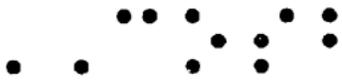


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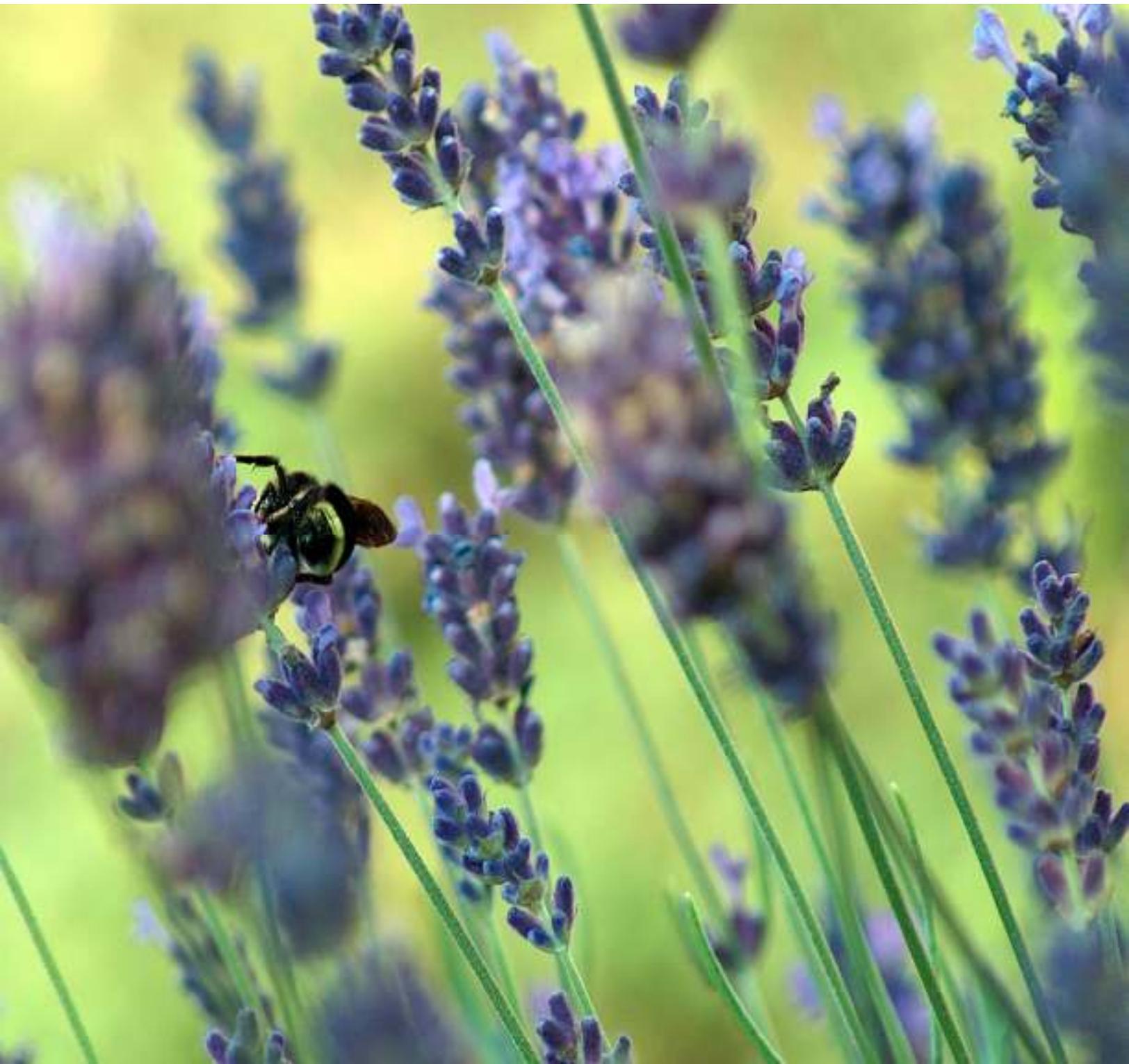


Howe's Now

Council of Schools for the Blind

Volume 14, Number 3

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Howe's Now is a quarterly publication of the Council of Schools for the Blind (COSB) that recognizes Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe. Samuel Howe was the first Director of the Perkins School for the Blind in 1833. His ongoing efforts, as an advocate for public school programs for the blind, were instrumental in establishing a full-continuum of placements options and services for the blind and visually impaired.

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On the Front Cover: Gary School, volunteer photography instructor at the Washington State School for the Blind, submitted the wonderful cover photograph taken by WSSB student Jackie Patching.

On the Back Cover: Norm has floppy ears, a wet, cold nose and brilliant brown eyes. He joined the Perkins School for the Blind's staff in 2010, becoming the institution's first and only educator with a tail. Rachel, a Secondary Program student, poses with her furry friend Norm during a sensory motor integration class

Editor's Note: A special note of thanks needs to go out to Beth Caruso, Perkins School for the Blind, Steve Gettel, COSB President Elect, Dr. Blue Bickford, Portland State University, and all the Publication Committee members for their dedication and efforts in making COSB's *Howe's Now* a successful publication for all our specialized schools.

A Message from the President

By Jim Durst, President, Indiana School for the Blind

Pay for Performance

Teachers of students with visual impairments working at residential schools for the blind have for years, earned salaries based on their education level and years of service. They have followed the same pay schedule as their peers in local education agencies. Merit pay, performance pay, and knowledge-and skill-based pay, are all the focus today in the news as alternatives to the traditional teacher step system. President Obama administration's Race to the Top grants has pushed the envelope on student performance/outcomes and strongly advocates for tying teacher salaries and retention to student growth.

Our state legislature recently moved in the direction of teacher salaries based on student outcomes/performance for both the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and School for the Deaf with many local school systems following suit. As an administrator, I certainly support student growth and positive outcomes along with the accountability to ensure this occurs. However, the dilemmas we and many of our colleagues serving students with a sensory loss face are: measuring student growth for our diverse population; determining the growth model used; the emphasis on the expanded core curriculum; and reflecting student growth for our specialty teachers.

Many states and local school corporations are tying teacher evaluations and subsequent remuneration to student performance as measured on state assessments, primarily evaluating the attainment of core standards. While many of our students, with appropriate accommodations, perform well on these state assessments, many do not. Rules and regulations requiring students to be assessed frequently do not take into account: the onset of our student's vision loss; the degenerative nature of many of our student's visual conditions; where students are functioning in terms of Braille and Nemeth skills; access to and the availability of assistive technology; and other handicapping conditions. These are just a few of the challenges our students and schools face.

Many of the state assessments have improved over the years and generally substitute or omit questions that tend to be visually biased. However, many tests continue to have such bias and frequently do not adequately reflect the progress our students have made. The lack of reliable and valid assessments specific to our students, the size of our schools, the uniqueness of our students, and the fact that many of our schools are the only schools in our state comprised solely of students with a sensory loss and a sensory loss with other handicapping conditions, presents a challenge for decision makers as to how to compare are schools with other schools in the state.

While the mastery of core curriculum is essential, expanded core curriculum is equally important for our students. The incidental and casual learning experienced by sighted children must be systematically and sequentially taught to our students. This is paramount for the attainment of core curriculum skills yet it is infrequently if ever a topic of conversation when determining the quality of an instructor or the performance of a student.

It is critical for our students to master core and expanded core curriculum. It is critical for our schools to be able to adequately show the progress our students are making and for us to be part of the team in making decisions about pay for performance for our teachers. It is a challenge that we will continue to face and sharing information between our schools, states and agencies will be beneficial to all of us.

Canine Companion Transforms Classroom Experience

By Anna Miller, Publications, Media and Public Relations, Perkins School for the Blind

Norm has floppy ears, a wet, cold nose and brilliant brown eyes. He joined the Perkins School for the Blind's staff in 2010, becoming the institution's first and only educator with a tail.

"Students light up when they see him," says Jen Feinstein, an occupational therapist and Norm's sole facilitator.

Students see Norm through their hands, feeling his soft golden fur, wagging tail, and moist kisses. They laugh when his nose delicately sniffs their fingertips and are delighted to shake Norm's extended paw.

Norm is a professional facility dog. The three-year-old yellow Labrador and Golden Retriever mix has years of training behind him. He is a graduate of Canine Companions for Independence, a non-profit organization dedicated to training and placing service dogs with people who have disabilities.

