



MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & THE BLIND *Express*

lifting students beyond expectations

Volume XXXVII Issue 3, Summer 2023



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From Our Superintendent



As with any year, as our graduates walk across our gymnasium floor I found myself reflecting on the accomplishments of our seniors. This year there were three of them. Our students amaze me in so many ways with their talents and gifts. Each one of them is an example of persistence, hard-work and victory. However, it was not just the students themselves that caught my attention this past graduation, but as I looked at the students sitting before me listening to our guest speaker, I caught myself watching those immediately sitting behind our graduates, their families. These families trusted MSDB staff with educating their students. Two of the families made the decision to place their student in our cottage program. Being a parent myself, I cannot imagine the difficulty of that decision that means living apart for eight months. Our third family, I am almost sure that mom is “Superwoman!” Watching her be a mother to her child for the past six years has been an honor for me and an example of what parenting should look like.

After observing our graduates and their families, it resurfaces the importance of our strategic plan that was implemented this past year. In October, I presented the focus for this current year. In summary, we wanted to accomplish the following:

- Organize and advance an organizational mentoring program.
- Create a structure that will develop leadership opportunities at MSDB.
- Utilize PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) to work collaboratively in order to build capacity of all staff.
- Identify and build relationships with key stakeholders.
- Provide professional development specific to Special Education (SPED), Visually Impaired (VI), Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH), curriculum and instruction.
- Utilize accessible sensory specific assessments from established lists at a predetermined frequency.

As I ponder the success of each initiative listed above, I feel confident that we met a majority of our goals. Of course not at the 100% level and not without failing. However, at MSDB we are adopting the mindset that sometimes failure is the best way to learn. We will refine the above initiatives to better align to our goals and also begin focusing on new initiatives as identified in our strategic plan.

Additionally, MSDB has been collecting evidence to apply for school organization accreditation from the Association of the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER). This process has had our VI Department closely review management standards; including policy and administration, financial management, staff and volunteers, building and grounds, community relations, fundraising, and community/consumer involvement. All of these standards are currently being addressed and will ultimately strengthen our entire school. We are hopeful to apply for this accreditation at the beginning of the 2023-24 school year.

One aspect of the AER Accreditation that excites me is the creation of a volunteer program here at MSDB. We want to open our doors to anyone who would like to help us meet our mission of providing the best services in Montana. This could include helping in our classrooms, reading to students, among other things. We will be implementing the Raptor Volunteer Management System in August 2023 to help with our volunteer application process. Please be on the lookout for further information.

In closing, congratulations to our graduates and their families. Thank you staff for your dedication to our students and your engagement with our strategic plan. We set out with the theme “**Oh, the Places We Will Go,**” and I encourage you to think about the changes this past year. We are building the premiere resource in Montana for educating our students we work with. Take some time this summer with family and relax. 🦋

In Mustang Spirit, Paul Furthmyre
Superintendent
pfurthmyre@msdb.k12.mt.us



Expressions of Silence

By Jen Wasson - Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



Front row- Lexi, Lucia, Lilly, Ayvia, Blair, David, Angelina, Madison, Marissa.
Back row- Marias, Korben, Joshua

Expressions of Silence (EOS) performing group recently hosted their annual spring fundraiser and performance on May 5, 2023. This year's theme was "Rewind Through the Decades." Students showcased their talents by singing and dancing to different songs from each decade; starting with the 2020's and rewinding back to the 1950's. It was an incredibly fun night, and it is so much fun watching the hard work from hours of practice pay off by performing on stage for so many of our faithful and new fans.

The spring performance is the primary fundraiser of the year for Expressions of Silence. The funds raised are used to help offset the team's travel costs, uniforms, and celebratory events for the members of the group throughout the school year. It includes a silent auction with items donated by generous businesses and community partners, MSDB staff, and our MSDB families. Without their gracious support this event would not be possible.

The directors of EOS, Tearra Donovan and Jennifer Wasson, would like to thank their donors and supporters. If you are interested in having Expressions of Silence perform at your upcoming event, please contact Jennifer at 406-771-6143.



Hugs all around.

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Graduates

Class of 2023!



Planting of the Senior Tree.



Doug Baker

Right before Christmas, Doug came to MSDB in 2013 from Mountain View Elementary in Great Falls.

He has come up against many challenges in the last 10 years, yet he never gave up and kept moving forward.

