

SEE/HEAR

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER ABOUT VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS AND DEAFBLINDNESS FOR FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS
A collaborative effort of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Texas Commission for the Blind

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To Begin With...

we have often grappled with whether to have themes for our issues of *SEE/HEAR*. Sometimes it is hard to include everything we would like, and still follow a theme. Other times a theme just seems to come together. A theme of sorts has developed for this issue, and it has to do with food. It seems appropriate for these summer days, when people are out cooking on their patios, maybe trying new recipes, or perhaps heading out to favorite restaurants.

There are other informative articles as well. And you will also find an insert, which is our annual reader survey. Filling out the survey will help us know what you think of *SEE/HEAR*, and help us make it more useful and relevant to all our readers. There are also questions about services that may benefit children and families. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey, and mail it back to us. The address is already on there, and we would love to hear from you.

About The CHARGE Foundation

By Jennifer Holweger, Parent, Pflugerville, TX

My husband and I live in Pflugerville, Texas with our three year old son, Cameron Scott Holweger. Cameron was diagnosed with CHARGE Syndrome around his first birthday. Cameron is deafblind, has a heart defect, and cerebral palsy, along with other characteristics of CHARGE. Despite his disabilities and constant medical care, he is a very happy three-year-old. We are members of the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation located in Columbia, Missouri. The CHARGE Syndrome Foundation is a nonprofit charitable organization that provides information and referrals on CHARGE Syndrome to individuals, families, and professionals worldwide. Membership includes a quarterly newsletter, biennial conferences for families and professionals, parent-to-parent information, and publications.

CHARGE Syndrome refers to individuals born with a specific set of birth defects which include anomalies of the eyes, ears, face, heart, nasal passages, cranial nerves, lungs, gastrointestinal tract, genitals, urinary tract and kidneys. The acronym CHARGE stands for:

- C = Coloboma and/or Cranial nerve abnormalities
- H = Heart malformations
- A = Atresia of the choanae
- R = Retardation of growth and/or development
- G = Genital and/or urinary abnormalities
- E = Ear abnormalities/hearing loss

Due to hearing and vision anomalies, many of these individuals will be diagnosed as deafblind. Some individuals with CHARGE Syndrome will be unable to swallow, smell or taste. In addition to these anomalies, there can be other malformations seen in individuals having CHARGE Syndrome, including cleft lip and palate, trachea-esophageal fistula, poor muscle tone and/or poor immune response.

There is an overwhelming need to raise public awareness of CHARGE Syndrome in the medical, educational and general public, as this condition remains under-diagnosed. As a parent of a child with CHARGE, I strongly encourage those families with a CHARGE individual to become members of the foundation. They have been an excellent resource. They publish a management manual for parents, which is full of information. I'm still in the process of reading ours and have already learned a lot. A conference is held every two years with rotating geographic locations. We are fortunate to attend our first conference in July 2003 in Cleveland, Ohio. I've been told these conferences are a must to attend if you are a parent of a CHARGE child. I'm really looking forward to it! *[Editor's note: Jennifer wrote this before heading off to the conference. Perhaps in a future edition she will let us know about her experiences there.]*

I encourage you to become members of the foundation if you haven't already. Here's how to get in touch with them:

CHARGE SYNDROME FOUNDATION, INC.
 2004 Parkade Blvd.
 Columbia, MO 65202-3121
 800/442-7604 for families only
 email: marion@chargesyndrome.org
 http: //www.chargesyndrome.org

I wish you all the best of luck!

Post Secondary Program TSBVI/TCB

By Sofia Bocanegra, Crystal Davenport, Whitney Lawson and William Sparks

Editor's Note: The Post Secondary Program began in the fall of 2002. The focus of the program is to provide training for students who are blind or visually impaired and have graduated from high school or achieved equivalent certificate. Students seeking this post-secondary experience are in need of remedial academic, independent living and work related skills training. They will cultivate the skills, attitudes and opportunities necessary to meet the demands of competitive employment and adult living. For more information, visit <www.tsbvi.edu/school/psp/> or contact Sherry Hayes at (512) 374-1664 or e-mail: <sherryhayes@tsbvi.edu>.

If you know a young person who is graduating from high school soon and is eager to experience independence, we have a new program to consider. We have been the first to pilot the Post Secondary Program (PSP), which is a collaborative effort between the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) and the Texas Commission for the Blind (TCB). Our quadriplex is located directly across the street from Criss Cole Rehab Center (CCRC) and slightly north of the main TSBVI campus. Both campuses are within walking distance. We are all very enthusiastic as we are about to complete the first year of the program, and would like to tell you about it. We are Sofia Bocanegra from Garden City, Crystal Davenport, of Houston, Whitney Lawson, from Blanco, and William Sparks, who hails from San Antonio. Two of us entered the program in September, 2002 and the other two joined us in late October. The program is to last approximately one year.

When we arrived, we were nervous but eager to get started. In the beginning it was very hectic! We had to move into brand new apartments, do our first grocery shopping trip and get oriented to the new surroundings. We also had to attend lots of orientation meetings, both at CCRC and the Post-Secondary complex. The complex contains four apartments surrounding a central common room that holds the laundry facilities and the office for the coordinator and assistant. The apartments are small and efficient for single living. All units are accessible, but one is specifically designed with an adapted kitchen and bath for wheelchair use. The apartments are furnished and the kitchens are fully equipped. An important part of our training takes place in our own apartments. During the evenings and on weekends, we receive instruction from the PSP coordinator and residential assistant in the skills needed to live independently, such as cooking, cleaning, budgeting, paying rent, learning about deposits and setting up our own utilities, as well as figuring out how to access leisure activities of interest to us in the community.

We attend classes at CCRC and TSBVI. We have taken courses at CCRC in basic blindness skills including Kitchen, Braille, Keyboarding, O&M, Personal Finance and Organization, Technology, and Career Guidance. These classes are self-paced and the students are required to wear blindfolds while in training at Criss Cole Rehab Center. In classes at TSBVI or while in our apartments, blindfolds are optional. "Wearing a blindfold can be a real pain, especially in the summer when it's hot," says Crystal "but it has helped me to use my other senses more, instead of relying entirely on my vision."

In kitchen class, we started off with learning how to use talking calculators, clocks, and watches. We also learned to organize money and shop without using vision. Then, it was on to cooking. "When I first started the program I didn't know how to do much of anything," says William. "The microwave and Hilbert's Hamburgers were my best friends." We all helped our families prepare Thanksgiving dinners in November after being in the program for just a few months. Cooking skills are practiced and reinforced in our apartments as we are responsible for preparing food for ourselves and required to have at least one dinner party with guests.

What any student works on in Braille class depends on what he/she already knows. Beginners like Crystal and Sofia start by learning the alphabet. After that, we proceed into contractions, while advanced braille students like William and Whitney have practiced reading and writing to build up speed and accuracy.

Keyboarding is the first computer class we take. We are required to use earphones and follow instructions on a tape to practice typing. At first, this was very hard to do. Before we complete this class, we must be typing at least 20 words per minute. Then, we have the choice to go into a Windows class or an internet or Microsoft word class.

Says Sofia, “O & M is a very challenging class where you really have to concentrate on what you are doing.” During O & M training, we work indoors as well as outdoors. We learn how to use a cane, cross busy and quiet streets, ask for information, and use the Capital Metro bus system. We are required to use a cane at all times even if we have some vision.

Our Career Guidance class covers everything from jobs to owning a home. “I like the class because I always leave there thinking about things that I never thought about until now,” says Crystal. The course is tailored to fit each individual’s needs and interests. Since Sofia is interested in pursuing a career in the office/clerical field, her Career Guidance class has included some valuable on-the-job training on the switchboard at CCRC.

Another required class is Personal Finance and Organization (PF&O). The class begins with learning to label different items in Braille. Once this is completed, we move on to making an address book. Then, we begin more advanced training which consists of setting up a file box for storing important documents and learning to keep a check register. Our academic tutorials provide extra practice in these skills and include, among other things, learning to pay bills on-line.

During academic tutorials which we attend daily, we are not required to wear blindfolds. In the very beginning, we were assessed, using the ACT Work Keys assessment. It covers a variety of skills such as Math, Writing, Reading Comprehension, and Listening. Once the assessment was completed, we identified areas of need based on industry standards for jobs in which we were interested. We work each day to improve on those skills that fit our personal goals. Whitney says, “One of my goals is to prepare for the TASP so I can go to college in the fall. I’m doing this in the academic tutorial class. I’ve also gotten to fill out an admission application for Austin Community College and work closely with their Office for Students with Disabilities.” Sofia is working on listening and taking notes so that she will have stronger skills as she seeks a job in the office/clerical field.

“I have learned a lot of things in this program,” says Crystal. “I have learned all of uncontracted braille, how to write checks, and how to ride the buses. I am also cooking much more than I used to.”

Sofia adds, “I believe that this program has really helped me learn new things, have more confidence and be able to ask questions. I have also learned to be away from my family and to be independent.”

“I didn’t know how to pay bills or give myself shots. Thanks to the Post-Secondary Program, I now have the confidence, competence, and independence I need for higher learning,” says William.

All of us agree that the Post-Secondary Program is a very beneficial program for anyone who is college bound or seeking work after high school. It offers the right amount of independent living experience as well as training based on individual future goals. We are unanimous in saying that being on our own in an apartment is truly awesome! We have really enjoyed the time spent in the program, and we have even adopted a motto based on our new competencies and skills: “Post-Secondary lead the way! All the way!”

Planting Seeds in Fertile Soil

By Craig Axelrod, Teacher Trainer, TSBVI, Texas Deafblind Outreach

In December 2000, I noticed Mary Chris Knorr's name on a list of special education advisory board members. Twenty years earlier, while pursuing an elementary education degree at The University of Texas at Austin, I had been placed in Mary Chris' second grade class at Eanes Elementary School, teaching students to read under her supervision. (I also taught them the fingerspelling alphabet and some sign language.) I reintroduced myself by e-mail, not sure if she'd remember me. Being a teacher, of course she did! When I told Mary Chris that I was working with Deafblind Outreach at TSBVI, she mentioned that a few times in years past, Linda Hagood, who was then with Outreach, brought a student with deafblindness to meet her students during their unit about Helen Keller. She wondered if I might arrange a similar visit.

I contacted Randy Feille, supervisor of Deaf-Blind Services at Texas Commission for the Blind, who introduced me to Alberto Gonzales, a deafblind man who lives at the Deaf-Blind Community-Based Apartment Program in Austin. (Alberto is becoming very well-known in Texas. He presented on the topic of independence at the 2001 Symposium on Deafblindness, was a keynote speaker at the 2003 Symposium, and wrote an article in the Winter 2003 issue of *SEE/HEAR*, entitled "I Love My Life, Swimming and Texas Longhorns!") Alberto, who had some experience speaking about deafblindness to young students at other schools, agreed to visit the third grade classes at Eanes Elementary School, where Mary Chris was now a special education partner doing collaborative and resource teaching with second and third graders. He left a lasting impression on over 100 students and their teachers.

Since then, Alberto's presentation at Eanes has become an annual event, and more elaborate each year. Before this year's visit, Chrissy Cowan, Consultant for the Visually Impaired and Deafblind Specialist at Region 13 Education Service Center, suggested that it might be useful to describe the learning goals and activities that were developed for the Helen Keller unit, so other teachers who would like their students to know more about deafblindness can replicate or modify the process.

LEARNING ABOUT HELEN KELLER AND DEAFBLINDNESS

Mary Chris identified four learning goals for the third grade students:

1. Study the genre of biography, which includes reading an additional biography and making a book report presentation to the class;
2. Summarize, by writing a "condensed" biography of Helen Keller's childhood years;
3. Answer inferential comprehension questions;
4. Become more aware of what it means to be deaf and blind.

Before meeting Alberto, their awareness of deafblindness was increased by:

1. Taking an audiotaped "unfair spelling test," to experience various types of hearing loss;
2. Guiding and being guided under blindfold on a walk around campus;
3. Watching a Reading Rainbow video about a deaf child, entitled "Silent Lotus;"
4. Referring to information about guide dogs (including a video) that was learned in an earlier unit;
5. Exploring brailled paper, looking for braille in the community and reporting back to class;
6. Wearing distortion glasses that simulate the experience of a visual impairment.

THE PRESENTATION

Alberto visited the Eanes cafetorium on an afternoon in April. I accompanied him, along with Jim Durkel (Statewide Staff Development Coordinator with the Outreach Program at TSBVI), Diane Barnes, Alie Greene and Nancy Kimbro (Orientation and Mobility Specialists; Diane with Region 13 ESC, Alie with Round Rock ISD and Nancy, an independent contract provider), Josh Belury (Eanes ISD Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments) and Brandy Wojcik (a young adult who is visually impaired).

