support these kids.” I couldn’t have said it better myself. We have a great group of students and staff here. We complete each other!

SKC is 265 miles from Great Falls. To learn more about Salish Kootenai College visit www.skcedu.





Montana School *for the*

HELP US GIVE KIDS THE BUI

A MATCHING GIFT: THE POWER OF WE ... AND ONE UNCOWARDLY LION

By Heidi Gibson, contributing writer

A movement often begins with just one person. When Jack Beckman heard about 93 Montana kids with low vision needing a magnifying reader device, he took action.

As a Lions Club member, Beckman considers himself a Knight of the Blind. In 1925, Helen Keller addressed the Lions Club International Convention in Cedar Point, Ohio. She described her isolation of being blind and deaf since the age of just 19 months old. "Try to imagine how you would feel if you were suddenly stricken blind today," Keller asked Lions members packed into the convention hall. "Picture yourself stumbling and groping at noonday as in the night; your work, your independence gone." Keller probably didn't imagine the long lasting impact of her speech and how the relationship would deepen throughout the world. She had no idea just how far the association would take her challenge. Before the convention was over, the association unreservedly dedicated itself to making Keller's dream a reality. Lions would become Keller's Knights of the Blind.

Since 1925, hundreds of millions of lives have been changed through the vision-related work of Lions around the world, and today the association is as dedicated as ever to hastening the day when no one should suffer unnecessarily from vision problems. Through eye centers and hospitals, medicines and surgeries, eye glasses and eye banks, Lions are working to end preventable blindness and aid the visually impaired (source: <http://lions100.lionsclubs.org>). Montana had only been a state for 36 years at the time of her famous speech, but her influence is still strong and is referenced in Beckman's recent statewide letter to fellow Lions.

During the MT state convention, MSDB Outreach Director Carol Clayton-Bye gave a presentation about the technology available that literally changes a child's life. A video depicted a school age girl who, once she had the benefit of the CCTV, saw there were words engraved in her #2 pencil. She proudly demonstrated the benefit of the equipment which allows her to read at the same pace as her sighted peers.

The family favorite film Wizard of Oz depicts a cowardly lion who is afraid of his own shadow and the great leader Mufasa depicted in the Disney film Lion King manipulates and bullies to get his way. Beckman is quite a contrast from both of those characters. Originally from the tiny town of Rocker, MT, Beckman is a long-time member of the Sunrise Lions Club in Great Falls and has demonstrated a true passion for helping MSDB kids. His record of service is strong, as evidenced by serving as Lions District Governor (2013-14). He is the chairman of the committee actively seeking matching funds up to \$150,000 from 67 Lions Clubs across Montana. Foundation Board Member Mark Willmarth and GFPS Superintendent and Board of Public Education member Tammy Lacey are members of the Great Falls Lions Club.

To find a Lions Club near you visit:

<http://www.montanalions.org>

To change a life, send a check to:

Low Vision Reader Project % MSDB Foundation
PO Box 6576 Great Falls MT 59403



How You Can Help

With your help, the MSDB Foundation has been able to provide funds for services and equipment for the students at MSDB for over 30 years. The Foundation is committed to funding academic and extracurricular activities that help prepare students for independent lives. Please join us in that commitment by making a tax-deductible donation to

www.msdb.mt.gov/foundation or mailing it to:

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

For more information, please call 406-771-6040

e Deaf & Blind Foundation

LDING BLOCKS TO INDEPENDENCE

GREAT FALLS SUNRISE LIONS CLUB

World's Largest Community Based Service Organization Centennial Celebration 2016-2018

Greetings LIONS:

This letter is the introduction for the formal launch for the MT School for the Deaf and the Blind MSDB-LIONS LOW VISION READER PROJECT. This project was approved by the DISTRICT 37 CABINET at the most recent meeting immediately following the district convention in Butte.

It is imperative that you understand and convey the mission and need of this project. We all want to serve our communities and in this case it turns out the "community" is the State of Montana.

We have a "need". The 93 children who will use these readers are clinically blind. They have to use power magnification to be able to read at a basic level. The reader we would be providing not only magnifies but offers the additional function of bringing presentation on boards or in demonstrations directly to the student's desk. This is a huge powerful improvement and is really required to give the student the ability to "see" and process the world around them.

