



# Express

MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & THE BLIND

*giving kids the building blocks to independence*

Volume XX, Issue 2, Spring 2018



**SKIS, BOARDS,  
OR SHOES**  
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**GRADUATING  
CLASS OF 2018**  
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V 406-771-6001  
VP 406-760-1068  
dsorensen@msdb.mt.gov

# Dear Families, Staff, Students, and Stakeholders,

We have all heard that the only thing constant is ‘change’. We have heard “change is hard.” We may have even said things like “time changes everything” or “change your attitude and you can change your life.” Our small piece of the world has seen significant changes this year. We have had staff members move on to other opportunities. We have hired new staff members. We have moved offices, changed classrooms, switched staff members in the cottages. Some students have changed their schedules. The second semester brought new classes for some students.

In many of our personal lives, changes have brought joy in the faces of new babies and sorrow in the illness or the loss of people we love. We may have bought a new home and moved. We may have moved recently from another state. We may have gotten a new phone and all of the tricks we knew no longer work. Our partner or housemate may have changed the brand of coffee and that might have been the final straw.

As humans, we crave consistency, and yet, we live for excitement. How does one find the right balance of consistency and change, the yin and yang, the push and pull of life without falling apart?

In thinking about this question, the word ‘resiliency’ comes to mind. Resiliency is the ability to “bounce back” after any change that might be significant to you. While there are curricula, resiliency isn’t something that automatically comes to mind when one thinks about school. We tend to think about reading, writing, math, and science.

What does this have to do with MSDB?

Well, spring is around the corner. Our schedules will get busier. We will have weekend events. We have our Spring Musical/Arbor Day Program to plan and practice. Spring sports will begin and we will have to think about getting to and from practices. We are starting AdvancEd Accreditation processes. Individual Education Plan meetings will happen. We will get more referrals. Students may come and go, staff may come and go. Other changes and stressors will present themselves. It may be time for your work evaluation. It may be time to retire. You may start a new job. In thinking about how you will get through spring, how do we teach those coping skills to our children and our students?

1. Take care of yourself. Making decisions requires energy which must be restored. Otherwise, one succumbs to mental fatigue. Eat healthy, stay active, and sleep well.
2. Seek information. Our brains crave information. Make sure your information is accurate. Information is powerful. By gaining information, your brain settles.
3. Stay connected to your friends. Just as your brain creates neural connections in learning, your heart and soul needs connections in life. ❖

Check out these websites for more information:

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3057733/how-your-brain-reacts-to-change>  
<http://blog.langleygroup.com.au/neuroscience-of-change-what-makes-change-easier/>  
<https://www.resiliency.com/free-articles-resources/the-resiliency-quiz/>  
<http://www.resiliencyquiz.com/index.shtml>

Wishing you peace and resiliency,

Donna E Sorensen, MSDB Superintendent

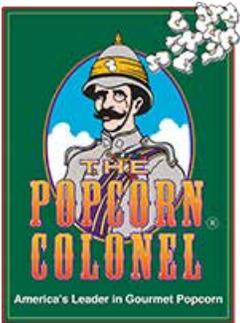
# What's Popping at the VIEW?

By Amy Tangen, Outreach Consultant

At the Visually Impaired Enrichment Weekend (VIEW) we always have such a good time. This event takes place on campus each fall and again each spring. Students who are visually impaired from all over the state join students who attend the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB), and staff from around the state joins staff from MSDB campus to grow, learn, and celebrate together.

The event usually kicks off Friday morning with introductions and events divided up by age group. Time is given for old friends to reunite and catch up with each other. We go hiking, fishing, shopping, and more. We try out different vocations to become fire chiefs, artists, cooks and more. Friday evening we head to the Mustang Center to celebrate with pizza and listen to our favorites, with the Visually Impaired Performers (VIP) group singing beautiful and/or fun songs! They are awesome. We head over to our evening programs and then end up in the cottages visiting and eventually tucking in for some sleep. Saturday is filled with sports, arts, and activities. It is such a good time.

During VIEW this past fall, the younger group made a special trip down to the Popcorn Colonel store here in Great Falls. We learned about the varieties of popcorn, how it is popped, flavored, and bagged and even got to have a tasting contest. When we were all done, they gifted each of us with a free bag of popcorn. This trip filled our senses and our hearts. Thank you to the Popcorn Colonel!



## MSDB Staff and Eagle Mount



No matter what the students chose, they all had a blast at their annual day of skiing, snowboarding, and snowshoeing at Showdown Resort! Staff had most students skiing independently by the end of the day! Trenton is seen here on the chairlift with an Eagle Mount Volunteer.