Alberto, Jim and I began by speaking to the entire group. Alberto answered questions that Jim and I asked about his life, such as where he's from, how he became deafblind, what he can see and hear, what he learned in school, what he did after graduating from high school, what he's doing now and what his plans are for the future. We knew the students would be curious about Kersey (Alberto's guide dog who was with us on stage), so Alberto described how she helps him travel safely and independently. He also explained why it is important to not touch or distract a working guide dog. Because Alberto is a tactile signer, we signed our questions into his hands, then voice interpreted his signed responses.

After our opening conversation, the students divided into their five classes. Each class went to an activity station in a different area of the room, hosted by either Alberto, Jim, Josh and Brandy, or Diane, Alie and Nancy. A VCR was at the fifth station. Each station focused on a unique aspect of deafblindness. The classes rotated every 15 minutes.

At the vision station, Josh showed students low vision tools used to look at very small print, regular print books compared to large print books and books written in braille, tactile maps, globes, puzzles and diagrams, and tactile games such as dominoes and playing cards. Brandy brailled all of the students' names and wrote each of them a secret braille message to take home and decode, using an NFB braille decoding card.

At Diane, Alie and Nancy's orientation and mobility station, students took turns putting on blindfolds or other low vision simulators, and earplugs to simulate a hearing loss. They were also shown how to walk safely using a cane. An obstacle course was created with freestanding "stop," "yield," "school," and "bicycle" signs. The students walked with the canes while wearing simulators, located and identified the signs, then walked between and around them.

At the hearing station, Jim used a three-dimensional ear model to review ear anatomy and physiology ("What is the name of this part?"), identify the cause of Alberto's hearing loss ("Here is the part in Alberto's ear that doesn't work.") and reinforce ear safety ("Is it OK to stick a pencil in your ear?"). Then he introduced the fingerspelling alphabet, and fingerspelled familiar words for the students to interpret. Jim concluded by demonstrating some common signs (especially animals and foods), "My name is ____" and "Thank you," as well as special requests.

At the VCR station, a videotape was shown of Alberto doing everyday activities in his home and community, such as riding on public transportation, shopping at the local grocery store, preparing a snack in the microwave, chatting on the telephone with a friend, walking to his bank down the street and completing a financial transaction. Students were given a written list of questions to think about while they watched the video and discuss later in their classrooms. (A guide for teachers was also provided.) These are the questions and answers:

Q: How does a person walking with Alberto guide him?

A: Alberto holds the person's arm above the elbow, using a technique called sighted guide.

Q: How does Alberto communicate with people who don't understand sign language?

A: He uses a "Braille Talk." Printed letters of the alphabet, and the numerals 1-10, each have their braille equivalent directly below. Alberto and the other person communicate by spelling out words and numbers (such as the cost of his groceries at the checkout line).

Q: Alberto can't see. How does he understand what people are signing to him?

A: He uses tactile signing, by putting his hands on top of their hands and feeling the signs, letters or numbers they make.

Q: How does Alberto know which numbers to press on the microwave?

A: He reads the braille numerals that are taped on the buttons.

Q: How does Alberto know when his telephone is ringing?

A: When the telephone rings, his "Vibra Call" pager vibrates.

Q: How does Alberto communicate with people who call on the telephone?

A: A message is typed to Alberto from another person with a TTY, which is a machine used to communicate by telephone with people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. The message is transmitted through Alberto's TTY into his Telebraille, where it is changed from print to braille. Alberto reads the message in braille and types his response in braille. The information is then transmitted back through the TTY as a print message. (If the other person has a Telebraille, the message is received in braille.)

Q: Why does Alberto use a small plastic frame when he's writing a check?

A: He uses the frame to neatly write information (date, dollar amount, signature, etc.) in the correct locations on the check.

Q: How does Alberto use his cane to travel independently and safely?

A: He uses the cane to locate obstacles (such as curbs, trucks and furniture) before his body comes in contact with them. He also uses it to follow the edge of a sidewalk or wall, which helps him walk in a straight direction.

Q: How does Alberto know where he is going?

A: Alberto has learned to find the landmarks (doors, stairs, railings, sidewalks, etc.) that are always in the same places along the routes he walks. Some of his routes have become so familiar that he has a "sense" of how far to walk and how much time it takes to get where he's going.

At Alberto's station, he demonstrated how some of his assistive devices are used, and responded to questions. (I tactily signed the questions to him and voice interpreted his responses or explanations.) Students with questions were first shown how to introduce themselves, by guiding Alberto's index finger to the letters of their names on the "Braille Talk." Before responding, he helped several of them create their own name signs. Alberto was surprised and impressed when some independently fingerspelled their names for him. While the students were interested in Alberto's technological equipment, and enjoyed watching me sign their questions and interpret his responses, they wanted most of all to communicate with him directly.

ALBERTO'S MAILBAG

A few weeks after Alberto's presentation, he received an envelope in the mail full of thank you notes from the third graders. Here are some of the things they said:

“Dear Alberto, Thank you for coming to our school and sharing how it would be if you were deaf and blind, just like Helen Keller, the famous little girl.”

“Dear Alberto, Thank you for coming to our school. I loved when we pretended to be blind. It was very fun. Your dog is very cute. It was nice of you to put us in your schedule.”

“Thank you for helping me learn more about blind and deaf people. I bet my mom will be happy about what you taught me. I enjoyed listening to what you had to say and hope you had fun too.”

“Thank you for teaching me about deaf and blind people. I know how it feels to be blind and I kind of know how it feels to be deaf. I like the cool gadgets.”

“Thank you all for coming and taking the time to show and tell us all those neat things. I liked it when we told our names to Alberto and we got our signing name. I also liked it when we got our braille message. I still haven’t read it yet, but I think that learning braille would be so much fun. I enjoyed the program very much!”

“Dear Alberto and friends, Thank you for visiting my school. My favorite part was when I got a secret message from Brandy. p.s. I have still not cracked the code that she gave me.”

“Dear Alberto, I am so glad you came to our school. I liked how Brandy typed on the braille machine and how Alberto answered my question and helped me invent a name sign for myself, almost just like my best friend’s.”

“Dear Alberto, I have enjoyed learning about being deaf and blind. My best friends and I enjoy our name signs being the same only with different letters. I was looking forward to this for a very long time. I enjoyed it even more than I thought I would. I hope we can meet again.”

“Dear Alberto, Thank you for teaching us how to read sign language. I’m glad your friend sounded out the words. Thank you for bringing your friends. Thank you for the blind walk.”

“Dear Alberto, Thank you for teaching me about being blind and deaf. You are very fun to hang with.”

“Dear Alberto, Thanks for coming with your friends and teaching us how to do sign language and read braille. You have a great personality and sense of humor. p.s. Your dog’s really cute.”

“Dear Alberto, It was fun to know how it is to be blind. You have an interesting job and it’s hard to not pet your dog. Now I know how it is to read braille. Thank you for teaching me a lot. p.s. I liked the movie.”

“Dear Alberto and friends, Thank you for visiting Eanes Elementary. You are a cool guy. My favorite activity was meeting you. Remember me for loving animals.”

“Thank you so much for coming, Alberto. You are such a good person. I think how you communicate is really neat. Chuy’s is one of my favorite restaurants. That’s really neat that you work there.”

“Dear Alberto, I was amazed how you could get around so easily by yourself. I’m so sorry that you are deaf and blind, but it doesn’t matter. Everyone is different.”

“Thanks for coming to our school. You are an amazing man.”

“Dear Alberto, Thanks for visiting us. Are you coming next year?”

PLANTING SEEDS

This year, and for the two previous years, third graders at Eanes Elementary School acquired a greater understanding about deafblindness through a variety of activities, culminating in the opportunity to meet a young man who lives a typical life and happens to be deafblind. It's clear from their letters that they've been profoundly moved by the learning experience, and by Alberto's abilities, positive attitude and friendliness. There's no way to predict what new directions their lives might take, but it's exciting to imagine. Some may enroll in sign language classes. Others may befriend a visually impaired student who was feeling isolated. Still others, who hadn't even considered the possibility, may pursue a career in special education, or even deafblindness. Alberto should take satisfaction in knowing that, as an example of who a deafblind person is and what a deafblind person can do, he is having a positive influence on other people's attitudes of tolerance, acceptance and inclusion. Seeds planted in fertile soil don't yield immediate results, but I eagerly look forward to watching them grow.

Book Review: *Helping Children Who are Blind*

By Jean Robinson, VI Outreach Family Support Coordinator, TSBVI

Helping Children Who Are Blind: Family and community support for children with vision problems by Sandy Niemann & Namita Jacob is part of the Early Assistance Series for Children with Disabilities published by the Hesperian Foundation. This book is available in Spanish and English for \$22. Other translations include Farsi, Hindi, Indonesian, Thai, and Vietnamese. Order information can be found at <www.hesperian.org> and toll free at (888) 729-1796. Hesperian is a non-profit publisher dedicated to promoting health, self-determination, and empowerment in poor communities worldwide. These communities have little if any healthcare services or educational opportunities so these books are precious resources. The series focuses on the first five years of a child's life, since what happens during this time period has a powerful effect on the child's future development.

Fortunately in this country most of us have some amount of formal education; however, the unique needs of a child without sight are not common knowledge. Have you ever wondered how a child learns to eat, dress, and play independently when he does not see others completing these tasks? This book explains why and how in a very simple, easy to understand language and well-illustrated pictures. The suggested activities can be done anywhere and the materials described can probably be found around your house. The topics include: guidelines for learning activities; finding out what your child can see; activities for birth to 6 months; communication; thinking skills; teaching everyday activities; safety, movement; helping your child know where she is; preventing sexual abuse; becoming a part of the community; getting ready for childcare and school; support for parents; learning to prevent blindness; and thinking about your child's future. The appendix includes child development charts and toys you can make at little or no cost.

The culturally diverse activities described may seem unusual to middle-class society, but they clearly show that knowledge is more significant than wealth to a child's development. Professionals who have frequent experience with a variety of children with blindness tend to forget that family members, especially new parents, don't have a clue about how to teach a child the concepts that she will not learn incidentally like a sighted child. Many folks need the information broken down into small steps in order to integrate it into their daily lives. This book takes the mystery and scariness out of raising a child with a visual impairment. It is written for ordinary people who want to help a child with a vision loss develop all of his or her capabilities.

**Looking for Parents: Experience Not Necessary;
On the Job Training Provided by Their Child
With a Visual Impairment;
Bonus for a Child With Additional Disabilities**
By Jean Robinson, VI Outreach Family Support Coordinator

Nothing about parenting is easy; it is the hardest, most rewarding job I know, but I could not have done it without support from other parents like myself. Would you like to meet other families raising a child with a visual impairment? Who else can you go to when you are frustrated because your child does not learn by watching others? Who else can appreciate how long it may take before your child learns to walk? Due to a variety of factors, families of children with vision loss have become isolated and don't readily have the opportunities to meet other families like themselves. In an effort to connect families raising a child with a visual impairment, including those with additional disabilities, the Texas Visually Impaired Family Network has been established on the internet. This list is designed exclusively for families of children with visual impairments that live in Texas. By connecting families within Texas, it is intended to provide them the opportunity to share their experiences, ideas, joys and concerns with each other, to gain support, information, and resources about raising a child with a visual impairment. To learn more about this list go to <www.topica.com/lists/txvifamily>. If you are interested in receiving and/or sending email to other Texas families of children with vision loss send a blank email to <txvifamily-subscribe@topica.com>.

In addition to the Network, there are a host of other organizations that provide opportunities to make connections. Following is a brief summary of some major ones.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS (NAPVI) has come to Texas! History was made on June 12, 2003 during the Texas Focus conference in San Antonio when forty parents founded a statewide steering committee to form a Texas chapter of the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI). It was awesome watching the willingness of the parents to become involved and take on different roles. Parents from different parts of the state volunteered to coordinate the flow of information to families living in their area. These folks agreed to take on their role for one year. They can be contacted through the Texas VI Family Network. If you are a Texas parent please subscribe and offer your support to them. Spread the word and start using the latest acronym "TAPVI" which stands for Texas Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments!

Alaine Hinds, La Porte & Laura Boenig, Portland - State Co-chairs
 Sherrie Williams, Austin - Secretary
 Cheryl Whitten, Houston - Newsletter
 Sharon York, Alvarado - Database
 Jason Adair, Webmaster
 Laura Adair, Friendswood & Keleigh Muska, Baytown - Houston Co-chairs
 Lauren Stevens, Tye & Carrie Leverton, Odessa - West TX Co-chairs
 John Delgado, Edinburg & Laura Boenig - Valley Co-chairs
 Debbie Harris, Little Elm & Sharon York - Central TX Co-chairs

Alison Rickerl, the Region V (Texas) Director of NAPVI, facilitated this amazing process along with Susan LaVenture, Executive Director of NAPVI. Alison lives in Houston and can be reached at 281-286-9820 and <arickerl@hotmail.com>. Susan can be reached at the national office at 800-562-6265 and <napvi@perkins.org>. For more information about NAPVI go to their website at <www.napvi.org>.

