



22nd Annual
FAMILY LEARNING WEEKEND for
FAMILIES OF Blind and Visually Impaired Children
June 3-5, 2022

What: MSDB 22nd Annual Family Learning Weekend for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Where: MSDB Campus in Great Falls
When: June 3-5, 2022
Who: Families of Blind and Visually Impaired Children living in Montana!!!!!!
Why: It will be fun!!

The Learning Weekend is a creative program that provides opportunities for families of sensory impaired children to learn about blindness and visual impairment, share their experiences with other families, and learn how to communicate more fully with one another in a warm, caring atmosphere.

The focus of the weekend is to enhance each individual's personal knowledge of blindness and how it relates to the education and development of their child. Informal workshops, group discussions (parent groups, kids groups, siblings groups, etc.) and hands-on activities will be offered. Child care and recreation for the children (siblings included) is available at no charge. Families will be reimbursed for mileage at the current state rate.

Housing is provided on a first come first serve basis. Each family is generally provided with their own suite of rooms in the cottages and efforts are made to make assignments according to individual needs and preferences. Typically each family has their own bathroom, sometimes two depending on the size of the family. **Participants will need to bring personal items such as soap, shampoo and toothpaste.**

Children ages **birth to two** will be in the cottage nursery with staff. *Parents should pick up their children from the nursery prior to lunch and return them to the same location when they are done eating.*

The children are divided into groups based mostly on age. Many factors are taken into consideration including friendships, maturity level and interests when putting together the groups. The children stay with their groups until they join the parents for mealtimes. Some of MSDB finest residential and school staff will be responsible for supervising your children and making sure they enjoy the weekend as much as you do!

Children ages **three to five** will be involved in a variety of activities throughout the day. These activities will include: snacks, indoor and outdoor activities including a trip to the MSDB playground (weather permitting). The activities for this group will remain flexible depending on the ages and abilities of the participants. Saturday morning during breakfast your children ages **six through eighteen** will be assigned to various teams (groups). These teams are designed to allow for children to be involved with peers their own age. For this session there will be several different activities including: recreation activities, crafts, some Orientation and Mobility experiences and of course snacks. Sometime during the morning session MSDB Counselors will also meet with the siblings and provide them the opportunity to discuss their feelings regarding having a blind or visually impaired sibling. *This information (in general terms, while keeping siblings names confidential) will be shared with the parents during the Sunday morning presentation.*

Information from various vendors (serving Blind and Visually Impaired) will be available during the weekend

***The kids program is intended to provide entertainment and educational activities that will further the participants' understanding of vision loss and its impact on the family. Activities are designed for the youth with vision loss and their siblings. Participants are grouped by age and staff are assigned accordingly depending on the numbers of the participants and their individual needs. If you have unique concerns regarding your child, please let us know and we will work with you to ensure that everyone has a good time.

Presenter Bios

Jacob Bachmeier was born and raised just up the road from Great Falls in Havre. He attended Havre High School, and during his senior year, he announced his first campaign for the Montana House of Representatives. Jacob went on to win his primary in 2016, just months after graduating from high school, and then beat the incumbent in the general election. He was re-elected in 2018 to serve a second two-year term. While in the legislature, Jacob was honored to carry many significant pieces of legislation, such as House Bill 726, which he co-sponsored with Rep. Mary Caferro. House Bill 726 changed the law to extend child support payments to parents taking care of adult children with disabilities.

Jacob also attended MSU-Northern while serving in the legislature and graduated with an Associate of Arts degree in 2020. Last spring Jacob enrolled in a Bachelor of Christian Ministry program at Regent University. He looks forward to completing his degree and eventually going into ministry. Jacob likes to spend his free time outdoors fishing and camping. Recalling the childhood pleasure of watching minor league baseball with his grandparents in Great Falls, he enjoys watching the Voyagers to this day. Jacob credits much of his success to those who advocated for him and provided him with visual resources throughout his K-12 education experiences. The Montana School for Deaf and Blind was one of his strongest advocates. He now appreciates the opportunity to champion investing in the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind.