Douglas is a tech wizard and loves to play video games. He has been working with the office on campus sending notifications to staff. He loves to interact with staff and has a great sense of humor.

Douglas will work from home after graduation using his tech skills. His dream is to create an accessible joystick for video games to help those with disabilities and give them the opportunity to enjoy a little fun. 🦿



Daemien Stout

Daemien came to MSDB from Big Sky High School in Missoula in March of 2021. Since arriving at MSDB, he has fit right in and made great friends. He even took some classes at Great Falls High School, including Theatre and History.

His straight-faced humor and acting skills show his wit and charm with staff and students alike.

Daemien has always enjoyed writing for pleasure and now plans on attending college to further those writing skills. 🦿



Blair Walkley

Blair came to MSDB in 2011 as a first grader. Since that time, she has become a strong leader amongst her peers. She is involved in many activities such as student council, Expressions of Silence and Flying Hooves performance groups.

She helps out with the younger students and helps guide them during afternoon activities. She is very patient and kind to all students.

Blair has worked in different settings on and off campus, but her passion is in photography. She has taken courses on campus and at the public school to learn more about the subject.

At this time, Blair is taking time for herself before she decides what direction to follow in her future. She states she may work full time or take college classes. She also has the opportunity to attend the Living, Employment and Academic Planning program (LEAP) on MSDB campus in the fall should she decide to do so. 🦿

Learning Skills through Photography and Video Editing

By Lace Lesofski - Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



Angelina



Johnny

This year several students had the opportunity to take a new elective offered at MSDB! This elective was Photography and Video Editing. Students learned how to use their creative eyes to find, snap, and edit photos using a variety of software.

Over the course of the year students took photos on and off campus using both a DSLR Canon camera, as well as their school ipads. They took these photos and then learned to edit using

either the editing software provided by Apple or Adobe Express. They also created several video projects that incorporated ASL, storytelling, drawing, and advertisements. It was such a wonderful opportunity to see students creating art through their eyes. Every single one of these students has an eye for creativity and gave it their all! Students were also included in the 3rd Annual Art Show that happened on May 5th. ■■



Blair



Korben

The ECC... Where to Begin?

By Denise Rutledge - Teacher of the Visually Impaired



Caleb and Gracie work with money readers.

The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) is an essential component of education for students who are deaf and hard of hearing, and for those who are blind or have low vision. But what is the ECC?

All public schools have skills and concepts that have been identified as fundamental for all learners. These include literacy, math, science and social studies (and additional curriculum areas depending on your state and school districts). These skills are aligned with statewide core content standards (often by grade level). Students with disabilities have the same curriculum as students without disabilities. Students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, low vision or deafblind have additional, specialized needs not covered in the general education curriculum. For students in general education, they would have gained this knowledge or skill incidentally—by observing through sight or hearing. For students with a hearing or visual loss, it requires direct instruction.

For those working with students with visual impairments, there have been nine identified areas of study for the ECC specific to the visually impaired (VI) student. These areas include: Assistive Technology, Career Education, Compensatory Skills, Independent Living Skills, Orientation and Mobility, Recreation and Leisure, Self-Determination, Sensory Efficiency and Social Interaction Skills.

For those working with students who are Deaf or hard of hearing, there have been eight identified areas of study for the ECC specific to the DHH student. These areas include: Audiology, Career Education, Communication, Family Education, Functional Skills for Educational Success, Self-Determination and Advocacy, Social-Emotional Skills, and Technology.

Notice that there are several areas where there is crossover between the two populations?! Utilization and understanding

of the ECC components is part of what makes MSDBso unique. Deaf Enrichment Weekend (DEW) and Visually Impaired Enrichment Weekend (VIEW) events are packed with ways to encourage growth in ECC skills. Our two summer camps and Family Learning Weekends also highlight how to identify and progress with these skills. And every day at MSDB, you will find classrooms engaging in a variety of lessons to celebrate our uniqueness and develop skills to succeed in the world.

When many people read the word ‘curriculum’, they assume this means textbooks and other learning materials. But the reality is that ‘curriculum’ really means the total learning of an individual—not just the traditional tools used in a classroom. For the Expanded Core Curriculum for either the DHH or BLV populations, there isn’t a magical set of textbooks that will guide them on their path to accomplishing the components they missed incidentally. Instead, there are a host of checklists, workbooks and other resources that give suggestions on how to practice and evaluate the concepts needed to be proficient with the skills. The actual materials include groceries, hammers, band-aids, iPads, decks of cards, etc. Most any object can become part of the ‘curriculum’!