DEAF-BLIND MULTIHANDICAPPED ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS (DBMAT) is a statewide nonprofit support organization formed by parents and professionals in 1973. DBMAT advocates for all persons of all ages and cognitive ability who are deaf-blind multihandicapped, blind multihandicapped, deaf multihandicapped and their families. Parents serve as Regional Coordinators across the state. Plan to be a part of the next Annual Family Conference held at Camp John Marc in October 10-12, 2003. Go to <www.dbmat.org> to find out about the In Touch newsletter and Sib Street pen pals. Bud Freeman, President, can be contacted at the Parent Connection phone number: 817-279-0366.

TEXAS PARENT TO PARENT is a nonprofit organization that was created by parents to support children with disabilities, chronic illness and other special needs and their families. Go to <www.main.org/txp2p> to subscribe to their newsletter, be matched to another parent, or to partner with the medical community. This organization received a four-year grant to provide training to Pediatric and Family Practice Residents and other medical professionals in order to give them a comprehensive understanding about life with a child with chronic illness or disability. Laura Warren, Executive Director can be reached at 512-458-8600 and <laura-tx2p2@sbcglobal.net>

FAMILY TO FAMILY NETWORK offers training and support to parents and professionals. This group received a grant to develop Connections: Creating a Positive School Culture by Uniting Families and to provide Training of Trainers across the state. Information is offered through monthly meetings in the Houston and Dallas area, a monthly newsletter, a resource library, and various trainings. For more information go to <www.familytofamilynetwork.org> or contact Eve Cugini at 713-466-6304 and <evvecugini@familytofamilynetwork.org>

PARTNERS RESOURCE NETWORK was the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) for Texas from 1986-2002. Under the latest federal grant process Texas has been divided into 3 different grant regions each with its own Parent Training & Information Project (PTI). Partners Resource Network (PRN) received two of the grants and is the nonprofit agency that coordinates and funds two of the Parent Training & Information (PTI) projects. The purpose of both projects remains the same: to empower parents of children and youth with disabilities in their roles as parents, decision makers, and advocates for their children. Partners' goal is to promote partnerships throughout the state and the regions it serves, among parents and professionals, parent organizations, school districts, and service organizations. Parents and professionals are encouraged to work together as PARTNERS and to focus on cooperation and collaboration. PATH Project East serves Educational Service Center Regions 5-13. PATH Project East Director, Janice Meyer may be contacted at the Coordinating Office in Beaumont at 409-898-4684. West Texas Parent Education Network (PEN) serves ESC Regions 14-19. Mary Lou Wright, W. TX PEN Project Director works in Lubbock and may be contacted at <partnerspen@earthlink.net> and 806-762-1434. Go to <www.partnerstx.org> to find out about local events and the regional director in your area or call 800-866-4726.

TEXAS FIESTA EDUCATIVA, a nonprofit organization, received the third grant for a Parent Training & Information (PTI) and serves ESC Regions 1,2,3,4,20. Its mission is to advocate for and to provide multilingual/multicultural education services to persons with disabilities, their families and the professionals who serve them. Services are provided through an annual statewide multilingual/multicultural conference scheduled each August in San Antonio. This conference links children with disabilities and their families to community professionals to improve access to health and human services, education, and vocational rehabilitation programs. Two offices are funded to serve parents of children with disabilities, youth with disabilities, and service providers. Resources include a newsletter, a lending library, and scheduled trainings. Project P.O.D.E.R. is located in San Antonio and their contact numbers are 800-682-9747 and 210-222-2637. El Valle Community Parent Resource Center is located in Weslaco. Their contact numbers are 800-682-0255 and 956-969-3611. For more information go to <www.tfepoder.org>.

PROJECT SPARKLE is a new model of individualized learning that enhances the ability of parents of children who are deafblind to fulfill their critical and expanded role in the development and education of their children. Many parents of children who are deafblind currently access information and training through workshops, conferences, and parent retreats. Through Project SPARKLE, parents have access to information, training, and resources in their homes via the Internet. The project is funded as a model demonstration grant and is currently working with about 60 families in the states of Texas, Georgia, Minnesota, and Utah. Depending on the Texas Deafblind Project funding, TSBVI Outreach is hoping to include more Texas families to the project next year. To learn more about Project SPARKLE, check out the website at <www.sparkle.usu.edu/about>. If you are interested in participating in the project, contact Edgenie Bellah, Deafblind Family Specialist, at (512) 206-9423 or <edgeniebellah@tsbvi.edu>.

DBMAT Regional Coordinators Can Lend a Hand

By Debra Newberry, Paul and Susie Welch, and Cyndi Hunley,
Regional Coordinators, Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas
with David Wiley, Texas Deafblind Outreach

Since 1973, the Deafblind Multihandicapped Association of Texas (DBMAT) has been an active statewide organization of families and professionals concerned with deafblindness, or multiple impairments including deafness or blindness. Within the past few years, DBMAT has designated Regional Coordinators (RCs), volunteer family members who agree to help families in their areas with referral to resources, connection to other families in the area, and a sympathetic ear from someone else who has “been there”. The role of the RCs also includes being available as a resource to regional agencies and organizations, along with attending training sessions about topics related to deafblindness and state systems.

These profiles will introduce you to a few of the RCs. Any of the RCs listed welcome contact from families in their regions who are looking for connections or help. They also want to hear from any agencies or groups in the region wanting to know more about deafblindness or DBMAT.

SAN ANGELO AREA

My name is Debra Newberry. I serve as the Regional Coordinator for Region 14. My region covers 14 counties of rural West Texas. I have been part of the Deafblind Multihandicapped Association for 3 years. As a Regional Coordinator I have had the privilege of attending numerous training sessions directed by TSBVI Deafblind Outreach. I have learned many things about deafblindness as well as meeting other wonderful Regional Coordinators from around the state. I have received an incredible amount of information from these training sessions, but my most extensive training has come from my 17 year old son, Nathan. Nathan has multiple disabilities including deafblindness, autism, mental retardation, and a seizure disorder, as well as several other disorders. Although I will say that having Nathan has not been without its many challenges, it has also taught me many valuable lessons that help me cope with life’s hurdles.

I have had many experiences over the years with the school system, health and behavior issues, as well as sorting through all that is involved for an individual with the disability of deafblindness. There was always someone that I connected with that helped guide me in the right direction. DBMAT saw the need of having a contact for parents that face some of the same issues I have, in hopes that we can help with a comforting word, or information that can lead you in the right direction.

I would love to visit with anyone to help offer some guidance. You can reach me at 325-695-1655, or email me at <debranewberry@netscape.net>.

MIDLAND AND LUBBOCK AREAS

We are the Welchs - Paul, Susie and Jaceson. Our son Jaceson is Deaf Blind Multihandicapped. Jaceson is twenty-four years old and lives at home with us in a small town in West Texas called Big Spring. Jaceson attended school in Big Spring. He volunteers at the VA Hospital taking medical records from office to office. He also helps with Bingo on the Nursing Home floor. In his school program he was mainstreamed into several classes, volunteered at the VA Hospital, and learned life skills. He graduated from high school in 2001 with a standing ovation at graduation. Jaceson is well-liked and accepted by his peers. Everywhere you go in town Jaceson is stopped by people he knows from school. Now Jaceson is enrolled in the Deaf-Blind Medicaid Waiver program. He has an intervener who takes him to his activities in the community, and also works with him at home. Having Jaceson and being very involved in his school program made Paul and I take an interest in being a Regional Coordinator for Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas (DBMAT). We work mainly in Region 18 (Midland), but have also volunteered to help anyone in Region 17 (Lubbock) as well. We want to share what we have learned and help parents learn ways to give their son or daughter a more meaningful life.

As a family we do many activities together. We enjoy cooking in our home. We also like to go camping, swimming, fishing, and walking. Jaceson especially likes to go swimming and camping. In October, we attend the DBMAT Family Conference at Camp John Marc and are able to see old friends and make new friends. It really helps to talk with people who understand about our special needs child. Connecting with others really helps. Give us a call at (432) 263-1658, or email <pwelch@usaonline.net>.

HOUSTON AREA

My name is Cyndi Hunley and I am one of the Regional Coordinators from Region 4, Houston, Conroe, Galveston areas. I have been employed for four years with a stock brokerage firm in downtown Houston as the cashier/wire operator. I live in Spring, Texas with my older daughter Amy, 23, and granddaughter Terra, two years old. My younger daughter Bethie, 21, is deaf-blind with severe retardation. Bethie had CMV menigo-encephalitis at 14 months, and again at 18 years old. For the last two years Bethie has lived with her foster mom, which is on a street behind me.

I remember some 20 years ago when the doctors gave me the news that my daughter was severely disabled and how devastated I was. I spent hours on the phone to find help for her, but because of the dual sensory impairments, the doors kept closing. I volunteered two and one-half years ago to be a Regional Coordinator so I could help other parents with resources available for their children or for the family. I had learned at my first DBMAT meeting in 1983 that we, the parents, have to teach other parents how to find help for their deaf-blind children, to help them develop to their potential. Call me at (281)821-9005, or e-mail <chunley@aol.com>.

OTHER AREAS

- Region 4 (Houston). Diane Shepard lives in Houston. Call her at (281) 999-3942.
- Region 10 (Dallas). Linda Carter lives in Dallas. Call her at (972) 285-5912.
E-mail <lgcarter1@juno.com>.
- Region 11 (Ft. Worth); Region 12 (Waco); and Region 9 (Wichita Falls). Lynn Freeman lives in Granbury. Call her at (817) 279-0366.
- Region 18 (Midland). Celestine Rand lives in Odessa. Call her at (915) 337-7739.
- Region 20 (San Antonio). Sharon Galvan lives in San Antonio. Call her at (210) 499-0251.
E-mail <sharongalvan@hotmail.com>.

A Place for Everything and Everything in Its Place

By Jim Durkel, Statewide Staff Development Coordinator, TSBVI Outreach

There is a term used by professional cooks called “mise en place.” Translated from French, it means something like “put in place” or “prepared ahead of time.” It is the idea that when cooking, the first step is to measure all the ingredients and line them up in the order in which they will be used. The thinking behind this is that it might not be convenient to be in the middle of a recipe and discover that you need to get and measure some ingredient. By using the idea of “mise en place,” you also don’t run into the problem of trying to remember if you have already added a certain ingredient to what you are cooking; if the bowl with the measured ingredient is empty, then you added it!

There is a similar idea related to house cleaning. Experts in this area will tell you to fill a bucket or caddy with all the cleaners, paper towels, rags, etc. that you need to complete cleaning tasks. The thought here is that you can take these materials from room to room, instead of having to go from the room you are cleaning back to where the materials are stored, then back to where you were cleaning.

This kind of organization is important for all children, especially those with visual impairments. Thinking about an activity before it happens, thinking about what materials will be needed, reviewing the steps that will be needed to complete the activity, then gathering all the materials ahead of time saves time and effort.

Take the example of “mise en place” while cooking. As a person who is sighted, it often takes me several minutes to locate an ingredient, especially if it is something I don’t use very often. (And yes, my kitchen is organized!) Sometimes it just takes time for me to look in the cabinet where I keep the herbs and spices to find the turmeric, which I rarely use. Sometimes the time I take to look for an ingredient is all the time that is needed for what I am cooking to burn or get lumpy or, well, you get the idea. And I really hate it when I have started to cook something and am half way into the recipe when I realize that I don’t have any turmeric at all! If I had measured all my ingredients ahead of time, I could have saved myself some problems.

As parents and teachers, we can help children with visual impairments develop organization skills in several ways. One way is that we can model these behaviors. Children who are sighted might be able to see me organizing my space as I get ready to do something. For a child with a visual impairment, I might want to “think out loud” as I get ready for this task.

To continue with the example of cooking, as I get ready to make dinner I might read the recipe out loud and say things like: “OK, first heat the oven to 350 degrees.” “Next, I need a 13 by 9 inch pan. Lets see, all those pans are in the cabinet under the toaster oven.” “Next I need a bowl and a mixing spoon.” “I think I will measure out everything before I start mixing.” By saying these things out loud, we provide a model for our children to copy later.

Think about other tasks during the day. Do you make grocery lists before going shopping? Do you write down the names of items that you need as you use them up? Do you look through the refrigerator and cabinets to see what you need before you go shopping? Does your child know about how you get ready to go shopping?