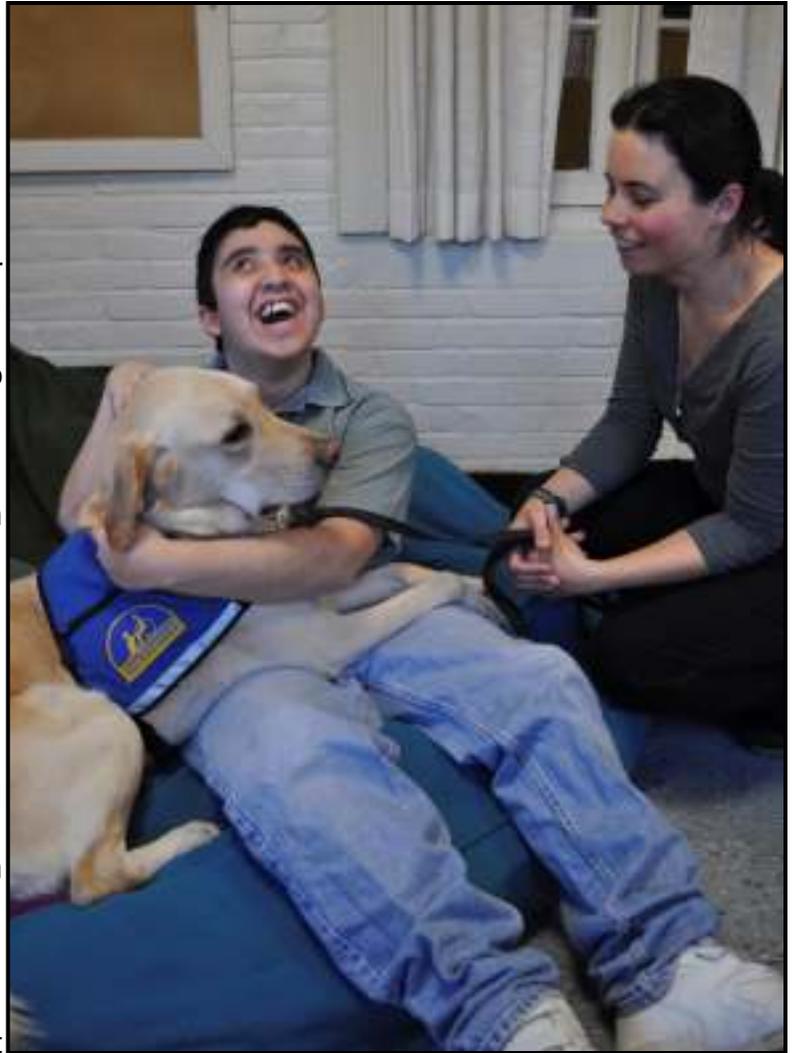
Feinstein and Norm are a team. They attended a two-week intensive training course to learn how to work together before he came to Perkins. Since then, the human-canine duo has been helping students learn in Feinstein's occupational therapy sessions.

Norm's therapeutic services are available to various departments at Perkins. Fellow clinicians and teachers often invite him into their classrooms and therapy sessions. If a student is having a tough time at home, a social worker can arrange an appointment with Norm.

Norm's job as a facility dog is to offer companionship and emotional support to every student that he meets. "Norm is a live therapy tool," says Feinstein.

Norm has a natural ability to befriend, support, and encourage students in the classroom. Students with sensory and motor impairments enjoy visiting with Norm on a beanbag chair, where they can reach out and pet him. Other students request to have Norm sit on their laps and give him hugs.

Feinstein has found that students are more eager to communicate and socialize when Norm is around. One mostly nonverbal student even says "dog" or "woof" when he meets with Norm. For many students, Norm provides the first positive opportunity to interact with a dog. These sessions have become very beneficial to students with dog-phobias and severe anxiety related to dogs.



"Some of our students may be afraid of dogs," says Feinstein. Because Norm is specially trained, the students can take control of these interactions. "A lot of the dogs in public are not really trained. Norm is polite and not intrusive in their space."

In addition to helping students overcome fears, Norm is a great motivator. Students are more eager to come to class and actively participate in activities when Norm is present. They want to bake him treats, pour him water, and go for a walk when Norm is involved. "It's amazing how much students will do for him," Feinstein says.

Feinstein uses Norm as a therapy tool during one morning's occupational therapy lesson with Dylan, 19, a student from the Secondary Program. This class is devoted to learning important mealtime skills and expanding Dylan's flexibility, range of motion, and communication skills. To make it fun, Feinstein asks Dylan to pour a bowl of fresh water for Norm.

Dylan earnestly raises the pitcher off the desk and carefully pours water into Norm's blue plastic bowl, without spilling a drop. He bends down and slowly lowers the bowl to the floor, reaching past his toes.

"Good job, Dylan. Should we let Norm drink it?" Feinstein asks.

"Yes," Dylan replies. He bounces in his chair with excitement and anticipation.

A huge smile spreads across Dylan's face as Norm loudly laps the water.

"Can you hear him, Dylan? What is he doing?" asks Feinstein.

After a long pause, Dylan begins to laugh. "He's drinking," Dylan says beaming. He reaches out to give Norm a pat, and Norm gently leans into the affection, tail wagging.



Second Technology Olympics a Success

The possibilities were endless for South Carolina students who are blind or visually impaired at the second Technology Olympics at EdVenture Children's Museum in Columbia. Sponsored by the University of South Carolina Braille Grant, the SC Commission for the Blind, and the South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind, students grades K-12 participated in a series of high-tech adventures in access technology.

Activities using access technology included events with adaptive devices, such as electronic note takers, monoculars, digital talking book players, and talking GPS systems.

This year, the event introduced families of blind and visually impaired children, ages birth to 3, to their own adventures in technology. This new addition provided information for accessibility and the latest in access technology for younger individuals to ensure further enrichment.



The Hadley School for the Blind Strives to "Stay Ahead of the Curve" of Technology Trends in Education

This year marks the 10th anniversary of eHadley, the school's online education initiative, and Hadley now offers more than 40 online courses. As the school passes this important milestone, we move into the next phase of online education—mobile learning, or mLearning-- which offers students the ability to complete coursework from their mobile devices, thus enabling them to learn on the go, on demand. Seminars@Hadley is now available as a podcast, which can be accessed from a mobile device.

Additionally, many Hadley online courses are compatible with Android, Blackberry and Apple mobile devices. mLearning is the future of distance education, and Hadley is proud to be at the forefront of this trend.

Three of the Family Education Program courses, FAM-111 You, Your Child and Your Community, FAM-121 Beginning the Special Education Journey, and FAM-131 How to Be Your Child's Advocate, are now available in a new medium – eBook. Upon enrollment, students will receive a link to the download page, where they can select a format appropriate for their eBook Reader. Hadley eBook courses are compatible with Amazon Kindle, Barnes and Noble Nook, Sony Reader, iPhone/iPod/iPad iBooks app, and any other eBook reader that accepts ePub or MobiPocket file formats.

For more information, please visit www.hadley.edu.

Capture the Flag

By Christy Bowen, Adaptive Physical Education Teacher, Kansas State School for the Blind

"Can we play Capture the Flag?" one of my students asked me. I thought to myself - I've only played Capture the Flag with a large number of sighted children in a big open field. I don't think it can be played by a small group of visually impaired children in a gym. And so I said, "I don't think so." A few weeks later the same student once again asked me "Can we play Capture the Flag? My brother played it and said it was really fun." I thought to myself - maybe there is a way to adapt this game. So I started asking my co-workers for ideas and we all came up with an idea that works!

Do you know how to play Capture the Flag? There are 2 teams - they each have a flag that they hide on their side of the field. The object of the game is to steal the opponent's flag without being caught and take it back to your side of the field. When a player is on the opponent's side of the field they can be captured and taken to jail (a marked space to the side of the field). In order to be freed from jail a team mate must run to that person and tag them without getting caught themselves. Once a jailed person is tagged he and his team mate are allowed to safely walk back to their side of the field. Four main things are happening in this game - players are guarding their flag, players are attempting to capture their opponent's flag, players are guarding their opponents that are in jail, and players are attempting to free their team mates that are in jail. The ultimate goal, however, as mentioned above, is to capture the opponent's flag and take it back to your side of the field.



Adaptations had to be made so the students with visual impairments could play it. First of all, we couldn't use flags. We needed something that would make noise so we used the Sound Balls from the American Printing House for the Blind. One team used the Yellow Boing Boing Ball (APH catalog number 1-07510-00) and the other team use the Red Techno Beat Ball (APH catalog number 1-07516-00).

Each team put their ball in a clothes basket, so it wouldn't roll away, and placed the basket at the end of their half of the gym. Then we needed to mark a spot on each side of the gym that the players could use as their jail. A mat worked fine for this. Each player wrapped jingle bells around their ankle or on their belt loop so the other players could hear where they were. There remained one major adaptation to be made. How could the students know when they crossed the mid-line of the gym into their opponent's territory? A raised line on the gym floor wouldn't work because the players could run right over the line and not even realize it was there. Here's what we came up with...and it works!