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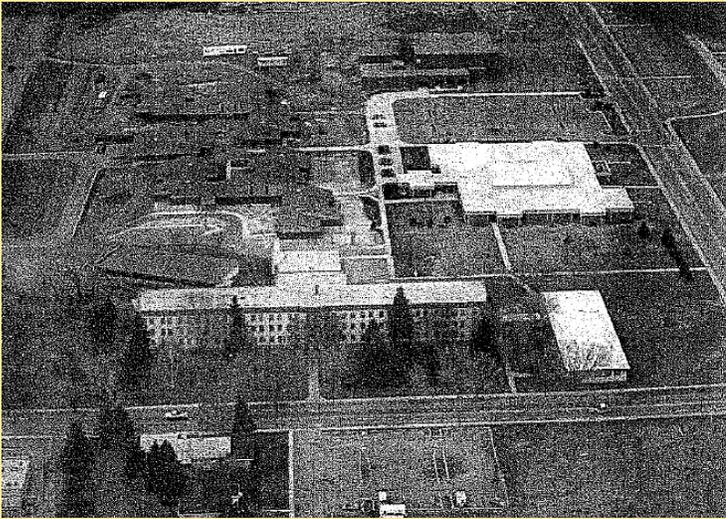
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- MSDB Summer Programs...Hope To See You Here!

# CELEBRATING OUR 125<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY (1893-2018)

By MSDB Staff



*GREAT FALLS MT MSDB CAMPUS, 1980s*

On April 27, we will celebrate an important benchmark in the history of MSDB. The school turns 125 years old this year. Thousands of children have benefited from programs over the years to enhance their education and promote independence.

Public Works Administration (PWA)

Started: 1935

Completed: 1936

Contractors: Pappin & Son

The predecessor to the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind was founded in Boulder, MT in 1893. The school served deaf, blind, and developmentally disabled children. As the school - and particularly its developmentally disabled student population - continued to expand during the early 1900s, the Montana's state legislature "voted [in January 1934] to segregate the departments of the deaf and the blind from the department of the feeble-minded" (Source: MSDB-A Short History).

In doing so, the legislature approved a new campus, moving the school from the town of Boulder to the city of Great Falls, which donated ten acres of land on the east side of town for the school.

Construction on the new school "began in 1935 with federal money and under the direction of the Public Works Administration" (MSDB).

Montana's Big Timber Pioneer newspaper reported that construction had been completed by April 1936, though the school formally opened and was dedicated in the fall of 1937.

The building included "classrooms, trade shops, kitchens, dining rooms, laundry, recreation rooms, dormitories,

hospital, gymnasium, boiler room and staff quarters" (MSDB). The original PWA-funded school building was expanded but has since been demolished.

The original school building was located at the west side of the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind campus, between Central Ave. and 2nd Ave. North, along [the east side of] 38th Street North.

Source: <https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/montana-school-deaf-blind-great-falls-mt/>



*The building and an adjacent boiler house served as the school and dormitory until classroom additions were made in the 1950's. A new school building was completed in 1972 and new dormitories and a recreation facility were completed in 1984-86. The original 1937 structure was demolished in 1986.*



*1893 school established  
1936 moved to Great Falls  
1981 started MSDB Foundation*

# VI WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

By Carrie Dawes, Teacher

**F**our-wheeled carts. Library books. Disinfecting wipes. What do these three things have in common? They are all a part of the Visually Impaired (VI) Department's Work Experience Program.

The VI Department participates in a Work Experience Program consisting of three basic parts.

- Part One is the classroom component. Using their medium of choice (print, braille, or audio), students read and discuss materials presented in the textbook *Preparing for Life and Career*. Topics include communication skills, managing resources, making career decisions, learning about work, getting the job you want, and preparing for job success.

- Part Two consists of the on-campus job program. On a typical day, one may find Saraphia and Anthony e interdepartmental mail route, Kaelyn checking in library books, Cecelia cleaning the Library, Billy doing custodial work around campus, and Brandon making campus deliveries (no delivery too large or too small!).

- Part Three is the off-campus component. Students are trained in off-campus jobs such as mucking stalls at Eagle Mount Equine Program, walking dogs at the Animal Shelter, delivering snacks at an elementary school, or sorting DVD's at Mike's Movies & More.

The process mirrors the real work world. Students fill out an MSDB student job application to "apply" for a job. Once awarded the job, students must fill out time sheets. Completed time sheets allow students to receive a small wage for their labors which is another generously funded by the MSDB Foundation! Upon completion of a job (usually anywhere from 6-9 weeks), an MSDB Work Behavior Evaluation is completed by the supervisor of the student. The score from this tool can be used as a percentage in order to provide a grade for the job. Employee evaluations are essential for improving performance in any workplace and exposure to this process in a supportive environment is designed to help take away some of the anxiety of being evaluated. Job skills gained in this program are life skills that will stay with the student long into the future.

So, the next time you see a student with low vision or blindness sorting mail, pushing a large garbage can on wheels, or scanning books ... you just may be witnessing an MSDB Mustang participating in the VI Work Experience Program!