You are receiving a packet of materials which explain the project, the goals and some of the answers to questions which will arise from within your club. We are also asking MSDB and corporate and private foundations to provide the matching funds needed for a Lions Clubs International Foundation grant. This is a great opportunity for Lions to respond and provide the assistance to the blind which Helen Keller spoke of in naming us "Knights of the Blind."

Personally, this project is a reaffirmation of the mission and strengths of Lions. Simply, we serve! As individual Lions we can see this as "someone else's problem." It is not! This need is statewide and moving all of the time in a more fluid society. Some schools have answered the call. Some can't. With this load project administered and supported by the MSDB (Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind) all of the need can be answered. It will continue to operate into the future and provide needed educational support to make these individuals more independent members of society.

Thank you for reading this to your club and engaging in a very powerful investment in the future.
Sincerely,

Lion Jack Beckman PDG 13-14, Committee Chairman
jtbeckman@bresnan.net
(406) 231-2424



"Individually, we are one drop. Together we are an ocean."

~Ryunosuke Satoro

MSDB Foundation Board of Directors

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Introducing Foundation Member Shawn Tulloch



Shawn Tulloch has been a member of the MSDB Foundation Board since 2014. She currently works as the Program Manager for Deaf Services in the Disability, Employment and Transitions Division (under Department of Public Health and Human Services) in Bozeman.

In the past, she was a Teacher of the Deaf for several years in Vermont, Arizona, and Montana. She continues to teach American Sign Language (ASL) in the local community and works with families who have children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Shawn volunteers her time as a Secretary for Gallatin Association of the Deaf and as a Vice President for Big Sky Recreation Association of the Deaf. She is an active member of Montana Association of the Deaf and National Association of the Deaf. She is a strong advocate for deaf and hard of hearing individuals to be independent and to make their own decisions. She is also a supporter for all of the staff at the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) who work tirelessly to encourage MSDB students to be successful in life after high school.

Shawn and her husband, Cam, will celebrate their 13th wedding anniversary this fall. They enjoy traveling and camping trips in their spare time. They have two pet Aussies to keep them busy!

Meet our Foundation Member Debra Redburn

Debra Redburn has served on the MSDB Foundation Board since 2006. She recently retired from Montana State University in Bozeman where she served in several positions. For 5 years, she was the Development Director for the College of Education, Health and Human Development and for the past 12 years, she was the Communication Specialist and Scholarship Coordinator.

Deb grew up in Kansas, graduated from Emporia State University with a degree in Elementary Education and spent 20 years teaching in Garden City, Wichita and Derby, Kansas. When her husband was hired as the Superintendent of Bozeman Public Schools in 1999, the family moved to Montana and have greatly enjoyed all that the beautiful state has to offer, including hiking, skiing (downhill and cross-country), and taking frequent trips to Yellowstone National Park.



Deb and husband Mike have two grown children, Nick and Lauren. Nick is married and is a Gallatin County Sheriff's Deputy and Lauren lives in Seattle where she pursues her passion

for performing classical music with her flute and works at Amazon.

PROUD HERITAGE

By Missie Hill, Special Education Coordinator

Each year Native American seniors attending school in Great Falls are awarded an eagle feather upon their graduation. The feathers are blessed by Chief Earl Old Person from the Blackfeet Nation in Browning, MT, to symbolize strength and honor for completing this portion of life.

It is believed that the feather will protect the recipient in future endeavors. Three seniors from MSDB were included in this sacred Native American ceremony to celebrate their completion of high school. Alyson, Cecelia, and Donald are all enrolled tribal members.



Student Employment Opportunities

By Kelly Olson, Teacher



Achieving independence is an ultimate goal for students. In order to bridge the gap for MSDB students, our school offers a variety of classes related to employment.

Students learn workplace vocabulary, practice completing applications, and attain information on the different types of jobs available. Students are able to work on and off campus to gain work experience. Some volunteer and others work for pay at a variety of locations. Some of the participating community businesses that have welcomed our students into their workforce include North 40 Outfitters, Johnson Madison Lumber Company, Loaf 'n Jug Convenience Store, Sinclair Convenience Store, Lewis & Clark Elementary School, and Play 'N Learn Childcare Center.



