

# EXPRESS

MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & BLIND

Volume IIV, Issue II, Spring/Summer 2009



GRADUATION  
2009 PAGES 6-7

EDUCATION, COMMUNICATION AND INDEPENDENCE FOR LIFE



*Lynndsie Claussen*



*Krissy Ellsworth*

## Meet Lynndsie Claussen

I am married and have two boys who are 12 and 4. I am from Great Falls. I graduated high school from Great Falls High. I attended Northeastern State University in Oklahoma for early childhood. I love working in preschool and at MSDB. I have spent the last 10 years working at Head Start in Oklahoma. I was a teacher at Head Start in Great Falls for 2 years. Like I said, I am pretty boring my family is my world. I love to fish and camp and be outdoors with my family. Well if you have any questions just let me know. Have a great day.

## Meet Krissy Ellsworth

Hi, my name is Krissy Ellsworth, I have been working at MSDB for about 3 months now. A little bit about myself... I have spent the past 10 months building 10 homes for The Self Help Program. In two months, I will be the proud home owner of one of them. I love the outdoors; wakeboarding, swimming, camping. I also have a big place in my heart for all animals! I truly enjoy working here with all the wonderful staff and students. I would like to thank the entire school for warmly welcoming me into your MSDB family!!



## Three Join Foundation

Bob Norbie, John Musgrove and Miral Gamradt have joined the MSDB family as our three newest Foundation Board members. Bob is from Great Falls and is the CEO of Montana Special Olympics, John Musgrove is a retired teacher from Havre and Miral Gamradt was the business manager before Bill Sykes and is from Bozeman.

# Looking Ahead with Thanks

*By Steve Gettel, Superintendent*

As we cross the finish line of another school year I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who make MSDB the excellent learning community that it is. Thanks go to our excellent education and residential staff who provide many of the best learning opportunities in the state for deaf and blind children. My thanks go to the MSDB outreach staff who travel across Montana working to ensure that every school and family has the best information possible to meet the needs of their child. Thanks go to our stakeholders; everyone who provides services to our students and who work collaboratively with us and support our efforts to improve learning opportunities for all of Montana's deaf and blind children. And most importantly thanks go out to all the parents who allow MSDB to be a part of their families' lives as we work together to provide the best education possible for their children.

The school is already looking forward to next fall and the implementation of some of the objectives from the new strategic plan. To help facilitate these efforts we will be making some changes in staff assignments that allow for the implementation of the plan in a couple of key areas. One of these areas is to use technology to enhance communication and connectivity to provide more opportunities for teaching and learning between students and teachers at MSDB and students and teachers in the local districts. Another area focuses on making more short term educational opportunities and social activities available at our MSDB campus for students who attend public schools across the state as well as their families.

With the adjournment of the 61st legislature we are now able to plan our budget for the next school year. Though there will be less money in our operating budget MSDB did receive good support from a number of legislators and the governor's office. In the end the school's budget was protected, to some degree, from the impact of the poor economy and declining state revenue. We are confident we will be able to staff all positions that are currently filled through the next two years. Families and schools can expect that MSDB will continue to operate its programs without limits or disruptions.

I hope that you and your family have a great summer. We here at MSDB will be busy with the learning weekends, camps, training, and planning for the coming school year, but we too plan to have some fun and enjoy the recreational opportunities that living in this great state provide.

*Education, Communication and Independence for Life*

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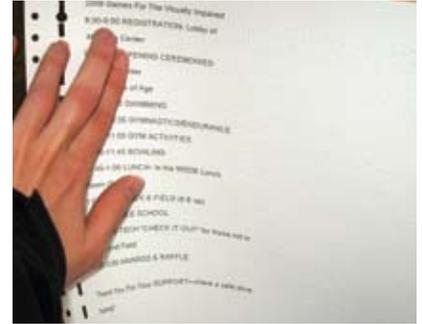
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# MSDB Foundation

Together, we can make a difference!