We threaded a clothesline rope through the top hem of seven sheets, cut the sheets into strips-like fringe-and then knotted each strip at the bottom to keep them from unraveling and also from getting all tangled up. It became a type of curtain that the students could run through and when they did so they would know they were in "enemy territory."



On each side of the gym – right at mid-court – an eye hook was placed in the wall about 10 feet high. I tied each end of the rope through the hook ...and the curtain sagged in the middle all the way down to the floor – it was too heavy and I couldn't pull the rope tight enough.

The idea was too good to give up on so I went back to my co-workers for ideas. I connected each end of the rope to a turnbuckle which I then put through the hook on the wall but I still couldn't get the rope tight enough. Adding a pulley to one of the turnbuckles was the key to getting the rope tight enough. Now I can put up the curtain by myself in less than 3 minutes.

The students love this game. When I asked them what they liked about the game some of their answers were "It involves a lot of strategy", "I get to play with my friends", and "I get to put people in jail." I like this game because now when my students hear their sighted friends or siblings talk about playing Capture the Flag they can join in on the conversation and say "Oh, yeah – I've played that game too."

News from the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

At the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB), the Deafblind Program falls under the jurisdiction of the Blind School. We'd like to share some of our good news from Deafblind during the 2011-12 school year: Leslie Buchanan and Susan Patten from Deafblind Services recently returned from Sao Paulo, Brazil where they attended and presented at the world conference of Deafblind International. Deafblind International (DbI) is the world association of professionals, researchers, families, deafblind people and administrators promoting services for, and raising awareness of deafblindness. Disseminating current research and promoting effective educational programs and strategies were focal points of the conference.

Leslie and Susan's presentation titled "A Diverse Set of Services for a Diverse Population: Utah's System of Services for Serving Children with Deafblindness, Birth to Twenty-two" was attended by people from 14 countries including Denmark, Spain, Croatia, Argentina, Venezuela and the host country, Brazil. The presentation used the diversity of the state as a metaphor for the diversity of children with deafblindness and the diversity of their needs. It highlighted Utah's unique system of service which is a collaboration of USDB's Deafblind Services and the Utah Deafblind Project, a federally funded technical assistance and training grant, in cooperation with local districts, early intervention agencies and the Utah State Office of Education.

This system allows deafblind teacher specialists quick access to and training on current research-based and evidence-based practice. Their work with individual education and family support teams allows for immediate implementation, thus bridging the research to practice gap. Session attendees were interested in evaluation tools developed and used by the division. Leslie and Susan were able to share evaluation tools with several including the vice-president of the European Deafblind Union. This tool is currently being used throughout Latin America to build teachers' use of effective practices.

The Seventeenth Annual Para educator's Conference Committee recently announced USDB's Kimberly Bressler (Deafblind Intervener) as the winner of the Resource Outstanding Paraeducator of Utah Award. Kimberly will be recognized and presented with this award at the November 2011 Para educator's Conference in Provo.

The committee received MANY nominations, and the final decision was a tough one. Kimberly was chosen because she displays exemplary skills and professionalism in her area of service to children and youth in Utah. USDB is proud to have employees of this caliber serving students.



USDB is a premier place to work in a state with a high standard of living and exciting recreation opportunities. We are currently recruiting licensed and fully endorsed teachers of the visually impaired. Interested? Please contact Brian Gough, USDB Human Resources Director at (801) 629-4725 or briang@usdb.org.



by Beth Caruso
 COSB Clips Editor
 Perkins School for the Blind

ARKANSAS

The Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI) residential students will now be spending their evenings in style, thanks to several Lions Clubs throughout central Arkansas. ASBVI 7th grader Brandon Sims approached the Gravel Ridge Lions about upgrading *The Stand*, an on-campus recreation area that included a television set, a pinball machine, and several antiquated video game consoles in varying stages of disrepair.



Lions Clubs from Cabot, Jacksonville, Pine Bluff, Little Rock, and Watson Chapel joined the Gravel Ridge Lions in sponsoring upgrades to the newly named *Lions' Den*, including new lighting and paint, two large flat screen TVs (both equipped with a Blu-Ray Player, a Wii, and an Xbox 360), new couches, new Coca-Cola themed tables and chairs, and an upgraded concession area with granite countertops and a popcorn machine. Sims Waterproofing volunteered a construction crew to install the new fixtures, and Lions Club members and local Best Buy employees contributed the labor to complete the recreation room, which was dedicated in December.

Response to the new *Lions' Den* has been overwhelmingly positive. ASBVI junior Ray Foster says "The *Lions' Den* is a great place to study, hang out with friends,

and have a good time," a sentiment shared by students and faculty alike. ASBVI Superintendent Jim Hill agrees with Foster, and adds "This is another great example of the commitment that the Lions consistently show to our kids, and we anticipate our students creating many years of happy memories in the new *Lions' Den*."-Chris N. Wilks [cwilks@asb.k12.ar.us]

ARIZONA

Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) continues its 100 year anniversary celebration through the 2012 Calendar Year. After our official kick-off in January, we celebrated on campus in February with "Frontier Day" – a jam-packed day of activities that attempted to demonstrate how life in Arizona has changed since we became a state (the state shares the same anniversary as the school!). We began the day by showing a documentary featuring early photos and films of our school, and by honoring some of our well known alumni, which include musician and songwriter Howlett Smith who wrote the school song. Institutions from all over the Tucson area came to campus to give workshops and demonstrations.

The Arizona Sonora Desert Museum, the Arizona State Museum, the Tucson Model A Ford Club, the Arizona Rose Theater, and the Arizona Historical Society all donated their time to give workshops in subjects such as native plants and their uses for food, tools and other resources, a Navajo weaving exhibit, period costumes, farm animals, mining, and many other areas of interest.

On Presidents' Day, the School for the Blind (ASB) also hosted the first regional Braille Challenge in the state of Arizona. Students at ASB and from across the state came to our campus to participate in the annual event sponsored by the Braille Institute of America. Students had a wonderful time, and we are hoping for an even bigger event next year. - Samuel Ace [samuel.ace@asdb.az.gov]

CALIFORNIA

California School for the Blind (CSB) has made the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) a priority. Finding time to work on the ECC, even at a specialized school for the blind, can be challenging. CSB teachers are monitoring student progress by using the ECC Minimum Standards, a comprehensive assessment of each ECC area at the beginning and end of each school year.

In addition, a class period has been set aside on a weekly basis for students to engage in a variety of exciting and innovative classes. This has given the school's school psychology team the opportunity to organize groups related to vision loss, personal safety, dating issues for adolescents, and social skills instruction. Other classes include yoga, board games, managing a budget, introduction to BrailleNote GPS, introduction to CSB's apartment living program, and planning your life after graduation. Not only are students learning new skills, they have an opportunity to engage with students in other classes, and work with teachers and specialists who are new to them. For more information contact: Sharon Sacks at ssacks@csb-cde.ca.gov - Stuart Wittenstein [swittenstein@csb-cde.ca.gov]

Junior Blind of America is proud to announce our formal expansion of Youth Services into Central and Northern California. For nearly sixty years we have provided services to children, youth and adults who are blind, visually impaired or multi-disabled living in Southern California. The Student Transition & Enrichment Program (STEP) is our core program offering services in these communities. Staff based at our new office in Oakland have spent the past five months developing relationships with partner organizations and transition-age youth from various areas including: Sacramento, San Francisco, San Jose and San Luis Obispo. Ten STEP weekend workshops are already scheduled for youth (ages 16-22) on various topics, including applying to college, assistive technology, effective communication and more.

Junior Blind is also offering our VISIONS: Adventures in Learning Program in Central and Northern California. This program provides teens with empowering recreational and learning adventures; challenging them to overcome physical and emotional obstacles while teaching them the power of teamwork, confidence and leadership. Our first VISIONS Adventure, which took place in February, brought together 16 teenage participants who explored the San Francisco Bay Area by Ferry, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) and Trolley. They visited Alcatraz Federal Prison, Pier 39, Fisherman's Wharf and other landmarks. In April, the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk Adventure will include thrills like riding the world-famous Giant Dipper roller coaster, visiting the Arcade and Neptune's Kingdom, playing Laser Tag and Miniature Golf and Bowling on the Boardwalk along the beautiful Monterey Bay. - Donald Ouimet [douimet@juniorblind.org]

COLORADO

Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB) has news to share related to our Strategic Plan. In the area of technology, an assistive technology assessment for students K-12 has been developed. Baseline data in the areas of Screen Reading/Magnification use, Word Processing, Keyboarding and Email/Internet was collected and presented to the CSDB Board of Trustees in March. Baseline assessment data will also be used to develop goals in the area of technology curriculum and instruction for the 2012-13 school year.