What steps do you follow when you get ready to pay bills? Do you get your checkbook, a calculator, envelopes and stamps ready before opening this month’s bills? When you finish paying one bill, do you start a pile of the bills that are ready to go to the mailbox? Does you child know that you do these things regularly as part of paying bills?

As teachers, when we are getting ready to do a lesson with a child, do we model organization? Do we have materials ready ahead of time? Do we have the area arranged? Have we made our organizational strategies obvious to our students? Do they realize that we have made a plan ahead of time?

There are many different ways we can help ourselves be organized. Think about dresser drawers. Some of us may organize by similar clothing items: all the socks go in this drawer, undershirts go in that drawer, etc. Others might organize by association: gym socks are in the same drawer as gym shorts and shirts we wear when exercising. It doesn't matter what your system is if it works for you. What matters is having a system, and then helping a child use the system that works for them. Doing this proactively may help prevent some behavior problems later. It is not fair to yell at a child for taking so long to get dressed if we have not helped her learn how to organize her closet and dresser. (If she has a system and doesn't use it, however, then some consequences might be appropriate!) This also means that as a parent, I should soon stop putting clean clothes away for my child and make that her job. Putting clothes away is part of developing and learning to use organization skills.

Children with visual impairments often have quite a bit of stuff they need to use during the school day. It is up to us as teachers to help create a system in the classroom that helps the student find their materials easily. We then should expect the student to be responsible for using that system.

There are many ways to organize a study space or a desk. Some of us might want to arrange things in drawers; others may want everything in its own container on top of the desk. Go to "The Container Store" and see all the different ways you can organize a desk or drawer or closet! Then go back and think about how you can organize a space with materials already in the classroom or with things you can buy at "The Dollar Store"!

Sometimes storage is what is needed. I saw a student that had a small cart on wheels. The cart had several shelves that held a Braille embosser, Braille paper, the child's abacus, and other materials the child needed. This student could then roll the cart with all his materials to wherever he was working.

Sometimes having a clearly defined workspace may be the problem. This is especially true when students work in small groups at tables. How can we let the visually impaired child know where her workspace starts and ends? Does she need a mat to help her have landmarks so she can easily find materials? Maybe she needs a tray to keep her things from rolling into another group member's space.

Does the child need help organizing materials? Ask the child for his ideas and talk with him about his preferences. Some people may want to organize materials in a left-to-right fashion: whatever I need first is to the left side of my workspace, and what I need last is the farthest to the right. Other people may like to organize in a top-to-bottom fashion, starting with the first material at the top of the workspace and the last material at the bottom. Again, what matters most is that we help our children find a system that works for them and then help them make using that system a habit. Teaching the child to put something down in the same spot is not teaching obsessive-compulsive behavior. It is teaching the child a strategy that can save the time and effort it takes to search over and over for materials.

For younger children and children with multiple impairments, organization helps support the development of concepts. Consider the example of making nachos. We can help the child understand the concept of "making nachos" by getting all the materials and ingredients we need ahead of time. "Making nachos" becomes associated with having a plate, chips, grated cheese, and hot peppers. We help the child further understand the concept of "making nachos" by arranging the materials and ingredients in the order in which they will

be used: first the plate, then the chips, then the peppers, and then the cheese. When we reach the end of the ingredients, it is time to put the plate in the microwave.

For older students, we can use these same organizational strategies to help them make associations and develop categories. Asking questions helps students organize their thinking and make a plan. For example, we can ask: “Where are chips stored, in the cupboard or in the refrigerator?” “Where is cheese stored?” “Where do you buy cheese, at Sears or at Krogers?” “In the grocery store, where do you find cheese? Is it in the produce aisle? Is it at the meat counter?”

Organization can support concept development, and that supports better thinking and problem solving. “A place for everything and everything in its place” can become a powerful strategy for teaching and learning.

Get Out in the Kitchen and Rattle Them Pots and Pans

By Kate Moss, Education Specialist, Texas Deafblind Outreach
and Holly Cooper, Technology Specialist, TSBVI Visually Impaired Outreach

For many blind and deafblind children, participation in paper and pencil types of tasks that are part of typical classroom instruction can be accomplished with a number of modifications. Other children with blindness or deafblindness, because of their additional language or cognitive challenges, do not benefit at all from paper and pencil types of activities. Having opportunities to learn in a way that includes the use of other sensory channels such as taste, touch, and smell is not only more motivating, but often more beneficial. All children with blindness and deafblindness benefit greatly from experiential learning situations, those that involve activities where the child can learn by doing. Food preparation is a learning activity that is a great idea for most classrooms and grade levels serving children with blindness and deafblindness.

A GREAT RECIPE FOR INSTRUCTION

It is not hard to think of ways to infuse a variety of skills into cooking activities. Here are just a few.

Language, Concept Development, and Communication Skills

Food is a great topic of conversation for most of us. Children with blindness and deafblindness can naturally use objects to request or offer. Learning the names of favorite food items is highly motivating and very functional. Cooking is a natural way to help the child learn language and concepts about different textures (smooth, hard, chewy), temperatures (hot, cold, warm, cool), flavors and odors (sweet, sour, salty, spicy, burnt). The student can learn to identify and categorize items based on these qualities as they learn through participation in the cooking activity.

Hearing, Vision, Fine and Gross Motor Skills Development

Developing hearing, vision, fine and gross motor skills are critical to all children. Cooking is a wonderful way to work on all these skills within a single activity. Children can walk or push a cart through stores to shop. The child must use vision to look for specific items, orient to cooking materials, and read a recipe. Learning to listen is important for all students with visual impairments. Cooking activities provide many opportunities to practice listening skills such as learning to listen for the cashier to ask for money or to listen to a recipe on tape. The students can exercise muscles to reach and lift, clean a table, or wash dishes. Fine motor skills are needed to open and close, to stir, knead, cut and shape, to locate and put away materials, and to clean up.

Orientation and Mobility Skills

Whether or not a child is able to travel to a store to buy supplies before completing a cooking activity, it is easy to infuse O&M skills into routines. Learning skills related to organizing the work space, learning positions of ingredients relative to bowls and blenders is a great way to work on positional concepts. Navigating the room to carry items to the refrigerator, stove, or sink is a natural way to learn to how to follow a route or navigate around obstacles.

Literacy and Math Skills

In the area of math you can learn to count and measure, identify money, count and make change. You can talk about fractions, weights, and sizes. You can learn to read a recipe using words, Braille, or pictures. You can write about the cooking activity you have completed and print a sign to advertise the sale of food items you have made. You can look for particular brands of food in the grocery store or read the signs to help you find the aisle where a specific product is located.

Instructional Routines

Instructional routines are one educational strategy to use with students who have additional disabilities or deafblindness. A clearly defined activity helps build memory, provides a structure for teaching concepts and skills, and helps the child develop an understanding of whole events involving a sequence of steps enabling him/her to participate in the event. Cooking is a perfect activity to develop into an instructional routine. Children may participate in every step of the cooking routine or assist with one or two steps. Cooking may be done as a group activity routine or as an independent activity. A student can complete cooking routines that make food “from scratch” or use frozen or precooked items, depending on his/her skill and interest level. Cooking is also an important independent living skill that many individuals will need or use in their adult lives.

Modifications

One key to making a cooking activity work for a student with blindness or deafblindness is finding the appropriate modifications. These include recipes on Braille, in large print, picture or tactual symbols, or audio cassette. Using Braille labels, rubber bands or tactual symbols to label products makes them easier for the individual to identify. Appropriate technology in the form of switches, note taking devices, and so forth may also be needed. Placing hard materials in easy to open containers, using nonskid mats, or specially adapted devices for cooking may be necessary for some students. There are a variety of ways to modify almost any cooking activity so that just about every student can participate to some degree.

Below is a list showing typical jobs that might take place in a cooking activity, skills that might be worked on at different levels, and possible modifications that may be needed for the blind or deafblind student.

Student's Job - Collecting Ingredients

Skills That Might Be Worked On: reading a recipe; learning about temperatures; learning concepts and vocabulary related to ingredients; shopping and paying for items; finding items in kitchen or cooking area; carrying items to work area; traveling around the store, kitchen or classroom; organizing materials in a work space and orienting to them.

Possible Modifications: use object symbols, Braille, large print, pictures to make recipe accessible or to make a shopping list; use travel cane to navigate store; use pictures, tactual marker/Braille labels to identify ingredients or location of ingredients; use a basket or cart to help transport ingredients and other cooking materials; use communication notebook or cards to assist in communication with grocery clerk.

Student's Job - Measuring Ingredients

Skills That Might Be Worked On: learning concepts/vocabulary related to measuring (scooping, pouring, measuring, fractions); counting skills (number of spoons, cups); organizing materials in a work space and orienting to them.

Possible Modifications: Use hand-under-hand techniques to assist with pouring, scooping; measuring; Use tray, mats, other surfaces to identify work space; Use a slotted box to organize and sort ingredients into a sequence; Match items to pictures/object symbols in recipe to count using one-to-one correspondence; Use measuring spoons, cups that are specially adapted for visually impaired such as measuring cups and spoons with adjusting level guides or a liquid indicator.

Student's Job - Chopping, Grating or Cutting Ingredients

Skills That Might Be Worked On: learning concepts and words related to preparing ingredients (cut, chop, grate, slice); using a pushing motion to activate a hand chopper; holding hand chopper steady while activating with other hand; holding a knife and using safe cutting technique; activating a food processor with a switch.

Possible Modifications: use hand-under-hand techniques to assist with cutting, grating, chopping; use duct tape to secure hand held chopper to table or assist the student by holding base of chopper; use an adaptive switch to activate food processor; use color-contrasted board for chopping or slicing; use easy grip knife for cutting.

Student's Job - Mixing Ingredients

Skills That Might Be Worked On: learning words and concepts related to blending ingredients such as stir, sift, toss, add; following a left to right sequence using words, pictures, or object symbols; using a hand-held mixer; activating a food processor to knead or mix) using a switch; stirring with a spoon or using hands to mix.

Possible Modifications: use a slotted box to sequence ingredients and work from left to right; use a sequence of objects on a strip that can be removed as that step is completed; use mixer that is on a stand; use switch to activate food processor; use hand-under-hand technique to model mixing motions.

Student's Job - Shaping dough

Skills That Might Be Worked On: learning words and concepts related to shapes and shaping dough; using hands/fingers to roll, pat, fold, cut.

Possible Modifications: use hand-under-hand technique to model shaping dough.

Student's Jobs - Preparing Pans and Cooking

Skills That Might Be Worked On: learning words and concepts related to preparing pans, using ovens or the refrigerator such as grease, flour, hot, etc.; using hands/fingers to grease or activate spray top on Pam/cooking oil; turning on and setting oven; learning safety techniques for using oven and handling hot pans.

Possible Modifications: use hand-under-hand technique to model spraying motion; use a pump-type squirt bottle instead of aerosol type can; use oven mitts instead of pot holder; use a rack jack device to reach the pan out of the oven.

Student's Job - Cleaning up

Skills That Might Be Worked On: learning language and concepts related to cleaning such as empty, wash, dry, etc.; carrying dirty dishes to sink; using hands to explore surface to determine if it is clean or dirty, to hold a sponge or cloth to wipe off cooking area; holding and sweeping with a broom or vacuum; washing, rinsing, drying dishes; returning items to correct location (may involve locating Braille, print or picture card on cabinet, shelf, etc.).

Possible Modifications: use hand-under-hand technique to model washing, rinsing, drying dishes, sweeping with a broom, or vacuuming; use tactual, print, Braille labels to mark cabinets, shelves, etc.

Student's Job - Sharing or Selling Food Items

Skills That Might Be Worked On: learning language and concepts related to selling or sharing food items such as buy, want, give, food names, money concepts; writing advertisements or product labels; bagging, boxing or sacking items for sale or to share; selling products and collecting money; using travel skills to deliver products ; Interacting with customers to ask what they want and to complete sale; sharing food items with friends, family; or pets; using communication strategies to ask and offer; learning math skills needed to handle money and make change; learning how to use an adding machine, cash register, etc.; learning how to figure cost vs. profit; budgeting profits to pay for special item or event.

Possible Modifications: use picture, print, Braille or tactual markers to label items for sale; use jig to hold bag sack open or to help student fold box to put food item inside; use cart to carry items around for delivery; use talking or large print calculators, or cash registers; use communication cards and books to facilitate interaction with others.

ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS RELATED TO COOKING ACTIVITIES

The child who is tube fed

As beneficial as cooking activities are for many of our students, some students who have issues with feeding often seem to be left out of these activities, because they cannot consume food orally. Parents and teachers sometimes think they can't do cooking activities with their child or student because the he or she doesn't eat like a typical child. But any child can participate in cooking activities.

