

The MSDB Student Life Newsletter

Message from the Director

By Jim Kelly II

The students are heading home for a nice, long Spring/Easter break on Thursday, March 29th. As you can see with this newsletter our students are involved with so many different activities. I want to give a huge, well over-due "Shout Out" to the **staff** in the Student Life Program - **you** are the ones who make our program the students' "**home away from home**"! *Spring is here and summer is near. . . I hope. As always, don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions, suggestions or concerns for your child!*

WORKING TOGETHER

On the last travel home day, March 8th, the Resident Advisors in the Student Life Program were able to participate in a professional development and team building training provided by the Cottage Counselors. The training focused on Team Effectiveness and Communication Styles.

The Team Effectiveness assessment and break-out sessions allowed staff to have discussions about how each staff person viewed their team effectiveness in each of the following domains: purpose and goals, roles, team processes, team relationships, inter-group relations, problem solving, passion and commitment and skills and learning.

The Communication Styles assessment and break-out sessions allowed staff to have discussions about how they may have to change the way they communicate based on another style and how we may have to adjust our assumptions based on someone else's style. Four styles were described.

1. Energizer who is direct and results oriented
2. Systemizer who is indirect and results oriented
3. Associator who is indirect and relationship oriented
4. innovator who is direct and relationship oriented.

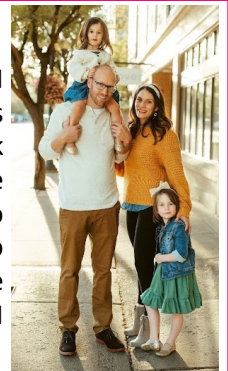
The staff who attended felt that the training was beneficial and plan to continue these conversations in their cottage meetings.



Health Report

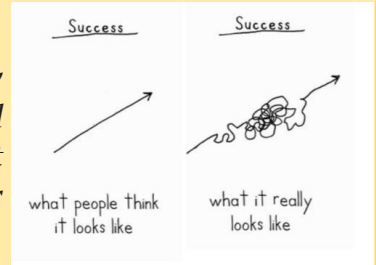


Hi Everyone! I am Nikki Bonilla King and I am the new Health Services Director! I have worked as registered nurse the last 7 years. Last year, I finished my Masters of Science in Nursing and received my Family Nurse Practitioner. I chose to work at MSDB because I really like working with children. When I am not working I love to read, be outside, when it is warm, and spend time with my family. I have two daughters, Tennyson and Brontë, and I am married to Patrick. I am excited to work with the MSDB community! As the school year is coming to an end quickly, please be on the lookout for next year's paperwork for your students. We will be sending it out at the end of May! I have enjoyed meeting parents and look forward to meeting more!



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!



Since starting at MSDB I have learned the phrase “embrace the squiggle”. This concept was new to me. In life there are many situations where success requires patience, hard work, and dedication. Rarely, do we successfully reach our goals linearly. Learning about embracing the squiggle, I can reflect on my past experiences and with my present situations and see many occasions where this concept applies.

Working in the Infirmary, there are many opportunities to embrace the squiggle. One situation where I have learned to embrace the squiggle is working with the students. In my profession as a nurse, we work to make individuals comfortable in uncomfortable situations. Growing connections and relationships is a way as healthcare professionals we help nurture a working relationship. Each student is unique and we work to learn their interests to help make them feel comfortable working with us. Finding what they like and what makes them comfortable is a work in progress. What works for one student does not work for the next. It is my passion to make every student comfortable in the infirmary. Whether they need medication or if they hurt themselves, I want them all to feel safe and comfortable with the nurses. Even when sometimes our attempts at connection are not successful, our success can show up in the creativity we apply when we try again. As we endeavor to reach this goal, we embrace the squiggle.

By Nikki Bonilla King

Cultural Connections

By Angelina Gilcher

When Earl saw my project at the science fair about dream catchers, he told me he knew how to make them and he could teach me how to make them. I said, “sure.” We got together on Monday, and he taught me how and told me a story about his culture. He told me they use a willow branch and form it into a circle and the web inside was a leather string. He said they give to their baby when they are born to protect them from bad dreams and spirits and they keep them for all their life. I enjoyed talking to him about dream catchers.