Transportation can be a challenge. Students practice independently traveling to their work sites by either walking or riding the city bus. They complete time-cards determining their elapsed time and total hours worked. They practice communication strategies with their co-workers and supervisors, use the video phone to request time off, and arrange for interpreters for special meetings. By experiencing a variety of different job opportunities, the goal is that the students will find an occupation that they will enjoy.

Braille Rocks in Frenchtown

By Barbara A. Balko, Outreach Consultant

On April 30, Barbara Balko, Outreach Vision Consultant for the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) in collaboration with the Montana Deafblind Project, presented on the practical usage of braille to fourth grade students at Frenchtown Elementary School located in Frenchtown, Montana. Katie Rolf, who is Barb's daughter and is an adult who is blind, came along to assist. Katie is a proficient braille reader and writer. Approximately 150 fourth grade students, teachers and staff participated in the presentation.

This presentation consisted of a brief history of braille, some practical braille applications and making a snack from a recipe written in braille. The discussion began with Katie talking about the importance of braille in her life. Next, a step-by-step snack recipe "Ants on a Raft" was read aloud and all participants followed along to create their snacks. Once students made their snacks they were introduced to braille writing utilizing the Perkins brailier and the braille Slate and Stylus. There was a selection of braille books available for students to explore and they had the opportunity to create their own tactile graphics! Some students made braille name tags while others experimented by writing braille messages. The presentation was a wonderful success. The students came away with a new appreciation and brief understanding of encoding and decoding braille and how important it is to those with vision challenges.

A big thank you to all who participated! The Frenchtown students were curious and motivated in their attempt to have some fun in their discovery of braille.



Katie and Maddie (fourth grade student) at Frenchtown Elementary School.

Going Green with DEW

By Emily LaSalle, Outreach Consultant

In celebration of Earth Day, the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (DHH) Outreach team hosted a green theme for the spring Deaf Enrichment Weekend (DEW) April 13-14, 2018.

Sydney Arens with the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation educated our students and staff on "Leave No Trace" practices both in the city (frontcountry) and out in the wilderness (backcountry). Did you know that it takes up to two years for an orange peel to decompose while a piece of chewing gum takes five years and a tin can takes 50? Sydney also shared with us that it is better for the environment to walk on durable surfaces like trails, rocks, sand and gravel than to walk on surfaces such as mud, moss, steep slopes, wet meadows or leafy plants.

Our goal for these weekend events on campus is to bring outreach students together with campus students for a chance to learn and socialize with peers who are also deaf or hard of hearing in order to build communication skills and have a great time all within a 24 hour period. The smiles and friendships made during this Spring's DEW was proof enough for us that we successfully met our goal!

The Outreach Staff would like to extend our sincere thanks to all of the staff and parents who collaborated and shared your skills, experiences and personalities. You all add so much to our weekend. Our heartfelt thanks goes to the MSDB Foundation for funding our enrichment weekends. DEW is an amazing opportunity for our students and we are so thankful.



PARENT GROUP SOCIAL GATHERINGS

By Sue Davis, Outreach Consultant

The Billings area parent group works hard to bring families of children with visual impairments together for fun, social, and learning activities. To make an even bigger impact, they have restructured their meetings to pull together larger events.

The fall event kicked off the series of activities with their 2nd Annual White Cane Day/Halloween pizza social. Members of the parent group, occupational therapy (OT) students at the University of Mary, and the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) Foundation worked together to sponsor the October gathering of students, friends, and families. With



white canes and costumes, the event took place at the University of Mary in Billings, Montana, commencing with an outdoor walkabout led by Sharon Woods in recognition of White Cane Day. After which 20 or so occupational therapy students, sporting a lovely array of costumes, provided sensory activities

for children with visual impairments and their siblings. The children had fun navigating an obstacle course, finding creatures in a concoction of goo, as well as decorating pumpkins with paint and tactile objects.

The event was made possible through donations, financial support, and loads of enthusiasm from the families, and the folks at the University of Mary. Our wonderful MSDB Foundation provided refreshments in addition to Sharon Van Dyke furnished delicious cupcakes, Domino's at Shiloh Crossing donated four extra pizzas to go with our already large order, Party America in Billings Heights provided the festive decorations, which Tina Bolt delivered and arranged. Jamie Buechler worked with Pastor Adrian at the First Alliance Church on Central Avenue to obtain pumpkins which Mr. Kirk Osterdyk graciously donated from his pumpkin patch. Paula and Tanna, faculty at the University of Mary, along with numerous OT students, offered the use of their campus, their time in setting up and engaging with the children in activities, and oodles of gusto. And we mustn't forget the families that attended and warmly shared their children with us for a few hours of fun, with the evening passing far too quickly.