A child who is transitioning towards getting off tube-feedings may benefit greatly from exposure to food in a way that does not put pressure on him/her to take food orally. It is certainly less threatening to lick off your own finger that accidentally got dipped in the instant pudding than it is to have someone try to feed you pudding from a spoon that makes you gag. Having exposure to the textures, smells and tastes of food in this incidental way may make work the OT does on actual oral feeding much easier since the child has more familiarity with the food items.

The child who is severely disabled

Another benefit of cooking, even if the child will not be eating it, is that he or she can prepare something to offer to his or her peers. This gives opportunities to practice communication skills such as asking and offering

as he/she assists with snack time. Preparing food to share also gives the child an opportunity to do something for others, an experience not always available to the severely disabled child.

What about hygiene?

An issue for some parents and teachers related to cooking is the issue of hygiene. Children who have problems controlling saliva or who tend to mouth things may not need to be preparing food for other humans to consume. One way to deal with this issue is have the student prepare something just for himself. Another way around that concern is to make food that is meant for pets to eat.

COOKING WITH ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Switch-activated blenders

Cooking is also a great activity for kids who need to have opportunities to learn to use switches or to expand the variety of routines in which they are able to participate. Students who have significant motor impairments and are not able to independently pour, stir, shake or hold tools needed in cooking can be active participants using simple assistive technology. Many teachers and parents are familiar with using battery operated toys with switches to give students with motor impairments recreation and leisure time activities which they can do independently or in a turn taking setting with a peer. It is just as easy to use the same or similar switches with a special power transformer called the PowerLink from AbleNet, Inc.

To adapt an activity using an electrical appliance for a switch user, prepare the setting in advance by placing the electrical appliance in a place that is easy to see and within reach of the participating student. Plug the appliance into the PowerLink; then plug the PowerLink into the electrical outlet on the wall. Plug a switch into the switch jack that corresponds to the power outlet the appliance is plugged into, then turn the appliance power switch to the on position. When the switch is activated, the appliance will run.

Using a blender with a switch is an easy way to make snacks and drinks for students. The blender running makes lots of noise and vibration, and the liquid inside swirls around. It's a high sensory load, which can be especially desirable for a student with multiple sensory impairments. The noise and vibration can be dampened down a bit by setting the blender on a placemat or other padding if it is too startling for the student. It's also a relatively safe appliance since there are no exposed blades or beaters. Even items that are normally stirred using a mixer can sometimes be mixed with a blender to reduce the mess and safety risks. The blender is a good way to make drinks, smoothies, puddings and ice cream shakes that are easy to consume for students who have difficulty chewing or have problems tolerating texture in their food. Drinks like frozen juices or chocolate milk, or soft foods like jello and pudding which only need stirring with a spoon can be mixed with a blender to give students who cannot independently hold a spoon or stir a chance to participate.

Switch-activated stand-mounted mixers

Stand mounted electric mixers such as those made by Kitchen Aid are also great for using with switches, because they are stable and do not require being held. Liquids and solid ingredients can be added to the bowl, and the mixer activated with a switch and PowerLink. A mixer is a good appliance for making cakes and cookies, even if they are from a mix. Whipped cream can also be made this way.

SETTING UP A CLASSROOM KITCHEN

If you are a classroom teacher with just an ordinary classroom set up and no kitchen appliances, I would recommend that you start by buying a toaster oven that is as big and as good a quality as you can afford.

Microwaves are good for some things, but for cooking baked goods, they are almost universally dismal failures. Baking cupcakes or cookies is an activity that can be done at school, even if you do not have an oven in your classroom. There are a lot of good recipes you can make by dividing the recipe in half and making it in a toaster oven.

You should also invest in a blender. It doesn't have to be big or even really good quality. If you have students who are tube fed, you should already have a small refrigerator provided by the school district to store the student's food in, and you can use this for your cooking ingredients. If you have a choice, get one large enough to have some freezer space so you can make Popsicles and store ice cream.

With these appliances and a PowerLink with switches you can make a variety of foods and snacks. If you need money to purchase this equipment, try selling popcorn, dog biscuits or cookies to teachers and students in the school to generate funds for your classroom needs. You might be able to get a family member, school staff member or your PTO/PTA to donate kitchen items. Garage sales, thrift stores, or "wholesale clubs" such as Sam's or Price Club often have deals for limited pocket books.

RECIPES FOR SUCCESS

Dining Alone

There are any number of good, simple recipes that can be made for one individual. Here are two of our favorites.

"Aggression Cookies"

- 1 cup oatmeal,
- 3/4 cup flour,
- 1/2 cup brown sugar,
- 1/2 stick margarine,
- 1 teaspoon baking powder

Mix all ingredients by hand. Form into a ball and then flatten with your hands by patting on it. Fold dough over and repeat several times. Then divide into 3 or 4 balls and flatten each one on to an ungreased cookie sheet by patting. Bake at 350 until they're done (about 10 minutes). This is a nice recipe because it makes just enough for one, so the cook eats what he/she makes. It also involves a lot of banging with your hands, which is a nice way to take turns and work out your frustrations at the same time.

"Princess Sandwich"

- Slice of bread or bagel
- Whipped cream cheese
- Fruit Jelly

Toast bread or bagel in a toaster oven. Put softened whipped cream cheese and jelly in separate cake decorating tubes and let the child help squeeze on cream cheese and jelly designs. Cut into strips or triangles and serve.

Animal Snackers

There are a variety of recipes for how to make treats for all types of animals that can be found in books and on websites. One very nice website for some of these recipes is the *Recipe Goldmine*, which can be found at <http://www.recipegoldmine.com/pets/pets.html>. Here are several great recipes and some ideas for how to include them in cooking activities at home or school.

“Basic Dog Treats” (from *Recipe Goldmine*)

- 1 3/4 C. whole wheat flour
- 1 1/4 C. oatmeal
- 1 1/2 T. vegetable oil
- 1 C. warm water
- Options: 1/3 C. finely grated cheese, 1/4 C. peanut butter

Mix the dry ingredients together. Then mix the wet ingredients together. Blend both mixtures until a firm dough is achieved. Shape dough into an oblong roll, wrap in plastic wrap, and chill for 1 hour. Preheat oven to 300°F. Lightly grease sheet pan. Slice roll into 1/4-inch slices, place on sheet pan and bake for about 1 hour or until treats are done, checking after 45 minutes, and then every 5 minutes thereafter. Let them cool before giving to your best friend.

“Horsey Cookies” (from *Recipe Goldmine*)

- 1 C. uncooked oats
- 1 C. flour
- 1 C. shredded carrots
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. granulated sugar
- 2 tsp. vegetable oil
- 1/4 C. molasses

Mix ingredients in bowl as listed. Make little balls and place on cookie sheet which has been sprayed with oil or Pam. Bake at 350°F for 15 minutes, or until golden brown. Take several along to your next hippotherapy session or share them with the local feed store as a give away for their customers buying horse feed.

“Bird Bread” (from *Recipe Goldmine* - Source: *Bird Watcher's Digest*)

- 2 C. melted peanut butter, bacon grease, meat grease or other fat
- 2 C. cornmeal or stale dry cereal blended into crumbs
- Warm water
- 2 to 3 C. wild birdseed
- Raisins, nutmeats or chopped peanuts

Slowly melt peanut butter, grease or fat over low heat. Add cornmeal or stale cereal crumbs. Slowly add enough warm water to make a stiff dough, then add birdseed and raisins, nut meats or chopped peanuts. Pack mixture into small foil pans or a large flat pan and refrigerate overnight. Cut into pieces for tying onto tree branches. Spend time watching the different birds that come to feed and learning about the life cycle of birds.

Blender Delights

“Gazpacho”

- 12 oz can tomato juice or V8
- 1 Zucchini
- 1 Green bell pepper - small
- 1 Onion - small (optional)
- 1 Cucumber
- 1 Tomato - large
- 1 Garlic clove (optional)
- 1/4 Teaspoon chili powder
- 4 Tablespoons olive oil

You can prepare in advance by cutting ingredients into large pieces, so students can eat some or taste small bits while they prepare the gazpacho. Pour tomato juice in blender. Add about half of the vegetables. Blend. Add the other half, blend more. Add all remaining ingredients. This is traditionally served as a soup, but I would serve it in a cup for students to drink. This is a nice recipe for kids to make to serve mom and dad at home.

“Yogurt Popsicles”

- 8 oz plain yogurt
- 8 oz any kind of fruit juice or
- 8 oz frozen fruit

Put all ingredients in a blender. Blend well. Pour or ladle into Popsicle molds or paper cups with spoons Popsicle sticks inserted in the middle. Freeze till firm. Sell at an outdoor stand or simply eat them up.

“Fruit Smoothie”

- 1 medium banana, sliced and frozen
- 6 strawberries, frozen
- 2 Tbs. frozen orange juice concentrate
- 1 cup milk (may be soy milk or yogurt)

In blender, combine all ingredients and blend until smooth and creamy. Serve in margarita glasses with umbrellas and straws.

“Berry Shake”

- 1/2 cup yogurt or rice milk
- 1 tsp. sugar or honey
- 1/4 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 generous cup of chopped strawberries, blueberries, or mixed berries (you may use frozen fruit)

Blend all ingredients in blender. Serve in soda fountain glasses and garnish with a strawberry.

“Chocolate Peanut Butter Shake”

- 1 cup chocolate milk, (nondairy “milks” such as soy or rice milk may be used)
- 1 small banana, sliced and frozen
- 2 Tbs. smooth peanut butter

In blender, combine all ingredients. Blend until smooth. The kind of treat to make Elvis take notice.

TASTY RESOURCES

There are so many things that can be taught through cooking activities. Cooking activities are also a natural activity for families to do together or for kids to do with their peers. Check out some of the simpler recipes available in children’s cookbooks that can be found at any book store, your local library or on the internet. Then, get out in the kitchen and start rattling those pots and pans.

Recipe Resources

There are some really helpful books for teachers and parents that can give you some good ideas of cooking activities and recipes to do with students. Some of these have easy to make recipes, some have foods that are especially appealing to students with special needs.

Feed Me! I’m Yours, 1974, Vicki Lansky, Meadowbrook press.

This is mainly a cookbook for baby food, but look toward the back for seasonal snacks, edible playdoughs, Popsicles and juices

Sugar Free Toddlers: Over 100 Recipes, 1991, Susan Watson, Williamson Publishing.

Mainly a cookbook for toddler food, not always simple recipes with only a few ingredients, but it does include some great snacks made from fruit, fruit juice, smoothies, gelatin snacks, puddings and spreads.

Super Snacks, 1992, Jean Warren from Totline, a division of Frank Schaeffer.

Seasonal recipes with fresh and cooked fruits and vegetables, no sugar added. Many recipes for muffins, pancakes, punch, pudding, and Popsicles.

Book Cooks: Literature-Based Classroom Cooking, 1991, Janet Bruno, Creative Teaching Press.

Recipes and other classroom activities to accompany teaching thematic units based on children’s literature. Some of these recipes are pretty visual, but the general ideas can be a good launching point for food and cooking activities with students of all levels.

Switch Resources

AbleNet <<http://www.ablenetinc.com/>>

Adaptivation Incorporated <<http://www.adaptivation.com/>>

Don Johnston <<http://www.donjohnston.com/catalog/catalog.htm>>

Enabling Devices <<http://www.enablingdevices.com/>>

TASH, Inc <<http://www.tashinc.com/catalog/>>

Dining Out Made Easier

By Susan R. Hart, MS, TVI, RTC, Assistant Project Coordinator,
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Reprinted from *Sharing Solutions*, Spring 2003 with permission from
Lighthouse International, <www.lighthouse.org>.

Dining out with friends and attending family celebrations should be pleasurable activities, but for people experiencing vision loss, they can be sources of great anxiety. As a person who is both visually impaired and a certified rehabilitation teacher, I'd like to share tips to increase your comfort level and confidence when dining outside your home. Vision loss need not stop you from life's enjoyments!

PLANNING AHEAD CAN HELP

By familiarizing yourself with a menu in advance, you won't have to rely on reading it in a dimly lit restaurant. When possible, stop by and ask for a take-out menu to read at home. If you use a computer, check if the menu is available online. Or choose someplace you've been to before, particularly if you're dining alone.

If you know the menus of chain restaurants, dining there may be easier. Some chains may even have a consistent layout—making you more comfortable when navigating.

GETTING ORIENTED

Ask the host/hostess to be seated in a well-lit area. If that's not possible, carry a small flashlight or hand-held, illuminated magnifier for reading the menu.

It's okay to ask dining companions to read the menu out loud. And if you're in a new restaurant, ask questions about your surroundings and table setting. If your vision is very limited, use your hands to lightly scan the area in front of you to familiarize yourself with the place setting and anything else on the table (glasses, salt, pepper, etc.).