*Alyson with her snack cart at Lewis and Clark Elementary School.*



*With a smile on his face, Drew is working at the Eagle Mount Equestrian Center.*



*Kaelyn is scanning books in the MSDB Library.*

# PRESENTING THE GRADUATING CLASS 2018

Please join us for their Commencement Ceremony on

• **Friday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00 PM in the Mustang Center** •

As they prepare to leave us for their next journey in life, they leave us with these memories:



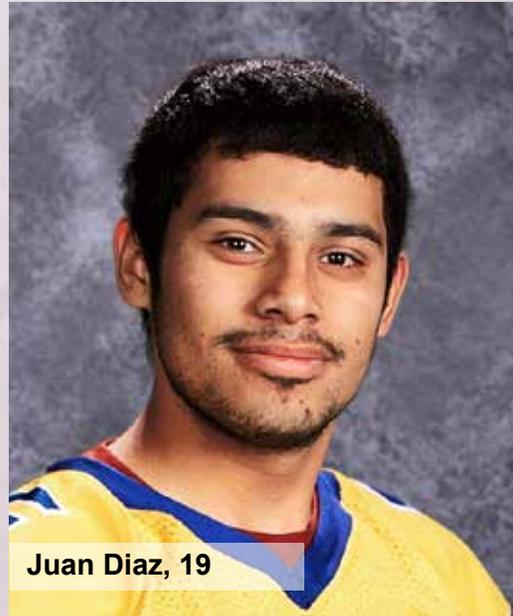
**Cecelia Coeeyate, 19**

**Best memory while attending MSDB:**

Shredding papers and doing the obstacle course.

**Future plans:** I will work at Fuddruckers wearing a uniform and hat. I will give customers food.

**Favorite class:** Work Experience.



**Juan Diaz, 19**

**Best memory while attending MSDB:**

Becoming friends with Kyle Hotzel.

**Future plans:** I will continue working at Johnson Madison.

**Favorite teacher/class:** My favorite teacher is Mrs. Wasson. My favorite classes have been Math and Driver's Ed.



**Donny Miller, 17**

**Best memory while attending MSDB:** Study Hall.

**Future plans:** Video Editing, Art, Guitar/Piano.

**Favorite quote:** "Feels bad, man."

**Favorite Teacher:** Brittany Smith.

**Favorite Class:** Culinary Arts.



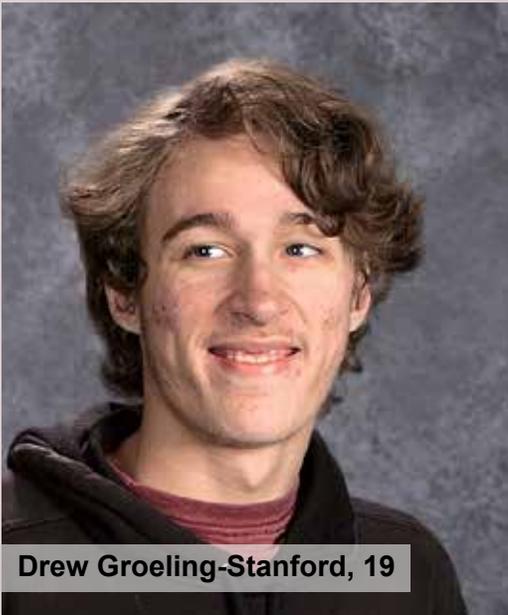
**Elsa Jones, 18**

**Best memory while attending MSDB:**

Socializing with my friends.

**Future plans:** I want to travel to different countries.

**Favorite teacher:** I love Mrs. Wasson because she drives me crazy!



**Drew Groeling-Stanford, 19**

**Best memory while attending MSDB:**

The first time I met everybody!

**Future plans:** I am going to continue to work at Western Livestock Auction. And I will possibly take some culinary arts classes.

**Favorite teacher/class:** That's hard to decide! All of the teachers here at MSDB, at the California School for the Blind and the ones at Great Falls High School are memorable! Biology at Great Falls High School was my favorite class.



**Skylee Black, 19 (20 by grad.)**

**Best memory while attending MSDB:**

Performing with Expressions of Silence. I love being involved with this group!

**Future plans:** I want to become a math teacher.

**Favorite teacher/class:** My favorite teacher is Mrs. Wasson. My favorite classes have been Math and Fashion Design at Great Falls High School (GFHS).



**Adriana Huth, 19**

**Best memory while attending MSDB:** Getting to perform in the Christmas programs.

**Future plans:** I'm going to college to become a history teacher.

**Favorite quote:** "Be kind to each other. Share with each other."

**Favorite teacher/class:** At MSDB, my favorite teacher is... all of them! In Helena, my favorite teacher is... all of them! My favorite classes were all of them, too!



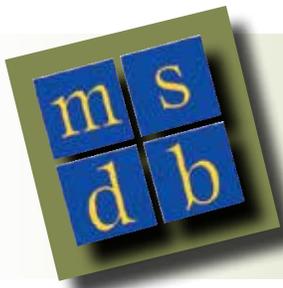
**Alyson Flamand, 19 (20 by grad.)**

**Best memory while attending MSDB:**

Lunchtime! My first memory was when I first came here when I was 7, and my brother and I shared a double tricycle bike.

**Future plans:** I'm going to get a German shepherd puppy. As soon as he is housebroken, I am going to look for a job with on-the-job training. I would be interested in working with animals of some kind.

**Favorite teacher/class:** My favorite teacher is Mrs. Rutledge. I have enjoyed Finding Wheels to help solve transportation issues.



# Montana School *for the*

## HELP US GIVE KIDS THE BUI

### A MAN, A DOG, AND A CAUSE: THE ORIGINS OF THE MSDB FOUNDATION

By Heidi Gibson, contributing writer



Shep's story means a lot of things to different people. Mostly, it is a feel-good story about loyalty, perseverance and the kindness of strangers. What many don't realize it was also the beginning of a legacy at MSDB.