This year, I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to teach an ECC class for the elementary VI students. We have used a variety of supplies to address our nine areas. I love the “Independent Living Skills” Checklist from the Michigan Department of Education (which we have used to help guide lessons). Many of the skills listed in this guide cover more than just the “Independent Living Skill” portion of the ECC for the VI. I have also used several resources from the American Printing House for the Blind. We have had exposure to basic tools and used hammers, nails and screwdrivers (Independent Living Skills); we have learned about adaptations to



Gracie playing tactile Candyland.

commercially available board games (Recreation and Leisure); we have explored digital book players, apps and services (Compensatory); we learned about jobs at Amazon (Career Education); we used crowd-sourced and artificial intelligence apps to search our environment (Assistive Technology); and we have practiced making phone calls to campus staff and local businesses (Social Interaction Skills). We have put on band-aids, made beds, loaded and unloaded the dishwasher, played games with cooking utensils, used microwaves/Keurig machines/toasters/blenders/ice cream machines, learned financial literacy concepts, checked for expiration dates on products, combed each other's hair, learned our clothing and shoe sizes, memorized our addresses and phone numbers... WE HAVE BEEN BUSY.



Sera working with technology.

When I asked the students to tell me what they like about ECC, Caleb told me, "I like ECC activities like hammering nails so you can learn about construction workers." Troy replied, "I like learning dance moves to music. It is a good social skill. I like to practice keyboarding to get my typing faster and I like setting goals." Gracie said that she liked all of the ECC areas. "It is a really fun class. We learn new ways to access books and apps like how to identify money. We learned how to cook and new life skills like using a toaster to cook waffles. Once we made ice cream after reading about a girl that loves ice cream in our audiobook, *Sideways Stories from Wayside School*. We made formal phone calls, which is awesome so I'm prepared for life." Sera loves reading and said she would like to listen to audiobooks fifty times a day! She has also gotten pretty good at loading the dishwasher.

In short, the Expanded Core Curriculum can be just about anything. It can and should be built into our students' daily lives. It should be infused within the general curriculum but also explicitly taught. It should happen at school, at home and on the job (for our older students). As family members, stop and think about each time you do something for your children and ask if this is a skill they should be developing on their own? If you aren't sure how to teach it, check with your MSDB Outreach Consultant or on-campus staff members for some advice. There's always a way to help a student while also helping them learn to be safe, efficient and independent. ■■

New Weight Room Equipment

By Missie Williams - Editor



Heidii and Blair

Our Mustang Center has a fantastic gym, which includes a bowling alley, pool, and weight room. The equipment in the weight room has been there for many years and is old and outdated.

This is where the MSDB Foundation and our gym teacher, Mr. Auers, step in.

In the spring of last year, knowing we needed new equipment, Mr. Auers began researching the best places and prices to get them replaced. Eventually he found Better Body Fitness in Helena, MT. These people know their machines and have some great ones to choose from.

With the help of generous funders, the Foundation stepped in and helped with the \$55,000 price tag for the ones Mr. Auers chose. These machines are now at home in our weight room and being enjoyed by all. Staff use them regularly and students are being trained on the correct way to use them.

Thank you, MSDB Foundation, Better Body Fitness, and Mr. Auers for taking the time and putting forth the effort and money to get this great addition to our campus!!



Old Fitness Room



Blair and Mr. Auers



Montana School *for*

LIFTING STUDEN

Brockton Farmers' Charitable Giving Benefits MSDB

By MSDB Foundation



Bobby Stepler

Brothers Raymond and Stephen Schmitz and Raymond's wife Jeannette Burke-Schmitz farmed in Brockton, Montana. They had a heart for children, and they made sure programs helping children living with disabilities became part of their estate planning. Their gift to MSDB Foundation was inspired by neighbor Bobby Stepler, who was born deaf.

When Bobby was 5 years old, his mom took him 355 miles away from their home. She said it was the hardest thing she ever did in her entire life. She gave him a hug, then went to her hotel. MSDB staff told her she could come back the next day and check on him if Bobby didn't see her. When she returned, she saw her son happily playing with the other kids. She was relieved and able to return home. Until he was an adult, he lived on campus during the school year but returned home on the train for holidays and summer breaks.