CSDB has created a new Professional Learning Community (PLC) in the area of Orientation and Mobility. This PLC consists of a partnership between 2 O&M Specialists from the School for the Blind and 2 from the CSDB Outreach Services Department. This collaboration between O&M professionals (each with a different focus) supports our goal of serving as a statewide resource in the area of O&M service delivery. The first project of the O&M PLC is a regional training for O&M Specialists on the Trekker Breeze GPS system. - Barbara Meese [bmeese@csdb.org]

FLORIDA

Florida School for the Deaf and Blind (FSDB) teacher Ashley Dalia, writes about the students spread across 80 beautiful acres as they participate in academic activities that best fit their individual learning needs. This year, we have reached out across those 80 acres to gather students of a unique population for *InTouch*, a networking group for students with deafblindness. The purpose is to address social skills, life skills, and self-help skills in a casual and safe environment. Students who may never cross paths in their academic day can meet each other to ask questions, share strategies, and form friendships as they come together to be “in touch.”

The first *InTouch* meeting was a social event which included student interest surveys, an icebreaker and a social session. Seventeen students from 6th grade to continuing education attended along with several staff. Since then, the students have taken pride in their new found culture. Two students participated in the Southeast Transition Institute for Students with Deafblindness. They are putting together a presentation for *InTouch* so they can share their experiences.

Another student has entered the FSDB Pageant in hopes of earning the Miss Florida School for the Blind title as a deafblind teen. Other students have shown empowerment by demonstrating confidence, strong advocacy skills, and motivation to try new strategies in the classroom and community. These students have reported that being able to talk to a peer who understands the challenges of their deafblindness has really made a difference. This spring, a technology session and guest speaker event are planned.

InTouch at FSDB is evolving as the students shape the club into what they want it to be. *InTouch* does exactly what it implies—it keeps a wonderful and unique population of students in touch with their world as they develop friendships, academic issues, and life skills together. — Mary Lou Hofmann-Sitten [hofmannm@fsdb.k12.fl.us]

GEORGIA

During the month of March, *Georgia Academy for the Blind* hosted a student tour that depicted the value of experiences that associate our students with their *differently-abled* peers. The baseball team from Bleckley County Middle School came to see where their manager, a 6th grade day student at GAB, goes to school each day.

They started their visit with a tour of the middle school classes and were able to see how the visually impaired students access the very same Georgia Performance Standards that all middle school students in the state of Georgia must master. They were able to see braille and large print text books, how visually impaired students access technology, and how they use assistive technology on a daily basis. They were impressed!

After the tour, the 6th, 7th and 8th graders from GAB gathered with the BCMS students for an exciting game of beeper kickball. Once the game was over, the group ate a “Pi Day” lunch in the school cafeteria and enjoyed a meal of round foods. It was a wonderful and enlightening day for all involved. — Amy Bardash [Amy.Bardash@doe.k12.ga.us]



ILLINOIS

The Hadley School for the Blind has launched a new course, "Braille Music Basics." Designed for those who are sighted and want to learn about transcribing print music into braille, teaching braille music or simply supporting someone who is interested in learning the braille music code, this new course offers an introduction to the fundamentals of braille music.

The prerequisite for this five lesson course is completion of Hadley's "Braille Music Diagnostic," which assesses the student's ability to read print music at an elementary level, as well as visually read and produce uncontracted braille. Lessons 1 and 2 provide some of the basic braille music symbols used in braille music for any performance medium. Those lessons concentrate on music for single-melody instruments, like clarinet or violin. Lesson 3 explains braille music for voice with melodic and choral accompaniment.

Lesson 4 presents braille music for keyboard instruments. Lesson 5 addresses some questions about teaching and transcribing braille music. The information in this introductory course does not enable students to professionally transcribe print music, teach music or teach braille. However, after completing the course, students can enthusiastically support and encourage a music student who is blind and learning to read music independently.

Written by musician and braille music transcriber Ruth Rozen, this course is offered tuition-free for students in Hadley's Family Education Program and tuition-free for a limited time for students in the Hadley School for Professional Studies. While the online version of the course will be coming later this year, the print version is available now. The development of the course was partially funded by a generous grant from the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville, Kentucky. - Kate Streit [kate@hadley.edu]

Illinois School for the Visually Impaired (ISVI) has been fortunate to receive a third year of grant support that allows the Dietary Staff to purchase and serve various fruits and vegetables to the students. Twice a week fruits and vegetables are available in the Principal's office. ISVI students have come to enjoy the variety of healthy snacks. At the end of a school day in January, students and education staff gathered in the dining hall to enjoy healthy snacks as a group. A large array of fresh fruits and vegetables filled a table. Several students spoke to the group to tell how much they enjoy the healthy snacks.

ISVI students always enjoy the cultural exchange with the Japanese students from Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan. This year the Japanese students visited in February. They spent time in classrooms and then joined the student body and staff in the dining hall for conversation. The guests enjoyed hearing from ISVI students about braille. Tactile maps allowed the students to show each other where in their respective lands they live. This annual event at ISVI is both fun and interesting for all involved. - Marsha Schoth [marsha.schoth@illinois.gov]

INDIANA

Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ISBVI) kindergarten class has been using a new 'Morning Message' curriculum this year. As a result, the classroom teacher, Nancy Bingham, has seen a vast improvement with reading and sentence fluency, spacing, editing and punctuation. The weekly schedule includes:

- Monday: The teacher prints (or brailles) a sentence (in a predictable format) on chart paper including a subject the students have been studying. Then, each student produces their own sentence and the teacher prints (or brailles) that sentence on the chart paper. Students are given recognition for their individual sentence as their first name is written in parenthesis at the end of their sentence.
- Tuesday: Using the sentences from the previous day, the students take turns reading all of the sentences while the teacher points to the words on the chart or braille paper. Each student takes a turn using a marker to circle the capital letters at the beginning of each sentence, important words, and punctuation marks.
- Wednesday: The entire class rereads each sentence again. Then each student has their individual sentence cut word by word and placed into a baggie. The students work to unscramble the words and arrange them in the correct order. Each student then reads their sentence.
- Thursday: The class rereads the sentences again and then illustrates their own individual sentence. Upon completion, they unscramble their words again and glue the words on their illustrations.
- Friday: The class presents their finished products to the class and to their principal.

Nancy reports that the students have really done well with these activities and the routine and repetition have been a great start to improving each student's literacy skills. ISBVI hosted another great Little NC conference. Student athletes from several other schools participated in a plethora of athletic events. This year, both the Kentucky School for the Blind and the Ohio School for the Blind were among the competitors. There were a total of 25 junior varsity athlete participants. The athletes had a chance to compete in goalball, swimming, wrestling and cheerleading competitions. Little NC is a great chance for students to participate in and be exposed to a variety of athletic opportunities. — Toni Hughes [thughes@isb.state.in.us]

KANSAS

The Kansas State School for the Blind (KSSB) Industrial Arts class has really been busy this year! The instructor, Janet Mosley, has been teaching students for approximately 15 years and has had many great project ideas. One project, which has also been a great money maker, is the production of ink pens, key chains, key chain screw driver kits and bottle stoppers. These multi-colored and beautiful items are made from wood and acrylic which the students shape on a lathe and then assemble the component parts. They have been sold to the Lions Club, parents, family, friends, and even to the alumni organization of Webster University.

Another fun item that has been made by the students and distributed widely is the gumball machine. Other projects include the making of bookshelves, entertainment centers, end tables, treasure boxes and jewelry. It is important to note that while students are engaged in producing these items they are also learning to use power tools, click-rulers and hand tools. In addition to the industrial arts projects, KSSB students have become involved in learning home maintenance skills. These include changing furnace filters, making simple lamp repairs, hanging pictures on walls, and replacing or repairing faucets and parts of a toilet. Students have also experienced making repairs on washers and dryers. It is through these various experiences that learning occurs and self-confidence grows. Ms. Mosley reported that as students experienced a variety of activities in the industrial arts class, she also witnessed an increase in their sense of pride and accomplishment.

Also, of great importance, the industrial arts class helps prepare the students for independent living. Consequently, many graduates have returned to express their appreciation for the skills that were taught by Ms. Mosley in industrial arts class. - Cheryl Love [clove@kssb.net]

LOUISIANA

The Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired (LSVI), like many schools, is preparing for the spring standardized testing. Besides teaching strategies that will help our students, we are also including two events to build self-confidence and inspiration among the student body. One event, called Academic Olympics, was held in March. Teachers in the core subjects created games using sample questions that students experienced on the tests. Students participated by going to various game tables, completing the tasks, and earning tickets to 'buy' prizes at the end of the Olympics. The games are leveled for the various ages and abilities so all students are winners!