The Great Falls Tribune put the spotlight back on Fort Benton to commemorate a milestone. Shep would have been surprised, too, perhaps, for Shep was a "modest and unassuming dog," a Tribune writer opined in a story announcing an accident had taken the dog's life 75 years ago last winter.

Shep first appeared in Fort Benton in 1936 when his owner, an area shepherd whose name remains unknown, was brought to town for medical treatment. When the shepherd died, his body was sent on a passenger train to his family in the East. That's when Shep's vigil began. For the next 5-1/2 years, he lived at the Fort Benton train station, waiting for his master's return.

On Jan. 12, 1942, Shep ran across the tracks in front of the engine and attempted to leap onto the depot platform, but he wasn't agile enough to make the jump. Maybe he slipped. Perhaps Shep, deaf by then, didn't realize in time that the train was coming. Though many mourned his death then, the number has multiplied through the years as Shep's story passed to new generations.

The United States was at war when Shep died, and still his death merited prominent mention in newspapers around the country. Thousands sent messages to Fort Benton.

Shep was called "the dog who knew no master save one," as a writer at the time described him, and only in the last few years of his life did he allow himself to be coaxed into the station for warmer quarters. He



*Shep continues to keep watch over the Fort Benton valley. (Photo by TravelTourXP)*

gradually accepted attention from people he knew "but he accepted no master except the one who had preceded him in death."

When the train whistle blew at the unveiling of Bob Scriver's Shep bronze statue at the 50th anniversary ceremony, it was said there wasn't a dry eye in the place.

Shortly after Shep's funeral, Great Falls Mayor Ed Shields announced a simple concrete tombstone, "properly engraved," would be placed at the dog's grave. Today a small concrete obelisk is next to a metal

## 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

<http://msdb.mt.gov/foundation.html#donate> 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



cutout of Shep overlooking the town and depot. So, instead of overfeeding Shep, the funds went to start the beginnings of the MSDB Foundation. Shields started an important philanthropic legacy for the school when construction of the new Great Falls campus was completed in 1936.

Many locals have a personal connection. Mine is my grandpa and great-uncle working shoulder-to-shoulder with Boy Scout Troop 47 to haul big white stones to spell out Shep's name. In fact, the original wood cutout of Shep was painted by my great-uncle Art Brown, who worked at the 320 Ranch and later became the artist in residence in Virginia City, MT. The troop served as pallbearers at the funeral attended by hundreds



### A LEGACY BEGINS

A lasting impact of Shep's story came from the profits of a booklet about him, which Shields sold on the train. He was friends with the superintendent of the School for the Deaf and the Blind. Hoping to see something happy emerge from Shep's tear-jerking story, Shields directed more than \$25,000 from booklet sales to the school, money that effectively launched the MSDB Foundation.

The school receives state funding but does not have discretionary funds for extras. Foundation money has sponsored student participation in activities such as the Ice Breaker Road Race and prom. It's put clothes on needy students, sent staff to training and upgraded computers. The fund has also helped with travel costs for financially strapped students to come home for holidays and over school breaks.

who mourned the loss of a socially detached yet loyal companion. The story became a legend, and the kids at MSDB still benefit from Shep's legacy. Almost poetic that Shep lived long enough to become hard of hearing.



### Share Shep's legacy:

- **Donate in Shep's memory:**  
MSDB Foundation, PO Box 6576 Great Falls, MT 59406  
or online <http://msdb.mt.gov/foundation.html#donate>
- **Visit Fort Benton and see Shep's grave, a short hike from a trailhead near the airport. The Shep statue is near the Grand Union Hotel on the levee.**
- **Read Shep: Our Most Loyal Dog by Sneed Collard III of Missoula.**

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

*~Helen Keller*

### MSDB Foundation Board of Directors

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## Introducing Triumphant Treyton of Anaconda!

By Barbara A. Balko, Outreach Consultant

**T**reyton is ten years old and is in the fourth grade. He attends Fred Moodry Intermediate School in Anaconda, Montana. Treyton is an amazing student, a hard worker and an absolute delight. He is a successful student, loves to play basketball, soccer and flag football. He is a wide receiver on the school's Blue Team.

While he was in third grade, Treyton participated in his school's "Battle of the Books" reading competition. The competition was comprised of all third and fourth grade students. Treyton and his group "The Skittles" were the third grade champions and went on to compete against the fourth grade champion team. The competition finale was held in the school auditorium with a total of 24 students competing. Each team member was given a total of 15 books to read and was responsible for learning pertinent information about each book (title, author, plot, characters, etc.). Treyton and his fellow students were quizzed on their knowledge. After a challenging competition, Treyton and his team emerged tied for second place overall.

Treyton is highly motivated and competitive, and he also happens to be visually impaired. He rose to the challenge

of reading the required 15 books utilizing the website and his tablet. The Learning Ally is a national non-profit organization dedicated to helping students with print reading challenges. Treyton downloaded all 15 books onto his tablet and diligently read and studied each one.

Treyton's parents were instrumental in encouraging and helping him to complete the daunting assignment. Treyton said, "I like listening to audio books because I can keep up with my teammates." His mother Tiffany stated that audiobooks foster his independence. When asked about future plans Treyton shared that he plans to go to college but for right now he is just focusing on getting through elementary school. Way to go, Treyton!