MEALTIME ADVICE

- **Beverages:** Ask your server to pour your beverage, if that's not the (usual) practice at the restaurant, and know where your drink has been set in relationship to your plate. To avoid spills, place your hand perpendicular to the table, with your pinky resting on the table. Slowly glide your hand up to locate your beverage. If the drink is not there, move your hand slightly to the right (or left) until the backs of your fingers touch the glass.
- **Food:** Think of your plate as a clock. Detect the location of food by placing your fork at the 12 o'clock position and probing in a clockwise manner. Different textures also offer a natural way to differentiate foods. If you prefer, ask your companion to describe the location of food to you using the clock method.
- **Seasonings and extras:** When using salt and/or pepper, pour a small amount into your hand and add it one pinch at a time. Use a systematic, clockwise pattern to ensure all surface areas have been

covered. When spreading butter on your bread, start in the upper left-hand corner and spread from either left to right or top to bottom.

Rely on your common sense. For example, restaurants often serve salad with dressing already mixed in. To monitor the amount, ask for dressing on the side and spoon it on in a clockwise pattern.

CUTTING FOODS

One of the biggest challenges is cutting foods—especially meat. You can ask to have meat cut/fish boned, or you can cut your own meat using the “grid technique” (reverse the process if you’re left-handed):

1. Place your fork in the top, left-hand corner of the meat.
2. Place your knife (blade side down) directly in front of your fork. Your knife and fork are now at the nine o’clock position.
3. So you don’t lose the groove you create with your knife, cut in a continuous sawing motion toward the three o’clock position, until the entire row has been cut.
4. Move your fork down to form another row; repeat steps 2 and 3.
5. Rotate the plate one-quarter turn to the right; repeat steps 1- 4.

Work on one row or column at a time. This will give you bite-size pieces and ensure that the meat stays warm as long as possible.

Food not only has texture but also weight. If the amount on your fork feels heavy - or if you’re not sure how much is on the fork - cut that piece again. Keep cut pieces together in the center of the plate. You can also use your knife as a “wall” to move food onto your fork.

Choosing easy-to-eat foods can make dining less stressful. Order whatever you like, but remember that if certain foods are difficult to eat for a person with full sight, chances are they’ll be difficult for you, too. For example, small bowtie pasta is easier to eat than long strands of linguine. Eating ice cream instead of cake is another example. But the grid technique works for dessert, too!

PAYING THE BILL

Use an adaptive method for identifying cash (sort bills and place them in different sections of your wallet, and/or fold them according to denomination). This helps the payment process go smoothly and keeps you in control of your money. Remember: newly printed bills have large, bold numbers on the back, lower-right-hand corner. If you’re paying by credit card, carry a signature guide. Or, simply ask your companion or the cashier to darken, or place an “X” in front of, the signature line.

Basic adaptive techniques and a bit of pre-planning can put the ease and pleasure back into dining out. Bon appétit!

Expanding Children's Diets

By Suzanne Evans Morris, Ph.D, Speech-Language Pathologist, Faber, VA
Reprinted with permission from New Visions <<http://www.new-vis.com/>>

Editors note: Thanks to Dr. Morris for giving us permission to reprint this article from the New Visions website. I would strongly encourage readers to visit this site for other wonderful articles and resources on feeding.

THE ISSUES

Children with sensory-based feeding difficulties frequently limit the types of food and liquid that they are willing to eat. Problems with sensory regulation and sensory defensiveness lead toward many uncomfortable surprises that become associated with food and mealtimes.

THE PRINCIPLES

Children need to learn about new foods in an unthreatening way. They need a great deal of exposure to a food before they will consider tasting it or eating it. Mealtimes frequently are associated with expectations for eating and drinking. Many children are on guard and spend a great deal of energy protecting themselves from new sensory experiences that feel dangerous. Comfort and safety are the most important aspects of the mealtime. When children feel safe and comfortable, they are more willing to risk and participate in new experiences.

Feelings of comfort and safety are based upon adequate sensory processing and gastrointestinal comfort. When these two areas are not functioning efficiently, children will spend more energy protecting themselves than learning about new foods. They will limit their food choices to a narrow group of familiar foods that they have experienced as "safe". Mealtime programs that are successful incorporate overall strategies to improve sensory processing and integration and reduce gastrointestinal reflux and discomfort.

Adequate nutrition comes from eating a wide variety of foods. Mealtime programs that place a stronger focus on expanding dietary choices than on increasing dietary amount will have greater long-range success.

THE GUIDELINES

Incorporate Strategies for Normalizing Sensory Processing Before and During Encounters with Food

Activities that provide specific types of sensory input can support sensory organization and reduce sensory defensiveness. This includes movement through space or vestibular input. Slow swinging, for example, can be used as a transition between more active activities, prior to mealtimes or activities like tooth brushing to help prevent sensory defensiveness and overload, and as a quiet, organizing activity when a child is listening to a story or receiving a tube feeding.

Jumping and bouncing also provide vestibular input. In addition, they provide the sensory input into the joints that is called proprioceptive stimulation. Proprioceptive input is organizing for many children, and can help reduce sensory defensiveness when provided before food exploration and mealtimes. It also helps children who have low tone and reduced postural stability gain better steadiness for more controlled movements. Other activities that provide strong input into the joints and muscles include pushing (the swing, a wheelbarrow, or stroller), carrying (boxes, pile of laundry, pillows), somersaults, hanging upside down, climbing stairs or hills, and marching.

Firm hugs and hiding under piles of pillows provides the sensory input to the skin known as deep touch-pressure input. Roughhousing, rolling up in a blanket, and sleeping under piles of covers also provide this kind of sensory stimulation.

Specific types of sound and music are also highly organizing for the nervous system. The use of music containing specific binaural beats known as Hemi-Sync has been particularly helpful for children with sensory processing difficulties. When this type of music is used in the background during sensory exploration and mealtimes, many children experience more focused attention, reduced sensory defensiveness, and greater openness to new experiences.

Observe the child very carefully when introducing these types of stimulation. Sensory stimulation should never be imposed on a child. Some children become more disorganized with vestibular input and do not like swinging and bouncing. Others lack the overall motor control to engage in self-generated activities that provide strong input to the joints and muscles. Still others may find background music distracting or disorienting. Observe the types of activities that the child seeks and enjoys. Expand ways in which the child can receive the types of sensory input associated with these activities. Introduce sensory activities at specific times during the day as a sensory diet that can help the child attain and maintain greater sensory comfort throughout the day. When the sensory system is functioning more normally, children will be more open to making new discoveries about the sensations that accompany eating and drinking.

Build on What the Child Knows and Accepts

Make a list of the foods and liquids that the child currently accepts and likes. Organize these by sensory properties such as taste, texture, color, or smell. For example, does the child eat mostly foods that are crisp or crunchy? Foods that have a strong taste? Foods that are bland? Foods that are sweet? Foods that are soft and smooth? Foods with similar colors?

Make a list of other foods in the same categories. For example, a child who eats potato chips and pretzels may accept other crisp, salty foods more easily than foods that are soft or bland. Corn chips and crackers could be introduced to the diet. Bread could be introduced as toast, or sandwiches could be created on crackers rather than soft bread.

A child who eats soft smooth foods such as pureed applesauce or bananas may accept another white fruit such as pears or a mixed fruit such as bananas and pineapple more easily than green beans. In this example the pears are in the white, sweet fruit group. The primary change is a slight difference in the sweet taste. Green beans are very different in both color and taste and may represent too drastic a change for the very sensitive or suspicious child.

Create new combinations from two foods that the child usually likes and accepts. For example, a child who likes popcorn, corn chips, and cheese may accept popcorn with melted cheese or Nachos (melted cheese over large corn chips). The child who likes the taste of a smooth mango puree and a peach puree, may enjoy a blend of mango and peach.

Make Very Small Changes as New Foods are Introduced

Small, gradual changes are always easier to accept than large or sudden changes. We experience this guideline in all areas of our lives. When changes in the sensory properties of food (i.e. color, taste, texture, smell, and temperature) are made too rapidly, many children “just say NO”! To prevent this from happening and support the child’s success, make very tiny changes in the new foods that you offer.

One of the simplest changes is to introduce a new brand or variety of a food that the child accepts. There are very slight differences in taste or texture in different brands. These may be very subtle, or very noticeable to a specific child.

Introduce different types of food that the child accepts. Yellow cheese could be Mild Cheddar, Medium Cheddar, Sharp Cheddar, Colby, or Longhorn. White cheese could be Swiss, Gruyere, or Mozzarella. Apples come in sweet, tart, firm, and soft variations. Applesauce comes in sweetened, unsweetened and cinnamon applesauce. Pretzels can be long and thin, short and fat, or round.

Make bridges toward totally new foods based on taste, texture, and color. For example, a yellow apple and a yellow pear have many similarities but a few important differences in taste and texture. A child who eats apples may have an easier time moving to pears than to strawberries. A child who eats strawberry yogurt may transition easily to raspberry yogurt.

Build Familiarity with New Sensations and New Foods through Play

Children learn to make friends with new foods by playing with them. When they stir, pat, smear, pour, and make designs with an unfamiliar food, they experience the sensory qualities of that food. What color is it? What does it smell like? What does it feel like on the hands? Is it smooth or does it have some texture? Is it wet or dry? They may add other sensations to their play as they lick a finger or take a small taste from the spoon used for stirring. Gradually they develop the comfort to explore the food with the mouth as they begin to eat small amounts.

When food play is separate from the child's meal, children know that they are not expected to taste or eat the food. This gives them confidence and greater willingness to experience the food in other ways. Food play can begin with pretend foods such as a soft plastic apple or plastic slices of bread and cheese. The child can explore these foods with the lips and tongue or pretend to feed them to a doll or stuffed animal. A real apple, bread, or cheese can be introduced into the play as the child becomes more comfortable and accepting of real food. Strips or small cubes of cheese can become the eyes, nose, mouth, and hair on an apple face or on a piece of bread. A boat could be hollowed out of a cucumber or zucchini with an older child. The emphasis is entirely on the familiarization that comes through play. If adults try to convince children to take a bite of the food, they may become suspicious that the adult has an ulterior motive. They begin to perceive the situation as another trick to get them to eat rather than enjoyable food exploration.

Some children need the opportunity to stir and mix food and smear it on the highchair tray as a preparation for taking a spoonful. Small amounts of food play at mealtimes are very appropriate for young children who missed this stage of development when they were infants. Once the child has become familiar with the food through play, introduce it as part of the meal.

Help Children Feel Physically and Emotionally Safe with Textured Foods

Lumpy foods or solid foods that must be chewed can be very frightening to children. As they become more afraid and feel pressure from adults, they increase tension in their face and mouth. They clench the jaw or pull back the tongue. They may open the mouth a tiny amount. They may freeze and stop moving the tongue as soon as they feel the food touch it. The tension and lack of mouth movement increases the child's sensory discomfort. Pieces of food may sit on the back of the tongue and trigger a gag. The child panics and decides that this type of food is dangerous and must be avoided in the future.

Typically developing infants spend many months exploring toys with the mouth. They sense the toy's firmness by repeatedly biting into it. They feel shape and size with the lips and tongue. As they learn to push

the toy around in the mouth with the tongue, they discriminate the lumps and bumps of surface texture. As they do this, they feel very safe because the lumps and bumps don't come off. They don't have to be manipulated in the mouth and swallowed. When they encounter lumps in food or bite off a piece of cookie or cheese, they have had experience with textures in toys so they are not afraid. They know they can handle the new experience with foods.

It is important for children with feeding difficulties to have experience exploring toys or objects with the mouth. Many children miss this stage of infant development. They may avoid mouthing their hands or toys because they are uncomfortable with mouth stimulation. Or, they may have engaged in a more generalized random mouthing that did not include exploration with greater sensory awareness.

Children need to know that they can get pieces of food out of their mouths. Adults can help them use their fingers to remove a piece of food, learn to spit the food into a bowl with good lip and tongue control, and gather small pieces of food together for swallowing by using a smooth food that binds or sticks the pieces together. Smooth applesauce could be paired with chunky applesauce. Blenderized spaghetti sauce could be used to bind together pieces of pasta that are stuck on the tongue. Some children learn to clear their mouths by taking small drinks between bites.

Many children can learn to bite off a piece of food and spit it out immediately. As this becomes comfortable, they may progress to holding the food in the mouth or moving it around the mouth before spitting it out. Gradually they will learn to chew it briefly without swallowing and then swallow small amounts as they chew. Through confidence, comfort, and experience they master chewing and swallowing foods easily and independently.

When children know that they can get the food out of the mouth when they need to, they are much more likely to put it into the mouth. If they feel threatened or unsafe, they will fight any attempt to put the spoon or food in the mouth.