Barbara Peterson is an Outreach Consultant for MSDB in western Montana serving children who are blind and visually impaired. She lives in Missoula, Montana. Barb has her Masters in Special Education as a teacher of the visually impaired. She is also a certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist, and a Deafblind Specialist. Barb is the mother of two children; a son and a daughter. Her daughter Katie is blind (and has multiple challenges). Barb is avidly committed to helping all children with vision loss and their families.

Michelle Cross is an Outreach Vision Consultant for MSDB serving Blind and Visually Impaired children in Northeastern Montana. Her home and office is located in Great Falls. Michelle has a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and Special Education. Michelle has been employed with MSDB since July 2006, as a teacher of students with visual and multiple impairments in the classroom on campus and is currently a consultant. Most recently, she has completed her Masters degree in Special Education through Texas Tech University with an emphasis in visual impairments. She enjoys spending time with her family, fishing and camping.

Susan Davis – MSDB Outreach Consultant since 2015 serving children in Southeastern Montana. She has an Elementary Education degree from MSU-Bozeman and was a classroom teacher for 10 years prior to obtaining her Masters in Special Education with an emphasis in Teacher of the Visually Impaired. She is passionate about learning and integrating technology in ways that increase student achievement.

Jane Garrison is a Vision Outreach Consultant serving students in the northwest portion of the state of Montana for 10 years. Her home and office are located in Eureka. Jane was a Special Education teacher for 18 years before coming to work for Montana School for the Deaf and Blind in August of 2008. Jane has a Bachelor of Science degree from Northern Michigan University with teaching endorsements in Elementary and Special Education. She received a Masters Level certificate for Teacher of the Visually Impaired and completed Orientation and Mobility Training through Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, TX.

Billy Henry was born in Montana and founded Northwest Association for Blind Athletes in 2007 when he was fifteen in Vancouver, WA. The organization served six students the first year and now impacts nearly 2,000 individuals annually through 600+ in-person and virtual events across WA, OR, ID and MT. Billy graduated from Washington State University with a degree in Public Affairs and lives in Vancouver with his fiancé Ashlyn, and their two dogs.

Kerri Norick has been an Outreach Vision Consultant for MSDB in southwest and South-Central Montana since 2005. She completed her Masters in Special Education with an emphasis in teacher of the Visually Impaired and is a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. Prior to MSDB, she worked as a special education teacher in Hamilton & Belgrade. Kerri and her husband Storm reside in Bozeman with their two sons. They enjoy living in the mountains and playing outdoors.

Sharon Woods is a Teacher of Visually Impaired, Orientation and Mobility Specialist and most recently certified as Deaf-blind and Autism Spectrum Disorder and Visual Impairment Specialist. She began serving infants and school age children with visual impairments in Yakima Washington and has been an outreach consultant for Montana School for Deaf and Blind for more than a dozen years. She started her career in education as a teacher in Montana in 1978. Sharon currently serves Central and South central Montana.

Amy Tangen began her teaching career in 1988. When her oldest daughter was diagnosed with a bilateral profound hearing loss, the family moved to Great Falls, so she could attend MSDB to ensure the best possible education. Amy began teaching in the VI Dept – teaching Technology, Reading, and Life Skills. Amy taught VI children for 7 years, and then returned to teaching public school, while earning a Masters Degree in Educational Technology and Assistive Technology. Amy returned to work for MSDB as a VI Outreach Consultant in July of 2013, and has completed her Master's Degree in Special Education with a certification as a Teacher of Students with Vision Impairments.