Bobby went on to learn ASL and teach his siblings how to sign. Even as adults, his brothers continued to communicate with each other from the tractor to the ground using sign language. After graduating from MSDB in 1967, he went to college in Minnesota. After moving back to Montana, he got a job working at a bank in Billings.

Later, he moved to Seattle and worked at Boeing. When he was a young adult, he developed Usher Syndrome and lost his sight. He still lives in Seattle with his partner who also has similar hearing and sight issues. In years past, he used seeing eye dogs and a cane in order to navigate the world. Now in his 60s, Bobby goes by RJS instead. He uses a piece of technology that translates messages on his computer to Braille. When he doesn't have technology readily available, he is able to communicate with people writing words in his hand. RJS says, "I have enjoyed my blessed life in Seattle's DeafBlind community for 37 years!"

The Schmitz's were so impressed by how Bobby matured and grew academically that they kept a special place in their hearts for MSDB. ❖

"A society grows when people plant trees in whose shade they shall never sit." — Greek Proverb

the Deaf & Blind Foundation

ITS BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

Thanks for Giving this Spring!



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MISSOULA & BITTERROOT GIVES
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GALLATIN VALLEY GIVES BIG
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The Express is available online!

Sign up to receive electronically
by sending an email to
foundation@msdb.k12.mt.us

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**MSDB and the
MSDB Foundation**

“Individually, we are one drop. Together we are an ocean.” – Ryunosuke Satoro

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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 40 years.

The Foundation is committed to funding academic and extracurricular activities that help prepare students for independent lives.

Please join us in that commitment by making a tax-deductible donation to www.msdbmustangs.org or mailing it to:

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

For more information, please call 406-771-6040

Art Exhibition at MSDB

By Tearra Donovan - Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

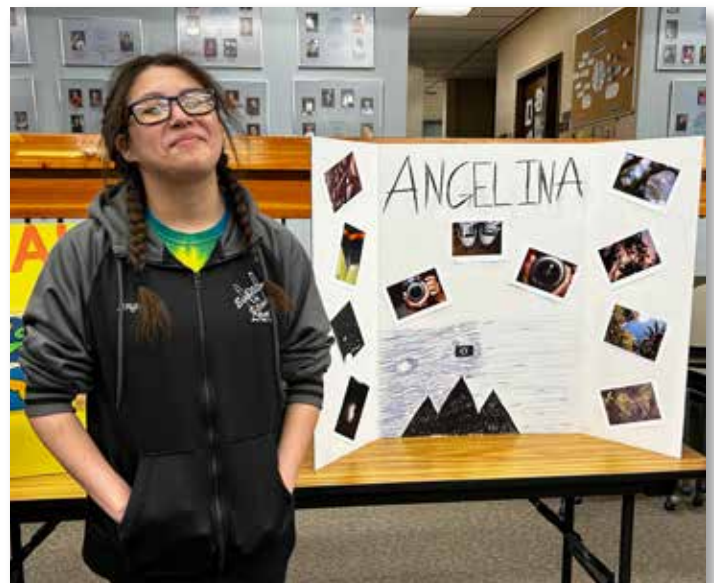


Students enjoy the exhibit.

MSDB hosted our 3rd Annual Art Exhibition during the first two weeks in May displaying student artwork in IMC. The exhibition was set up three years ago to give students an opportunity to show off their artwork and recognize their artistic ability. Their artwork is displayed in the IMC where everyone can walk around to check out each student's work. This exhibition gives students the opportunity to build their communication skills. We had an assembly for the Art Exhibition on May 5th, students stood next to their artwork and staff and students asked them questions related to their artwork. Students described how they created



Sera is proud of her work.



Angelina showing her photography skills.

their artwork, why they like it or don't like it, and which one is their favorite that they created in art class this year. This helps students to grow and learn more about themselves by analyzing their thoughts and how to answer questions. Also, this year MSDB offered a photography class and students who take the class exhibit their photography skills by printing their pictures out and putting them on the display. The photography students would describe how they took the pictures and why they chose to show at the exhibition.



Amerra shows her talents.

by inspiring themselves and everyone else as it is the main focus of the Art Exhibition. As an Art teacher here at MSDB, I couldn't be more proud of the students who are in my Art classes, they have shown their growth and the improvement with their artistic skills, and also to believe in themselves too. I am looking forward to continuing the Art Exhibition here at MSDB annually. 🌈



Marissa with her projects.