Build Acceptance through Gradual Repeated Exposure to the Food

All children need repeated exposure to a new food before they are comfortable eating it. Studies have shown that children without a history of feeding difficulties are more likely to eat new foods that they have seen or played with many times. They see the food on someone else's plate or in a serving bowl. They smell it as it is cooking and while they are sitting at the table. They may play with macaroni and cheese on the high chair tray or chase pieces of carrot around the plate with a finger long before they would consider putting the strange food in their mouth.

Some children need to begin by listening to a story or looking at a picture book about the food. Others may have trouble being in the same room with the food. They may have developed such strongly aversive responses that they will scream or vomit as soon as they smell or see the food. It is important to identify the type of relationship with the new food that feels safe to the child and slowly increase the child's involvement with the food. Some children will become upset and want to leave the table if a new food is placed in front of them. If the food is on the other side of the table, it is okay. Gradually the food can be moved closer and closer until it is in a dish in front of the child. As this is accepted, the food can be placed on the child's plate. This progression is usually more successful if the food has been included in food play that is separate from the child's mealtime. Introduce a new food at the meal after the child has explored aspects of it during the food play and exploration. For example, cut-up pears at the meal could follow play with boats made of pear halves floated in the bath tub.

Many adults will offer the child a new food once or twice. When the child refuses to eat it, the food is placed on the does-not-like-it list and is never offered again. Since this happens when most new foods are presented the list of possible foods shrinks, and the child and parent settle with a diet of 4 or 5 foods that are acceptable.

When food is offered many times without pressure to eat it, the child becomes familiar with its sight, smell, feel and taste. Curiosity and hunger may encourage the child to take a few bites and eventually incorporate the food into an expanded diet.

Build Interest and Involvement with Food and Mealtime Preparation

Young children love to imitate their parents as they wash the table, vacuum the floor, stir a cake mix or stack the laundry. When children are cautious or suspicious about new foods, they may avoid the kitchen and miss out on many aspects of food and mealtime preparation. This may happen because cooking smells are offensive or children are afraid that adults will push them into tasting or eating the food.

Even very young children can carry their plate or bowl to the table when it is time for lunch or take the bowl to the kitchen sink or dishwasher when they have finished eating. This helps them understand where the food came from and that meals have a clear beginning and end. At the beginning of the meal, the child can scoop the food from a serving dish or baby food jar into his own bowl. Older children can help cook the meal for the family or plant vegetables in the garden or grow herbs in a small pot in the window. Caring for the plants and watching the vegetable grow create a stronger interest in cooking and eating the food.

Offer Foods with High Nutritional Value

Children with sensory-based feeding issues are often picky eaters who will eat only a small number of foods. They may become stuck in eating foods with similar sensory or nutritional characteristics. For example, one child might drink milk, and eat yogurt and cheese, limiting intake to dairy products. Another child might live on cookies, bread, and white rice, a very limited refined carbohydrate diet. Fruits and vegetables are often missing from children's diets. Because many children like sweet tastes, parents will offer them candy and sweet deserts to entice the child to eat or learn to chew. Because children with sensory issues have difficulty with change, they can get addicted easily to these super-sweet foods and refuse more nutritious foods. If the child prefers sweeter foods, begin with a vegetable like carrots or sweet potato or add maple syrup to some vegetables, fruits or cereals. This offers a less intense sweetener that provides both nutrients and high quality calories. Some children like the intense tastes provided by carbonated beverages. Instead of giving the child soda pop, mix a favorite fruit juice with carbonated mineral water. Pieces of vegetable or meat can be dipped into spicy condiments such as barbecue sauce, salad dressing, or salsa. Children can chew on crunchy carrot sticks or pickles at the beginning of the meal to wake up the mouth. Herbs and spices can be added to foods to increase the intensity of their sensory input. Children need dietary variety to get the calories and nutrients required for growth. Nutritional supplements can be added to the diet with the guidance of a qualified dietitian or physician. High quality food supplements, such as a dehydrated fruit and vegetable powder, can be blended with foods the child accepts.

The Evolution of Schools for the Blind in the 21ST Century

By Phil Hatlen, Superintendent,
Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

In this country, inclusion had its serious beginnings in the 1950s. By the end of the 1970s, it was firmly established as the most popular, most desirable educational placement for many blind and visually impaired children. This did not happen easily, and many serious conflicts caused what should have been an exciting, wonderful era in our history to be less than joyful. Most significant among these conflicts was that schools for the blind were left out of the movement toward inclusion; in fact, they were often thought to be inhibitors of inclusion. The result was years of suspicion, hostility, turf wars, and less than adequate attention paid to the individual needs of children.

Even today, there are children who are receiving inadequate services, not because the services are not available, but because they are the victims of misguided philosophic differences. This applies equally to blind and visually impaired students in schools for the blind and in local schools.

“Evolution” implies a gradual, steady movement. This is what has happened to schools for the blind in the U.S. Before the second half of the 20th century, these schools were havens of the elite blind. Children with no additional disabilities were far in the majority, and academic programs were offered that were at least as good, and often better, than non-disabled students received in regular schools. Through most of the second half of the 20th century, there was significant upheaval in schools for the blind. As we should have expected, most parents of blind children with no additional disabilities strongly preferred regular school enrollment for their child. This movement left many schools for the blind with rapidly diminishing populations.

However, as we became more sophisticated at diagnosing visual impairment, and as we gradually began to recognize our responsibility to visually impaired students with additional disabilities, many of the spaces vacant in schools for the blind were soon filled by a very complex, challenging population. This is not the place to discuss whether this was a good move for schools for the blind. In my opinion, every child with a visual impairment, regardless of additional disabilities, benefits from educational services that address the visual impairment.

Unfortunately, we work in a profession that, when the pendulum swings, it doesn’t stop in the middle, it goes to the polar side. First, the popular thing to do was to place your child in a school for the blind. Then the pendulum swung, and the place for most, if not all, blind and visually impaired children was in regular schools. Many of us viewed it as our professional responsibility to try to move that pendulum toward the middle. And, my friends, it is happening. This is why there is a serious evolution of schools for the blind in the U.S. at this time.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, it was my privilege to discuss the emerging role of schools for the blind in England, Germany, Australia, and Japan. Without exception, my worst fears were true. In other countries with growing emphasis on inclusion, there was tension building between schools for the blind and advocates for regular school placement. In all instances, my message to colleagues throughout the world in schools for the blind was consistent. “Don’t fight inclusion,” I stated. “It is inevitable. Rather, embrace inclusion, and find positive ways in which you can encourage and support it. There is no reason that the champions of inclusion cannot be leaders in schools for the blind.”

Perhaps there are three groups of professionals. First, there is a vocal, but diminishing group who believe that all blind children should attend schools for the blind. Then there is an equally vocal group, who find themselves on the side of political correctness, who advocate for regular school placement for all visually impaired children. Then there is a third group, one that sees values in all placement options, and believes that services should match the needs of students. This third group has no political agenda. It simply believes that, for every blind and visually impaired child, there is an appropriate program, based on the individual needs of each child. Needs may change through the years, and often this means that placement should change. My “third group” has two fundamental beliefs: 1) Regardless of placement, all visually impaired children need a qualified teacher of the visually impaired who can meet their special needs. 2) The expanded core curriculum needs of visually impaired children must be considered when planning educational services.

In order to accept my thesis regarding schools for the blind, you must understand certain fundamental beliefs that I have: I believe that schools for the blind are centers for the most experienced, most expert professionals in education of the visually impaired. The school for the blind should be the “hub” of educational services for blind and visually impaired children, regardless of where they go to school. It is the professional responsibility of a

school for the blind to share its expertise wherever it is needed. In order to truly share, there must be a significant shift of resources. In two of the United States, the schools have changed their names. The Wisconsin School for the Visually Handicapped is now The Wisconsin Center for the Education of the Visually Impaired. The same change has happened in Nebraska. In that state, the school for the blind was mandated by their legislature to take a significant role in the education of all visually impaired students in Nebraska.

This constitutes a significant evolution. While schools for the blind continue to serve children in a residential school, they are discovering ways in which they can enrich the education of all such children in regular schools.

This first installment of Schools for the Blind for the 21st Century is perhaps a history lesson. In future installments we'll look at how these ideas are being applied now.

Transition Services: Starting Sooner!

By Terrell I. Murphy, Executive Director, Texas Commission for the Blind

The Texas Commission for the Blind is taking the next important step to improve vocational outcomes for Texans who are blind. Effective September 1 the Commission is lowering the age at which its Vocational Rehabilitation Program becomes involved with blind students by three years to age 10. We have no doubt that earlier, positive vocational involvement with young people via TCB's knowledgeable transition specialists is appropriate and necessary in today's economic and social environment to reduce the high unemployment rates still prevalent among the blind population. The earlier young people who are blind experience empowering skills, the better prepared they are for the various transitions between youth and life as an adult.

Thirteen years ago, TCB became the first state agency in the country to develop an active VR transition program with adolescents who are blind to help them successfully plot a course from school to work, or from secondary school to college or vocational school. This partnership between state vocational rehabilitation agencies and education is one of the most effective programs formed in legislation during my years with the Commission. Together we promote high expectations for student achievement and learning to ensure that future postsecondary education and employment opportunities truly reflect the student's capabilities.

TCB's **Transition Program** has historically served students 13 years old and older. Starting sooner at age 10 will give a boost to families and young people who are blind as they adjust to adolescence. The teen years are full of their own difficult transitions, regardless of whether the young people have disabilities. Young people approaching adolescence who have a stronger foundation of high expectations and solid vocational expectations already in place will have an easier time adapting to their changing teen years than those with low self-esteem and a weaker sense of identity.

TCB has been building a unified service system of high expectations for several years to obtain better results in all our programs. Experience shows that higher expectations on our behalf translate into higher expectations in consumers, regardless of their age. This environment is then reinforced with empowering vocational rehabilitation services whereby individuals learn to be confident in their own ability to problem-solve and be fully involved, contributing members of society.

TCB's **Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program** will continue to be Texas's first responder to the condition of low expectations for young blind children. Our trained blind children's specialists are often the first people to share information about successful, independent, well-functioning blind individuals with confused and despairing parents. The sooner blindness and a vocational future are mentioned together, the better. Our goal is to immediately create an environment of higher expectations.

We know in advance that some young people will need to receive their services from the children's program past the age of 10 because of varying circumstances. However, the vast majority of students age 10 and older will be transferred to a VR transition counselor as soon as possible, because the bottom line of earlier intervention with transition services will be better future vocational outcomes.

Graham Greene, a British author, once wrote, "*There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in.*" We think that making transition services available at age 10 will open a lot of doors to a much brighter future for this generation of youths who are blind. If you have any questions about these changes, I hope you'll contact one of our local offices.

Following up on my last *SEE/HEAR* article, we've been getting a lot of calls this month voicing concerns about the Texas Legislature's decision to abolish the Texas Commission for the Blind after its long and distinguished history of more than 70 years as an independent agency and to consolidate its functions under the Health and Human Services Commission within a new Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services.

There's not much I can say about the upcoming changes at this point because we simply do not know when or exactly how the changes will take place. The Governor signed House Bill 2292, the bill that reorganizes all health and human service agencies, on June 11. The transfer of TCB's powers, duties, functions, programs, and activities will be accomplished in accordance with a schedule included in a transition plan to be developed by the Executive Commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission and submitted to the Governor and the Legislative Budget Board not later than December 1, 2003. Not later than November 1, 2003, the Health and Human Services Commission must hold a public hearing and accept public comment regarding the transition plan.

That's all I know at the time I'm writing this article on June 13. By the time you read this, I'm confident that the HHSC Commissioner will have announced more about the future of services to Texans who are blind, so keep in touch.

Transition: It's All About Collaboration

By C. C. Davis, Regional Representative, Helen Keller National Center, Dallas TX

It doesn't seem that long ago since the Texas Symposium on Deafblindness—the one where we celebrated communities and connections. This article is about some of those connections.

For some time now, many a thoughtful professional in our deaf-blind community has felt that some deaf-blind students graduating from high school could benefit from some additional preparation for life—sort of a post-graduate program to prepare for a post-secondary educational program or community living.

The Texas Commission for the Blind (TCB), Helen Keller National Center (HKNC), the Deaf Blind with Multiple Disabilities Program (DB-MD Waiver) of the Texas Department of Human Services (DHS), and the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired's (TSBVI) Deaf-Blind Outreach program have been working together to provide just such an experience for graduating deaf-blind students.