The second event was a secret for two months. On the afternoon of the Olympics, students heard from retired major league outfielder, David Delluci whose hometown is Baton Rouge, the location of LSVI. Mr. Delluci spoke with the students on how to approach the task ahead of them and how to finish the process. LSVI students regularly participate in sports and were motivated by a 'peer' sportsman!

To celebrate having completed testing in April, LSVI will host a statewide talent and art show for students with visual impairments. Special guests and judges from the community will be coming on campus to view the school's local talent. The following day, the students will be outside *all* day for activities, demonstrations by our community first responders, and a picnic. - Anna Gayle [anna.gayle@la.gov]

MASSACHUSETTS

Perkins School for the Blind (PSB) Outreach Short Courses has been busy with a number of exciting programs. One of the highlights of the winter was the New England Blind & Visually Impaired Ski Festival at Sugarloaf Mountain in Maine. 7 students enjoyed a week of daily ski clinics with trained instructors, slalom races, snow tubing, ski mobile rides, and a Snowcat adventure! From the beginner to the experienced, everyone had an unforgettable time. During the Outreach Theater Program the students performed the play "The Patchwork Girl of Oz" for an audience full of friends, family, and Perkins staff. Kelly Cote, Supervisor of Short Courses, reports that there are more wonderful opportunities to come with Camp Abilities Boston and summer programs right around the corner. For the second year, Kelly is running the Boston Marathon in support of Perkins – Go Kelly!

Jan Seymour-Ford, Research Librarian reports that the PSB Archives has a wealth of information about the early history of our field. Recently we have digitized a lot of this material, and you can view it on the internet. Check our website at www.PerkinsArchives.org for links to annual reports, The Lantern, historical papers, and a wealth of fascinating photographs, including many of Helen Keller.

– Beth Caruso [beth.caruso@perkins.org]

MICHIGAN

Michigan Department of Education-Low Incidence Outreach (MDE-LIO) assists in the scheduling and operation of Camp Tuhsmehta (touch-smell-hearing-taste), also known as Camp T. This facility is located west of Greenville, Michigan, amongst 301 pristine acres of pine and oak forests on the beautiful Morgan Mills chain of lakes. This outdoor education/recreation facility was originally created in 1970 for the visually impaired by Robert H. Thompson, a past superintendent of the Michigan School for the Blind. Today the camp provides education/recreation programming for all children as well as serving as a year-round conference and retreat center. The beautiful countryside of western Michigan affords a variety of unique opportunities and can accommodate a variety of day and/or overnight programs. Over seven hundred campers have reservations for this season. Check out the camp website: <https://sites.google.com/site/tuhsmehta> for additional information. - Susan Bradley [bradleys1@michigan.gov]

MISSOURI

The Missouri School for the Blind (MSB) hosted its first ever "Tech It Up a Notch" technology event in March. This event provided students in grades 5-12 with hands-on access to software and devices designed for the blind and visually impaired. In addition to MSB students, visiting students from various Missouri school districts attended this event.

Students were given a variety of topics to choose from. During each of three sessions they could explore devices or demonstrate their skills in competitive rounds for the chance to win prizes – including iPads, LiveScribe Pens, Adaptive ADL equipment and more! Students were able to explore APH software, including Talking Typer and Math Flash, as well as devices like Refreshable Braille, LiveScribe pens, iPads with B/VI software and adaptive cooking equipment. Other courses included:

- Managing Important Information: participants learned to manage medical information and appointments, as well as other personal information using a Talking Watch, Talking Calendar and Talking Prescription Bottle.
- Text enlargement: participants viewed demonstrations of a CCTV, Pearle/Open Book, Sapphire, Ruby, ZOOMText and Transformer for use with enlarging text in a variety of formats.
- Braille Note Takers: participants used Braille Note Takers to find, create, edit and print files and documents.
- What Not To Wear – Clothing Identification and Labeling: using Match Maker, Color Mate and a Braille Labeler, students identified items of clothing and then labeled them by sewing in braille or tactile labels.
- Trekker: students used the Trekker to navigate throughout an assigned course on MSB's campus.
- Screen readers and enlargement: students used ZOOMText, JAWS and NVDA to navigate text, computer files, operating systems and the Internet to answer a series of questions.

Through this event, students were able to identify adaptive technology that could be utilized in their everyday lives and learned where this new technology can be purchased or borrowed.

– Patti Curran [Patti.Curran@msb.dese.mo.gov]

NEBRASKA

The Nebraska Center for the Education of Children Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI) students had an easier time of finding Easter eggs this year that were hidden around the campus. Thanks to a generous donation, these specialized eggs have been adapted specifically for children who have visual impairments.



The International Association of Bomb Technicians and Investigators (IABTI), in conjunction with the Nebraska State Patrol, put together the beeping eggs as an electrical training exercise. Sgt. Jud McKinstry serves as the Chapter Director for the IABTI. He visited NCECBVI and delivered the eggs to the students. NCECBVI plans to share these as a resource for teachers and school districts in Nebraska.

- Sally Gittinger [sgittinger@esu4.net]

NEW MEXICO

New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NMSBVI) joins with the state of New Mexico in celebrating 100 years of statehood in 2012. NMSBVI was created in 1903, nine years before New Mexico became a state! Many festivities will occur throughout New Mexico in its centennial year and NMSBVI is proud to be a part of several celebrations.

After many attempts by the Territory of New Mexico, President William Howard Taft signed New Mexico's Statehood proclamation in a small ceremony on January 6, 1912. NMSBVI students and many staff were able to attend a reenactment of this historic event at the Farm and Ranch Museum in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Buses, suburbans and cars were loaded up and headed out for a day filled with history and enjoyment. They were treated to a self guided tour of the Farm and Ranch Museum prior to the event and were seated in a special section in the standing room only meeting room.

NMSBVI has ties to the state song, "O Fair New Mexico", as it was written by Elizabeth Garrett, daughter of Sheriff Pat Garrett and former student and teacher at NMSBVI. There is a dormitory named after Elizabeth on the NMSBVI campus. The Farm and Ranch staff were kind enough to publicly acknowledge our group at the event along with our ties to Elizabeth and the state song. Students and staff alike took away great memories of a wonderful event.

NMSBVI is also hosting a Centennial event called "Neighbors Day" in April where the community is invited to our campus to experience numerous events from historical to modern with blindness awareness components woven throughout. Happy Birthday New Mexico...we are proud to be a great part of your history! –Carolyn Delone [cdelone@nmsbvi.k12.nm.us]

NEW YORK

New York Institute for Special Education (NYISE) students successfully participated recently in the Braille Challenge, a national, academic competition for visually impaired students. This event was first introduced by the Braille Institute, Los Angeles, California, in the year 2000. It was designed to motivate and encourage blind youngsters to practice and apply their braille skills. There are five contest groups from grades 1 – 12, and the children compete in a variety of categories, including: Spelling, Proofreading, Reading Comprehension, Charts and Graphs, and Speed and Accuracy. Depending on their performance at the regional level, the contestants have the opportunity to move up to the national level competition which is held at the Braille Institute in California.

In February, the regional challenge took place at the WT Clark High School in Westbury, NY. Fifteen students from our school participated in the activities under the direction and guidance of Ms. Jackie Banschbach, our first grade teacher. Her dedication and commitment to the Braille Challenge over the years has resulted in several winners from NYISE. This year our expectations were equally high as the contestants were cheered on by the enthusiasm and pride of their parents, families and teachers.

Three of our students were most successful: Misael Gonzalez tied for first place in the Freshman Division; Esmeralda Chavez took first place in the Sophomore Division; and Kalah Dolman took second place for the Junior Varsity Division. While these are outstanding achievements regionally, we are waiting to hear how our students ranked nationally and if they will progress to the finals. The Braille Challenge has proved to be a wonderful opportunity for our students to build and demonstrate their braille skills, their self-confidence and their good sportsmanship. - Albina Gaudino [agaudino@nyise.org]

NORTH CAROLINA

Governor Morehead School (GMS) sent 50 students to the circus this winter. The Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus was in town for their “fully charged” presentation of *The Greatest Show on Earth*. While one might assume that the circus is an odd event to which to take visually impaired and blind students, you’d be wrong. Our students had great fun seeing the lights and pyrotechnics, listening to the music, the lively ringmaster, and the amusing sound effects. Providing live verbal description is tough, particularly when what is in front of you is literally a three-ring circus. But fortunately, the circus presented a number of performances that were more focused, such as when the troop of elephants entered the arena to perform under the direction of their animal trainer. These focused performances made it much easier to describe to the students what was occurring.



