

December 2023  
Vol. 3, No. 4

# The MSDB Student Life Newsletter

## Message from the Director

*By Jim Kelly II*

Happy Holidays!

Since we have returned from the Thanksgiving break the students in our program have been non-stop busy! We have had so many different activities, parties and performances happening. The students have done some holiday shopping, Christmas Cookie Decorating party, attended a play in Helena with ASL interpreters, formal dinner a cottage-wide party with games and food and each cottage wing had a special Christmas party with gift exchange and food. Courtesy of the MSDB Foundation, cottage students and staff went to Fuddruckers. This special dinner out has been a long standing holiday tradition since 2001! I believe our program creates many memories for the students to cherish as they become older. The holidays in particular, at MSDB are for making memories. Thinking back on my Christmas past, it is not the gifts that I remember, but what we did as a family. We do our best to continue our traditional cottage activities so that your child will have some fond memories to talk about and share with you!

PLEASE HELP US  
WISH OUR  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH SERVICES

*Diane Eddy*

A HAPPY RETIREMENT AFTER 22 YEARS  
OF SERVICE.

Thank you for everything you've done. You  
will be missed.



## STAFF BUZZ: Embracing the Squiggle!

For this year's Staff Buzz, we will be hearing from different staff about how they see success reflected in our students' efforts, mistakes and failures and not just in what goes "right" or "correctly". Success is not a straight line, but rather moves forwards and backwards and may take a winding path to our own, individual successes!



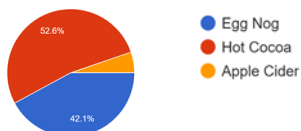
Students in the Independent Life Skills Program have been working weekly on the follow skills: meal planning, shopping, cooking, and paying bills. Each of these students does these tasks with varying levels of support. First, the skill is taught via a presentation, verbal instruction and/or modeling. Then the student is able to do it themselves with the staff person supervising and offering support when needed. Sometimes there are failures or mistakes, but those are used for learning going forward. The Accessibility and Awareness Forum article in this Newsletter highlights some of the ways that we can support students towards their independence. I believe that success that is achieved from hard work is the most meaningful. I hope our students will learn this, as well. Perseverance, determination, resilience, persistence, tenacity, pride. These are all adjectives that I would like our students to use when describing themselves.

By Erin Faulkner

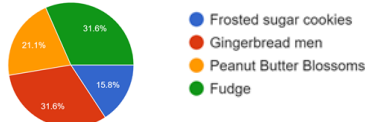
### Student Hub

In honor of the holidays, we conducted a fun survey of cottage students and staff to find out a little more about them and what they like. We had responses from 10 staff and 9 students.

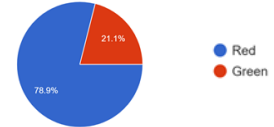
#### Favorite Christmas Beverage?



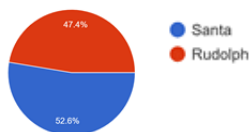
#### Favorite Christmas cookies?



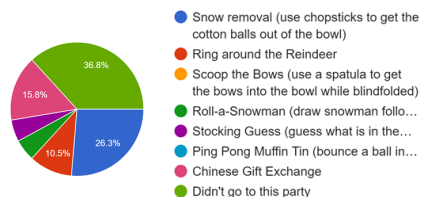
#### Favorite Christmas Color?



#### Santa or Rudolph?



#### Favorite Cottage Party Game?



#### What do you want for Christmas?

- Steam deck
- Computer
- Fun!!!
- New shoes
- People being nice to others
- Someone to clean my house
- Apple pen
- Time with loved ones
- Sleep
- Peace and happiness in the world
- Kitchen set
- Playstation 5
- Xbox
- Motorcycle
- White Christmas
- Baby deer and black dog and white mom dog

### High School Happenings

by Erin Faulkner

#### Planning a Party

Students worked together to plan the Cottage Christmas Party. They discussed the following needs for a good party: when, where, who to invite, how to invite, food and drinks, activities and decorations. They learned that when planning a party, you must consider who is responsible, when tasks need to be completed and how much things will cost.

#### OTC Pharmacy Exploration

This workshop took us out of the cottages. Students were given cards with different ailments and medication/treatment suggestions. They needed to search through the Walmart pharmacy for these items. This activity was designed to get the students to become familiar with what they need to use/do for certain illnesses or injuries and where they can find those things in a store.

## Basket Raffle Winners

Our 3rd annual Adopt-a-Family fundraiser was a great success. We raised enough money to provide a Christmas dinner to a family of 4 and presents for the three children. We had enough money left over to help support the MSDB food bank!