Efforts began with identification of students who would benefit from participation in the HKNC comprehensive rehabilitation program, located in Sands Point, NY. The HKNC regional representative visited with the students over time and helped with the assessment of their appropriateness for HKNC's program. Information on HKNC's program was provided to each student's family and school personnel. TCB's vocational

rehabilitation (VR) counselors, transition counselors, and deaf-blind specialists were also contacted; information was provided to them, and decisions were made with regard to eligibility, VR plan development and the appropriateness of referral to HKNC.

Once a student was in the referral process to HKNC, a team was formed to help follow the student's progress and to provide transition planning. A potential long term community service provider was identified through the DB-MD waiver, and contact persons from that organization were brought in on the team effort. The team followed the student from early referral, through the training program at HKNC, and into the transition phase back to Texas. While the student was in training at HKNC, periodic telephone conferences were held to go over the student's progress, plot necessary changes and enhancements to the HKNC program, and eventually, plan the transition of the student to placement in the community.

HKNC not only trains the deaf-blind person in community living skills, but also provides comprehensive reports which provide detailed suggestions for communication, mobility, residential supports, employment, recreation/leisure, environmental modifications and other areas. HKNC provides a variety of work experiences for students to help identify interests, strengths, weaknesses and special considerations.

As the student nears completion in HKNC's program, which can take up to a year, plans are made to put recommendations and supports into effect. HKNC center staff returns to the state with the student to work with key provider personnel who will provide ongoing support. The provider agency staff is oriented to the student's needs and training is provided for a few days. The HKNC center staff and regional representative are later available by phone to follow up and answer any questions by the provider.

TCB deaf-blind specialists and counselors follow along with the entire process. TCB pays for the initial supported employment service to get the student actively employed. HKNC's regional representative and the TCB's deaf-blind specialist maintain contact on the case and provide periodic visits for on-site training, technical assistance and reviews of the student's situation. TCB and the deaf-blind waiver residential provider often continue to work with the supported employment provider to sustain necessary long term supports. HKNC, TCB, and the DB-MD waiver provider have been collaborating to assist in implementing the recommendations made for the student.

The collaboration has not always been easy, and much has been learned about what needs to be done, and what some of the pitfalls can be. Learning how to communicate effectively has been an early challenge. The DB-MD waiver provider staff often has no, or little, experience in deaf-blindness; consequently, significant training is required. Periodic training provided by David Wiley with the TSBVI Outreach program has been important in addressing this deficiency. Turnover of the staff in the waiver program (both direct care and case managers) is a chronic issue for some providers in some areas of the state, a situation that is common in other states. This makes it challenging to sustain a high level of expertise in the service provision. The DB-MD waiver is an indispensable assistance to deaf-blind persons with multiple disabilities, but it is a program that will take time to achieve the level of service quality that is customary and expected in most educational programs and at HKNC. Information on the DB-MD waiver can be found in the fall 2001 issues of *SEE/HEAR*.

The exciting aspect of this collaboration is the manner in which the effort continues to address problems and deficiencies. The Texas Interagency Task Force on Deafblindness has been a part of this cooperative venture, as it assists in setting up a continuum of quality services across all ages, problem solving gaps in services, maintaining dialogue with stakeholders, and looking for opportunities to work together to leverage resources. The collaboration between TCB, DHS, TSBVI and HKNC is largely an outgrowth of a strong sense of community among service providers on the Task Force who have an interest in deafblindness.

The effort is far from over. Problems crop up on a daily basis, and caring minds and hearts have to get together to try to problem solve in order to create a better support system for deaf-blind people transitioning from educational programs. Resources are sometimes limited, and there seems to be a continual need for training and re-training, but as time goes by, the capability of many provider agencies is improving.

For further information about these collaborative efforts, or programs and services, please contact:

- C. C. Davis, HKNC Regional Representative; phone, (972) 490-9677; or email, <ccfutbol@aol.com>;
- Steve Schoen, DHS, DB-MD Waiver Program Manager; phone, 512-438-2622; or email, <stephen.schoen@dhs.state.tx.us>;
- Brad Carlson, TCB Deaf-blind Specialist, (512) 377-0572; or email, <brad.carlson@tcb.state.tx.us>;
- David Wiley, TSBVI Deafblind Outreach, (512) 206-9219; or email, <davidwiley@tsbvi.edu>.

Home Talk: A Family Assessment of Children Who Are Deafblind

DB-LINK has announced that the final version of *HomeTalk: A Family Assessment of Children Who are Deafblind* is now available for your use.

HomeTalk is an assessment tool for parents and care providers of children who are deaf-blind and have other disabilities. It is designed to help them participate in their children's education by giving them a way to provide a broad picture of a child's skills, special interests, and personality. *Home Talk* was developed by the Bringing It All Back Home project, a collaborative effort of Design to Learn Projects at the Oregon Health and Science University and the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University. It is available for free from DB-LINK. Phone: 800-438-9376. TTY: 800-854-7013 E-mail: <dblink@tr.wou.edu>

The project has one request: if you plan to use *HomeTalk* for an educational meeting (e.g., IEP meeting, annual review, transition meeting), please provide some feedback about your experience. They have a short form that they will mail or e-mail to you to complete, or they can interview you by telephone (10-15 minutes). Please contact Harvey H. Mar, Ph.D (<hhm1@columbia.edu>, 212-523-6235) or Charity Rowland, Ph.D. (<rowlandc@ohsu.edu>, 503-238-4030) if you are able to assist.

PRIIDE DVD

HOPE Publishing, Inc., announces the release of PRIIDE DVD, anticipated publication date of June 1, 2003. This DVD is an interactive educational program that addresses sensory loss issues related to deafness, blindness, and deafblindness. The program consists of three curriculum areas: 1) Vision Loss, 2) Hearing Loss, and 3) Combined Vision and Hearing Loss, which are captioned and available in English or Spanish. It provides information and instruction that helps families, teachers, service providers, and medical personnel gain a better understanding of what it means to be deaf, blind, or deaf-blind. Available from HOPE Publishing, Inc. Phone/Fax: 435-245-2888. E-mail: <hope@hopepubl.com> Web: <http://www.hopepubl.com>

Music By Ear Courses

"By Ear Intro" music courses for the visually impaired are available through <www.musicvi.com>. All of the introduction courses are available through the National Library Service (Library of Congress). They also

have PIANO BY EAR and GUITAR BY EAR titles which are individual cassettes teaching entire songs using no written or Braille notation. Descriptions of all the courses are below. More information is available on their website.

INTRO TO THE BASS GUITAR FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

This totally tape-driven course teaches the student the names of the parts of the bass guitar, the names of the notes, and the most commonly used rhythm patterns for the bass, including the Pop/Rock Pattern, the Alternate Bass Pattern, the Waltz Pattern, and 6/8 and 9/8 time patterns. The price of the course is \$39, which includes shipping in the USA.

INTRO TO THE 5 STRING BANJO FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

This totally tape-driven course teaches the student how to hold the banjo, how to tune the banjo, the Alternating Thumb Roll, the Forward and Backward Rolls, Chord progressions to several songs, and banjo solos for the songs “Cripple Creek” and “Foggy Mountain Breakdown”. The price, \$39, includes shipping in the USA.

INTRO TO THE GUITAR FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

This beginning guitar course talks the student through the basics of guitar playing using no written materials or visual references. The course comes in an attractive bookshelf quality four-cassette album that is fully brailled (tapes and album spine) and includes a free GUITAR BY EAR instructional cassette tape. In the three tapes that make up the course, the student will learn how to hold the guitar, the names of the parts of the guitar, how to tune the guitar, the three most common rhythm patterns for the guitar, several chords to use with these patterns, songs for each of these patterns and chords, the names of the notes of the guitar, and several songs using these notes. The student will also learn a song from the GUITAR BY EAR library which is included with the course. The price, \$39, includes shipping in the USA.

INTRO TO THE PIANO FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

This beginning piano or keyboard course talks the student through the basics of playing the piano using no written or Braille materials or visual references. The course comes in an attractive bookshelf quality four-cassette album that is fully Brailled (tapes and album spine) and includes a free PIANO BY EAR instructional cassette tape. In the three tapes that make up the course, the student will learn how to sit at the piano or keyboard, how to find the notes on the piano, the names of these notes, the names and locations of the flats and sharps, the C and G scales, the C and G cadences, the song “The Rose” in a pop style at three progressive levels, “Minuet” by Bach in the original contrapuntal style, a pop/rock accompaniment pattern to be used for accompanying singers and instrumentalists, and how to play a popular piano piece from the PIANO BY EAR library.

The course is taught in a detailed step-by-step process with several built in breaks that allow the student to rehearse what was learned before moving on. The teacher for the course is Bill Brown, the owner and creator of PIANO BY EAR and GUITAR BY EAR. The price, \$39, includes shipping in the USA.

PIANO COURSE 2 FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

This sequel to “Intro to the Piano for the Visually Impaired” takes the student into more scales and keys with the goal of teaching the basics of playing the piano by ear. The student will learn to find melodies and chords through the use of hearing skills and theory. Included with the course is the PIANO BY EAR song lesson for “My Heart Will Go On”, the love theme from the move “Titanic.” The price of the course is \$39, which includes shipping in the USA.

CLASSIFIED

Mail or e-mail your new classifieds to Jim Durkel at:
TSBVI Outreach, 1100 West 45th St., Austin, TX 78756, or JimDurkel@tsbvi.edu.
An up-to-date Statewide Staff Development Calendar is posted on TSBVI's website at <www.tsbvi.edu>.

The Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas (DBMAT) 31st Annual Statewide Family Conference "Passing the Torch"

October 10-12, 2003

A Fun-Filled Learning Weekend for the Entire Family

Camp John Marc, near Meridian, Texas

For more information, contact:

DBMAT

Cyndi Hunley, Conference Registrar

23202 Bright Star

Spring, TX 77373

281-821-9005

chunley@aol.com

Family Training Materials Now Available

Training materials to help families of children with visual impairments prepare for their ARD meeting have been developed. These materials focus on key vision issues in I.D.E.A. and showcase Texas families and professionals. The packet includes: A 90-minute videotape divided into three parts-Assessment, Developing the IEP, and the Expanded Core Curriculum; A family-friendly ARD workbook with templates; Supplemental resource materials in print and on disc.

For effective use of these materials we encourage you to contact TSBVI Outreach about customizing a workshop for parents and professionals in your area. If you are interested please contact Jean Robinson at <robinsonj@tsbvi.edu> or at 512-206-9418, or Edgenie Bellah at <bellahe@tsbvi.edu> or at 512-206-9423.

Each video packet with supplemental materials is \$20.00, shipping included. To order, please contact Karen Scanlon with TSBVI Outreach at (512) 206-9314 or <scanlonk@tsbvi.edu>.

**Virginia Murray Sowell Center
for Research & Education
in Visual Impairment
Distinguished Lecturer Series**

September 26-27, 2003

Speakers:

C.T. Vasile, O&M Department Supervisor,
Western Blind Rehabilitation Center, and
Rick Ludt, O&M Intern Supervisor,
Western Blind Rehabilitation Center

Location: College of Education,
Texas Tech University, Room 001
Contact: Virginia Murray Sowell Center
at 806-742-1997, ext. 233

**Fall 2003
Southwest 504 Conference,
With a Special IDEA Strand**

October 6-7, 2003

Location: Doubletree Hotel, Austin, Texas
Please call the hotel directly at 512-454-3737 or
800-222-8733 to make hotel reservations.
Contact CESD at 512-219-5043
Fax: 512-918-3013
9801 Anderson Mill Road, Suite 230,
Austin TX 78750

**21st Annual
Closing the Gap Conference**

October 16-18, 2003

Location: Bloomington, MN
Contact: Closing the Gap
PO Box 68,
526 Main Street
Henderson MN 56044
Phone: 507-248-3294, Fax: 507-248-3810
Email: <info@closingthegap.com>

**The 39th Annual Conference of
The Learning Disabilities
Association of Texas**

October 29-November 1

Renaissance Austin Hotel, Austin TX

For more information contact:
LDAT, 1011 W 31st St.
Austin, TX 78705
512- 458-8234, 800-604-7500
Email: LDATexas@cs.com

**CESD's 2nd Annual
Texas Dyslexia Conference,
All Dyslexia All the Time**

November 3-4, 2003

Location: Doubletree Hotel, Austin TX

Please call the hotel directly at 512-454-3737, or
800-222-8733 to make hotel reservations.

Contact: CESD at 512-219-5043
Fax: 512-918-3013
9801 Anderson Mill Road, Suite 230
Austin TX 78750

**AER Orientation and Mobility
Division Conference**

December 13-16, 2003

Location: New Orleans, LA

Contact: George Tully or
Lynn Gautreaux at
<oandm@lsvi.org>

SEE/HEAR

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The audio version of *SEE/HEAR* is provided by
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**If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please call
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or e-mail her at BethRees@tsbvi.edu.**



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