The highlight of the circus was the Touch Tour, a specially designed event where the circus invites blind students to come down to the arena floor and explore with their hands, eyes, ears, and noses. Students were allowed to explore the various props used during the circus, as well as try on the circus costumes while conversing with the performers. If you have never tried on a rhinestone covered jacket, you’d be surprised at how heavy one is. The students loved the texture, weight, and shininess of the costumes. The absolute highlight of the Touch Tour was when the trainer brought in Asia, the matriarch elephant of her troop. The students were allowed to touch Asia, and many remarked about how her skin felt and how large she was. The opportunity to bring so many of the school’s students to the circus and Touch Tour was made possible by The Ringling Brothers’ promoters who recognized that they could do more to make the circus accessible to an audience that experiences vision impairment and blindness. It is an example of how a show dating back more than 100 years can be updated to meet the needs of diverse learners such as ours. The students loved their experience at the circus and it is one they won’t soon forget.

– Kelly Davis [kelly.davis@esdb.nc.gov]

NORTH DAKOTA

North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind (NDVS/SB) in Grand Forks is proud to provide persons who are blind or visually impaired direct access to a sampling of low vision aids that they may need for daily living and for enjoyment through *The Store*. NDVS/SB opened *The Store* in 1997 with the hope of bridging that difficult first step in selecting low vision aids. Customers can come in and try items they might otherwise be hesitant to order, and find items to assist them with their independence. *The Store* carries a large selection of mobility products such as canes and cane tips, braille writing supplies, tactile marking aids and magnifiers, including a very affordable video magnifier that can be connected to a computer. There is also a wide variety of items from large print playing cards and tactile dice to talking clocks and protective eyewear. A catalog of the items is available by email, in braille or large print and phone orders are welcome. An additional benefit to North Dakota customers is that we do not charge in state shipping or handling fees. Please contact *The Store* manager Pamela Hesse at 701-795-2714 or email her at phesse@nd.gov if you are looking for a specific item, have any questions regarding *The Store* and products, or would like to request a catalog. - Carmen Grove Suminski [csuminsk@nd.us]

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma School for the Blind (OSB) held the Braille Challenge in March on campus. More than 20 visually impaired students from across Oklahoma competed. The Challenge tests proficiency in braille reading and comprehension as well as speed, accuracy, spelling, proofreading and tactile graphics. Oklahoma’s Braille Challenge is one of 37 such competitions in the United States. Winners included Jennifer Ratliff an OSB eighth grader who won the Overall Sophomore, Junior Varsity and Varsity Category. Daniel Brookshire, a sophomore from Tulsa, won second in the category. Congratulations to these outstanding students and to Mrs. Faye Miller, event coordinator and the entire Braille Challenge committee for a job well done. - Carolyn Sheppard [cshepard@osb.k12.ok.us]

PENNSYLVANIA

Overbrook School for the Blind (OSB) participation in the Middle States self-study, as in the past, is an all inclusive group effort. Board members, administrators, support staff, teachers, paraeducators, parents, and students discuss and analyze where we are and where we are going as a specialized school, what we are doing, how we can improve, and what we want to change—all in line with Middle States standards.

It speaks to the dedication of staff and the competence of everyone involved that while this necessary and important activity occurs, the primary work of our school—educating children and young adults who are visually impaired—progresses uninterrupted. If we sound proud of our school, it's because we are, even though as individuals we remain humble in the light of all that our students and their families accomplish.

The documentary about OSB, *Beyond These Walls*, was screened for the first time on campus in March. We combined the showing with dinner and a discussion that included Villanova University faculty and student film makers, the three OSB students and their families that are profiled in the film, and other audience members. Highlights of the film include students talking about their lives and families opening up about the initial shock of learning their children have a disability and the eventual pleasure of seeing the children grow and succeed.

During the discussion period and afterward over dessert, Villanova students and faculty thanked our school—and especially the three featured students and their families—for “trusting” them. Families thanked the film makers for taking the time to listen and to learn from them and their children. OSB staff voiced appreciation for the respectful and non-intrusive way that the film crews moved about campus, doing their creative work and not interfering with ours.

Beyond These Walls, like other documentaries done by the university students through the Villanova Social Justice Documentary Film program, will be offered to professional documentary film festivals. As one of the Villanova faculty stressed, “We’re talking about professional festivals, not student competitions.” OSB Director Gerald Kitzhoffer looks forward to the general public seeing the movie, because, as he says, “It has the potential to change the way people see ability.” - Dennis Brookshire [dennis@obs.org]

Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children (WPSBC) has planned several initiatives to commemorate the occasion of our 125th anniversary. Our educational staff will incorporate special lessons for our pupils, while our Outreach Department will be hosting two different educational symposiums for the community focused on increasing awareness and improving instructional services for the visually impaired. The first conference, *CVI: Visions of Change*, will held in June on our campus. It is open to teachers, therapists, families and the medical community. Go to www.wpsc.org for more information.

The capstone of the anniversary is the development of an Urban Trail to be situated on our campus. The purpose of this project is to continue to innovate and improve the opportunities for our students and create pathways to learning and enriching the lives of a student population overcoming remarkable challenges.

WPSBC Outreach is partnering with Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh (BVRS) to host Expanding Visions, a week long, August overnight camp for teens who are blind or visually impaired ages 14-16. We will provide a variety of training and activities from the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC).

The beginning of the 2011/12 school year saw monumental changes as WPSBC embarked on two new programs to serve individuals with visual impairments both younger and older than ever before. As part of the School for Blind Children's current strategic plan, the organization began piloting a post-school adaptive living skills service and vocational training day program for graduates ages 21-25. In addition, the School initiated a child care program called “Little Learners” that will blend young children with visual impairments with sighted typically developing peers ages birth through 5. The program is located in our Early Childhood Center. – Beth Ramella [ramellab@wpsbc.org]

SOUTH DAKOTA

South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SDSBVI) faculty/staff members will have opportunities to share their craft with colleagues as the Dakotas AER Conference will be in Aberdeen in April. We will also be hosting the national Outreach Forum in Aberdeen in May.

As we “turn the corner” and “head for home” with the 2011-2012 school year, (wow, where DID this year go!?), some of the happenings in South Dakota relate to the weather (very mild winter – although we did have one “quasi” snow day for our students); student participation in the area vocal music contest at NSU; our annual “Move for Heart” fundraiser for the American Heart Association (raising over \$900!); celebrating our 112th birthday on March 1st; attending the state one act play festival in Aberdeen; an “I Hate Winter” overnight/all night activity for our students and residential program members; hosting the SD Board of Regents on our campus for their spring meeting; and our students’ participation in and work with swim team, goalball, forensics and participation with the NCASB meet in Minnesota in late April. Our Special Olympians will also be participating in local, area and state level events for swimming and track and field.

We have no graduates for the spring of 2012, but anticipate graduating as many as five in May 2013. Planning has already begun for our SDSBVI Extended School Year / Summer School programs in June and July. - Mark Krogstrand [krogstrn@sdsbvi.northern.edu]

TENNESSEE

The Tennessee School for the Blind (TSB) Wrestling and Cheerleading teams won first place in the North Central Association of Schools for the Blind Conference championships held at the Arkansas School for the Blind in January. There were four TSB wrestlers who won first place and all the other wrestlers on the team placed in the tournament.

TSB students represented the nation of France in this year's University of Tennessee High School Model United Nations. We had seven students sign up to be part of this year's program. Chris Wright won Honorable Mention for his work on the Economics and Finance Committee. This is our 5th year to compete but our first year to earn an award. We are proud of our whole delegation but especially of the way Chris represented TSB.

Teacher Shari Scott was selected by the Tennessee Holocaust Commission as a winner of the 2012 distinguished Belz-Lipman Holocaust Educator Award. Shari teaches adaptive technology, personal finance, economics, government and world history at TSB. She has been teaching history for the past six years and has incorporated Holocaust studies into all of her classes since experiencing the Echoes and Reflections Curriculum at an educational program conducted by the Tennessee Holocaust Commission.