The basket raffle winners are:

Craft and Create—Bonnie Joslyn (interpreter)

The Great Outdoors—Naomi Witham-Travers (VI teacher)

I Love My Pet—Andrea (parent)



Congratulations to the winners and thank you all for your support!

## Kitchen Korner

The MSDB dining room staff has recently experienced some personal hardships. The dining room staff provide lunches for the students Monday through Friday, as well as home cooked meals for the cottage students every night and on the weekends. The Great Falls Public Schools was able to provide our students with lunches for the past few weeks. We thank them for supporting our school! The cottage students have had different opportunities for evening and weekend meals: leftovers from GFPS, dining out, ordering in, and shopping and preparing meals with cottage staff. We are all really looking forward to getting eating the wonderful, homecooked meals again! We are blessed and spoiled by our dining room staff.

Our formal dinners are a time-honored tradition that we celebrate three times per year. This year's dinner was made by three staff who have previously worked in the kitchen but now work for other departments. Many thanks to Terri Knotts (housekeeping), Linda Ranes (maintenance) and Wanda Sutinen (nightwatch) for the wonderful Christmas dinner.

## Our 4-H Club in Action

*By Cheri Luongo*

We're thrilled to share the latest from our vibrant 4-H club as it kicks into high gear. Under the leadership of President Lucia Little, our members are actively engaged in diverse activities, making every moment count.

Lucia, leading with enthusiasm, is mastering the art of running meetings, setting a positive tone for the entire group. Recently, our students participated in a project day where they delved into robotics, crafted personalized bags, and connected with peers from other clubs.

Marissa, a standout archer, is gearing up for a competition in Helena post-Christmas break. Meanwhile, Emery and Carter are diligently preparing presentations for an upcoming communications contest.

Our 4-H journey emphasizes not only individual growth but also community building. The interactions with kids from other clubs during the project day underscored the importance of collaboration and friendship.

Our 4-H club is alive with energy and achievement. From leadership development to hands-on projects and competitions, we're excited about the growth and success that lie ahead for our dynamic group.



## ACCESSIBILITY AND AWARENESS FORUM

Guest Contributor: Teresa Leese

Teresa Leese is a Resident Advisor who has worked with our students in the cottages for more than 25 years. She found the article “19 Ways to Step Back” which was adapted from Classroom Collaboration by Laurel J Hudson, PhD (Perkins School for the Blind). This article has been adapted to meet the needs of all of our cottage students.

1. You are STEPPING BACK so that your students can step forward and become independent. Keep this simple fact in mind in all that you do.
2. “Sit on your hands” for a whole task while you practice giving directions instead of physical prompts or more intrusive support. Gradually increase the distance between you and the students to promote independence.
3. If you must give more intrusive prompts, try “hand-under-hand” or “side-by-side” modeling instead of “hand-over-hand” or “light physical prompts”. This provides for more choice.
4. Let your students make mistakes. Let them “fail forward”. It’s part of the human experience!
5. Even though helping can feel right, be aware that too much assistance is short-sighted. Sometimes less is more, less is better.
6. Catch yourself before you correct your student’s work. Don’t cover for them. This is about their skills. NOT yours.
7. Commit to NO intervention for a whole activity. Take data instead. Things might not fall apart as much as you had expected.
8. Teach students to decline assistance. “Thanks, but please let me try it by myself.”
9. Whenever you add prompts, include a plan to phase them out to avoid the student being prompt-dependent.
10. “Stepping back” means allowing students to practice what they have already learned. They still need to be taught many skills! Be teachers, supporters, encouragers, and Observers, as well as social partners.

### Outings/Activities

#### Look what we did!

- Christmas Stroll (12/1)
- Oreo Gingerbread Houses (12/2)
- Christmas movies (12/2)
- Wrkshp: Planning a Party (12/6)
- Wizard of Oz /Pizza Ranch in Helena (12/9)
- Christmas Craft (12/10)
- Individual Cottage Parties (12/13-12/15)
- Cookie Decorating (12/16)
- Cottage/Student Council Party (12/16)
- EOS Christmas Program (12/17)
- Christmas Formal Dinner (12/17)
- Dinner at Fuddrucker’s (12/19)
- Piñata fun from a 4-H Group (12/20)

#### Coming Soon-

- Travel Return (1/2)
- Events TBD
- Travel Home—Optional (1/12)
- Travel Return - Optional (1/15)



## MSDB SAFETY: Winter Safety By AJ Kauffman

Hello everyone! This article will discuss winter safety because it's that time of the year when it's getting cold. After all, Christmas is just around the corner! I'd like to talk about winter safety because being prepared and cautious with snow and ice is very important. When you step outside in the cold, be sure you have your coat, hat, scarf, boots, and gloves at all times. Once you're outside playing in the snow or shoveling your driveway or sidewalk, be sure to wear layers, as they provide better insulation and warmth, and always keep your fingertips, earlobes, and noses covered if you go outside.