## Lexi: Superstar Student

By Barbara A. Balko, Outreach Consultant

**M**meet Lexi, a bubbling ten year old who attend Lone Rock School in Stevensville, MT. She is in the fourth grade and loves school. She is fond of just about every subject and is especially great at math.

Not only is she enthusiastic about school, Lexi is also a bright and outgoing athlete. She recently returned from the Montana Special Olympics Area Games at Lost Trail Ski Resort where she competed in cross country skiing and snowshoeing events. She won several ribbons and medals.

Lexi is visually impaired, so she reads braille and writes with a Perkins braille. Lexi is proud of being a fast and proficient braille and is able to keep up with classmates in school utilizing braille. Lexi uses her tablet and associated magnification apps to aid her in participating in classroom activities.

Lexi's family purchased a new Humanware BrailleNote Touch for her. This is an electronic notetaker with a refreshable braille display. It is a stand-alone device. Lexi says, "I love my BrailleNote Touch because it is like an electronic braille. I have better accessibility to things." In addition, her teacher Mrs. Wandler can follow along through the use of the built-in touchscreen monitor that translates her braille to print. Lexi's braille specialist, Mrs. Dimsha, said the BrailleNote Touch gives Lexi independence and better connects her to her class and her teacher.

Lexi's parents were instrumental in the challenging acquisition of the Braille Note Touch. This purchase has proven to be a valuable investment in Lexi's future. Lexi is a breath of fresh air and a Superstar Student! We wish her the best in all future endeavors.



## The Cottage Promotes Independence for Life

By Audra Balcarcel, Cottage Life Attendant

One program we offer for residential students is for Juniors and Seniors to participate in the Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP). This program is designed to help students develop skills they will need to become independently successful in today's world.

Specific areas on which we focus are: daily living skills, school and work, as well as health and nutrition. Every two weeks, students create and plan a menu for the upcoming weeks. By having our students do this, they learn the importance of nutrition and how to shop on a budget.

When students have completed the initial planning stages of grocery shopping, we take them to Albertsons to purchase their food items. While we are there the students learn skills such as how to maneuver around the store, quality and price difference between brands, and how to advocate for themselves if they need help. Our students are also expected to practice their cooking skills, with minimal guidance whenever possible. We think it is so important that our students are comfortable and confident in their skills, so we want to practice and apply them as often as we can!



*Adriana is a senior residential student in our Independent Living Skills Program. Visual impairment makes the task of removing hot items from the oven very challenging. The new (longer) oven mitts keep her hands protected while she makes chicken fajitas for dinner!*

## Exploring the Lewis & Clark Portage around the Great Falls

By Dessica McKeenan, Teacher

How much do you know about the Lewis and Clark Expedition? The 4th Grade class at MSDB has been learning about this particular topic in Social Studies. We have discussed key players, important locations, and major events. The crucial role of documentation in journals and mapping this unknown area were also explored. To top it off, we took a field trip to the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center here in Great Falls where the portage took place in 1805.

The Interpretive Center gives us a much better idea of the historical importance of navigating waterfalls before roads and bridges were built. It is thrilling to have this piece of history right in our own backyard!

Lewis and Clark and the Great Falls Portage:

*Lewis was thrilled to see the enormous waterfall, the Great Falls of the Missouri. It was 900 feet wide and 80 feet high with a "beautiful rainbow" just above the spray. Lewis called it "the grandest sight" he "ever beheld." More importantly, it meant that he and Clark had chosen the right fork in the Missouri River. All winter long they had been talking with Native Americans about a water route across the west. The Native Americans had described the territory in detail, including important landmarks like the waterfall in front of Lewis.*

Now it was time for the portage (the carrying of goods over an obstacle): Lewis and Clark's expedition party needed to carry their canoes and supplies around the waterfalls. Before they saw the Great Falls, Lewis and Clark thought the portage would be less than a mile. As Lewis scouted further, he found four more waterfalls and realized that the portage would be much longer. In fact, it would set them back an entire month.

The Corps would have to hike 18 miles to get around the five waterfalls. Source: <http://www.americaslibrary.gov>.



*Bridger and David pull a rope that simulates hauling a boat out of the water. They are testing their strength.*

# Our Incredible Christy Receives National Recognition

By Denise Rutledge, Teacher

In October 2017, Christy Haagenson was presented with the “2017 Outstanding Paraprofessional of the Year” award by the Principals of Schools for the Blind and The Councils of Schools and Programs for the Blind. This award is given annually to a paraprofessional working at a residential school for the blind. Christy was able to attend the American Printing House for the Blind’s annual convention to accept the award due to the generous support of the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) Foundation.

Christy has been an asset to MSDB for over 15 years and is very deserving of this award. Joining our staff at the young age of 17, Christy was originally hired as a substitute in the spring of 2001. She returned as a full-time staff member for the 2002-2003 school year. Christy has risen to all challenges presented to her. She jumped on board with learning braille and eventually went on to become one of the first certified braille transcriptionists in Montana. Following Christy’s daily schedule is a task unto itself! Throughout her day, you can find her embossing materials for our tactile learners and braille readers; assisting students in various Great Falls public schools as a 1:1 paraprofessional; substituting for teachers on-campus who may be at meetings or absent; and teaching braille lessons to students to make sure each one of them knows all of their contractions and correct braille formatting! Christy’s commitment to MSDB extends beyond the school day. She has assisted with extracurricular duties like sponsoring graduating classes, working as an assistant coach for the Cane Club, and (currently) as a co-director for the Games for the Visually Impaired.

