

SENSE Abilities

A Quarterly Publication about Visual Impairments and Deafblindness
A collaborative effort of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
and the DARS Division for Blind Services

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Spring is a busy time at schools for parents and teachers of students with disabilities, as well as for the students themselves. It's time to write new IEP's, finish up TAKS testing, and work out agreements at ARD meetings which can be stressful and contentious situations. Be sure to spend time reading Isela Wilson's perspective on ARD meetings and working with a team which didn't always agree with her ideas. Sasha writes again about growing up with a visual impairment, and her mother Evangelina writes from a parent's perspective.

Take a look at the programming section for ideas about things to do to stay active and explore and learn about the world with TSBVI's physical education teacher Elina Mullin. Susan Lowry, COMS from Governor Morehead School and Lyn Ayer of Oregon Deafblind Project discuss ways to encourage active exploration and learning. This issue is packed with ideas, so dive in and enjoy!

Holly Cooper



**The Conference Center --
The new home for the
Outreach Program**

Rise of the Battalion Commander

C/MAJ Esmeralda Andrade, Battalion Commander

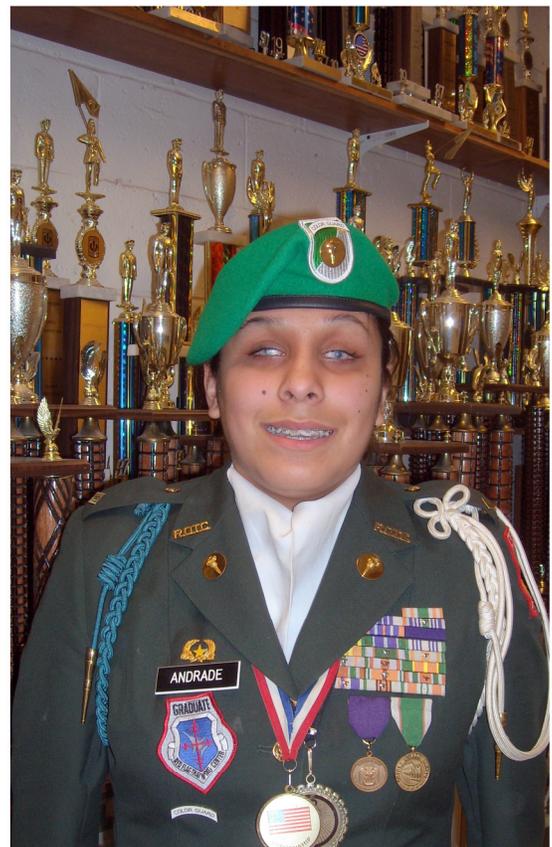
Abstract: A visually impaired high school student shares her story of advancing within her high school's Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC).

Keywords: Family Wisdom, visually impaired, Junior Reserve Officers Training Corp, leadership, self-determination, vocational development.

Hello my name is Esmeralda Andrade. I'm 18 years old. I'm from Dallas, TX and I am a senior in high school. I'm in a program called Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps also known as JROTC. This is a military based program. The goal of this program is to motivate young students to become better citizens. You learn leadership skills, learn marching, learn regulations on how to wear the army uniform, show respect to our American flag, etc.

You also make great friends along the way. There are also special teams. We have the Armed Drill Team, Unarmed Drill, Color Guard, Raiders, and Knowledge team. I have been in this program for all my 4 years in high school. Since I was a little girl in 6th grade I remember my older brother being in JROTC. I remember going to the annual award ceremony and seeing him in that uniform. Seeing him and seeing the people in their decorations made me want to join this great program.

I was committed to being in JROTC, so when high school came around I didn't hesitate. When I was in 9th grade I decided to join the Female Color Guard. That was the same team my brother and sister-in-law were in. The fact that I was visually impaired never crossed my mind. Honestly I was just myself and did what I wanted to do, and that was to be someone. I never competed my freshman year. I will admit I had people say "She won't compete." I believe that was the start of my motivation. I wanted



to prove those people wrong and I wanted to be the one everyone looked up to. Over the course of my 3 years I achieved that.

I commanded my first drill meet during my sophomore year. I took over the team my junior year and we got the most trophies the color guard got in the last couple of years. That was the year we were the 2010 Dallas Independent School District Champions. We placed first place in inspection, first place performance, first place overall, and I got best commander overall.



At the end of my junior year I went in front of a promotion board and I was announced as the Battalion Commander for my school. That meant that I was the highest rank, and in charge of the JROTC program. I am the leader and the first one they look to. At the end of the day I know no one can say "She can't do it" because I will prove them wrong.

Students tell me that at their school they're not allowed in this program and I'm just stunned. I

understand that I am very privileged for the opportunity my instructors gave me. If it weren't for them believing in me I would not have the positions I have earned. My advice for other students that face the same situations is to never give up because you can do it! Never ever let someone tell you anything different. The thing I tell my girls on my team is to never give up, because at the end the light is always bright.



Diya Becomes a Bat Mitzvah

Caryn Navy and David Holladay

Reprinted with Permission from Future Reflections, A Magazine for Parents and Teachers of Blind Children published by the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults in partnership with the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children. (Volume 29 Number 2, Special Issue: Blind Children with Additional Disabilities)

Abstract: a girl with blindness and additional disabilities achieves a religious milestone with family and community support.

Keywords: blind, multiple disabilities, Bat Mitzvah

From the Editor: In many families, religious milestones are crucial turning points, marking a child's entrance to full participation in the community. For a blind child with additional disabilities, such rites of passage may present unique challenges. In the article that follows, David Holladay and Caryn Navy of Massachusetts describe how their daughter Diya prepared to reach one of the most important milestones in the Jewish tradition.

Just before the closing prayers at the service where Diya became a bat mitzvah, she danced joyfully along with other children and adults. The energy and pride bubbled over as a stirring klezmer song celebrated Diya's accomplishment. We were all moved by her poise and the clarity and beauty of her voice as she led parts of the service and chanted from the Torah. We listened with rapt attention to the rabbi's moving description of Diya and her journey toward this day.

Diya came to the United States from India when she was twenty-one months old. As she was getting used to her new home, she encountered Jewish family and community life for the first time. It was during her first year with us, at a community Jewish holiday celebration, that a friend in the congregation who was a speech therapist suggested that Diya might have autism. Our friend also told us that autism is hard to diagnose in blind children since they often have autistic-like behaviors that they outgrow.

Over the next few years Diya's preschool teachers



and others often raised the question of autism. Diya was reluctant to play with toys, and she had very limited verbal interactions. She would answer no by saying, "No," but to answer yes she would repeat the question. Diya was finally diagnosed on the autism spectrum by a developmental pediatrics team, but we always felt a little uncertain.

In addition to regular preschool, Diya attended a Sunday preschool class in our congregation

for one year. The kids learned about Jewish holidays and other topics with their parents. Though Diya didn't tune into much of the learning, she fell in love with counting from one to ten in Hebrew. Since Diya had a hard time speaking, it was often helpful to give her a structure in which to insert her own words. One structure that Diya liked was the pattern of some Hebrew words followed by, "I am thankful for the gift of . . ."

In regular school a special IEP team helped identify and meet Diya's needs. In an extracurricular religious school program, however, those familiar resources wouldn't be available. Or so we thought. Then, almost by accident, we learned of a program in the Boston area called Etgar L'Noar (Hebrew for "the children's challenge"). This innovative program provided religious school classes for kids with special needs. In her kindergarten year at regular school, Diya began attending a Sunday class at Etgar L'Noar, which later became part of the larger program called Gateways: Access to Jewish Education (<www.jgateways.org>). Diya has continued to attend Sunday classes at Gateways except for one year. One of the things she loves about going to Gateways on Sunday is the long car ride with Daddy.

When Diya first attended the Sunday classes, she was very timid and barely spoke a word. Over the years she became comfortable with the other children, staff, and volunteers, and allowed her light to shine through. One of the things that we love about Gateways is the system of having a teenage volunteer for each student. Diya and her special teenage buddy always bond well. There were no other blind children in Diya's Gateways classes, but the staff and teachers learned more each year about the activities that

work well for Diya. Music and dance are at the top of her list.

Gateways has a special two-year Thursday class for kids preparing for the service where they would become a bar or bat mitzvah. (The term *bat mitzvah* means "daughter of commandment," and *bar mitzvah* means "son of commandment." In common usage the terms *bat mitzvah* and *bar mitzvah* often are used incorrectly to mean the service when a young person undergoes the rite of passage.) Each student has a tutor who works with her/him one-on-one.

When Diya was twelve, we pondered whether to have her prepare to become a bat mitzvah. Would it just be something for us, or would it be meaningful to Diya herself? Diya had attended several bar and bat mitzvah services, including the one for her brother Seth. If she had a bat mitzvah service, we wanted the celebration to help our extended family and community recognize her as an individual.

We took our cue from Diya. Yes, she wanted to become a bat mitzvah. She started the preparation class at Gateways, with long Thursday afternoon drives with her after-school caregiver.

In the program Diya would have to learn to lead some of the blessings, prayers, and songs that are part of our congregation's Saturday morning service. She would also learn to chant a portion of the Torah. The Gateways staff was very uncertain how Diya's training would work. That's where their experienced tutor, Paula Korman, came in. Paula is a pioneer in special-education issues in the Jewish community. "I'll be Diya's tutor," she said firmly.

Diya and Paula quickly felt an affinity with each other. "Diya and I have similarities," Paula observed. "We're both auditory learners. Diya speaks intermittently, but her ears are magnets. I can teach her through her talents for music and singing." Since a bat mitzvah is all about growing up and becoming an adult, Paula worked hard to treat Diya like a young Jewish woman, and she emphasized that role to Diya.

Through hard work with her dedicated one-on-one aide at school, Mrs. Snyder, Diya's Braille skills were starting to blossom. Mrs. Snyder used rhythm to draw Diya into writing with a Perkins Braille, tapping out the patterns of the dots that formed each letter.