When you approach the ice, be sure you have ice melt because it will help prevent injuries. When you're walking on the ice, wear proper footwear because it is especially treacherous. A pair of insulated and water-resistant boots with good rubber treads is a must for walking. Wearing a pair of rubber over-shoes with good treads your street shoes is a good idea during the winter months. Take short steps and walk at a slower pace so you can react quickly to a change in traction when walking on an icy or snow-covered walkway.

Shoveling snow can be a hard task. Be sure to take turns or take breaks. While you're shoveling be sure you bend your knees not your back while lifting the shovel. When you're shoveling snow be sure to bring water with you to keep yourself hydrated. Shovel one area at a time so you don't feel so exhausted or have an injury that will put you at risk.

While you're shoveling snow this year please build a snowman for me!!! I hope you all have a great Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. See you in 2024!!!



# MERRY CHRISTMAS

Sending you the gift of peace and joy  
this holiday season.  
Safe travels & stay healthy.

Health Services Staff

Autumn, Carol, Diane, Nikki, Tami, Tara & Vicky Jo



### Weekly Student Life Activities

- EOS (Mon/Wed)
- Swim Club and lessons (Mon)
- 4-H (alt. Mon)
- Goal Ball (Tues)
- SEL (alt. Tues)
- Student Life Social Hour (Wed)
- Student Council (Wed)
- Snack Shack (Wed/Fri)
- Swimming (Wed/Sun)
- VIP ((Thurs)
- Workshops (Thurs)
- Gaming Club (Fri)

Thank you to the  
MSDB Foundation for  
supporting our  
December Cottage events!

Helena trip to Wizard of Oz and  
Pizza Ranch, Cookie Decorating,  
parties, and dinner out at  
Fuddrucker's!



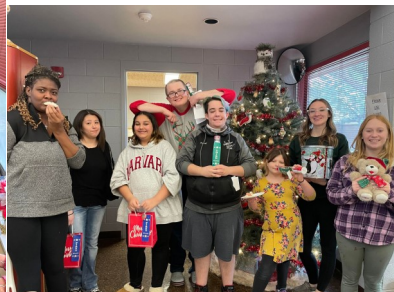
# CHRISTMAS STROLL



# OREO GINGERBREAD HOUSES



# 18th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS COOKIE DECO-





# GEYSER CHRISTMAS PARTY



# OBSIDIAN CHRISTMAS PARTY



# SHOSHONE CHRISTMAS PARTY





## COTTAGE/STUDENT COUNCIL CHRISTMAS PARTY



The cottage students were gifted a piñata from a local 4-H group. We enjoyed breaking the piñata and decorating leftover cookies.

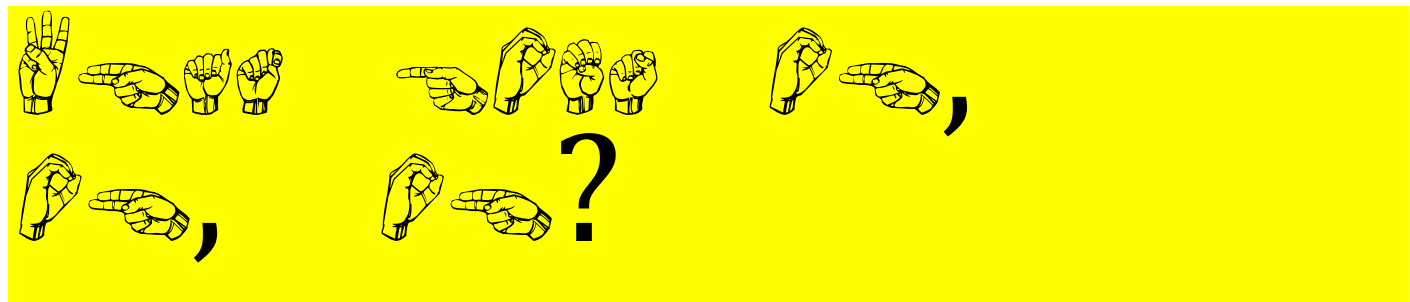
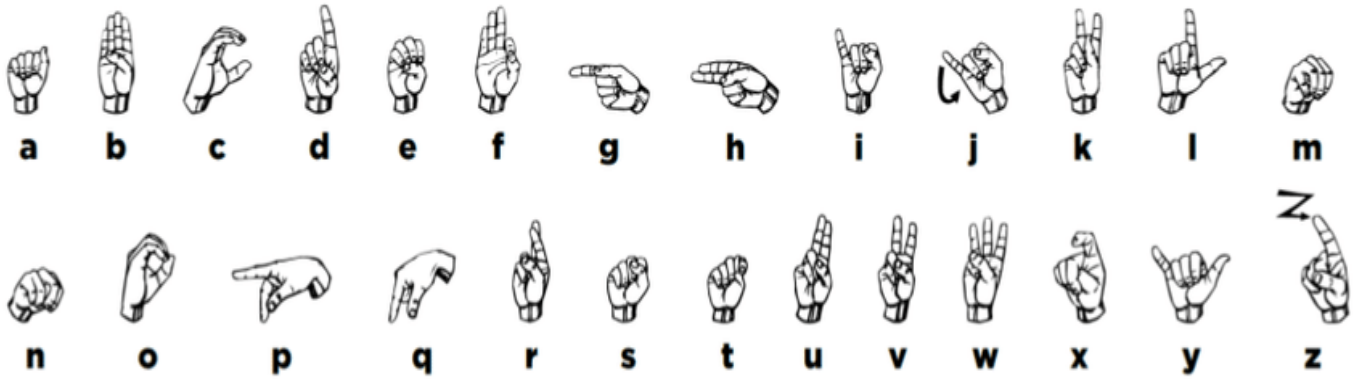