December brought another gathering for the holidays and some Christmas fun. The kids maneuvered through stations where they participated in a variety of activities or created different crafts. Cookie painting/decorating was a huge hit, as was the pine cone decorating and the snow dough station. The kids also colored pictures of Santa, created tactile Christmas trees using different textures, as well as tactile tree decorations.

These two events were truly wonderful for families to connect and share their triumphs and struggles; for many newcomers, it offered hope in knowing they are not alone in their journey of raising a child with a visual impairment. Members of the area parent group urged those in attendance to continue the relationships started here by joining them for other events throughout the year. Our next planned social gathering will occur in August for a back-to-school social. If you plan on being in the Billings area during the months of August, October, December, February, or April and would like to join in the fun, please contact MSDB's consultants, Sharon Woods or Susan Davis, for more information or check on the Kids with Visual Impairment Facebook page. We'd love to have you!



Deep in Our Hearts You Will Stay; Loved and Remembered Everyday

Wesley "Wes" Glen Ostberg
July 3, 1990 – June 21, 2018

Wes began working as a paraprofessional and sign language interpreter at MSDB in 2013. "His greatest joy and sense of purpose came from working with the Deaf children. Wes had a kind soul and a radiant smile. He always tried to find the good in others. He made lifelong friends both in Colorado and Montana. Memories of Wes will live on in the countless hearts he so genuinely touched." Published in Great Falls Tribune on July 1, 2018.

Farewell from Brittany Smith

When I started as a substitute teacher at Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB), I originally thought my path would be with students who are deaf. Life had different plans in store, and I fell in love with working with the amazing students who have visual impairments in Aspen Hall.

I have loved every minute that I have worked at this extraordinary school. I have been given so many opportunities to grow in my knowledge of teaching students with visual impairments during my time here. I will always be grateful to the administration for giving me the chance to try out my wobbly teaching legs as a long-term substitute teacher two different times.

When I was hired to teach while still completing my degree, it was like a dream. This past year I taught Independent Living Skills which included everything from sweeping, to ironing, to preparing food. The students in my math classes were able to use the accessibility features built into most ATMs by using the headphone jack and braille labels on the machine to take out \$20.00.

I am a firm believer that “Blindness isn’t synonymous with helplessness,” as stated by Rhianna Lynn Martin. Just because students may not have sight does NOT mean that they are completely incapable. A powerful lesson I have learned is that it is okay to allow students to fail; because learning happens just as much through failure as it does through success.

There are truly no words to express the love I have for the students and staff here at this school. This is where I feel I “grew up” into the professional I am today. I can never repay the people who have invested in me as a professional, as a colleague, and as a friend.

It is with a heavy heart that I have to let you know that my husband is getting the opportunity now to pursue his career dreams. We have accepted a position in Humble, Texas, where we will be relocating this summer. Thanks for believing in and developing this newbie! I cannot wait to keep up with what’s happening at MSDB. There could never be enough thanks!



Spring-Back to the 80’s

By Anna Greely, Para-professional



While creating decorations for the MSDB Spring Program, one of the kids asked me, “What are you making?”

“This is a cassette tape,” I said.

The student asked, “What is that?”

The Spring Program’s theme was “A Throwback to the 80’s”. Not only did we bring back some songs from the 1980’s, but also the fashion trends, toys, and movies from the era as well. Teachers reached back in their closets for related fashion, literally brightening the program with neon colors, shoulder pads, acid washed jeans, spandex, mullets, geometric shapes, and fanny packs. Let’s be honest, the teachers might have had more fun than the kids dressing up and showing off the 80’s style!

The program included a look back on the top movies and toys of the 80’s. Rubik’s cube, Cabbage Patch Kids, Glo-Worm, and Care Bears were a few that made the list. The top 10 movies of the 80’s included *Rain Man*, *Ghostbusters*, *E.T.*, *Batman*, and *The Breakfast Club*.