Receiving this national award is an honor for Christy, but also for our school and state. MSDB has nationally recognized paraprofessionals that excel at their craft and this award proves it! Our staff, our students and their families are beyond blessed to have skilled, committed individuals assisting our students in a gazillion different ways throughout their school days. Congratulations, Christy! Thank you for your many years of service to MSDB.



*Christy named the 2017 Outstanding Paraprofessional of the Year by the Principals of Schools for the Blind and the councils of Schools for the Blind.*

# Montana wins at ASHA Convention

By Kitty Griffin, Outreach Consultant

Catherine “Kitty” Griffin M.C.S.D. CCC-SLP Outreach Consultant for DHH accepted the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s award for Recent Clinical Achievement. In her acceptance speech, Griffin was quick to point out that the award was not a sole effort, but for assisting Montana in forming the state’s first Cochlear Implant Collaborative camp. Instrumental to this project were the following:

- Lisa Cannon AuD Consulting Audiologist at MSDB
- The Hearing Center at Rocky Mountain Ear, Nose, and Throat in Missoula
- The Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind
- State of the Heart Therapy, Inc
- MT Department of Public Health and Human Services.

The event was held at the historic Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles on November 11, 2017. Kitty shared the stage with ASHA colleagues from around the U.S. who were honored for terrific accomplishments including dysphagia (swallowing) protocols for school districts in Alaska, and beginning a treatment center for children with autism in the Caribbean from a colleague in Florida, among others. In addition, scholarships and awards for research and groundbreaking clinical work were provided.

This year’s Cochlear Implant camp is coming up on July 21 in Helena, MT. Please join us this summer! Do you hear what I hear? The sound of happy “campers” this July!



*Kitty (middle) shared the stage with ASHA colleagues from around the U.S. who were honored for terrific accomplishments.*

Trivia bit: The Biltmore Hotel was the site for the Academy Awards in the early years, and the hotel is decorated with photos of award winners such as Shirley Temple, Henry Fonda, Walt Disney, and George Burns.

# Finding Our Own Wheels

By Geri Darko, Orientation and Mobility Specialist

High school students in the Visually Impaired (VI) Department are participating in a class called Finding Wheels. Throughout this class, they are learning about the challenges of being a nondriver and how to overcome those challenges to be a confident, independent traveler as an adult. Students explore various methods of transportation including planning and executing walking routes, specific laws regarding bicycling, reading bus schedules and taking city buses, applying for and using Paratransit services, and the pros and cons of taxis and hired drivers. Each of these transportation methods has its own unique advantages and disadvantages. Students are trying out many of these options and are experiencing some of the pros and cons firsthand.



*Kaelyn independently pumping gas while Geri supervised.*

from school, work, extracurricular activities, and outings with friends, appointments, and activities of daily living. Students will have to determine which method of transportation is the most time and cost effective for a given trip or outing. Funding for transportation may come from a variety of sources such as paychecks from employment, allowance from parents, money given for birthdays or holidays, or payment received for doing odd jobs around the neighborhood. Students are more in control of their own independence and take ownership and pride in their skills when they are responsible for maintaining a budget and paying for some of their unique transportation needs.

Because money can sometimes be in short supply for students in high school, the Finding Wheels class is learning about exchanging and reciprocating for rides. Nondrivers should think about their own skills and abilities that they can offer to others in exchange for rides. They may tutor peers or friends, bring baked goods to a neighbor, babysit, dog-sit, or house-sit, shovel sidewalks in winter or rake leaves in fall. There is no limit to the number of ways a nondriver can exchange and reciprocate for rides from family, friends, neighbors or coworkers.

When a person with a visual impairment is taking a long trip with a friend or family member, he or she may reciprocate in other ways to make the trip more enjoyable. Bringing a selection of snacks, audio books and music or offering to pay for and pump fuel are just a few of the ways nondrivers can be active participants in a road trip. Recently, Finding Wheels students asked about the process of pumping gas. A field trip to the nearby Loaf 'n Jug gas station provided an opportunity for students to locate the vehicle's fuel door cover and learn about the parts of the gas pump. Each student was able to learn about the process from start to finish and even got to squeeze the lever and fill up the tank. What a great opportunity to learn a new skill that may prove useful to these future travelers!

## The Importance of Helping Others

By Brenda LeMieux, Teacher

In December, MSDB students and staff participated in a community service project at the Great Falls Rescue Mission's Cameron Family Center.

In our Social Studies class, students were in the process of learning the concept of how donating items can help local families going through a crisis. Students took the opportunity to visit and tour the Cameron Family Center to have a better idea what services take place there. Then, students made a plan by creating a list of useful personal items that could be donated to the families.

Not only did they participate in service learning, they also learned how to read the Great Falls Transit bus routes and schedules in order to shop for the items. As part of the plan, students took the bus ride down to Wal-Mart to purchase some personal items to be donated. They also learned about comparison shopping. They were able to find the best prices and pay for the items at the cash register.