Congratulations to TSB art student Corgan Waters for having her painting selected to go into the 2013 APH Calendar. TSB students had various art pieces on display at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center (TPAC) throughout March. In March, Ashley Jackson spoke to faculty and guests at Hiwassee University in Hiwassee, Tennessee. She talked about overcoming her physical challenges of having hearing and vision impairments as well as being a sculptor. Ashley was named Artist of the Year for Vision Strength and Artistry (VSA) by VSA Arts International Tennessee. – Victoria DeSalvatore [victoria.desalvatore@tnschoolfortheblind.org]

TEXAS

The Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) recently collaborated with the Austin Fire Department (AFD) to incorporate some of the techniques of Orientation and Mobility into AFD's training designed to help firefighters who become disoriented in dense smoke or other conditions where sight is impaired. TSBVI COMS Mary Faith Price worked with training coordinators to evaluate the most common errors firefighters make when they cannot see their surrounding environment. The firefighters will spend time under blindfolds learning to attune themselves to environmental clues coming through any of their senses. Much like a blind pedestrian who becomes temporarily disoriented, the firefighters will stop, calm themselves, observe what they can of the surroundings and then go through a mental mapping process in order to reestablish orientation to pathways.

Through this training the AFD intends for firefighters to routinely begin taking more notice of landmarks and routes upon entry into burning structures prior to encountering low or zero visibility conditions. It's interesting to consider where blindness skills of this type might have applications in certain occupations and activities where the ability to navigate the environment without full use of vision could be advantageous to both safety and performance. - Bill Daugherty [daughertyb@tsbvi.edu]

UTAH

At the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB), the Deafblind Program falls under the jurisdiction of the Blind School. We'd like to share some of our good news from Deafblind during the 2011-12 school year: Leslie Buchanan and Susan Patten from Deafblind Services recently returned from Sao Paulo, Brazil where they attended and presented at the world conference of Deafblind International. Deafblind International (DbI) is the world association of professionals, researchers, families, deafblind people and administrators promoting services for, and raising awareness of deafblindness. Disseminating current research and promoting effective educational programs and strategies were focal points of the conference.

Leslie and Susan's presentation titled "A Diverse Set of Services for a Diverse Population: Utah's System of Services for Serving Children with Deafblindness, Birth to Twenty-two" was attended by people from 14 countries including Denmark, Spain, Croatia, Argentina, Venezuela and the host country, Brazil. The presentation used the diversity of the state as a metaphor for the diversity of children with deafblindness and the diversity of their needs. It highlighted Utah's unique system of service which is a collaboration of USDB's Deafblind Services and the Utah Deafblind Project, a federally funded technical assistance and training grant, in cooperation with local districts, early intervention agencies and the Utah State Office of Education. This system allows deafblind teacher specialists quick access to and training on current research-based and evidence-based practice. Their work with individual education and family support teams allows for immediate implementation, thus bridging the research to practice gap. Session attendees were interested in evaluation tools developed and used by the division. Leslie and Susan were able to share evaluation tools with several including the vice-president of the European Deafblind Union. This tool is currently being used throughout Latin America to build teachers' use of effective practices.

The Seventeenth Annual Para educator's Conference Committee recently announced USDB's Kimberly Bressler (Deafblind Intervener) as the winner of the Resource Outstanding Paraeducator of Utah Award. Kimberly will be recognized and presented with this award at the November 2011 Para educator's Conference in Provo. The committee received MANY nominations, and the final decision was a tough one. Kimberly was chosen because she displays exemplary skills and professionalism in her area of service to children and youth in Utah. USDB is proud to have employees of this caliber serving students.

USDB is a premier place to work in a state with a high standard of living and exciting recreation opportunities. We are currently recruiting licensed and fully endorsed teachers of the visually impaired. Interested? Please contact Brian Gough, USDB Human Resources Director at (801) 629-4725 or briang@usdb.org.

A Day in the Life of a Child at a Specialized School for the Blind

By Gene McMahon, COSB Executive Director

The "Days" project is both a national and local event to bring positive focus to the great education that takes place at COSB schools and to educate the wider community about the importance of teaching the Expanded Core Curriculum to all students with visual disabilities, regardless of where they receive their education. Participating COSB schools spent a day highlighting the teaching and learning that takes place at COSB schools with a particular emphasis on the ECC. This includes the Outreach work that schools also do. Many of the participating schools held special days where they invited local and state legislators and educators to visit their school where they got a chance to see the teaching and learning of the ECC.

The Expanded Core Curriculum skills include:

- Compensatory Skills, Including Communication Modes
- Orientation and mobility
- Social interaction
- Independent living
- Recreation and leisure
- Sensory efficiency
- Use of assistive technology
- Career education
- Self Determination Skills

A unifying event among the school was a photo contest with an emphasis on ECC. Each school chose winners from their school and then they submitted their winners to a national contest. On May 17th, a culminating event was held in Washington, DC. Winning photos from each of the participating schools were on display in the House of Representatives Education Committee Conference Room and congressional representatives were invited to view the photos.

You can view all the photos by going to <http://www.flickr.com/groups/cosbecc/>.

This, or something like this, is meant to be a yearly event not a one shot deal as we educate legislators and policy makers about the educational needs of children with blindness and visually impairment and the great work being done by COSB schools.

Diveheart Scuba Experience

The Illinois School for the Visually Impaired participated in the Diveheart Scuba Experience on February 23, 2012, at the Il. School for the Deaf (ISD). Both schools are located in Jacksonville. Diveheart is a non-profit national organization based in Northern Illinois that provides and supports educational scuba diving and snorkeling programs for any physically impaired child or adult. Through the sport of scuba diving the program builds confidence and independence in children and adults with disabilities and disabled veterans.

Diveheart, through the support of the Jacksonville Rotary and Morgan county Underwater Search and Rescue Dive Team, offered this educational recreational activity for five ISVI students. In the pool, the students were engaged in exercises in a zero-gravity atmosphere. They learned how to clear water from their regulator, recover their regulator, equate their ears to deep-water pressure and mostly importantly, build confidence.

Mark Peters, a Transitional Living Program student at ISVI, made the following comments about the experience: "I enjoyed doing the flips. I thought it was really cool to be able to breathe under water. I thought it was a great experience over all. I want to say thank you to the whole dive team for giving us the opportunity to have the diving experience".

Jim Elliott, Diveheart President, trains the dive team to train the students with the end goal that the student can go on a true diving expedition. He has a daughter who was born visually impaired. When she became involved in skiing, her peers respected her for being able to do the activity in spite of the challenges associated with being visually impaired. Mr. Elliott wants to offer the diving experience so that students will think about exploring opportunities in their lives.



Up the Creek with O/M in North Carolina

By Rod Poole, COMS, Governor Morehead School,
William Tubilleja (photographer) and Daniel Simmons,
Graduate students in O/M at NC Central University

If you're visually impaired, a wilderness trail hike presents special challenges that need to be addressed with proper planning. For eight consecutive years now, during the winter, Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists at the Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh, NC, have taken small groups of visually impaired students to the Uwharrie Mountains in central North Carolina for a day hike. Why during the winter? That's when snakes and ticks are not yet out, and hunting season is over. On January 30, 2012, three staff from GMS took two high school young men on such an adventure.

Any successful hike begins with good orientation. En route to the trailhead in the vehicle, a discussion took place with the group concerning trail travel, sun clues and compasses (including a braille one), orienting a map to find the right trail at junctions, types of clothing for backpacking, disposal of human waste, importance of clean drinking water, food to bring, and what to do if you have an emergency such as getting lost, hypothermia, etc.

Trails in the northern Uwharries follow ridgelines or run parallel to streams that offer rock-hopping opportunities. Taking on this hike means that you are literally "up the creek". We were without a paddle but did have monoculars, compasses, and hiking staffs. When crossing creeks, students had to tap to find rocks and then use a hiking pole for support. Throughout the hike, one student used a long cane to preview the route. Our students learned quickly by previewing their route with a long cane or walking staff that if they were on fairly hard-packed ground that they were probably on the trail. They also quickly figured out that if they found lots of leaves or a steep slope either upward or downward, that they had probably veered off of the trail.

Many students at the Governor Morehead School are taught compass use for orientation in an urban setting. When travel occurs in a wilderness, proper use of map and compass can be truly critically important. For orientation, our students learned that the sun is in the southern sky during the winter in this hemisphere. One student learned to properly orient a tactile map, with the trail line marked by a hot glue gun to differentiate that line from other raised lines.



Hiking leads to healthy appetites. One staff member used his backpacking stove to cook up a terrific one-pot meal of chicken and noodles for everyone. Upon return from this cool Orientation and Mobility hike, the students asked "Can we do this again?" Then, we absolutely knew that this was a truly valuable experience for the students. Our students deserve as rich a variety of lessons as we can provide, and this opportunity was truly remarkable.

We're doing it again!