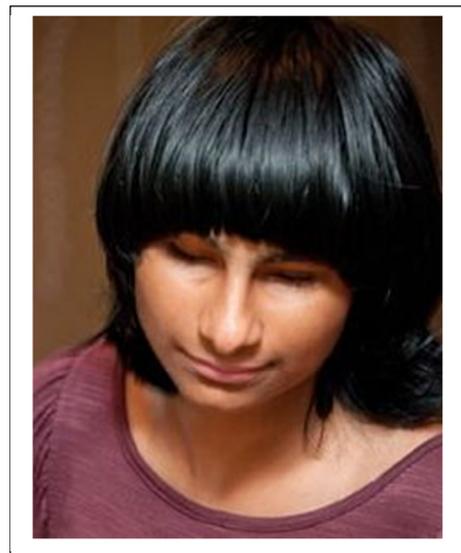
While writing and reading English Braille were coming together for Diya, nobody wanted to make the pot boil over by adding Hebrew Braille to the mix. Brailleing out the Hebrew text, transliterated into English, might have been helpful. However, transliteration was never considered an option for any of the other kids, and it was not considered for Diya either. She learned the Hebrew blessings, prayers, songs, and Torah portion of the service orally. Since music and rhythm are among Diya's strengths, she learned well with this method. She did use Braille to practice her answers to questions on her Torah portion for a dialog with Daddy after the chanting.

As she had more practice sessions, Diya became more confident and proud of her accomplishments. Nevertheless, she was still very inconsistent. Some days she spent more time laughing than practicing.

Coordination with our congregation was another major piece to be folded into the preparations. Usually the kids preparing for this milestone have

been going to religious school at the temple. The rabbi gets to know them and they have many opportunities to communicate. Our rabbi, Shoshana Perry, didn't really know Diya yet. She worked hard to change that and to plan with us. She has a gift for recognizing the uniqueness of each bar or bat mitzvah student and building the service around the student's special qualities.

Rabbi Perry helped us find a congregation member to work as a local tutor for Diya. The sessions with Paula were in a very different setting, and it was important for Diya to have a few practice sessions in the sanctuary with her local tutor. At home we tried to be more consistent about observing and including Diya in Jewish rituals, such as lighting the Sabbath candles. A few times the rabbi also arranged for Diya to lead the candle lighting blessing with us at Friday-night services. The first time we couldn't hear Diya's voice, but the next time it was clear and strong. Diya also attended bar and bat mitzvah services for other kids in our congregation and for other Gateways students.



It is common for parents to present a *tallith* (prayer shawl) to their young adult as a gift at their bar or bat mitzvah service. Our search for a meaningful *tallith* for Diya led us to a wonderful artist in Australia with a business called House of Rose. She made a *tallith* for Diya partially of silk brocade from India. The painted design, which is also tactual, shows lotus flowers. In India the lotus is a symbol of beauty and growth toward the light. We felt as if our new friend from Australia would be at Diya's bat mitzvah ceremony beside us.

Each bat mitzvah student at our congregation is asked to keep a journal about the *mitzvot*, or good deeds, she performs. Diya wrote about her effort to listen to the shofar, or ram's horn, during the High Holiday services; the piercing sound was painful to her ears, and she was happy that she was now able to hear it without distress. She also wrote about how much she likes to help and guide other people.

In addition to Diya's own reflections, her mom described a number of incidents that show Diya's compassion. Here are a few excerpts: "Diya watched the movie *Praying with Lior*. She says that she did not like it. I think the part that was the hardest for her was when Lior was crying at his mother's grave." . . . "Diya tries to make peace between people. Sometimes in the car she would say, 'Talk about George Bush.' Eventually we realized that she said that when David and I were disagreeing about something. She knew that we agreed about George Bush and she wanted to help us be in agreement."

As the date for Diya's bat mitzvah service drew closer, we dealt with countless details to prepare for the service and the party to follow. Sometimes we had to remind ourselves what it

was really all about. We had to make sure not to lose our focus on Diya.

On the morning of the bat mitzvah service we gave Diya some of her favorite foods from her gluten-free, casein-free diet. We wondered anxiously whether all Diya's preparation would pay off. As it turned out, we need not have worried. A friend in the congregation wrote to us afterward, expressing the beauty and richness of that extraordinary day in our lives. "Diya was a joy to listen to as she chanted many prayers, and it was wonderful to watch her relationship with Seth, the two of you, and her teacher. She chanted the prayer for Torah before the Torah reading. I thought someone else would read the Torah portion, but how wrong I was! She just continued right into a long Torah portion and the closing prayers. True, her teacher stood with her and from time to time helped her continue, but Diya really did it all. Her voice and demeanor are sweet. There was hardly a dry eye when the three of you spontaneously got up and danced in the front of the sanctuary to one of Diya's favorite songs. Then more joined in, including the many Gateways students present, and soon the entire congregation was dancing in the aisles and at their seats. All in all the day was so good it is off the charts! My tears were tears of pride and joy. Even Rabbi Perry admitted that she was holding her emotions in check, but that she no longer could, and she shed a few tears with all of us."

I Didn't See It Coming

Sasha Rangel, 25 year old, Austin, TX

Abstract: The next installment of Sasha's journey in life with vision impairment. This article, which is a continuation of an article published in the Winter 2011 edition, describes adventures transitioning into university life. Part III will be published in the Summer 2011 edition and will share Sasha's experiences studying abroad, wrapping up her undergraduate career, and her initial introduction to her present-day internship.

Keywords: family wisdom, visually impaired, personal perspective, challenge, transition, adult life, Retinitis Pigmentosa, success

Editors' Note: On page 11, we are pleased to share with you an article written by Sasha's mother.

As I sit here, I am reflecting on the larger life experiences I've had that have helped me appreciate life and where my life journey continues to take me. In my previous article published in Texas SenseAbilities, Winter 2011 edition, I discussed many experiences, both good and bad, that led up to vocational training I received after high school. After this training, I reached a point in my life when I desired higher education to expand my academic horizons.

LIFE HAPPENS TO EVERYONE

After the experience of walking down the "road to independence" and being hit by a car, I was fortunate to spend a few months after the accident recovering at my parents' home. Although I probably should have given myself more than four months to recover, I figured I was ready for the "next step" in my life and decided I wanted to move back to Austin and start my higher education career at the community college.

I moved to a suburb of Austin because the price was right and I was under the impression that having two best friends, both sighted and both drivers, would be the answer

to all my worries regarding the lack of public transportation. Although they turned out to be excellent resources for companionship, learning and practicing daily living skills and getting to and from many places, I temporarily stunted my growth by becoming too dependent on them, as there were no other options than getting help from my roommates and the occasional classmate.

Although I was a year behind starting college with the rest of my high school peers, I managed to worm my way into community college. I envisioned that college life would be a piece of cake; the study tactics, accommodations, working with teachers... no big deal! I mean hey, I did it in high school, right? It's just the same... right? WRONG!!

Oh BOY was I wrong!! I must admit that when I first discovered there was an office at this community college that I could discuss my accommodations with, I was under the foolish impression that things would just get done for me. I also was naïve in believing I could overachieve the typical full time twelve-hour schedule and registered myself for a total of seventeen hours. My schedule included U.S. Government, Intro to Psychology, College

Mathematics, Intro to Philosophy, and Spanish. No sign of elective relief whatsoever! I thought the administrators in the Office for Students with Disabilities were silly in believing I was crazy for such a heavy workload.

To make things even more complicated, I had to have a lens transplant surgery in the middle of the semester and was unable to complete my crazy workload. This was the first point in my life when I felt like an extreme failure. Despite the setbacks, I did still have the determination to keep going.

There was the dilemma of heavy dependence on my roommates for transportation in the suburbs, the lens transplant, the inability to complete all my classes in my first semester of college... and many more challenges to come. I knew in my heart I needed to take measures into my own hands by relocating myself to a residence within reach of public transportation. It was a necessary adjustment that was fortunately welcomed and supported by my roommates. I then had the privilege of living with my best friend for five years. It was during this five-year time span that I was able to complete many more semesters even while dealing with more adversities. My mother had an aneurism at the beginning of one semester and I put school on hold for that semester in order to take care of her. I had to put school on hold for one other semester when I severely sprained my ankle and could not handle the walk with crutches, a sprained ankle, and a guide dog I've had the privilege of working with for many years.

In the midst of my struggles, I learned an extremely important lesson. Life happens to everyone. Some specific situations may only happen to people who are blind or visually impaired, but most life lessons of any shape or

size can happen to any person at any time. My physics teacher in high school had a quotation on his door by Albert Einstein that read, "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity." This is a quotation that has lived in me for a very long time and has taught me that all of life experiences help one grow to be who they are.

Through all the challenges and life lessons that occurred during my time at the community college, I did earn an Associate's degree in Spanish and was ready to jump into university to fulfill my next goal of getting a Bachelor's degree.

BUMPING INTO MY FUTURE

When I began my first semester at a four-year university, it was quite the culture shock to walk onto a campus that involved more than a five-minute walk between classes. I had an O&M instructor orient me briefly to the new campus thinking one lesson was all it would take. Silly me! He described the university by explaining it looked like a long rectangle and had buildings on each side similar to how a football field would look and where bleachers would sit on either side of that field. That extended metaphor left me even more dazed and confused than when I first stepped on the campus grounds.

I was excited, anxious, intimidated, and scared out of my mind. I was not prepared for the transition of switching from community college to university and getting over these fears was tough because I felt like I had no one to talk to about it. While my network of blind friends was available from previous summer camps and other gatherings along the way, I didn't know if anyone would really understand what I was going through. I have this tendency to leap into things before I thoroughly think them through and thus, was enrolled in university before I even let

anyone know officially. That meant I didn't have the benefit of having a vocational rehabilitation counselor guide me during this transition. The things I had in my favor were the love and support from family and roommates, one friend I knew who went to the campus, my guide dog partner in crime Glori, and a darn good reader. Ready or not, there I went!

On the first day of classes, I was just as clueless as to how to get to my first class as I was before my O&M lesson. Every bit of confidence I had in knowing where I was flew right out the window when I took the first plunge down a set of stairs and bumped into a group of people in a feeble attempt to get out of their way. I then got lost in larger crowds, ended up on the wrong side of the walkway where people were walking towards me and me them, and ended up at a completely different building than I originally intended. I missed my first day of classes because I got so lost. It took a few weeks to really feel settled into the routine before I had a better idea of where things were and how to get to them.