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



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

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Gift amount:

\$25     \$50     \$100     \$500     \$1,000     Other \_\_\_\_\_

This is a memorial gift, in memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Send acknowledgement to: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like more information on planned giving

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

# MSDB Foundation

## Purchases New Braille Embosser

MSDB has a new Braille embosser/printer, thanks to friends of the MSDB Foundation. PPL Montana and an anonymous private foundation contributed the \$15,000 for the new piece of equipment, which has generated excitement in the Blind and Visually Impaired Department since its arrival. One of its first uses was to produce Braille trail maps of Showdown Ski Area for use by MSDB students who participated in Showdown's Ski P.E. Program.

On a daily basis, the embosser makes print educational material accessible to blind students once it has been transcribed by the school's Braille transcribers. Students who are learning or working in Braille use the embosser to produce homework assignments they've completed on computers.



One important feature of this machine is its ability to print in ink on top of the embossed Braille, so that those who don't read Braille can read a student's homework and other documents. This is very helpful for parents, and especially for teachers at public schools where many MSDB students also take classes. The new embosser/printer also has the capability to produce tactile graphics, unlike the old embosser. This means it can produce graphics needed for higher level math and other disciplines that in the past had to be hand produced by the transcribers. This is a very labor intensive process.

The school's old embosser was more than 15 years old. In addition to being out of date and cumbersome for blind students to use themselves, it was extremely noisy, making conversation in the same room with it very challenging.

MSDB prides itself on teaching students how to access equipment that enables them to function independently and to maximize their potential for learning. A big thanks to PPL Montana and our other friends for helping the MSDB Foundation provide blind students with the tools they need to learn and communicate.

MSDB FOUNDATION



# Senior Trip

by Jim Kelly, Dean of Students



During their senior year, students at the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind are fortunate in that they are able to go on a "senior trip". The trip ends up being one of the highlights of the time seniors have spent at MSDB. The senior trip brings about lasting memories and friendships for the students and their sponsors. This year, eight students and four staff traveled to Phoenix, Arizona. While in Phoenix they visited the zoo and an amusement park, watched a Broadway play, and went shopping, swimming and much more. Seniors and their sponsors left on Sunday, May 3rd and returned on Thursday, May 7th. Upon returning the students had just a few short weeks until their graduation on May 23rd.

Although students and class sponsors work very hard to earn money to go on the trip, the MSDB Foundation assists the students with some funding and covers the sponsor costs during the trip. MSDB is lucky to have the Foundation help with the expenses for the trip – many schools like MSDB are not as fortunate and end up doing all of the fundraising for their "fun" activities.

The students and class sponsors begin working together during their freshman or sophomore year. They have class meetings and conduct a variety of fundraisers. In addition to the Senior Trip the students always use part of their money to purchase a gift for the school, in addition to the class picture, which is displayed on the east wall of the main academic building.

The students usually select officers (President, Vice President, etc.). During the class meetings students also select their class flower, colors, motto, graduation announcements, songs (to be performed or played during graduation) and often times will select the commencement speaker. The class sponsors work very hard with the students during this whole process to make sure everything gets completed in a timely manner. Over time, the students and staff develop nice, positive relationships.



# Congratulations Graduates 2009

*"Remember, the excitement of today does not need to be extinguished by the fear of tomorrow but instead let your lives be filled with HOPE, hope for success, for love, for challenges and hope for joy. ... You and you alone hold the key to your future."*

*— Sally Tilleman, 2009  
Commencement Speaker*



Nathan Decker



Samantha Ellis



Max Jiron



Sarah Johnson



Robert Kindle



Melissa Lane



Allen Nearhoof



Karyll Lee Perkins



Dana Smith

MSDDB ON CAMPUS



# MSDB Skis

MSDB ON CAMPUS

## Winter Recreation Introduced at MSDB

by Steve Gettel, Superintendent

Each year hundreds of school children learn to ski at the Showdown ski area in the Little Belt Mountains about 65 miles southeast of Great Falls. This past winter/spring for the first time MSDB participated in the program which is for students kindergarten through 12th grade. On February 19th and 26th and March 12th about 35 students and 20 staff loaded up in buses and made the trip to be introduced to a winter recreation activity which can become a lifelong sport. All costs and lunch were provided by the School and the MSDB Foundation. Regardless of whether students were deaf or blind, the skilled instructors at Showdown worked with our students to ensure that everyone had a positive and enjoyable experience.