Visual Supports—Teaching Boundaries

By Erin Faulkner

Our past accessibility and awareness articles have focused on accommodations for our students related to their visual impairment or hearing loss/deafness. Sometimes our students need supports unrelated to these needs.

One of the ways that we can accommodate our students is with visual supports. There are many kinds of visual supports. You may have used visual schedules, timers, checklists, highlighters, and flags, for example.

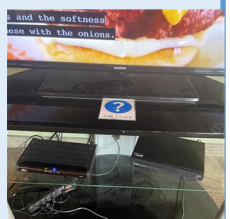
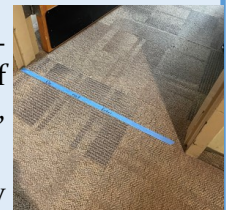
For students who may not have a sense of where they are allowed to go and not go, visual supports can help.

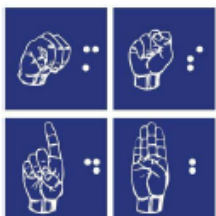
If a student is forbidden from entering certain areas at any time, a visual boundary can be used. Blue tape works well.

If a student is allowed to enter areas sometimes, but not others, you can use “stop” and “go” signs that let the student know when it is ok to enter and when it is not.

There may also be things that the student is able to use, but they need permission first. An “ask” sign might help to remind them.

We all use supports to help us be successful. Supports can be individualized to a person's needs and can be visual, auditory or even tactile.





MONTANA SCHOOL *for the Deaf & the Blind*

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www.msdbmustangs.org

Hello, Parents and Guardians!

We want to take this opportunity to share information about MSDB's Post High School Transition Program with you. The Independent Living, Employment, Academic Planning Program is also known as LEAP! This is a 9-month long program that focuses on building life skills in 18 to 21-year-olds with a qualifying hearing and/or vision loss who have graduated from high school. Participants of the LEAP program set their own goals and work to achieve them with support from their LEAP coordinators, Vocational Rehabilitation counselors, and community partners. These goals may include independent living, employment, academics, or other goals and needs they are working towards.

Components of the LEAP program include:

- Training Sessions - anything from taxes to self-defense to budgeting to cooking
- Community Work Experiences - get your toes wet in the world of work
- Community Involvement - recreation and volunteerism all in one
- Residential living on MSDB's beautiful campus in Great Falls, Montana
- Independent Travel - whatever your mode of transportation, we've got it!
- Sensory specific supports - a variety of supports available

For those looking at an academic track, you would have the advantage of living on MSDB's campus and attending LEAP while also being able to attend Great Falls College MSU. The Career and College Readiness Center offers a free college readiness program called Connections 101. LEAP allows you to pursue your academic goals in a safe and affordable environment while having access to staff that will help you navigate ADA and support your educational goals.

Individuals pursuing an employment track would enjoy the opportunity to work with many of our community partners in the form of a job shadow, work experience, or employer-paid job. Your LEAP coordinators will assist with job coaching, SSI reporting, banking, and transportation to and from work. We also help you coordinate your work and LEAP schedules with your employer.

Applications for the 2024 - 2025 year are open! Applications can be found on our website at www.msdbmustangs.org > Residential > LEAP Program > LEAP Application or using the QR code below. Once your application has been received you will be contacted and an interview will be scheduled.

We look forward to serving your young adults and supporting them into adulthood! If you have any questions or would like to learn more, please reach out to us at leap@msdb.k12.mt.us.

Sincerely,

Your MSDB LEAP Coordinators

Carrie Dawes & Mackenzie Merja

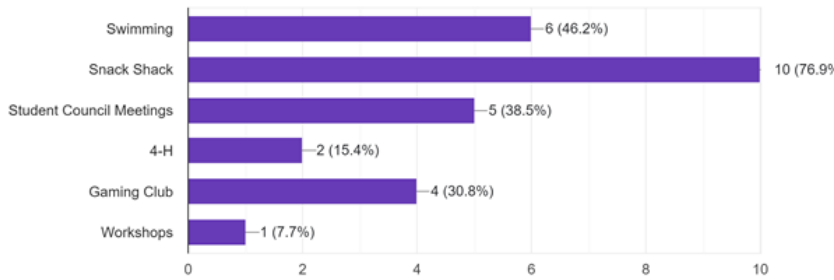


Leap Application QR Code

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE COTTAGE ACTIVITIES?