Almost on a daily basis, I would discover new bumps and bruises from colliding into pedestrian traffic and as I attempted to cross the metaphorical intersections that were my routes to go from one place to another. There is, however, one particular bump and bruise I will never forget. You know how whenever you bump into someone accidentally there's an unspoken (sometimes spoken out loud in curses depending on the pain severity) level of discomfort, embarrassment, and awkwardness that makes the whole situation just feel funny. It just so happened that on this particular occasion, I ran into another student AND a booth table at the same time! I casually played off my embarrassment by acting as if the collision were intentional. I proceeded with, "Hello! What is this booth having information

about?" The collided individual replied, "This is information about study abroad... if this is something that interests you, you can get more information from our Study Abroad Office." It sounded interesting to me, so I decided to pursue my questioning by exploring the whereabouts of this Study Abroad Office.

To my absolute amazement, I learned that the university's Study Abroad Office could provide many resources and registration information for a multitude of universities worldwide. One program I learned about would take place in a town in Spain that held classes that would directly apply towards my minor in Spanish at the time. The department was initially hesitant to have me participate in this program only because they had never done such a thing with a vision impaired person at either Texas State or the Spanish university before. Through many collaborative efforts from Texas State, the university in Spain and myself, a scholarship, fundraisers and the encouragement from the Division for Blind Services, I was prepared (so I thought) to tackle the worldly experiences that were about to unfold in my future.

Life to me is one big radio station that plays different songs as different memories are made and stored in our minds. A song from the 90's comes to my head at this point in my life and sings, "So much to do so much to see, so what's wrong with taking the backstreets? You'll never know if you don't go. You'll never shine if you don't glow..." (All Star by Smash Mouth).

Stay tuned for the continuation of this backstreet journey in our Summer 2011 issue.

The Squeaky Squawky Wheel

Evangelina C. Rangel, LBSW, CCDVC, PARENT, TEXAS

Abstract: This article tells the story of a mother's love for her child and how that love helped guide both towards a full and exciting life journey.

Keywords: Family Wisdom, visually impaired, grief process, advocacy, Special Education

A little girl! So healthy, so beautiful, so smart, so sweet, so loud! Whenever she needed or wanted anything she would cry so loud that the neighbors would come see what was wrong. Three baby girls were born in our neighborhood about the same time, but nobody could hear them cry. Oh, not because they didn't all speak the same language (crying). They just had dainty little voices. My baby's demands for attention were loud and clear. She seemed perfect in every way to me and nobody could tell me differently.

Because I was older than most of the mummies, my doctor told me that I needed to have an amniocentesis done before I was too far along. "Too far along for what?" I asked, and he told me the test would determine the fetal sex and chromosomal abnormalities if any. He told me that when the results came in my husband and I could choose to terminate the pregnancy or not depending on the results and what we wanted to do. I don't think I really understood what he was saying, or maybe I didn't want to. Waiting for the results seemed to take a painful eternity because day by day the reality set in, the baby might not be perfect and I would have to make a decision. When I finally received the call to go in for counseling because the chromosomal count was not normal, I knew without any hesitation

what to do. My heart dictated the next move. I did not go in. I said this to the counselor, "I love this baby with all my heart and together we will overcome whatever adversities come our way." The only thing I learned from the amniocentesis was that the baby (fetus seems so much like a thing) was a girl. Yea! Pink dresses, pink ribbons, pink booties!

Three years later, on her birthday she underwent a thorough examination to determine what the vision problem was and how it would affect her. Three months earlier I had taken her to an optometrist for an eye examination because I wanted to make sure she was not just clumsy. A little voice inside me kept nudging me to go. After the examination the optometrist told me she was a special child who would need much assistance. What did he mean "special child?" I immediately thought he was saying she was mentally challenged but he did not tell me anything else. He made an appointment for her to see a specialist in Houston. After several tests, the ophthalmologist told me that my daughter had a congenital disease called Retinitis Pigmentosa and that she could go blind at any time. This ended the complete denial of the amniocentesis results I refused to get before she was born. I chastised myself for being a bad mommy and the feelings were so heart

wrenching, that I almost hated myself. I had completely ignored the fact that my little girl needed assistance to keep up with the mainstream of sighted people. The feelings of guilt and sorrow overwhelmed me and I cried all the way home from Houston. The next day was the beginning of another chapter in our lives

Where to start? How to start? What to do? All these thoughts and more whirled around in my head but one thing I knew for sure. I was not going to let anybody or anything put barriers in front of my little girl. My baby was born with near perfect vision but as the days and years went by she started seeing less and less as evidenced by her tripping over toys, tricycles, bumping into furniture, walking into doors, other children, and me. She could see very little in the evenings and nothing at night. I decided I was never going to let her out of my sight and that is how I could keep her safe. Poor kid, I wouldn't let her breathe. I watched her like a vulture, hovering over her every waking moment. I was so scared she might go blind if I didn't have her with me everywhere I went.

Soon afterwards, I realized that no matter how much I wanted to protect her from any harm and hurt I couldn't do it 24/7. My new strategy became to show her everything most of us take for granted. Sighted people think we have the rest of our lives to see what we need to know. She was only three but she started life lessons everyday at least one and later two hours daily. She learned numbers, shapes, colors, body parts, complete sentences, what the ocean looks and tastes like, what the moon looks like, what the bark on the trees looks and feels like. She looked at all different kinds of ants, bugs, animals, fish, fowl, mountains, flame; everything that got in front of us was subject to a thorough examination. Sometimes she did not want to "work today" but somehow she knew the

importance of the lessons and she would come around. I realized that she was a member of the whole community and it came time for her to become a part of it. When the special education bus came to pick her up at 6 a.m. the first day of school, Sasha was ready to go. Like a brand new car, she was fully loaded with vital information. She knew so much that the teachers were simply amazed with her. She asked questions, conversed with everybody (at their level) and was a sweet, compassionate and loving little girl. The bus picked her up at six a.m. and drove her to every school in town. She remembers the little red tennis shoes she wore that day because she looked at them for hours. They finally took her to the bus terminal and called the special education department to find out where they were supposed to take her. Big Boo Boo on their part! And me? As the bus drove off with my baby in it I said a silent prayer that God would help me suppress the desire to run and stop the bus to bring her back home to her mommy.

Sasha has steadily lost vision until she can just barely see anything at all. Having this condition has been annoyingly uncomfortable for her but that has not kept her from living a full life. She told me once that everybody has some kind of disability, you just can't see it like you can with those of us that go everywhere with a white cane or a dog. She said that even the most gorgeous models have disabilities of sorts. They just keep them well hidden behind a beautiful façade.

Sasha has gone through many wonderful and horrible experiences in her life. When she started 6th grade her teachers were summoned for sensitivity training. The first day of class the homeroom teacher told

everybody that Sasha had a vision problem. The very first thing she did was to take Sasha by the hands, place them on a desk top, and said to her in a very loud voice, "This is a desk!" Later that year Sasha wore a smiley face necklace, earrings and ring to school. Two of the girl bullies in school befriended her and invited her to go to the gym with them to play. They had turned off the lights so they could rough her up and take her jewelry. Turning the lights off was a disadvantage to them but not to Sasha. When they started to rough her up, she used her cane to defend herself and those poor little bullies didn't stand a chance. Later that year she decided she didn't want to use her cane because she wanted to be just like everybody else. So she bumped into everybody, which was the norm in the crowded hallways anyway.

A rumor started that Sasha had no vision problem. She just pretended she had vision problems to get special attention. This rumor followed her to the high school where some of the kids got together and put gum all over Sasha's hair just to be mean and laugh at her. Those same kids were verbally brutal to her yet she never missed a school day. She was an active member of the high school band. She played the clarinet and the vibraphone, a musical instrument like a xylophone or marimba. She became a section leader in the auxiliary percussion section during the football game band performances. She played the clarinet during other performances. She was, is, an excellent musician. She also sang with the high school choir and enjoyed every minute. On the really exciting and cool side of high school there was the good-looking boyfriend. Yes, she had a boyfriend who really loved and cared for her. There were the banquets, proms, picnics, band

trips, choir trips, gowns, high heel shoes, hair styling, manicures, and all those things associated with teenage high school years. High school graduation came and she left town to start college and a new life away from home. Freedom at last! Sasha was ready to tackle the unknown one day at a time. And so she has.

Sasha has attended the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired during her summer vacations since she was in middle school. The school made all the difference in her life. Going to this school almost every summer vacation while in middle school, junior high and high school turned out to be a source of strength and support for her. We are ever grateful to them and all those people who helped guide Sasha along the way. My perfect visually impaired baby is now a full-grown young woman. Despite all the adversities, heartaches, setbacks, headaches, and tears, Sasha has persevered and achieved her long-term goal of graduating from college. On May 14, 2010 Sasha Yvonne graduated from Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas with a degree in Sociology and a degree in Spanish, which she perfected during her studies in Spain.

Chapter III of Sasha Yvonne's life is just beginning. Sasha is a productive member of society who is visually impaired. She came into the world squawking so loudly that she demanded, needed and got my attention and that of the community. She is now ready to make her mark in society. She has become my role model and I am very proud of her. Who would have thought it? All it took was lots and lots of oil; I mean attention.

5th Annual Texas Chargers Retreat

By Patti Sexton, Grandparent, Conroe, TX

Keywords: Family Wisdom, Deafblind, Charge Syndrome, Texas Chargers, family organization, peer support, retreat

Abstract: The author shares highlights of the Fifth Annual Texas Chargers Retreat held at Camp Allen November 3-5, 2010.

November in Texas ushers in many changes; the first cool front, the changing of the leaves, and the beginning of the season we celebrate with family and friends. And so it was, the first weekend November 3 - 5 2010, when families and friends again met for the 5th Annual Texas Charger's Retreat held at Camp Allen, located in the beautiful east Texas piney woods of Grimes County.

CHARGE syndrome is a recognizable (genetic) pattern of birth defects which occurs in one of every 9,000-10,000 births. It is extremely complex and involves extensive medical and physical difficulties that differ from child to child. Most people with CHARGE have hearing loss, vision loss, and balance problems which may

delay their development and communication. Despite these seemingly insurmountable obstacles people with CHARGE syndrome often surpass their medical, physical, educational and social expectations. This conference allowed those kids to be just kids, to laugh and play, and just be a kid.

Friday evening marked the arrival of over 40 families, including 8 new families and approximately 240 participants. Each was greeted at the sign-in station with smiles, hugs and bags of goodies. There was a movie for the kids and an official welcome including a parent's panel and ice cream social. Everyone was encouraged to get a good night's sleep for the full day ahead.