It is inspiring to see the students interacting with other people about their artwork and it gives students' self-esteem about themselves and their abilities with art. Like this quote from a famous artist, Salvador Dali, "A true artist is not one who is inspired but one who inspires others." With the size of this school, it is important for the students to have this opportunity

Summer Reading Around Montana!

Crystal Oring - DHH Outreach

Summer is right around the corner and with that comes barbecues, fun at the pool, and summer reading goals! There are so many great resources and opportunities here in Montana that everyone can keep up with their reading all summer!

Most of the libraries around the state offer summer reading programs in addition to their regular events and activities. To highlight just a few, Lewis and Clark Library in Helena will be having their Summer Library Program from June 1st through July 31st (lclibrary.org). The Bozeman Public Library is hosting their Summer Learning Program June 13th through August 18th (bozemanlibrary.org). The Miles City Public Library has their Summer Reading Program June 6th through July 13th (miles-citypubliclibrary.org). The Billings Public Library's Summer Reading 2023 program begins June 6th and goes through July 22nd. Missoula (missoulapubliclibrary.org), Great Falls (greatfallslibrary.org), and Kalispell (imagineiflibraries.org) also have their own programs to support reading and learning all summer long!

While public libraries are a great resource, they are not the only place to get your hands on a good book. Little Free Libraries can be found all over the place! Little Free Libraries are small cabinets that contain books that have been donated by people like you. You know those "take a penny, leave a penny" bowls at gas stations? It's like that, but with books! You can find a map of Little Free Libraries in your area by going to littlefreelibrary.org/ourmap. The search for the little libraries is half the fun, then seeing what each contains is so exciting! Check back to your Little Free Libraries often as selection changes frequently. And if you

have any gently used books you want to donate, leave a few for the next person to enjoy!

One of my family's favorite summer activities in Billings is Reading Rocks. Volunteer storytellers armed with picnic blankets, totes full of books, and a passion for reading gather at various parks around town and share stories with children. The best part is that each child gets to take home a book to add to their personal library! A guest storyteller reads a book of their choosing; my favorite was when ZooMontana came and read a story about animals and brought a few special friends from the zoo for everyone to meet! If you have a story to share, you can also volunteer to be the guest storyteller one day! Reading Rocks runs from June 12th to July 20th, Monday through Thursday. For more details, go to efbps.org/reading-rocks.html.

Finally, since you are going to be keeping up with your summer reading, you might as well keep a journal of all the great books you read! Barnes and Noble has a printable summer reading journal for students in grades 1-6. Once your student has read 8 books, they can bring their reading journal into Barnes and Noble for a new free book (from a specified list). This is a great incentive to keep up the reading all summer long. The Barnes and Noble summer reading goes from July 1st through August 31st.

The summer reading journal can be downloaded from bn.com/summerreading.

So get out there and check out everything your community has to offer! I hope you have a great summer! Happy reading!!

DHH Preschool Corner

Amber Bateen - Teacher of the Deaf



Oliver and Arabella play in the sand.



Oliver helping Charlie.



Aquilla and Arabella.



Elijah and Jericho helping Oliver and Charlie on the swings.



SEL and Workplace Readiness

By Trudy Hill - School Counselor

The US Department of Education defines employability skills (also referred to as “soft skills,” a part of workplace readiness) as “General Skills that are necessary for success in the labor market at all employment levels and in all sectors.”

The five critical skills most likely to increase success in the workplace are social skills, communication skills, problem solving/critical thinking/decision making (grouped as higher level thinking skills), self-control and positive self-concept. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the “process through which youth and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions” (Wisconsin’s Guide to SEL and Workforce Readiness 2022).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning has identified five core SEL competencies:

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Awareness
- Relationship Skills
- Responsible Decision Making



There is a close connection between Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies and workplace readiness skills. SEL skills such as self-management, communication, goal setting, collaboration and responsible decision-making are a few examples which correspond to workplace readiness skills such as self-motivation, time management, communication, problem

solving and relationship building. These are skills employers often seek. In fact, 2019 research found that 91% of employers believe social emotional skills or “soft skills” are more important than any other trend changing the nature of workplaces.

Taking a closer look at just a couple of these competencies will help in understanding the importance of SEL in readying students for workplace success.

First, how might self –management translate to workplace readiness skills?