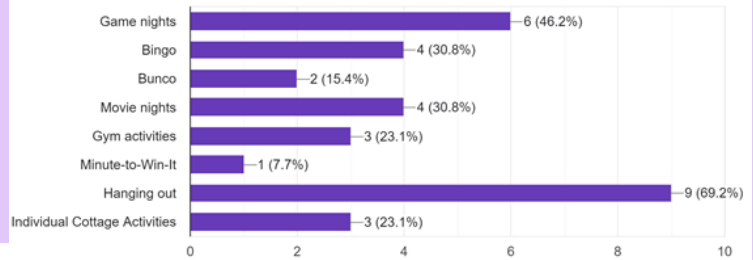
What is your favorite weekly activity? (pick 2)

13 responses



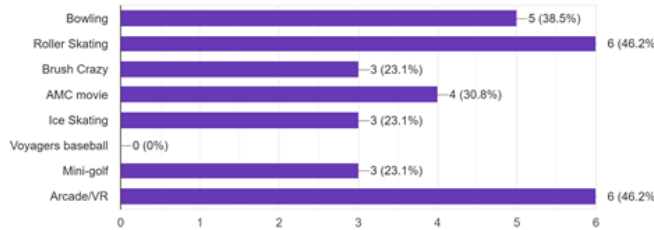
What is your favorite weekend cottage activity? (pick 2)

13 responses



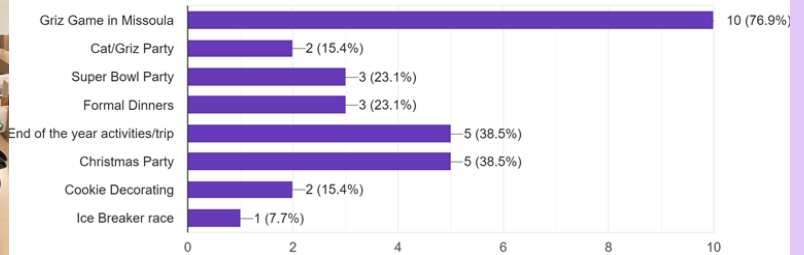
What is your favorite Great Falls activity? (pick 2)

13 responses



What is your favorite annual special activity? (pick 2)

13 responses



Outings/Activities

Look what we did!

- The Princess Bride (2/23)
- Gym Activities (2/24)
- Bingo (2/24)
- Deaf Youth Day Mayoral Proclamation (3/5)
- Foothills Concession (3/7)
- National Deaf HS Theater (3/13-3/17)
- VIEW (3/15-3/16)
- Foothills Concession (3/21)
- Easter Craft (3/23)
- Formal Dinner (3/24)

Coming Soon-

- Travel Return —School in session (4/3)
- 4-H Project Day (4/13)
- MSDB Swim Meet (4/13)
- DEW (4/19-4/20)
- EOS Spring Performance (4/20)
- VI Games (4/26-4/27)
- Prom (4/27)
- Flying Hooves Spring Performance (5/3)
- 4-H Tour of MSDB (5/4)
- Travel Home (5/10)
- Travel Return —School in session (5/13)

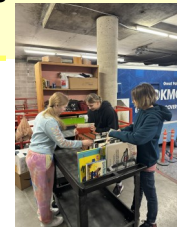
4-H News

By Cheri Luongo

On a chilly March 2nd morning, the MSDB 4-H group rallied together for a community service endeavor at the Great Falls public library. Despite the cold, the students eagerly volunteered their time to assist the Friends of the Library by unloading donated books. Their dedication and teamwork not only contributed to the library's mission but also nurtured valuable skills and self-confidence among the students. As they worked tirelessly, sorting through boxes and stocking shelves, they learned the significance of giving back to their community and witnessed firsthand the impact of their actions. This experience not only united them as a group but also instilled in them a lasting commitment to service and the betterment of Great Falls.

In other 4-H news, the Montana Farmers Union ran a \$100.00 one sentence grant competition. All area 4-H clubs were asked to write one sentence on what they would like to do if they were given \$100.00. Our kids really impressed me. After tossing out a bunch of ideas like going out to dinner, paying for 4-H project materials, or paying for next years dues, they finally decided on "the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) 4-H Club would like to purchase materials to teach others in the community about accessibility for Deaf and Blind children". We did receive this grant!