Though most students learned to ski without any special accommodations, the Eagle Mount adaptive ski program provided trained volunteers to assist some of the students who needed additional support or sighted guides. With the help of Eagle Mount our mobility impaired students were able to enjoy the hill riding in sit-skis.

We had three busy but very enjoyable days on the snow with great weather and plenty of smiles.



# at Showdown



## A Teacher's Perspective

by Kelly Olson, Classroom Teacher, HI Department

This was an awesome, unique opportunity that was both educational and enjoyable. Success was achieved with the cooperative teamwork of every single MSDB staff member, the employees from Showdown, and volunteers from Eagle Mount. For students not attending skiing, alternate activities were planned and implemented.

Prior to going to Showdown, teachers were able to use the upcoming experience to introduce terminology and expectations of their days at the ski hill. Some of the students tried on the ski equipment, and plans were discussed by everyone involved regarding the necessary clothing and any specific individual needs.

The bus ride was very pleasant, with the students and staff from both departments, visiting the entire trip. Upon arrival at the ski hill the students were fitted with boots and skis. Some students chose to use snowboards. Some students were fitted into a sit-ski. In addition to this, helmets and goggles were made available for the day. Also some of the students used adaptive ski equipment, such as a device to keep the ski tips together or tethers to control the skier's speed.

In addition to the students' enjoyment, their safety was a priority. Each student's ability level was assessed to assure everyone was using the ski equipment best suited to their needs. All of the students took a ski lesson from the instructors at Showdown. Staff members from MSDB assisted during these lessons in skis and on foot, walking on the ski hill.

Orientation and mobility skills were used on the ski hill and in the lodge. Everyone shared a common experience that could be used in language class to build communication skills. Throughout the day, the teaching moments were endless.

The students were all very successful in their adventure to Showdown. In their own way, every student showed a very impressive level of courage and skill. This was evident from the bus ride, to being on the ski hill, to being in the lodge. Many were able to use this incredible opportunity to demonstrate what they are able to accomplish in this world. The pictures from the ski trip show the true joy of self-accomplishment in each of their faces. Everyone looks forward to the possibility of doing this again in the future.

Thank you MSDB and the MSDB Foundation!



# Cottage Life

by Maeona K. Lee, Supervising Counselor, Residential Program

Newly established this year in the residential program is the Cottage Student Council. The students have participated in various fund raisers, service projects as well as personal improvement workshops. The group has raised money thru candy sales and bake sales. The students also pay \$5.00 for their yearly dues. This year the students dyed Easter eggs, purchased the gifts, hid the eggs and assisted in all phases of the MSDB annual Easter egg hunt. In the personal improvement area, a dental hygienist from the local college presented dental workshops in hopes of encouraging good dental care. The students chose two service projects this year. They purchased items and assembled emergency kits. These kits will be given to the Red Cross who in turn will give them out to individuals who experience disasters. Another service project was writing letters to those men and women serving in the military overseas. This project was a great learning experience for those involved. The high school students involved in student council also assisted in the decorating of the gym for the prom. The student council students have learned much this year in terms of how to conduct a meeting, expectations at meetings as well as learning from each project they have participated in. Overall the student council seemed to be successful for the Sponsors and students involved.



Another activity which has been very beneficial this year for the students is the Cottage Homework Connection. This is the daily homework time in which the students attend. The cottage staff on duty is there to assist in any way towards the students completing their homework, studying for tests and in general learning better study skills. It appears as if those attending are most often better prepared for the next school day.

## SEE Weekend Update Deaf / Hard of Hearing Outreach

by Emily LaSalle, HI Outreach Consultant

*(to be read with the tune "Do-Re-Mi" from the movie "The Sound of Music" playing in your head.)*

Let's start at the very beginning  
A very good place to start  
When you sign you begin with A-B-C  
A whole new world opens for you and me

Do-re-mi, do-re-mi  
The first few signs could be milk and please  
Do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti  
The SEE weekend went beautifully!

Parents, teachers, slps and me,  
Learning lots of sign language in SEE  
Sandy, my co-worker helping me out  
Dennis, our boss, dropped by on  
his route.

BINGO a game we all played  
Root beer floats so deliciously made.  
Fun we had so much  
And we all went home with sign- sign- sign!