In March, 2011, the Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired (FIMC-VI) sponsored a two day workshop for licensed/certified psychologists in Tampa Florida. The featured presenter was Dr. Joan B. Chase, who has developed a series of subtests and methods for application to students/clients who do not see. The kit is called the Tactile Assessment of Performance (TAP). It is distributed free to all attendees along with other measures for assessment of people who are dependent on tactile and auditory input. Only 100 kits have been manufactured, and it is hoped they will be distributed to psychologists in areas around the country as well as Florida. The 2011 Workshop was very well received, and the measures are now used by the participants.

The next workshop will be held in South Florida (probably Ft. Lauderdale) on Thursday and Friday, November 1 and 2, 2012. If you know of any psychologists interested in providing comprehensive evaluations of students/clients who are blind, please have them call either Kay Ratzlaff at 813-837-7829 or Dr. Joan Chase at 727-733-7771 to receive a brochure and registration form via snail mail. They can be reached by e-mail at kratzlaff@fimcvi.org or at jbchase@gte.net.

Please note that each participant must be a licensed or certified psychologist (not our rule, but privileged information will be shared about testing, so we must adhere to APA standards). Each participant will be eligible to obtain 12 Continuing Education Credits through the Florida Psychological Association (FPA). While there is no charge for the workshop, the cost of the CE's is \$180. for 12 credits (\$15. per credit). Those checks are made out to FPA directly.

Please contact psychologists who provide assessments in your area or State. Remember, we would like to reach those who will apply the test materials to tactile learners. As so few kits will be available, we want to be assured that they will be used.

Many thanks for your interest and assistance. Feel free to contact either Kay or Joan if you have questions. We look forward to another successful workshop!

Thanks for your interest,

Suzanne Dalton, Supervisor, FIMC-VI, Tampa, Florida.

National Leadership Consortium in Sensory Disabilities

National Leadership Consortium in Sensory Disabilities is an OSEP funded cooperative agreement aimed at increasing, through specialized doctoral training, the number and quality of leadership personnel competent in the areas of higher education and research to improve education services for infants, children and youth who have sensory disabilities (deafness/hard of hearing, blindness/low vision, and deafblindness) including those with multiple disabilities. There are 28 Fellows in 2 cohorts who are in their first or second year of their doctoral studies. Five Fellows are studying deafblindness, 12 are studying deafness/hard of hearing, and 13 are studying blindness/visual impairment. NLCSDF Fellows attend one of 24 consortium universities, and participate in a value-added Enrichment Program.

The purpose of the Enrichment Program is to augment training that the Fellows receive at their home university, and is designed to focus specifically on research in sensory disabilities areas. The program is led by Consortium faculty and by members of the Public Advisory Council, or PAC (COSB is a member of the PAC). One component of the Enrichment program is the technologically mediated course, which is structured similar to a university class. Each year of the program has a different focus. During the first year, the Fellows focused on research methodologies, and analyzed current research in sensory disabilities. The second year the Fellows work to select a research topic, write a literature review on the topic, identify potential research questions and create a short research proposal. The syllabus for the third year of the Enrichment Program is being developed, and will emphasize grant writing. During the final year, the professoriate, the Fellows will learn about university life and prepare for their role as faculty researchers and educators.

The second component of the Enrichment Program is the face-to-face meetings, in which the Fellows get together with the Consortium faculty and Public Advisory Council members to exchange ideas, make connections and develop collaborative relationships. Through the Enrichment Program, Fellows have access to leaders across the country in the areas of visual impairment, deafness, deafblindness and multiple disabilities, and they have the opportunity to learn about the education of children with sensory disabilities.

If you would like to learn more about NLCSDF, please contact:

Brooke Smith
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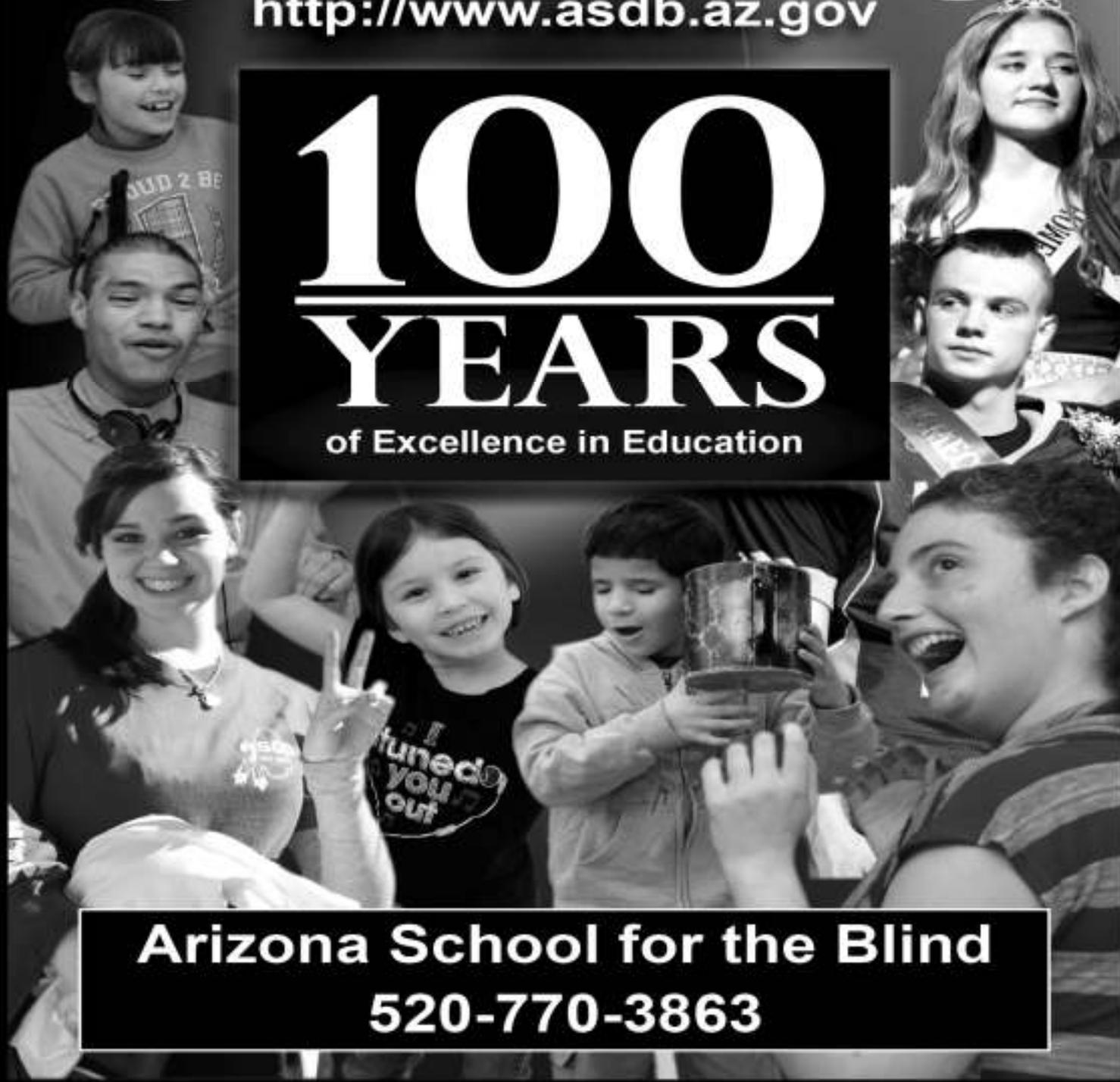
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HOWE'S NOW SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Howe's Now is a tri-annual newsletter of the Council of Schools for the Blind circulated to educators and vision professionals around North America. Issues are published during the Fall, Winter, and Spring. The deadline for receipt of articles and advertisements for the issues are:

Fall Issue — October 1st
Winter Issue — January 1st
Spring Issue — March 1st

HOWE'S NOW ARTICLES

- Faculty, staff, students, and parents are encouraged to submit articles for publication in *Howe's Now*.
- Some issues have specific themes, but articles for submission do not necessarily need to follow the current issue's theme.
- Articles can run from one to five pages in length.
- Articles can include photos and graphs. **(PHOTOS AND ARTICLES HAVE TO HAVE A UNIQUE NAME AND IDENTIFYING FILE NAME! DO NOT NAME AND SUBMIT FILES [ARTICLES AND PICTURES] WITH THE FILE NAME HOWES NOW!!!)**
- Articles will be edited for length, content, and formatting.
- Articles need to be submitted electronically in MS Word Format
- Authors will be notified by email that their article has been received. If the submitter does not receive electronic confirmation, please send a follow-up email to the editor.
- The Editor has the final authority to edit the content and length of articles, as well as paragraph and page formatting.

To submit articles or for questions contact:

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The Perkins School for the Blind integrates and introduces guide dogs to their students. Rachel, a Secondary Program student, poses with her furry friend (Norm) during a sensory motor integration class