Here are a few ways it might be seen in a place of employment:

- Initiative
- Strong work ethic
- Time-management
- Punctuality
- Organizational skills
- Adaptability

Another SEL competency is relationship skills. How might this show itself in the workplace? This list includes but is not limited to:

- Effective communication
- Listening skills
- Ability to collaborate with others
- Conflict resolution
- Teamwork
- Respond to customer needs.

Now, what does all this have to do with MSDB?

The staff has had training this year in implementing SEL in the classroom. We expect to begin teaching these competencies to our students next year.

As a school counselor, part of my job is to collaborate with others in preparing our students to eventually find employment after high school. According to the information shared above this preparation must include SEL competencies.

I look forward to finding engaging ways to support staff and students in learning these skills as part of their workplace readiness training at MSDB. ❖

THANK YOU, MSDB FOUNDATION!

By Erin Faulkner - Cottage Counselor



A little putt putt golf.

Our Cottage students spend the better part of nine months living on campus. The staff in the Cottage plan on-campus activities weekly and off-campus activities at least monthly. Some of these activities are free, some the students pay for, and some of which the MSDB Foundation provides funding.

Some of the annual activities that the Foundation has supported in recent years are: Labor Day Activities (Mini golf, Voyagers game), Griz game, Halloween and Christmas parties, Cat/Griz game and Superbowl parties, Cookie decorating, Fuddrucker's dinner out and Memorial Day activities (movie, mini-golf). In addition to these annual events, the Foundation has supported these activities this year: Brush Crazy, bus fare for student training, professional development and our upgraded fitness rooms.



Madison, Lucia, Ayvia, David, and Lilly playing a game.

Some of the Cottage students were asked what their favorite activities are and why they liked the activity.

Marissa: "My favorite event the Foundations supported us with was the **Halloween party** because I like going out with my friends and because it was fun and a little scary too. I also enjoyed bowling as an activity since I need to work on my skills for bowling and I love listening to music in the bowling

alley. *Thank you Foundation for everything, for paying for when we don't have enough money."*

Ayvia: "I enjoy the **Labor Day activities** since we do some much on those days, we do water slides, water balloons, and dunk tanks. It gets us out of the Cottage and is never a boring day. I really enjoy 4-H. It lets me learn and experience new activities. *I want to say thank you Foundation because you help us and support our activities."*



Ayvia soaking Blair.

Josh: "I would have to say I liked the **Christmas party** and when we went to the **movie theater**. These activities gave me time to hang out with my friends and get to know them better. I would also have to say I like the "Lunchner" and bowling. *Thank you Foundation. I appreciate all the fun I've gone through now."*

Lexi: "I liked the **Griz game** because I got to keep some memories and be with friends and socialize, and my mom showed up there to celebrate my birthday. I surprisingly like the new **fitness room**. All of the equipment is easier to use. I enjoyed the Kaboom arcade since it was fun, and I got to socialize and everyone was excited. *I would like to say thank you so so much. I really appreciate all of the money and time you have put into our activities this year."*

Angelina: "The **Christmas party** was lots of fun. I enjoy socializing. I enjoy going to brush crazy. I really enjoy anything fun that we do here. *Thank you Foundation for paying for all of the fun stuff we do and supporting MSDB."*

Madison: "I enjoyed the **Halloween party** because it was fun. We went to a haunted house with my friends. At the cottage we watched a scary movie and decorated. I prefer to watch movies at **the AMC Theater** and see the new movies. It's a fun experience with friends. I like playing Bunco at the cottage, I am skilled and always win. *Thank you for giving us money to do nice things and being nice."* ❖

Northwest Association for Blind Athletes

By Stacey Gibbins - Vice President of Programs and Services



MSDB VI Outreach Team hosting Spring VIEW 2023.

When you think of the word athlete, what comes to mind? For Northwest Association for Blind Athletes (NWABA), we believe anybody who desires to be physically active is an athlete. At NWABA, we meet participants at every age, stage, and ability level to help reach their potential. What does that mean? We provide over 20 different sports and physical activities through our programs and services for individuals who are blind and visually impaired. The key word being individual, we pride ourselves on curating programming that meets the needs of our athletes, where they are at, with the adaptations and modifications they need to be successful. We are not a one size fits all model, and we are led by a fantastic team of professionals who are leaders in the field of Adapted Physical Education. Our staff is dedicated to supporting all students who are blind and visually impaired to be active in their schools, communities, and at home, in whatever way is best for them. Sports and physical activity lead to a greater quality of life through increased self-esteem, confidence, community and relationships, and more. Sports and

physical activity can teach us excellent skills that build our knowledge and ability to move through transitions in life successfully.