Thank you for  
putting up with  
my song  
I feel so good  
We all got along  
Until the next  
time, practice  
your sign  
Remember  
expression each  
& every time!



# MegaDeaf Video Conference

by Kim Schwabe, Supervising Teacher, HI Department

Many months ago, MSDB began exploring the possibility of expanding into video conferencing technologies. We were contacted by Brandon VanCleeve of Pine Cove Consulting from Bozeman who told us about the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) who, working with Madeline Keller (a Tandberg grants coordinator), plan to put on a MegaDeaf video conference between schools/programs for the deaf. Brandon and his compatriot, Brandon, brought up video conferencing equipment and connected us to Madeline who told us more about the project. Soon, we were talking with Deby Trueblood and Clyde Mohan of KSD about how they were using video conferencing technologies as well as the MegaDeaf conference. Deby and Clyde invited us to participate in the event. After an initial moment of fear and trepidation (actually, it was more like a week), we jumped on board. Soon, Madeline sent us loaner Tandberg equipment (video camera and codec box) so we could practice our presentation as well as participate in preparing for the conference itself.

On March 25, 2009, the first MegaDEAF video conference was held. KSD Clyde Mohan hosted (video-jockeyed) and six schools/programs for the deaf and hard of hearing participated. The line-up consisted of MSDB (a virtual field trip of our recent PE ski days), Minnesota North Star Academy (online newspaper), KSD (how they make their "Idioms of the Week" videos which they post on schooltube.com), Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf (secondary program) from Ontario, Canada, (arts & culture high school major), Ohio School for the Deaf (work experience recycling program), and Kansas School for the Deaf (famous deaf people from Kansas). Over 40 school/programs for the deaf as well as numerous individuals from 18 other states and two international countries participated by viewing the live stream of the program!

The conference was held in the IMC and was attended by students and staff from the Deaf Department. We connected the loaned Tandberg equipment up to the Internet and directed the camera on to our presenter, Allen Nearhoof (senior), who was assisted by his teacher, Ms. Brenda LeMieux. We then projected the feed onto our big screen so everyone could easily see. When it came time to start the program, we were the first to present. So, with lights and camera on, Allen did his presentation. He did a terrific job; smoothly moving between his speaking part and the video of our ski day. (Thanks, Allen, for being such a wonderful representative for our school!) Before we knew it, we were done and without any technical glitches! Soon, the lights were off and we were all sitting back enjoying the other schools do their presentations. All we were missing was the popcorn! During a break, the audience got involved by doing a video "wave" to all the others watching/participating out there in cyberspace. KSD rotated between sites and it was amazing to see all the students and staff at their schools signing and waving hello. One of our little ones said, "Wow, like me. Just not here!" The world got a little bigger ...and yet a little smaller... that day.

With this experience under our belt, we look forward to being able to obtain this technology for ourselves and begin to connect via video with other schools, programs, and classrooms serving deaf and hard of hearing students across Montana, the nation and beyond.

Many thanks to Madeline Keller, Deby Trueblood, Clyde Mohan and especially to Brandon VanCleeve and all of Pine Cove Consulting for their unending support as we took this leap into video conferencing.

**To view the MegaDeaf conference, please go to following link (Please be aware that our presentation is joined mid-stream as the recording process started a bit late.):**

**[http://www.ksd.kyschools.us/megadeafconference/mdfc\\_video\\_0325.wmv](http://www.ksd.kyschools.us/megadeafconference/mdfc_video_0325.wmv)**

MSDB  
ON CAMPUS



# Goalball Enrichment Weekend

by Barb Rolf, VI Outreach Consultant

MSDB BLIND/  
LOW VISION  
OUTREACH

The Goalball Enrichment Weekend held on March 27-28, 2009 was a huge success! Primarily prepared by the VI Outreach staff, the weekend attracted students with visual impairments and their families along with many friends and teachers from throughout Montana. The Weekend started out on Friday evening, March 27 with a fun filled pizza dinner in the Mustang Center. The dinner was followed by a small orientation to the arts and a chance to personally experience a "look and touch" museum designed by the MSDB outreach consultants. The students' assignment was to think about the various forms of artwork presented (collage, watercolor and sculpture) and decide what form(s) of art they would like to explore during the scheduled weekend activities. Of course, the goalball sessions were also a main focus. Our students love goalball and they cherish the time they spend getting together, rekindling old friendships and making new ones. Students of all ages (preschool-high school) participated and everyone got along great! Parents, friends and teachers loved talking with each other and networking.