Saturday everyone met for breakfast in the large dining room. It was an opportunity to connect with familiar faces and to greet new ones. After breakfast parents could drop off their children, siblings and people with CHARGE alike, with volunteers who stayed with the children while parents attended the sessions. Time for the youngsters included games, a fire truck, petting zoo, and a rock climbing wall.

The keynote speaker for the morning general session was Dr. Tim Hartshorne, professor of psychology at Central Michigan University. Dr.

Hartshorne has done extensive research in CHARGE since 1993. His topic “Who’s in CHARGE: The Family Experience” touched everyone with the compelling story of his own 27 year old son, Jacob, diagnosed with CHARGE. He spoke of his family’s struggles and triumphs to encourage Jacob down his path to live independently.

Following the morning session, the Star Chargers Award was presented to Rachel Allen; a very lively, animated 15 year old who has overcome her CHARGE challenges to become a high school student and very active member of her community. Rachel had everyone in the audience laughing and applauding her life-affirming attitude toward her triumphs over her life's obstacles. She is a remarkable teen with a bright future.

The afternoon breakout sessions included family members who could meet exclusively with their peers. Sessions included mothers, fathers, and grandparents of





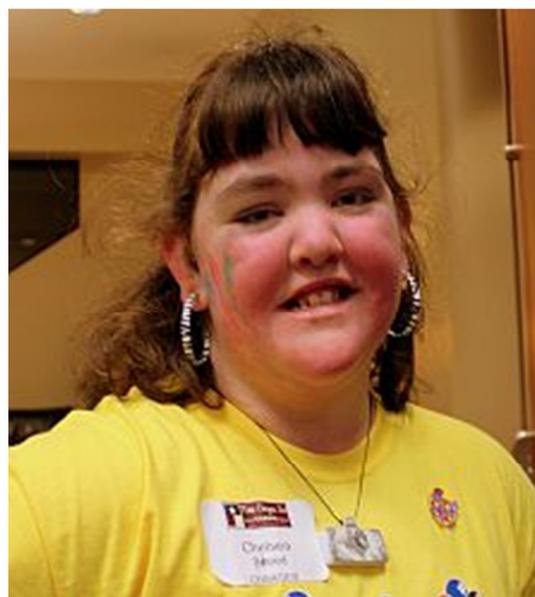
people with CHARGE. These sessions gave each unique group a chance to share the personal joys and challenges that only those who are experiencing them can fully understand. The grandparents were facilitated by Dr. Billy Cofield, licensed psychologist, who help the grandparents discuss their sometimes challenging roles of providing an appropriate support system for their own children.

Attendees for the afternoon were offered a choice of two sessions. The first was led by Edgenie Bellah, Family Support Specialist for the Texas Deafblind Project, who is part of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Outreach



Program. She spoke on Texas Agency Support for those with CHARGE. Dr. Hartshorne also presented a concurrent session on Transitional Living for those with CHARGE.

Saturday evening concluded with a Family Social time and CHARGE families were entertained with a rockin' D.J., dancing, games, balloons, face painting, and even a bubble machine. It was a time for families to



unwind with their new and old friends and share information. Most importantly it was a time for everyone to make plans for their return next year.

The 5th Annual Texas Chargers Retreat was an event about CHARGE families, for CHARGE families. Conference goers were encouraged to share openly the challenges and joys of a family life with CHARGE. They were informed and entertained but one of the most important aspects all families came away with.....“normal is just a setting on the washing machine.”

TAPVI Talks

Isela Wilson

Abstract: A parent of a child with a visual impairment shares the importance of the collaboration between the school and family. She gives information about what leads to conflict and what strategies encourage collaboration.

Keywords: collaboration, family-school communication, parent group, IEP

Editor's note: TAPVI had the opportunity to present at the 2011 TAER professional conference in Dallas. The presentation focused on family and school collaboration. Below is an excerpt from the presentation:

Just to give credit where credit is due, most of this presentation is taken from Nick Martin, a well-known facilitator/mediator and author. His book; *A Guide to Collaboration for IEP Teams* (Brooks Publishing, 2005) has been an invaluable resource. You can access this training online at the Education Service Center Region 20 website. You can find the modules under Parent Coordination in both English and Spanish at the following link:

http://portal.esc20.net/portal/page/portal/esc20public/SpecialEducation/ParentCoordination?_piref130_637132_130_637129_637129.tabstring=resources

Unless you live in a parent-school utopia where there is never a disagreement in how an appropriate IEP is to be drafted during an ARD, you may have to deal with conflict in your interactions with the school. This type of conflict is all too real and happens more often than any of us would like.

Let me begin with a little background of the education law. In 1975 the Education of Handicapped Children Act was passed, then in 1990 IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act) and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) was signed and became law. In 2004, IDEA was reauthorized and became IDEIA (Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act); this is the one currently in practice even though most of us still refer to it as IDEA.

In both IDEA and IDEIA lies the foundation for IEP Teams. This law requires that public schools make available to children with disabilities: FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education), in the least restrictive environment (LRE) with an IEP (Individual Education Plan) appropriate to their individual needs. Also with the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004, an effort was made for parents and educators to resolve their differences by non-adversarial means. IDEIA now provides that school officials consider parents as decision making partners.

So, where exactly does conflict begin at any given ARD?

- When the process is not well understood
- Perception of one against many
- Lack of structure
- Lack of time

According to Nick Martin, conflict also has a lot to do with what he calls the weasel words. These are words which are open to individual interpretation. Words, such as "appropriate" in FAPE and, "least" in LRE. School staff, administrators and parents often disagree with what constitutes an appropriate education for

the child.

What promotes collaboration?

- Remembering our common purpose
- Giving everyone a voice
- Communicating openly and with respect
- Assuming good reason and intention
- Exploring underlying interests
- Valuing the team and its members
- Trusting the process

Now you may all be thinking, why are they telling us this? As TVI's and O&M's you are the most important person on that team to us parents of children with visual impairments. Your knowledge and expertise on how our children learn is of utmost importance, being that sight or lack thereof is our child's greatest obstacle to learning. As parents with VI children we depend on you to provide the team with advice on how an IEP can be drafted and agreed upon, to accommodate our VI child in the most appropriate educational setting. We look to you for help in trying to get teachers and administrators to understand the importance of early intervention, of equal access to the core curriculum, of implementing an Expanded Core Curriculum, the importance of braille and on and on. You play a vital role, as other team members may look to you if they have little or no experience with VI students and VI education, programs or practices.

Let me give you an example. When I asked the school for an O&M evaluation for my child Andrew, our Special Ed Director said he did not need one because he was in a wheelchair. I looked at our TVI for guidance and she agreed with the director. I told them that I would like to see my son be able to push and maneuver himself around his environment and I had no training in teaching him that. Still it was refused

for three years. It wasn't until he was fifteen that I was able to get another VI teacher to request an O&M evaluation and get services for him. He is now 18 and knows left and right, stop and go, forward and back and landmarks! It has taken him three years to accomplish this. Can you imagine how much more independent he would be if that VI had spoken up at that initial ARD and told the special ed director that it would not hurt to have him evaluated for O&M services?

This is a classic example of misinformation, lack of information or no communication from all team members including myself. I could have expressed more concern about his independence and where I saw him in three years. As a team, we could have researched the possibilities, informed one another, and empowered Andrew, but at that time I saw them as working against me rather than including me as a valued team member. I felt betrayed, disappointed, let down, and discouraged by the VI teacher siding with administration. In other words I gave in to my emotions, something we all should not bring to the ARD table because it clouds our judgment and gets us off our common purpose in this case, Andrew.

We now have a wonderful O&M. She has taught us all how to help Andrew. I feel confident in asking her for advice when I get stuck in disagreements with my IEP team. Thank God it is less and less nowadays.

Before I close I would like to ask you all to consider getting to know the parents of those you serve outside of the ARD meeting. They will give you a wealth of information about your student that will ultimately make your job a lot easier.

What Is Out There for My Child?

Elina Mullen Ed.D., C.A.P.E.
Physical Activities for The Total Population: For Free

Abstract: the author discusses the importance of physical activity and provides ideas for active recreational activities available in the community at no cost.

Keywords: blind, visually impaired, physical fitness, recreation

Never has physical activity been so needed. The latest fitness reports give us an indication of what our children's status is and the report is "not healthy." We are eating more and moving less. Much of what we are eating is not healthy. Children are consuming less fruits and vegetables.

We tend to sit much more and in positions that are incorrect. Posture is being affected. Children are allowed to sit curled up and are basically sitting on their spine instead of their buttocks! As a result internal organs are cramped, growth stumped, vital amounts of oxygen are not getting to the body because the lungs caged in by the body being curled rather than upright.

Get outside and play for at least ten to twenty minutes a day in the sunlight. Studies are showing that 80% of us are lacking in vitamin D just from not being out safely in the sunlight (for short durations

of time) and when out in the sunlight, blocking it with all types of sun screens. Caucasians need at least 20 minutes of sunlight in the sun. People of color require at least twice that amount of time.

So, to take care of these two inadequacies let us explore some inexpensive ways for families to get exercise and at the same time some vital vitamin D. Use your schools' established communication modalities to communicate with your child and safety guidelines to keep the activity enjoyable and safe.

Walk as a family around your block. Walk fast, walk slowly, and change directions. Walk forward, backwards and sideways.

- Take the baby for a walk.
- Take the dog out for a walk twice a day.
Run with the dog (on a leash)



Tandem bicycles can be great sources of activity for young people and adults who may not be able to ride independently

- Ride on bicycles/tricycles together. Tandem bicycles are great for this.
- Dance together. Have healthy dancing parties. Serve healthy foods (fruits and vegetables) and healthy drinks.
- Run or jog around the park and also around the block.
- Find a school where the track is accessible to the community and walk, jog and run.
- Sing and play movement games.
- Have a tug of war using a piece of rope or an old bed sheet rolled into a rope.
- Play with hula-hoops.
- Jump rope. Jump hoops.
- Get out and play in the neighborhood parks.
- Put a swing out in your backyard and swing
- Pair up with a guide, friend or volunteer.
- Go to the park and fly kites.
- Most McDonalds have play-scapes – ensure cleanliness, but while there eat healthy foods like the salads.
- Exercise at home with one pound sand bags with children over 13 years (Caution: do not use heavy weights with young children, they are still growing).