Upon return to MSDB, they each brought a bag of personal items to donate into the bins. Once the collection bins were filled, they took the donations to the Cameron Center to donate to the families. The most important thing is that each student received a real life hands-on experience to understand the importance of helping others through donations.



# Batteries, Who Knew?

By Emily LaSalle, Outreach Consultant

Recently, a teacher asked about a student's hearing aid batteries not lasting as long as they normally do. Are the batteries old? How old are the hearing aids? Are the hearing aids draining the batteries? I turned to MSDB Audiologist, Kathy Johnson for input. The following is Kathy sharing her experience and knowledge:

Back in the "olden" days, hearing aid batteries were either made with silver or mercury. They still make some mercury batteries for specialized cases, but this is now rare. Batteries of these types would go dead over time if left in the package. Mercury batteries were especially dangerous if swallowed. To prolong battery life, they used to keep batteries in the refrigerator!

Most of the batteries sold now are "zinc/air" batteries. If there is a little sticker over the top of the battery in the package, then they are indeed zinc/air batteries. Peeling the sticker activates

the chemicals in the battery to start working and then create the current needed to power the hearing aid. This was done to use safer chemicals in batteries and also to prolong battery life. Now you don't need to put batteries in the refrigerator because chemicals aren't activated until the sticker is removed. When you put the new battery into the hearing aid, it does take a couple of seconds for activation to happen so sound can be heard.

If you are looking at batteries, always check the bottom of the batteries visible in the package. If you see fuzz, it means that the battery is leaking. It is important to never touch any battery that is fuzzy. Dispose of the battery using gloves and flush any skin that came in contact with the fuzz with water.

Hearing aid batteries have certainly changed over time. Technology continues to improve people's lives, and it is important that the power source has evolved for the better as well.

## Visually Impaired Kids Technology Project

By Carol Clayton-Bye, Outreach Director

Currently, 414 students in Montana are being served by MSDB for vision support. Many of those students need technology to assess curriculum similar to their sighted peers.

The benefits of this project are nearly immeasurable. Students provided technology to access materials at the same time as their sighted peers will increase success and participation in their education. For example, students diagnosed with legal blindness being provided magnification technology in an English class will be able to magnify the printed page to read and gain skills at the same rate as his/her sighted peers.

Another example would be for a student who utilizes braille as their primary literacy medium, being provided braille technology to read braille and gain skills at a similar rate. The end result and impact of the project will include students having access to technology to increase independent, social skills, academic skills, employability and community involvement. To date, 55 kids live on campus in Great Falls. This project is for the more than 100 family-based students who cannot logistically access equipment on campus.

Consultants will provide ongoing support and training for the use of assistive technology. Equipment will remain with an assigned student until such time that it is determined it's no longer required.

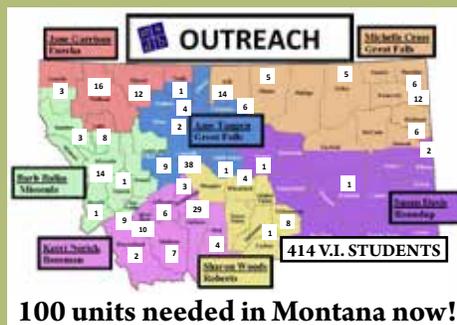
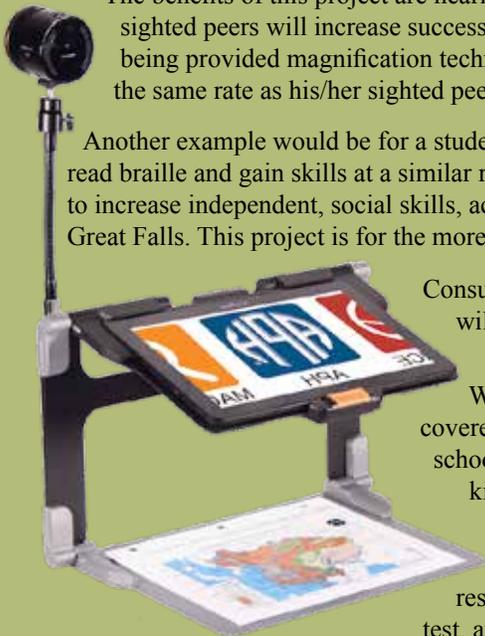
### WHY CAN'T MSDB JUST BUY THEM?

While the State funds the school, the Foundation continually seeks support for equipment not covered by state funding. The few units on campus are 20 years old and are not portable. Few rural school districts can afford them. At this time assessments are being done and it was determined 100 kids in the Outreach Program need this this lifechanging technology. The total cost is \$300,000.

### Lifechanging Technology

Students can magnify a print document, read a book from an online library, conduct internet research, view at distance, connect smartboard in a classroom, write and email assignments, take a test, and so much more!

To learn more about Outreach, visit [msdb.mt.gov](http://msdb.mt.gov).



# Cottage Craft Corner

By Dorothy Nutter, Cottage Counselor

Each month in the cottage, we do some kind of craft activity with the students. The craft usually has a theme associated with the holiday for that month. We have made the centerpieces for the tables in the dining room for our Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter dinners.