It would not be an 80’s Spring Program without kids singing and signing some classics. The program began with the movie *Back to the Future*’s theme song by Huey Lewis “Back in Time”. The Expressions of Silence group energized the audience with *Ghostbusters*’ theme song “True Colors,” and “Girls Just Want to Have Fun, both by Cyndi Lauper”.

Visually Impaired Performers head banged their way through Bon Jovi’s “Living on a Prayer” and “Should I Stay or Should I Go” by The Clash.

The girls from DHH signed “Walking on Sunshine”. The boys from DHH signed “We’re Not Going to Take It.”

Ms. Jarvey’s class performed “Heard it from the Grapevine”, by Marvin Gaye. They dressed up like raisins, referencing the California Raisin commercial from 1986.

Ms. Merja’s class performed Bobby McFerrin’s “Don’t Worry, Be Happy”.

The program ended with everyone singing, USA for Africa’s 1985 hit “We are the World,” and Billy Idol’s classic “Mony Mony”.

Finally, the tree song was sung to commemorate eight graduates and two retirees moving on from MSDB this year.

If you are looking for a way to take a trip back down memory lane, or want to check out all the trends of the 80’s yourself, all performances and songs can be viewed on the MSDB Facebook page.

Stone Child College visits MSDB!

By Missie Hill, Special Education Coordinator

Stone Child College (SCC) made their first trip to MDSB in April. The college students observed some classrooms in the morning and brought wonderful activities for the students to do in the afternoon.

Students from MSDB spent 45 minutes going from station to station to learn about the location, population, and history of the seven different reservations in Montana. There were also hands-on activities which included building small teepee's, decorating buffalo hides, and creating star quilt squares.

Because it was their first trip to our school, our students decided to make a gift for each person from SCC, located in Box Elder, MT. They painted canvas bags and used puffy paint to braille MSDB on them. Each bag had a unique picture of flowers, buffalo, teepee's, or the seasons created entirely by our students. The students from SCC were also presented with a certificate of appreciation.

SCC students said they were amazed by our school and our students. They asked great questions and tried to involve everyone in the activities. I even watched one student learn some sign language to talk to our kids! We hope this will become an annual event, what better way learn about Indian Education and to make new friends?

*Stone Child College (SCC) is a tribally chartered college established to deliver post-secondary educational opportunities through degrees, certificates and continuing education. SCC stresses the importance of preserving the Chippewa Cree language, culture and history. SCC will promote transfer students, professionally prepared and career-ready individuals. The campus is located 90 miles north of Great Falls. To learn more, visit www.stonechild.edu.





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Having Fun While Working Toward A Mission

By Jane Garrison, Outreach Consultant

Youth with visual impairments face unique challenges that may interfere with their ability to participate in certain daily activities. Adults who work with these youth may also face challenges in providing meaningful activities in the home and at school for these children. Many children with visual impairments, their families and teachers don't have the resources or education to overcome the obstacles that hinder full participation in all daily activities, including physical activities. This is the reason the Northwest Association for Blind Athletes (NWABA) and Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) provide regional Paralympic Experiences across the state.

Krista Pomeroy, Programs Specialist for NWABA flew to Kalispell to offer a Paralympic Experience for Flathead Valley youth with visual impairments and their families February 17th. Despite adverse weather conditions, three families braved adverse road conditions to attend. With the small number of participants, each child received individual attention from Krista who used a specialized beeper soccer ball to teach goal ball skills and how to work as a team player. Using scooter boards and sound balls, she also taught how to listen for and locate and/or follow sound sources.



Some of the positive outcomes that came from this event were the following:

- Learning to follow directions
- Listening and using hearing to participate in games
- Kids meeting new friends and working together to achieve a goal
- Getting a workout while having fun
- Being exposed to and using adaptive? Equipment e.g. sound balls
- Providing opportunities for success to increase self-confidence
- Parents meeting each other and forming friendships
- Parents learning what their children are capable of despite their sensory impairment

As a co-host of the event, my takeaway impression is that small turnouts can be just as meaningful as large one because if even one child and their family benefits, and I believe everyone there did, then 'mission accomplished.'

NWABA's mission: "To provide life-changing opportunities through sports and physical activity to individuals who are blind and visually impaired." (Source: <https://www.volunteermatch.org/search/org78730.jsp>).

MSDB's vision and mission: "The vision of the MSDB 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."

BACK TO SCHOOL: MSDB- AUGUST 27 • GFPS- AUGUST 29

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