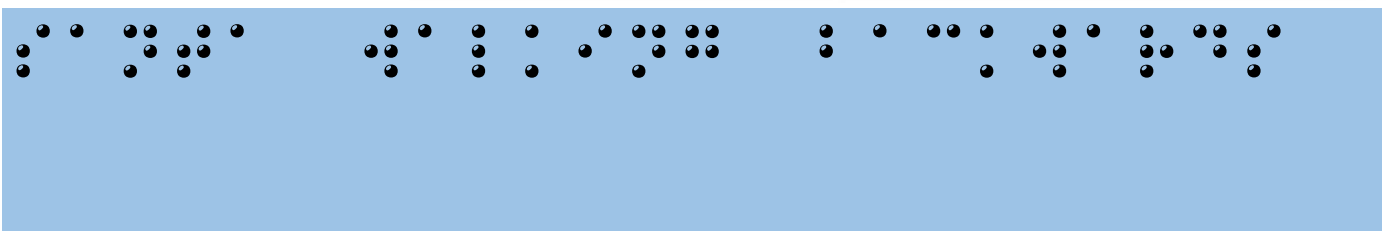
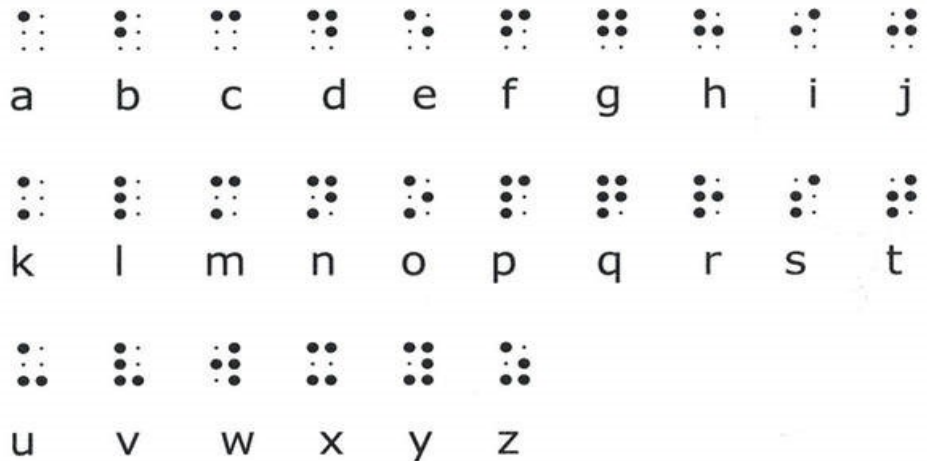
# PUZZLE PAGE

Decode the phrases using ASL Fingerspelling and Braille!

**Fingerspelling** is the process of spelling out words by using hand shapes that correspond to the letters of the word. A set of hand shapes used to spell words is known as a "manual alphabet."



**Braille** is a system that enables blind and visually impaired people to read and write through touch. It was devised by Louis Braille in 1821 and consists of raised dots arranged in "cells." A cell is made up of six dots that fit under the fingertips, arranged in two columns of three dots each.



## November Puzzler Answers:

Fingerspelling: Why didn't the turkey eat dinner? Braille: Because he was already stuffed.