Use exercise balls to sit/bounce and exercise on – (make sure that your child has proper balance and or support for activities on balls). Create little exercise stations in your yard, where you can exercise from station to station, for example:

Station 1 –10 Jumping jacks

Station 2 – 10 hops on right leg, 10 hops on left leg

Station 3 – 10 arm circles

Station 4 – 10 march in place

This is just a small sample of all you can do outside in your own neighborhood! Good luck!!

Let me know of your ideas at mullene@tsbvi.edu



Students in high school may complete their P.E. credits a few years before they graduate, and not be getting adequate exercise. Evette (left) and Candice attend an Adult Fitness class at Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The emphasis is on developing an interest in physical activities that can be enjoyed throughout the lifetime. The young women in this class enjoy walking the treadmill, doing yoga, exercising and walking in the community while gradually increasing their strength and endurance. They learn about making healthy food choices at

school and restaurants. They have improved their walking speed and orientation and mobility skills and can travel from one class to another on campus in less time. The class goes on an off-campus trip each week, which they plan themselves. This outing is specifically planned around fitness opportunities. They go to city parks, Lady Bird Lake Hike and Bike Trails, the Austin Arboretum, and during hot or cold weather they go to the shopping mall, pet stores, and music stores. They look forward to looking good in their prom dresses!

Thanks to Blanca Cunningham for sharing information about this class - the editor

Adventure Walks

Susan Shier Lowry, M.Ed., COMS
Orientation & Mobility Specialist, Governor Morehead Preschool

Abstract: this article describes how to use a walk to help a young child learn about the world.

Keywords: blind, visually impaired, early childhood

The term “adventure walk” was chosen by one of our GMP teachers to describe outdoor explorations and field trips. Children who are blind or have low vision often miss important information about the world around them, especially the outdoors and public places. Helping them get “up close and personal” with these settings improves their understanding, increases language opportunities, and enriches social exchanges with family and friends. A full memory bank of touching, hearing, smelling, and looking, outdoors and in their communities, will build important concepts for further classroom learning. Also, children who are blind increase their tactile tolerance and curiosity this way. Children with low vision enjoy the same benefits, and expand their understanding of what they see, therefore improving their functional vision.

GENERAL IDEAS

Get outdoors on a daily basis to explore, touch, smell, and look at a variety of natural and manmade items in the family yard, school yard or playground: shrubs, flowers, trees, mailbox, bird feeder, sprinkler, family car, grass, sidewalk, gravel, mulch, play equipment, etc.

Take the child on outings to parks, stores, and community events often, offering extra time to look, touch, name and smell a huge variety of

common items in these settings. Keep in mind that the child with blindness or low vision is probably unable to see in any detail most of what is around him. Even a child with relatively good vision may only be able to recognize objects up to three feet away.

Pick up the child, or otherwise get her close to the object, providing the option of touching or not. Tell her what it is, touch it yourself, and make a natural sound with it if possible, giving lots of time to look and listen. Encourage her to touch objects that are safe. Repeat these walks often...regular exposure should increase interest and tolerance. Honor any hesitation shown by the child by moving away, but offer the same experience again soon.

Use the child’s preferred mode of movement to explore outdoors, such as independent walking, guiding by the hand, carrying, or wheeling her in a wagon or chair. When possible bring the child to the object. If not, move the child as close as possible, and bring the object to her.

Encourage the child who walks to move all over the yard or playground freely, while you follow closely to supervise and provide verbal interpretation of surfaces, sounds, and objects. Remind him to put his “hands out in front” just before contacting an obstacle. Let

him contact obstacles with his hands, if safe to do so, instead of guiding him around them, telling him what he is about to touch.

As the child explores the yard, school yard, or playground take note of what she especially enjoys and return to these locations and activities later. These may not always be the play equipment you have thoughtfully selected and set up! Instead, she may for a time prefer the puddle at the top of the driveway, scraping her feet in the gravel, turning on the garden hose, etc. Use whatever she loves the most to make movement and exploration outdoors meaningful and fun.

For a child who is anxious, or not yet stable enough to walk well over the ground surface, provide Sighted Guide or hand-holding, while encouraging her to choose where to go. Over time encourage her to release your hand more and more. Walking over the less even surfaces outdoors increases balance and stability.

A toddler will often plop into sitting when walking over the uneven outdoor surface. Allow this fall to happen if you know the child is not likely to get hurt, and then encourage him to stand back up without your help. This may require him to put his hands down on the surface (grass, mulch, sand, etc.) and push into standing, a good experience for upper body strengthening and increasing tactile awareness and tolerance.

For infants and children who do not move independently provide a small blanket for sitting in the grass, sand, or mulch. Let the child find these along the edge of the blanket in his own time. It is fine for him to touch and then withdraw. Over repeated trials he is likely to begin moving to the new texture more and more, if he is not required to touch it.

Our children often need extra motivation to play outdoors, since at first it may only represent an overwhelming collection of unfamiliar sensations (e.g., ground textures, air temperatures, animal, lawn care, and traffic sounds, and breezes against the skin). Repeated experiences with enjoyable activities and play items may give the child a reason to explore the outdoors. These might include a wading pool, play equipment, riding on Grampa's tractor, washing the dog, putting gravel in a pail, playing in the leaves, chasing a beach ball, pushing a cart or riding a wheeled vehicle in the driveway, walking to the car for each errand instead of being carried, etc.

When setting up play equipment and wading pools consider locating them within a few feet of the door of the house or classroom, and leave them predictably positioned. If using 2 or 3 different pieces, position them with only 4 to 6 feet between each, and again leave them in the original arrangement. This way the child can be taught how to move to the area, and then from one piece to another independently. Ask the O&M specialist for specific suggestions regarding the actual route and arrangement and any safety concerns.

Children who are light-sensitive (photophobia) can enjoy play outdoors also, with some simple precautions, such as hats with broad brims, sun-protecting eye shades, and play areas and activities conducted under shade trees and in the shadow of a building line. The O&M specialist can help determine appropriate light protection and offer suggestions about increasing the child's tolerance for them.

Liz Goes to Southeast Asia

Elizabeth Eagan Satter, TVI
Federal Way School District, Federal Way, Washington

Abstract: the author writes about her trip to Cambodia and Vietnam to visit a teacher's college, a laboratory preschool, and an orphanage and school for students with hearing or visual impairment. These schools make due with very little.

Keywords: blind, special needs, teaching, Vietnam, Cambodia

Recently I had the good fortune to be a citizen ambassador with People to People. President Dwight D. Eisenhower founded this organization in 1956. It was his belief that ordinary people interacting with citizens from around the world could promote cultural understanding and perhaps lead to world peace. This philosophy continues on today through the organization. Through this opportunity, I was able to network with other professionals from across the nation as well as colleagues in Vietnam and Cambodia. I had the opportunity to visit classrooms, non-governmental organizations (NGO's), as well as experience the culture through food and sightseeing.

I will focus on two of the groups I visited, one from each country. The first is a college in Vietnam and the second is an orphanage in Cambodia. Special education is relatively new to both countries. There is very little testing, if any, being done and materials such as textbooks, disability specific resources, and manipulatives are very few. This does not stop the determination of individuals from both countries in striving to make a difference in the lives of these children. If you'd like to read more about my experience, visit www.travelingvi.com and click on the travel link. I kept a daily blog of the professional and cultural visits we made.

It is important to note that in these countries



National College of Education library

there is no assessment for identifying students with special needs. If a child appears to be "different" in their abilities, communication, or learning styles, then that child is considered to be a special needs student. Some of the students we observed as we traveled in the two countries we felt might not be special needs students.

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION IN HO CHI MINH CITY (SAIGON), VIETNAM

This College was founded in 1976 with the sole purpose of training preschool teachers. Their slogan is "The Best Children." They have expanded their studies to include special education, music and fine arts and hope to add social work, elementary education and speech therapy in the near

future. The special education department has some resources, but no textbooks. The department has ordered toys and materials, but they don't know how implement their use with a child.

The vice president and the dean of special education gave us a tour of the college following a wonderful presentation. In the photo of the college library, as you can see there are very few books. It was disheartening to see how very little they had, but I was encouraged to see how curious they were to learn more. I gave them several copies of previous Texas SenseAbilities publications and they were thrilled to receive them. I also exchanged email addresses with them and have begun to share what electronic files I have with them to aid them in gathering more information.

The college has a preschool lab program and has integrated the students with special needs into the classrooms. This program was added in 2003 as a training ground for new teachers as well as a way to conduct and implement new research. There are currently 350 children in the program, which is located directly in front of the college. Two of the preschool classrooms performed a program for us, singing and dancing. Since this was our first professional stop in our journey, the performance set the mood for the rest of the trip.

The classrooms did not look like the typical classrooms that I was accustomed to seeing in the United States. For instance, some of the classrooms had no furniture in them and the materials for instruction were few. The children sat on the floor facing their teacher. Shoes were also left at the door of the classroom. Most of the posters hanging on the walls were teacher-made.

The students were very well behaved and remained on task, with the exception of the one



Preschool Lab, National College of Education

student who was possibly a student with special needs. He was very high energy and had difficulty remaining seated. He needed frequent redirection to stay on task, as he was easily distracted.

Throughout our visit here, the 12 of us delegates were treated like royalty. The professionals asked a lot of questions about strategies, materials, teaching philosophies, and other topics. The children watched us carefully and broke into smiles when we stopped at their tables to interact with them.

**KROUSAR THMEY --
NEW FAMILY FIRST CAMBODIAN
FOUNDATION IN PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA**

Krousar Thmey -- New Family First Cambodian Foundation assisting underprivileged children is an orphanage that serves deaf and blind children. The children either had a hearing impairment or a visual impairment; none of the children there were deafblind. Neang Phalla, school director, coordinator of education for blind children met with us and gave us a brief history of the facility. The facility began in 1991. They have 380 full and part-time staff members. The

ultimate goal is to return the children to their families and communities, but this is not always possible. They have 10 family houses where the youngest or the most traumatized are cared for. The family structure helps the child return to a normalized and balanced life.

I visited six classrooms. The first three were deaf education classes. The students were well behaved, though they occasionally giggled when they saw us observing them. These children were not so different from the ones we work with in our respective school districts. They may not speak the same language or have the same opportunities, but they do similar hand gestures, looks between them, and try to avoid getting caught misbehaving. I enjoyed watching the interactions between teacher and student as well as student to student.