Blind Learning Weekend 2022 Schedule

(subject to change)

Friday, June 3, 2022

- 4:00-6:00 **Check in:** Yellowstone Cottage
- 5:30-6:00 Tour – meet in the lobby of Yellowstone Cottage
- 6:00-7:00 **Dinner:** Pizza, salad and dessert in the MSDB main dining room
- 7:00-9:00 All of the children will go to the Mustang Center to meet their “groups” and get to know each other.
- 7:00-8:15 **Ice Breaker:** Parents participate in an activity to connect with each other at the beginning of the weekend.
- 8:15-9:00 **Young Adult Panel:** Opportunity for the Vendors to share about their product and participants will have time to visit their tables to learn about the different services and products that are available.
- 9:00 Pick up your kids from the Mustang Center

Saturday, June 4, 2022

- 7:45-8:45 **Breakfast** in the main dining room
- 8:45 **Group Picture:** All Participants together in front of the big sign (each family will get a “Memory Book” at the end of the weekend to take home)
- 9:00-10:15 **Billy Henry** Will share information for parents of children with needs for vision.
- 10:15-10:30 Break – check out the Vendor Tables and help yourself to a snack!
- 10:30-11:30 **Community Partners:** Lion’s Club and the Sight and Hearing Foundation
- 11:30-12:45 Lunch served in the main dining room. Parents should be reunited with their children for lunch.
- 12:45-2:15 **Discussion Groups (3) based on topics desired at check-in (locations to be determined):**
Blind – Barb and Jane
Low Vision – Sharon and Susan
MIVI – Kerri and Amy
- 2:15-3:00 **Pick one (1)**
Blindfold Walk
ECC
- 3:00-3:45 **O & M Instructional Session and Expanded Core Session:** Pick the session you did not do at 2:15.
Pick 1 - O & M Instructional Session This is a hands-on blindfold experience. Navigating the environment and exploring mobility through all senses will be explored. . .OR **Expanded Core Session** Introduces participants to the QUICK & EASY ECC guide that provides short lessons for both parents and teachers to teach these unique disability-specific skills – focus will be on Life Skills. Sessions will be repeated at 3:00-3:45
- 3:45-4:30 **Parent Groups:** Separate group for Mom’s, Dad’s and Grandparents or other caregivers. Great Experience!
- 4:30-5:30 **Optional:** APH games (baseball, webchase, scatter crowns, monopoly, uno, Showdown, snakes & ladders, etc)
- 5:15-6:30 **BBQ dinner:** in the main dining room
- 6:30-8:00 **Parent Panel:** this has always been a favorite of the weekend. Listen to parents as they share their story about their journey with their child. It is uplifting and empowering to be a part of this presentation (as a participant or a member of the audience).
- 6:30-8:00 The kids will be in the cottages watching movies or playing outside (weather permitting). **When the parent panel is over please pick up your kids from the cottages.**

Sunday, June 5, 2022

- 7:45-8:45 Breakfast
- 9:00-11:00 **Jacob Bachmeier:** will share his journey and offer practical information for parents.
- 11:00-11:15 **Blind and Low Vision Sibling Summary:** Listen to what your children have to say about having a blind or visually impaired sibling AND also what the blind or visually impaired kids think about living in a sighted family! Some surprises and thought provoking information for all parents.
- 11:15-11:30 **Wrap up and Evaluations**
- 11:30-12:00 **Grab and Go Sack Lunch** will be available in the IMC for you to pick up as you leave.



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WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID ABOUT MSDB's FAMILY LEARNING WEEKENDS!

"I learned something new every day - even after attending five previous family weekends."

"Coming to MSDB for the Family Learning Weekend is our favorite thing to do every year"

"I was very impressed with MSDB in general. I had no idea that this was such a 'gem'. Montana is very lucky."

"This weekend is worth every mile I drive. MSDB has given our family emotional, physical and a valuable education"

"It was great! A lot of wonderful connections have been made"

"The staff is absolutely incredible."

SPONSORED BY:

The Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind ♦ The M.S.D.B. Foundation, Inc.
The Montana Deaf Blind Project and The Montana Office of Public Instruction



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Mailing Label