Our club will be holding an open house and invite other Cascade County 4-H Clubs. We will provide a tour of the campus with support from our MSDB Student Ambassadors, demonstrate Braille and technology used by our VI students and then teach some basic ASL. We will finish up in the gym with some refreshments purchased by our grant funds and send our visitors home with some ASL and Braille materials. This exciting



Announcing the Cottage Student of the Quarter

Gracie Jones

The Cottage Counselors and Lead Resident Advisors are thrilled to announce Gracie Jones as our third Student of the Quarter!

Nominations are made by the Resident Advisors and voted on by Counselors and Lead Residential Advisors. The winning student receives a \$15 gift card and gets their picture displayed in the Yellowstone Lobby. The Shoshone staff and students will also enjoy a celebratory dinner supporting Gracie's growth.

We look for students who have shown development in areas like self-care, managing chores, interacting with others, being responsible, and improving behavior.

Gracie has recently been able to get ready for school independently. She does her kitchen and work study jobs without being reminded. Gracie is working hard on staying organized, knowing where her belongs are, managing her time and learning to multitask.

Keep up the good work Gracie! You are an inspiration to our students and staff at MSDB!!



Student Council

The Student Life Program has been focusing more on providing the students with what they want. One of the ways that we are doing that is by the development of a new committee, the Activity Room Design Team. This team meets several times a month to discuss ways that the activity room and Teen Hangout can be improved to make the area more inviting for our current and potential future students. Dorothy Nutter, along with the student co-leaders, Angelina Gilcher and Emery Newman, have led a group of students and staff in brainstorming ideas that include furniture arrangement, painting the Teen Hangout, storage for games and the pool table supplies.

We are excited to see what changes will be coming!!

Safety: Traveling for Spring Break

By AJ Kauffman

Hi everyone once more. We're all eagerly awaiting our much-needed vacation or break to spend with family and friends as spring break draws nearer than we anticipated. The safety precautions for traveling by vehicle, bus, airplane, train, etc. are probably well known to all of you. In order for us to be able to tell our stories about what transpired during spring break and return home safely, it is imperative that you pay close attention to your surroundings.

This is a sensible decision if you're heading somewhere warm to avoid the winter, but just to be cautious, remember to pack a water bottle and sunscreen. Protecting oneself from the sun and maintaining hydration are crucial. Because time passes by so quickly during spring break, it's a great way for seniors who will soon be graduating to unwind from the pressures of the classroom or workplace. The following advice is intended for anyone traveling with friends or family for spring break:

1. **Get there securely**
2. **Don't travel alone if you're with buddies; stick together.**
3. **Always use caution when swimming as most locations lack lifeguards.**
4. **Make sure you're drinking enough water.**

Researching your location ahead of time can help ensure that you know where to go and don't get lost when traveling with family or friends. Budgeting, or managing money sensibly, can make it more beneficial. It helps to ensure that you have enough money for both your holiday and return trip.

When you are packing clothes for your trip, ensure that you have enough clothes otherwise you will run out and will have to scramble to buy clothes that can be expensive and will lose money while buying prices with taxes. I find myself packing enough clothes everytime I go on a trip from my previous experiences. Also always finding myself to have more money to be sure that I have enough money with me otherwise I will be stuck.

Also make sure you bring your identification at all times at no cost because no one likes to lose their wallet or purse. It is like a personal valuable item, my most important item is my wallet, phone, watch and my cochlear implant. If I lose any of these things I will freak out and I'm sure none of you people reading this article would want this to happen. I have lost my cochlear battery before and I had to wait for a new one to come in, it was different even though I am Deaf myself.

So again everyone, I wish you all have a GREAT Spring/Easter break with your families! Stay safe out there and keep an eye out for the next article as school draws near to the end and summer is coming. Go Mustangs!

GAMING CLUB TOURNAMENT

The inaugural gaming club held it's first tournament on February 26th. The game of the day was Mario Kart. This was a spectator event with staff and families invited to attend. The students did a wonderful job demonstrating sportsmanship and inclusivity. There were some close races.

The final results are:

- 1st place—Josh Briggs
- 2nd place— Madison Chacon
- 3rd place—Ayvya Kosine



Weekly Student Life Activities

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