Some classrooms had furniture while others did not. In this photo, the teacher is working with the students on learning the sounds of English letters. I was surprised to learn that the students are required to learn their native language as well as English. Notice the teacher's desk in the corner. There is not a chair for the teacher. This classroom had no other furniture in it. No



Classroom at the New Family First orphanage

bookcases with textbooks, nor counter with materials to be stored in it. The teacher and students sat on the floor in a circle and worked together. This class had three boys in it. Other classes I observed had up to fourteen students in them. Discipline is not a problem, we were told, as the students are motivated to be at the school to learn.

What I was waiting for happened! I finally got to observe three classrooms that had students in them that were blind or visually impaired. The students in math class used an abacus to solve their problems. They used the slate and stylus to record their answers. They did not use braille paper to write their answers, but old worksheets or notices that were no longer needed. Everything was recycled when possible. There were no Perkins Brailleurs in the classroom. I realized that once these children would go back into their communities they wouldn't have access to some technology. The low-tech slate and stylus is very mobile and inexpensive. It is the orphanage's goal to send the children back to their communities once they are educated and have learned a vocational skill.

All braille books were reproduced on site. They obtained books from the government or the local school and translated them into braille after they obtain approval to do the translations. They used Duxbury Braille Translation software to type or edit the text into braille. They also used scanners to scan the print materials into digital files. There are two staff members who do the braille transcription, and two who collate and bind the materials and there is one person who operates the braille embosser (computer braille printer).

All tactile images were made by hand. There



A young girl reads braille, with a slate and stylus and abacus nearby

was none of the technology available to produce tactile materials which we use. The lead brailist mentioned that they did not own a Tiger embosser, as it is too expensive. So they used whatever materials they could find and create all the images by hand. What an impressive job they do!

I returned to the United States with so many thoughts in mind. I couldn't wait to share my experiences with my students. I took hundreds of pictures, several videos, and some audio files to share with them as well as items I had purchased to give them a chance to share in my experience. My students and professional colleagues were amazed by the bare classrooms and overall lack of materials compared to what we have here in the States in our classrooms. It opened up a dialogue with several of my students about what they felt they needed to succeed in school if they couldn't have all the equipment they currently have. It also opened their eyes to the fact that they are very fortunate to have the equipment and opportunities they have.

Even after sharing my experiences with my students, colleagues, family, and friends, I came back with one important question, "What do I do now?" I've just had this wonderful life and

career changing experience, so what can I do to help the professional sites I visited? How do I share what I've learned with others? The answer to me was crystal clear. I had picked up business cards and exchanged email addresses with my professional colleagues in Vietnam and Cambodia. I am a handout and electronic file junkie, so the first thing I've done is to begin emailing my electronic files to my new professional friends. The hottest topics for them at this moment are assessment, autism, teaching strategies, and cognitive impairments. The next thing I've done is to tell anyone and everyone who will listen to me about my trip. I wrote a blog while I was away that was an attempt to share my experience from each day with students, family, and friends who wanted to keep up with my travels while I was away. It's a brief overview of the day's events and also a way to help me remember each day as we were constantly busy with very little down time. Finally, I don't want to lose my determination to share and expand not only my knowledge base, but others as well. I can't wait to hear from my new friends I've made, not only the professionals from Vietnam and Cambodia, but the other delegates that went on the trip with me. The door has been opened and I do not plan on closing it.

What's Up With All of this iPad Talk?

Sharon Nichols, CTVI, Outreach Assitstve Technology Specialist

Abstract: The iPad has a built-in screen reader for access by blind users, but not all applications work with the screen reader. Resources to find accessible apps are included in this article.

Keywords: Blind, screen reading software, voice output, iPad.

By now everyone has heard about the iPad, but have you heard it's accessible? The iPad comes with a built-in screen reader called VoiceOver. This is the same screen reader available with all iPhone, iPod Touch, and all Apple computers. VoiceOver allows instant accessibility at no extra cost. This is remarkable in the world of assistive technology, and we hope that Apple continues the support.

Access to VoiceOver on the iPad can be enabled through iTunes or with sighted help from the Settings App. If it is a new iPad it must be synced with iTunes, affording the user to turn on VoiceOver before turning on the iPad. If it needs to be set from the Settings App, first go to General settings, then on the bottom right go to Accessibility, and then select VoiceOver. Before activating VoiceOver I highly recommend looking further down the page and setting the Triple Click Home Button to Voiceover. This will allow the user to turn the iPad off and on with a triple click of the home button.

When VoiceOver is activated all of the gestures for typical use are changed. You can no longer simply tap an icon. This can be very disorienting for someone who already uses an iPad. For a list of all the gestures to be used for VoiceOver on the iPad go here:

<http://help.apple.com/ipad/4/voiceover/en/iPad604eac75.html>. The page has in-depth information about VoiceOver and its use.

Now on to which Apps are accessible. Most of the Apps from Apple already on the iPad are accessible, such as Calendar, Contacts, Notes,

Video, YouTube, iTunes, App Store, Safari, Mail, and iPod. However, Game Center and Maps are not accessible. One very accessible free App to load immediately, via the App Store, is iBooks. There are many free books available from the iTunes store; some are public domain and some are just a few chapters of current books. IBooks alone is revolutionary in that anyone can buy a book from the App Store and immediately have access. The iPad can read in a number of different languages, such as Spanish and French, but the book must be written in the language used for reading. Everyone should try a foreign language book, simply to listen to the quality of the synthetic speech!

A good source of which Apps are accessible is: www.applevis.com. While they do not have all of the Apps which are accessible, they have tested the Apps listed and posted detailed reviews. Be careful and read the entire review before you choose an App, as they will also mention how accessible it is with VoiceOver. For a starting list of Apps, I have Dictionary!, Pandora, Fandango, AroundMe, SearchIt, Weatherbug, Facebook, Talking Calculator (.99), Talking Scientific Calculator (4.99), and iBlink Radio.

It is important to remember that just as not all computer software is accessible, especially educational software, not all Apps are accessible.

Let's make that FUNCTIONAL Let's make it MEMORABLE!

Lyn Ayer, Ph.D., Project Director, Oregon Deafblind Project

Reprinted from the project newsletter: Building Effective Programs, Winter-Spring 2010

Abstract: Using a variety of strategies to support memory and lead to literacy

Keywords: blind, visually impaired, deafblind, object symbols, tactile symbols.

Think of what your life would be like without being able to depend on memory! We not only remember, but we have aids to help us. What is more functional than developing and using a child's MEMORY of his/her world to enhance it? If a child's vision is likely to deteriorate, it is important to spend time making sure that this child is exposed to as much visual information as possible.

Things you might do with Jenny, who is deafblind:

- Make "lists" for Jenny to use — e.g., a shopping list. This could be tactile or large print or even on tape/voice device — or a combination
- Create an "appointment" book for Jenny so she knows who she is going to see on a specific day — teacher, doctor, friend, grandma . . .
- A scrapbook of "Things I like" so Jenny can share things she has experienced and likes — fun to share!!

For example, if Jenny is able to go to her visual memory for help — she will better understand what a "squirrel" looks like, rather than just know that it is a small, furry something with a fluffy tail that she can feel. She might remember the color—brown, grey, red— the way the bright little eyes look, the way squirrels scamper around and

race up and down trees, or the way they like to bury nuts . . .

The same idea would apply to deteriorating hearing — or the other senses. It will give Jenny a "place" to go when she needs to think about something she can no longer see and/or hear. Jenny will be able to connect the information from her residual senses and fill in "pictures" of her world from what she has in memory.

How many of us keep memorabilia around us — both at home, at work, even in a locker at the gym? Our memories are closely connected to our emotions. These memorabilia are not just aids to memory, but — like chicken soup — they are comforting!

SO — let's think of things we could do with Jenny that might do the same for her:

- One item on the tray of her wheelchair
- Something in her "fanny pack" that she can check from time to time
- An item in her school locker that she can look at, listen to and/or feel each time she goes there — especially at the beginning and end of each school day
- One item on a corner of her desk or work-station

We use memory to match things. For example, most of us remember that a certain sweater looks better with a specific pair of trousers, or that a necklace is the right length for a particular blouse; or that a certain lid goes with a container or a cover with a specific pan... It might help Jenny remember what goes with what item if we:

- Use “mnemonic” devices: e.g., hang a necklace with a matching sweater, or a belt with a dress
- Mark clothes with tactile tags that can be matched
- Use tactile designs or braille strips to mark containers and lids
- Put a glob of heat-resistant glue in a design on the handle and cover of a pan.

Each of us learns that our life is a sequence — and most of us have information that attests to significant events — birth and other certificates, photographs, collectibles. Sometimes we are organized enough to put these in albums or folders so that the sequence is obvious to us. We connect our present to our past — and sometimes we can also “predict” or “envision” the future! It’s fun...

Create a timeline for Jenny — maybe on the wall of her bedroom — so that she can go from “start” and keep adding to it. Have Jenny help set it up so that she gets the idea of the “sequence.” This happened first, then this, and so on. Don’t forget to add a “vision” section to the end of the timeline — maybe one large sheet of cardstock or paper — document a “wish list” of things Jenny might hope will happen. As things “happen”, Jenny could take an item off the “vision” chart and paste it on the timeline instead so it adds to “memories”.

It is sometimes fun to SHARE our memories with others, especially friends who may not know of things that happened in the past, or others who were actually a part of the memory. Some of us have learned “Scrapbooking,” others prefer diaries

that document events, videotaping, or recording on tape. Sometimes we need the memory aids so we can better share what we have in our minds. When we use the memory aids, it helps to bring the other person into the same “sensory place” that we were. It helps to communicate a clearer picture.

Create MEMORY BOOKS with Jenny so she can use these to “remember” events with friends and family. The books might be as simple as binders — sorted by events : e.g., “Birthdays,” “Summer camp,” “Church events.” Have one page for one event, choose one — or maybe two — items for a page. Make sure that the chosen items are the most meaningful to Jenny — and not something you think is “cute.” For example, one student had a shoelace pasted on his “summer camp” one year. It meant little to us — until we learned that that year, he had lost a new and favorite shoe down the toilet at camp. He was NOT happy about that event, although he did go on to enjoy the rest of his stay. However — that was the one item that jogged his memory for that particular year.