Some of our crafts might be games. For example, we made marshmallow shooters and had a contest to see who could shoot their marshmallow the farthest.

In the past, we have made crafts for different celebrations like Chinese New Year or Mardi Gras. We made Chinese lanterns for Chinese New Year, and made colorful masks for Mardi Gras. The kids enjoy and look forward to our monthly craft corner.



*Elementary students in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Department participated in and learned how to do some simple sewing and embroidery stitches. Students watched videos on YouTube to learn how to do ten different stitches. Charlee (left) and Angelina (middle) share a joke while Lucia (right) stays focused on her work.*



*Lead Houseparent, Dorothy, assists Billy and Bo in constructing center pieces for the formal holiday dinner for staff and students. The students are always excited to take their projects home after the events to show their parents and often ask if they can make more than one to give to siblings.*



## Introducing New School Counselor Trudy Hill

Greetings to MSDB staff, students and beyond! I am a Licensed Professional School Counselor from St. Paul, Minnesota. I enjoy spending time with students and learning about their passions. Helping students achieve their goals gives me great joy, whether those goals are academic or personal, and whether they are going to college or to work.

I earned my Master's degree in School Counseling from Minnesota State University-Mankato, and I have been working as a school counselor in Minnesota. I also spent 5 months in a high school in Beijing, China, which was truly a life changing experience.

Continuous improvement is important to me. I continue to take classes to enhance my counseling skills and have specialist designation in the areas of Legal and Ethical Issues and College Admissions. I am currently taking a course for Stress and Anxiety Management with Children. I am excited to join the school, and I am enthusiastic about supporting the students and staff at MSDB.

When not working or studying, I like to read, take long walks and train my dog Finnigan in preparation for his International Therapy Dog certification. My future goal is to gain certification myself in animal assisted therapy which allows counselors to use a therapy animal in specific ways in counseling sessions. Sometimes it just feels good to hug a dog!





MONTANA SCHOOL  
FOR THE DEAF & THE BLIND

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## MSDB Summer Programs...Hope to See You Here!

MSDB offers a variety of enriching summer programs for children and their families. Family Learning Weekends offer opportunities for families to draw support from one another as well as from MSDB staff and other experts. Summer Camps are a chance for kids who attend school in their home communities and those who attend MSDB to come together for a week to socialize with their peers, develop independence, and learn new communication and technology skills.

### Family Learning Weekends

One Family Learning Weekend is designated for families of deaf and hard of hearing children, and one is for families of blind and visually impaired children. These popular weekends include dynamic national speakers and a wealth of information on learning to relate to a child's disability. The weekend provides opportunities for families to learn about their child's sensory needs, share their experiences with other families, and communicate with one another in a warm and caring atmosphere.

**Family Learning Weekend for the Blind/VI:  
June 1-3, 2018**

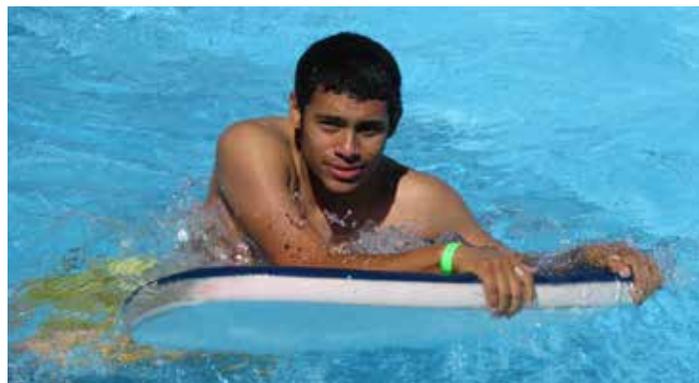
**Family Learning Weekend for the Deaf/HOH:  
June 8-10, 2018**

### Summer Camps

Week-long camps for children who are blind or visually impaired, or children who are deaf or hard of hearing are offered to students from across the state and offer skill-building in the key areas of communication, social interaction, independent living, and the use of technology.

The camps include structured leisure and recreational activities, including trips to the local water park, Great Falls White Sox baseball games, and exploring the historical, art and children's museums in Great Falls. The Montana School for the Deaf & the Blind has a complete recreation complex where campers can enjoy many games to enhance their language, communication, and their team building skills. For all students, learning these activities can be powerful accomplishments.

**Summer Camp for the Deaf/HOH: June 17-23, 2018**  
**Summer Camp for the Blind/VI: July 8-14, 2018**



The Montana School for the Deaf & the Blind provides room, board, entertainment, and transportation to and from the Great Falls campus at no cost to the student or family. Summer programs are co-sponsored by MSDB, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI), and the MSDB Foundation.

For more information please visit the MSDB website [www.msdb.mt.gov](http://www.msdb.mt.gov). Click on Campus, then Summer Programs. You will find further explanations of each event along with applications and program booklets. For additional information you can also contact your Outreach Consultant or Jim Kelly at (406) 771-6120 or Carol Clayton-Bye at (406) 771-6091 or call MSDB at 1-800-882-MSDB or email us at [info@msdb.mt.gov](mailto:info@msdb.mt.gov).

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"To be removed from this mailing list, please contact Paula Mix at [pmix@msdb.mt.gov](mailto:pmix@msdb.mt.gov)"