Goalball gives all of our students a prime opportunity to practice team sportsmanship. It serves as a recreational activity that individuals with visual impairments could possibly do as they become young adults. Over the years, much talk has begun to surface in professional realms regarding the increasing need to address the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). The ECC refers to the knowledge and skills that are needed in addition to core academics by students with visual impairments due to their unique disability-specific needs. They include orientation and mobility, social interaction skills, independent living skills, recreation and leisure skills, career education, technology, sensory efficiency skills, and self-determination. The Goalball Enrichment Weekends are designed to do just that...give students a prime opportunity to learn about extended skills beyond classroom academics.

Responses from families about the weekend: "I couldn't be more pleased, all of our experiences here have been awesome." "It is always great fun to come to MSDB." "Thanks for taking care of us!!" "We love your school!" "Some of the best times as a family have been here at MSDB."

What a great honor that we mean this much to the families in Montana! Way to go!



## Close-up Trip to Washington, D.C.

by Sharon Woods, VI Outreach Consultant

Special thanks to the MSDB Foundation for giving three of us the opportunity to experience our nation's capital and government. Jessica Massey from Anaconda, Stephanie Shuey from Libby and I learned a lot through the Close-up trip this spring.

The Close-up Foundation provides a fast-paced hands-on program for high school students in Washington, D.C. The students participated in mock debates, worked in small groups to discuss policy and government, and toured the capitol. We had the opportunity to meet with Representative Rehberg and Senator Tester. The girls both had informed questions which were given considerate and thoughtful answers by the government officials from our state. Other highlights included riding the Metro (subway), visiting monuments and museums and best of all making friends from all over the country!



# Games for Visually Impaired

by Carol Clayton-Bye, Supervising Teacher VI Department & Sharon Woods, VI Outreach Consultant

Students from across the state gathered to participate in the 2009 Games for Visually Impaired in Great Falls, MT. The event, held on MSDB campus, was a huge success! The 25 + inches of snow that fell during the week prior to the games created a unique challenge for the organizers and athletes that just seemed to add to the fun. It actually made measuring the distance of the softball throws a little easier!

Students ages three to 21 participated in the following events: pentathlon, track and field, gymnastics, gym activities, bowling and swimming. Smiles were abundant from the opening ceremony to the awards/closing ceremony. All the athletes were proud of their medals, trophies and accomplishments.



MSDB ON CAMPUS



# UM Students Get Music Lesson in Sign Language

by JOE NICKELL of the Missoulian, reprinted with permission

The sound of music is always ringing in Luke Juras' ears. Every day, the University of Montana junior and music education major immerses himself in the techniques of music-making with his trumpet and an array of other traditional instruments.

On Thursday, he and a couple dozen fellow UM students got a crash course in melodic silence, courtesy of a group of 11 students from the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind.

Those students, who perform around the state and country under the name Expressions of Silence, presented an interactive master class at the UM Music Building, as part of the school's activities during Disability Awareness Month.

Formed 14 years ago, Expressions of Silence has gained national acclaim for its diverse performances of popular songs using American Sign Language. The choir was a featured performer at the 2006 national conference of the National Association for Music Education, where they appeared alongside the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Oak Ridge Boys.

Choir co-director Dessica Wilson said the challenges of teaching music to her deaf and hearing-impaired students, who range from fifth- to 12th-graders, has been both a constant challenge and an unparalleled joy.

"Teaching just the basics like rhythm, when the students can't hear the sound, was a challenge," she recalled. "We were using sticks on white buckets, so some of the students could feel the sound. But it still was all about starting slow, keeping focused and working up from there. ... When it comes together, it really feels like an accomplishment."

"It's really about watching us and paying attention to us and each other," added co-director Jennifer Wasson. "The students have to focus on using their vision and learning to count in time, so it's a very focused communication that we create."

UM music education professor Mary Jane Belz said she was excited to bring the choir back to Missoula for the third year in a row.