Once you have created memory books, don’t forget to USE THEM! They are no good sitting in a closet or under the bed! Pull them out when you are sitting on the couch together, or in the park, or at camp. Make it fun to talk about things. Remember to PAUSE and wait for Jenny to remember and respond. Send the book to and from school — or maybe even other places in the community (e.g., gym, church, YMCA) where others can also get used to using the memory books. All this will help Jenny to build stronger memories, better concepts (because she has the past to use as “building blocks”)

GO FOR IT!

What's New in Career Ed at TSBVI?

William "Bill" Daugherty, Superintendent, Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Abstract: In this article, Superintendent Daugherty discusses "Career Education at TSBVI" and the different areas of job training.

Key Words: Blind, visually impaired, deafblind, career education, vocational education, job training, work experience, Texas Workforce Commission, TSBVI

What's new in Career Ed at TSBVI? We were awarded a Work Training Grant! This school year, we are working in partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission to provide students with job training and work experiences. TSBVI Staff are providing training in several work areas to meet the needs of students, and to prepare them for employment using the skills and knowledge learned in the training.

AREAS OF JOB TRAINING

Customer Service/Technology

Document Shredding

Barista/Coffee Shop

Hospitality

Screen Printing

Embroidery

Horticulture

Animal Care

Sound Engineering

CUSTOMER SERVICE/TECHNOLOGY

Students are learning Customer Service skills including telephone etiquette, accurate note taking, and how to handle dissatisfied customers. Customer Service students are participating in discussions, assignments, and role-play scenarios to demonstrate the skills and concepts they are learning. Students are also trained in technology. They are learning skills needed to work in an office or customer service setting accessing the computer through speech, magnification, and braille -- and other tools to

improve their job readiness.

DOCUMENT SHREDDING

Students are trained to use document shredders, including commercial-grade machines, and are learning trouble shooting and simple maintenance of the equipment. Talking scales are used to weigh the paper and track the amount of paper shredded. Document Shredding is a training area in which all students at our school can find their niche with a variety of tasks. Students learn work skills that will serve them in the future such as work expectations and productivity goals.

BARISTA/COFFEE SHOP

Coffee Shop skills training ranges from grinding coffee beans to mixing specialty espresso drinks. They are learning the operation of the various pieces of equipment that are used in the coffee industry and have opened an espresso cart on campus. Students are doing a campus-wide morning coffee service. They go to designated areas and brew coffee using their own pre-measured bags. When asked what they enjoy most about their coffee service, one replied, "I like working with other people," and another student replied, "I like the smell of coffee."

HOSPITALITY

Students are being trained in a variety of Hospitality areas including front-desk

procedures, reservation services, and hospitality marketing. Hospitality training also includes highly transferable skills such as following multi-step directions, organizational skills, and working effectively with a team. Students have spent time in the Austin area exploring various hospitality venues. The students have especially enjoyed evaluating the customer service provided by others to determine the level of excellence (or not) out in the community.

SCREEN PRINTING

Students are learning various work skills including speed and productivity as they produce bags, shirts and other products. Students are responsible for organizing the work area, keeping track of inventory, and developing a pricing structure by researching screen-printing companies. Students are completing design projects and are learning basic marketing skills and techniques. This semester, they will job shadow at a local screen-printing business to see the rate and pace of work performed on site, and to experience different types of screen-printing styles.

EMBROIDERY

Students are learning to set and sew decorative designs on fabric bags, shirts, and other products, skills to run the needed software to operate the embroidery machine, as well as various work skills in this area including diligent attention to task and productivity rate. They are also learning basic marketing techniques they can use to develop a small business in the future. Students have started to explore developing a partnership with local businesses and organizations to supply embroidered items from the students participating in this training.

HORTICULTURE

Students are being trained in various

horticultural activities as well as the upkeep and maintenance of a greenhouse. Horticulture students have been planting and harvesting vegetables in the TSBVI community garden plots, composting and mulching, weeding and watering, caring for seedlings and transplants, preparing plants for sale, mixing and selling homemade herbal teas and potpourri. Students have had the opportunity to visit local nurseries, gardens, educational greenhouses, and outdoor markets in the Austin community.

ANIMAL CARE

Students are learning skills and knowledge related to grooming and caring for small animals. This training includes grooming, bathing, brushing, cleaning up after the critters, feeding the animals, washing and drying feed containers, and socializing the animals. In the spring semester, students will have a work experience in local grooming businesses and/or veterinary clinics, volunteering at an animal shelter, kennel, or a pet store. The Animal Care training includes visiting anyplace where animals are kept--rehabilitation centers, dog parks, and local grooming businesses.

SOUND ENGINEERING

Students are learning technology that allows them to record, mix, and add effects. Students in this training learn how to use the CakeTalking tutorial MSW file in conjunction with JAWS and SONAR recording software. Training includes learning how to set recording levels, edit tracks, and choose from or create templates for various types of recording. Students participating in the Sound Engineering program at TSBVI are gaining experience, knowledge, and exposure to professional recording technology! Sounds good, doesn't it?

E3 Services Is the Goal

By Barbara J. Madrigal, Assistant Commissioner, DARS-Division for Blind Services

Abstract: In this article, Assistant Commissioner Madrigal reviews the results of the Partner Survey, designed to gather feedback about services provided by the Division for Blind Service's Blind Children's and Transition Programs.

Key words: Blind, Visually Impaired, Partner Survey, Quality Assurance, DARS Division for Blind Services, Educational Service Center (ESC), Early Childhood Intervention (ECI)

The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, Division for Blind Services has a commitment to provide "Excellent Services, Every Customer, Every Time." We call it E3 for short. This goal is not an easy one and requires that we take a hard look at ourselves, not just in the mirror but through our consumer's and our partner's eyes. This allows us to see what they have to say about what we are doing well and what needs improvement. It is only through a constant course of evaluation that we can meet and keep our E3 commitment.

This year, for the first time, we embarked on a journey to gather feedback and specific information about our services from our most valued partners who share with us the common goal of assisting Texas' blind and visually impaired children, youth, and their families. Our partners include Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Early Childhood Intervention staff (ECI), Educational Service Center (ESC) Specialists/Consultants, O&M Specialists, Special Education directors, therapists, and others.

The survey was conducted using an on-line survey tool (Survey Monkey) designed to allow unrestricted participation. Participants were encouraged to forward the survey link to anyone

who might have relevant information. The survey was designed to be anonymous but respondents had a choice to request direct contact from BCP staff.

The following information reflects the results of our survey from a statewide perspective.

We had a total of 188 respondents. The highest percent of responses came from Teachers of the Visually Impaired (54%), followed by ECI staff (16%), and ESC staff (10%). The majority of respondents worked with just one Blind Children's Specialist (53%) and/or one Transition Counselor (63%), and 66% of the respondents have partnered with us to provide habilitation or expanded core curriculum trainings, such as camps, workshops, and conferences.

All geographic areas of the state responded to the survey, although the number of respondents was not evenly distributed. Lubbock, Tyler, Houston, Fort Worth, and Austin provided 68% of the responses.

We asked our partners about the quality of our relationships and collaborations and the consistency of our services. Overall we found a preponderance of satisfied customers. In

the area of our relationships and collaborations: 84% of our partners ranked their relationships with us as excellent or good, with 16% indicating that the relationship was fair or poor. A majority of respondents (72%) ranked our collaboration skills as excellent or good. In the area of consistency of services, 77% of respondents indicated that DARS-DBS was consistent or fairly consistent, while 23% reported that we were not very consistent or extremely inconsistent.

These percentages were similar across other questions. In the area of professionalism, 73% of respondents indicated that the timely return of phone calls was excellent or good, 79% stated that BCP staff show up on time for appointments, 75% reported that BCP staff deliver on their promises, and 80% indicated that they are knowledgeable about services. A high percentage of respondents (96%) stated that they would seek DBS services if they had a child who was blind or visually impaired.

We are encouraged by the positive responses, but we are also challenged by the responses that indicate improvement is needed. As our first survey, the responses provide the Blind Children's

Program and the Transition Program a baseline from which to measure future responses.

In our endeavor to meet our E3 goal of Excellent Services, Every Customer, Every Time, we will continue to work with this information. First, we plan to extrapolate the data by region. This will allow each region to review the results and ensure that what is working continues and what needs improvement is identified and addressed. Our agency commitment is to support regions in maintaining relationships and collaborations that work and, in areas where improvement is indicated, to provide the support to develop quality services, first-rate relationships, and outstanding collaborations.

We cannot meet our goal of E3 services without honest feedback from our partners. DBS Children's and Transition Programs will continue to provide this survey on an annual basis so we can hear from you how we are doing. I sincerely appreciate all who participated and look forward to the opportunity to hear from all our partners again next year.

Project SALUTE: Successful Adaptations for Learning to Use Touch Effectively

From Project SALUTE home page

Project SALUTE addresses the unique learning needs of children who are deaf-blind, who have severe visual impairments, and require a primarily tactile mode of learning. This website is intended as a resource on tactile learning strategies for working with children who are deaf-blind or who are blind with additional disabilities. It has three purposes:

- to provide procedures for service providers

to document tactile strategies being used with individual students,

- to assist families and service providers in sharing challenges and successes in using tactile strategies, and
- To disseminate the findings of Project SALUTE and information on tactile strategies.

<http://www.projectsalute.net/index.html>

Join NFADB!

NFADB Press Release

Abstract: This announcement describes the National Family Association for Deaf-Blind and enumerates the benefits of joining.

Key Words: blindness, deaf-blindness, National Family Association for Deaf-Blind, SFADB, National Coalition on Deaf-Blindness, National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness, Helen Keller National Center, American Association of the Deaf-Blind

The National Family Association for Deaf-Blind is an organization that has been supporting individuals who are deaf-blind and their families for over sixteen years. We would like to invite you to become a member of this incredible organization. Our yearly membership runs from January 1 through December 31.

NFADB offers support in a variety of ways:

- A toll free number (answered by a real person) that connects families and others to resources and one-to-one support
- Current information and national updates delivered through a bi-annual newsletter
- Online resources and support through our website and Facebook page
- A member listserv that connects you by email to hundreds of other members

In addition, NFADB connects you to a much larger network of support. We represent families on the National Coalition on Deaf-Blindness by providing a unified voice on national issues related to deaf-blindness. We continue to expand and support a national NFADB Affiliate Network that supports state parent groups as they develop and grow. We can also help families access the services of the state deaf-blind projects, the National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness, the Helen Keller National Center and the American Association of the Deaf-Blind.