In 2007, our CEO & Founder, Billy Henry (Great Falls, Montana), decided that young adults who were blind and visually impaired needed access to sports and physical activity. As an athletic 15-year-old attending the School for the Blind in Washington State, Billy saw the need and decided to do something. He started a powerlifting team with six friends from his parent's garage. In 2023, NWABA will serve over 750 athletes across Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. It was essential to Billy to keep his family's roots in Montana, where he attended the school for the blind, and his family lived for many years. Hence, the partnership between the Montana School for the Blind (MSDB) and NWABA made sense. In fact, it is the longest-standing partnership that NWABA has had. Connecting with MSDB and his former teachers and MSDB Outreach, Billy started the programs across the state to build services for Montana. In the last year, we have had over 50 Program & Service Interactions across five cities, serving students who are blind, have low vision, and with secondary disabilities.



Caleb

Now more than ever, our programs and services are needed. With increased time away from school during the pandemic and specialized adapted physical education teachers not being available in most school districts across the state, NWABA bridges the gap for what is possible for students through physical education and movement. Our mission is to provide life-changing opportunities through sports and physical activity to individuals who are blind and visually impaired. We are proud to serve the State of Montana and are excited to support more students in the coming years. ❖

For more information visit: <https://nwaba.org/>.



Denise shows students a new activity.



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FOR THE DEAF & THE BLIND

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Letter from the Editor

By Missie Williams - Editor for the Express



The End of Another Great Year

As we wrap up another great year at MSDB, I look at how far we have come. We, the staff, continue to learn and grow as educators, by focusing on strategies and programs that will benefit the students in our care. The students continue to learn and grow as young people by learning in classes, connecting in after school programs, and problem solving towards independence.

You never forget the look on a child's face when they make a new discovery in their surroundings, when they learn a new skill, and when they make a new friend.

We have accomplished many new things on this campus this school year and hope to do even more in the future. Thank you, our readers, for supporting us as we continue to reach new heights.

All the staff at MSDB are grateful for this opportunity to work with these children of all ages. The experiences we have with them will be in our memories always. ■■

Missie Williams, Editor • mwilliams@msdb.k12.mt.us
Special Education Coordinator | Indian Education Coordinator | Science Teacher

BACK TO SCHOOL AUG. 28!

See Us On



Montana School for
the Deaf and Blind
Foundation



Games for Visually Impaired Revived!

By MSDB Outreach Staff

The MSDB Games for Visually Impaired roared back thanks to Seri Brammer's willingness to lead the team including campus staff, outreach staff and collaboration with Northwest Association for Blind Athletes' Stacey Gibbons. It was a beautiful day that began with a triathlon. Five intrepid athletes in middle and high school participated in one mile of swimming followed by two miles of biking and one mile of running. After a lunch break, athletes of all ages came together for the opening ceremony and Games for Visually Impaired. Different age groups moved through competitions in swimming, goal ball, and track and field for all abilities. This has always been a favorite event that takes a lot of people, dedication, and effort to put together. Many thanks to our athletes, staff, and NWABA as it was a huge success.

Winners of the triathlon: Blind division First place Macy, Low Vision division First place Deegin, Second place Tirzah, Third place Troy, Fourth place Levi.

Winners in the Games for Visually Impaired:

Swimming

Ages 3-5: First place Ben

Ages 6-9 Dual Sensory: First place Jericho, Second place Carter

Ages 6-9 Low Vision: First place Declan

Ages 10-13 Low Vision: First place Tirzah, Second place Troy

Ages 14+ Low vision: First place Deegin, Second place Amerra

Ages 14+ Low vision with adaptations: First place Trinity

Ages 14+ Blind: First place Macy Tanner

Track and Field

Ages 3-5: First place Ben

Ages 6-9 Low vision: First place Carter, Second place Jericho

Ages 6-9 Low vision with adaptations: First place Declan

Ages 10-13 First place Troy, Second place Tirzah

Ages 14+: First place Deegin, Second place Levi, Third place Damien, Fourth place Amerra

Ages 14+ Blind: First place Macy ■■



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