"I'm trying to turn my students' minds around to recognizing that the important thing about teaching music isn't achieving perfect sound, but rather inspiring students to celebrate the joys of music," said Belz. "This choir really brings that energy and awareness into focus."

After performing a spirited rendition of the Sandi Patty song "Love in Any Language" in American Sign Language, the choir, which is based in Great Falls, helped teach the UM students to sign the chorus of the song.

Luke Juras said the experience of learning from the choir brought a new perspective to his understanding of musical expression.

"It's really good to see that it's more than just playing instruments," he said. "You can experience music in whole other ways."



# Transition at MSDB

by Bob Corwin, Transition Coordinator

Another school year has ended, but it seems to me that Transition responsibilities never end. I worked last summer with two students on their employment and one student with daily living skills. Some think the daily living skills are a stretch for me, especially if you ask my wife.

Transition is always busy, but more so during positive economic climates. This year started out well with eight off campus placements for our students. Since the downturn in the stock market things slowed to a tortoise like pace. Businesses were not as anxious to hire students because their business activity had slowed. Currently four of the original eight students remain employed off campus. They are doing well and we have absorbed the other four students into our on campus employment plan where they work daily in a variety of areas. In addition to these four, twelve more students are employed and learning skills on campus. That number changes depending on the semester and the student's interests and class schedules. As I have mentioned in the past, our staff have become accustomed to having students working in their areas. The students work as Teacher Assistants, Clerical Staff, Librarian Assistant, Maintenance, Dining Room and Kitchen Assistants, Computer Assistants (entering data for staff) as well as other seasonal helpers. Our program allows students to develop interests and skills specific to their interests whenever possible. The program also teaches responsibility, team work, ethics, loyalty, and cooperation for all of the students involved.

In addition to our traditional transition programs we have added an on campus school store. In late February we started planning a store that would not only give us more on campus employment opportunities it would also allow us to train students for similar retail jobs. We opened the Snack Shack on campus where we operate the store from 7:00 a.m. until 9:00 a.m., Monday through Friday. At the Snack Shack we sell hot and cold drinks including cappuccino, hot chocolate, regular and decaffeinated coffees. In addition we sell water and flavored water along with special breakfast items including fresh cinnamon rolls, brownies and cookies hot out of the oven. We also offer a variety of healthy snacks for our consumers. The store is supported in large part by our staff and students. We use the store to teach math skills, cooking skills, marketing, sales, consumer etiquette, social skills and much more. MSDB would like to expand the store to include a lunch counter serving soups and salads in the near future. Please come and see our operation the next time you are visiting MSDB.



Transition is still going strong and our students continue to develop skills that will assist them with future employment opportunities. Although learning is occurring at a rapid on the job pace for the student, it sometimes feels as if "transition" is more fun than learning. That might be our secret to our program, but please don't tell anyone. We wouldn't want it to get out and let people know that we are enjoying ourselves and learning at the same time. Transition is a positive, active, engaging and interesting program. Transition for me is not really school in the traditional sense.

MSDB has witnessed positive growth in this program and it has become very popular. Students come to me often and ask when they can have a job. The students are talking to each other and sharing their experiences and that in itself is a very cool way to advertise the program. Until next reporting time take care, interact with your kids, enjoy life and as always if you have any questions for me concerning Transition please call me at MSDB during school hours.

MSDB ON CAMPUS



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

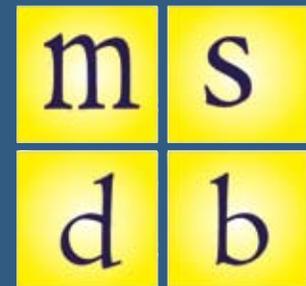


In Mrs. Cross' 8th period science class students were able to learn about the life cycle of chickens. The students planned, ordered, incubated, and hatched five chicks. The chicks were a popular attraction with students and staff checking on them throughout the day.



The annual Icebreaker is a tradition not only for Great Falls, but for MSDB. Students and staff in the residential program have participated in the Icebreaker for 29 out of 30 years. Their perfect record was ruined when the Icebreaker fell on a travel home weekend.

# MONTANA SCHOOL for the *DEAF & BLIND*



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