Membership Details

As you can see, we are working in many ways on behalf of individuals who are deaf-blind and their families. We would value your support and membership. We offer three membership options for families and professionals. Each membership is a household membership and includes all family members living at one address.

One year: \$15

Three years: \$35

Lifetime: \$100

On-line Survey

As the only national family organization that represents deaf-blindness, it is extremely important that we are aware of the issues that are of the greatest concern to parents and families with a child or member who is deaf-blind. You can help us accomplish this by taking a few minutes to complete a brief on-line survey. Simply click on the link below. The survey will appear with easy and simple instructions.

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s/425189/1bepm>

Please take the time to join NFADB and complete the on-line survey today. Together we can work to make a difference in the lives of individuals who are deaf-blind.

Braille Books from Beulah Reimer Legacy, BRL Announcement

Key Words: blind, Deafblind, Beulah Reimer Legacy, literacy, braille books

Beulah Reimer Legacy (BRL) is pleased to announce a new and exciting reading list of print/braille children's picture books. All books are brailled with clear plastic strips and will be sold for five dollars each. For more information and a list of available books, go to <http://beulahreimerlegacy.webs.com/>

To place an order or request more information about BRL or the reading grab bag, please use the contact information below:

April Enderton

phone: 515-282-0049

e-mail: endertona@wildblue.net

BRL's mission is to put braille in the hands of eager readers.

Disability 411

Excerpt from www.disability411.com home page

Key Words: blindness, visually impairments, deafblind, disabilities

Disability411 provides audio workshops, interviews and information on disability-related topics for those who work with individuals with disabilities, including college disability counselors, rehabilitation counselors, K-12 special education teachers, employers, or anyone who works in the disability field. Information is also of interest for individuals with disabilities and their families. It is hosted by Beth Case, a disability counselor with more than 13 years of experience in postsecondary disability services.

The link to the general podcast with the show notes and transcript is

<http://www.disability411.com>.

The direct link to the audio alone is

http://d411.jinkle.com/76_Disability411_21stCentAct.mp3.



Cooking and Shopping Made Easier and Healthier for Blind Americans

Excerpted with permission from Letsmove.gov/blog

Abstract: This website explains how the link directionsforme enables you to look up nutritional information and cooking instructions that is printed on the product packaging.

Key Words: blind, visually impaired, nutrition information, accessible package information

www.letsmove.gov/blog/2011/02/16/cooking-and-shopping-made-easier-and-healthier-for-blind-americans/

Posted by Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to the President in the White House Office of Public Engagement on February 16, 2011

In its first year, Let's Move! taught us to pay attention to what we eat. We've learned that choosing a bowl of whole-grain cereal with non-fat milk over cheesy biscuits and bacon is a great way to kick off a healthy, energized day. We've realized that many times we are offered portions that are bigger than necessary, and we've tested delicious, perfectly-proportioned recipes to make at home. And, with the release of 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans last month, we were reminded that consuming less sodium, fats, added sugars and refined grains is essential to a healthy lifestyle.

But, for millions of blind or visually impaired Americans, reading the nutrition information and cooking directions printed on the boxes, cans, jars, bottles and bags at the grocery store has been all but impossible—at least it was before the launch of *directionsforme* last month. *directionsforme* is an accessible and user friendly website that contains nutritional and product information for over 350,000 foods and appliances. Created by Horizons for the Blind, *directionsforme* is helping millions of Americans

like me to plan healthy menus, cook at home and to pay attention to the foods we consume. A study published in August 2010 by a group of Columbia University professors showed that people who regularly read the nutrition facts labels on the food that they buy have significantly healthier diets and consume less calories, fat, sugar and sodium than those who don't read the labels.

Thanks to *directionsforme*, blind grocery shoppers can now plan their trips by carefully selecting foods and brands whose nutrition information they have read and compared. A busy mom who wants to buy healthy snacks can use the website to find out which brand of peach fruit cups has no added sugar and an aspiring Italian chef can find out the appropriate serving size for his favorite brand of pasta.

Directionsforme is also helping American families eat healthy meals together at home, another key component of the Let's Move! initiative. Planning menus and cooking at home is a fun and healthy way to bring the family together. For sighted cooks, using a microwave to steam broccoli or pureeing vegetables in a blender is as easy as a glance at a user's manual and the push of a button. *directionsforme* now makes those time-saving appliances available to visually impaired chefs with accessible package information for thousands of products.

Let's Move! has always been committed to including people with disabilities in its healthy lifestyle outreach, whether by cheering on the American athletes at the 2010 Paralympic Games in Vancouver or recognizing the students with disabilities who earned Presidential Active Lifestyle Awards with a

special ceremony at the White House. Now, with the accessible nutrition information and appliance instructions on the *directionsforme* website, blind Americans can more easily pay attention to the food they eat and fully participate in the Let's Move! call for healthier meals and healthier families.

Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired – Outreach Program
Honors
TEXAS FELLOWS
Recognizing VI Professionals in their Role as Recruiters



<u>Texas Fellow</u>	<u>Candidate</u>
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Tressie Schindler	Charlotte McKinney
Sara Baker	Stacy Vance
Theresa Taylor	Tammy Averitt
Kathy Krenek	Julie Stanfield
Karla Cantu	Guadalupe Garza-Brown
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Brian Jones	Trish Duke
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Cecilia Cox Hayes	Gayla Brown
Myleah Rhynes	Beth Wallace
Pat Harper	Shonda Prater
Barbara Kline	Julia Sohns
Carol Dancy	David Carabajal
Bonnie Rudel	Norma Freimark



For more information about becoming a Texas Fellow or working as a VI professional contact KC Dignan at <kcd@tsbvi.edu>.

BulletinBoard

Announcements: regional, statewide, and national training and events

Mail or email your items for the Bulletin Board to Beth Bible:
 TSBVI Outreach, 1100 W. 45th Street, Austin, TX 78756; or <bethbible@tsbvi.edu>.
 An up-to-date Statewide Staff Development Calendar is posted at
 <www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/vi.htm>

Active Learning Conference

On the TSBVI Campus

June 9 - 10, 2011

With an Introduction to Active Learning by
 PATTY OBRZUT, OTR, of Penrickton Center for
 the Blind in Michigan

Early bird registration April 1 - May 15 \$100

Late & Out of State Registration

May16 - June 3 \$125

contact: Brian Sobeck at briansobeck@tsbvi.edu

Texas Assistive Technology Network

(TATN) Statewide Conference

June 14-16, 2011

Region 4 ESC

Houston, TX

Region 4 ESC Contact:

Kirk Behnke, kbehnke@esc4.net

Register for training at

www.theansweris4.net

Limitless Soccer Clinic: Designed Specifically for Elementary Age Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired

World Access for the Blind is committed to making all aspects of life accessible to the blind, including recreational activities. With this clinic, we hope to show blind youth that blindness need not prevent them from being active, healthy, or having fun! They have the ability to participate in ANY activity that they choose. We also want moms and dads of visually-impaired children to know that they can still play ball with their kids even if their kids cannot see.

<http://www.worldaccessfortheblind.org/taxonomy/term/21>

Registration is limited to the first 100 students

Sensory Clinic: To help people to understand there is far more to experience than what we see.

To bring awareness of the amount of information available to family, friends, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Vision Teachers, and anyone who works with Blind and Low Vision Students. To empower the blind and low vision community and their support staff.

Saturday, June 4, 2011

Soccer Clinic from 10 am until noon, Sensory Clinic from 1pm until 3pm

Farmers Branch Park, 13985 Dennis Lane, Farmers Branch, Texas

<http://www.swfarmer.com/FBP.htm>

BulletinBoard

Announcements: regional, statewide, and national training and events



7th Annual TxP2P Parent Conference: With a Little Help from Our Friends!

**Friday & Saturday, June 24-25, 2011
Embassy Suites, Spa & Conference Center
1001 McCarty Lane
San Marcos, Texas**

- More than 60 sessions for parents, family members, self advocates, and professionals
- Sessions in Spanish; Interpreters available for other sessions
- Program for siblings
- Teen Transition Summit
- Family Gathering
- Exhibitors

The Annual TxP2P Parent Conference educates Texas parents about how to deal with the unique issues and challenges they face on a daily basis in caring for their children. The two-day conference offers them tracks with multiple sessions, each covering a different topic. This year's themed tracks include the following: advocacy, autism, parenting and sibling issues including a one-day SibShop, special education law (basic to advanced), medical issues (including Medical Home and Medicaid Waiver Programs), behavior, mental health, parent leadership, resources and services, self-advocacy, self-determination, transition issues for youth and young adults with disabilities, and creating a good life for people with disabilities.

Through seminars and face-to-face networking, parents, self-advocates, family members, care-givers and professionals learn from each other as they continue their unique journeys caring for a child with a disability or a special health care need. TxP2P's goal is for everyone to leave the conference with renewed energy and passion along with tools and information they need to make positive changes for children with disabilities in Texas.

Download the 2011 Conference Registration Information Packet:

http://www.txp2p.org/docs/2011_conf/2011_conf_reg_pckt_english.pdf

If you have questions, please contact Susan Prior at Susan.Prior@TxP2P.org

Contact your DARS/DBS Specialist or TSBVI Outreach Family Specialists if you need travel assistance.

Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Outreach Program
1100 W. 45th Street
Austin, TX 78745

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AUSTIN, TEXAS
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Texas SenseAbilities

Published quarterly: February, May, August, and November.

Available in Spanish and English on TSBVI's website at www.tsbvi.edu

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please call Beth Bible at (512) 206-9103 or email at bethbible@tsbvi.edu

Items to be considered for publication should be submitted by email to the section editors at the addresses listed below. Deadlines for submitting articles are as follows: Winter, Dec 1; Spring, March 1, Summer, June 1; Fall, September 1.

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The audio version of *TX SenseAbilities* is provided by Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic, Austin, Texas.



This project is supported in part by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the U.S. Department of Education. TSBVI Outreach Programs are funded in part by IDEA-B Formula, and IDEA-D Deaf-Blind Federal grants. Federal funds are administered through the Texas Education Agency, Division of Special Education, to the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.