



# SENSE

# Abilities

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

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### Family Wisdom

Rachel Allen	2
Our Life in Music	5
I Didn't See It Coming	8
Blind Man's Skydiving Adventure	13

### Programming

Yog-A-Bility	15
Stroller and Wheelchair Mobility	19
How to Play Goalball	23

### News and Views

Advocacy on a Tight Budget	30
Celebrate the Past, Look to the Future	32
RFB&D for Texas Schools!	34
Opportunities for Doc Studies	35
2011 Awards in Deafblindness	36
Annual NFB Writing Contest	36
HHSC Quick Guide	37
Health Insurance Assistance	37

<b>Bulletin Board</b>	<b>38</b>
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Welcome to the Winter 2011 edition of Texas SenseAbilities. Here at TSBVI Outreach we have just finished our biennial Deafblind Symposium at which we welcomed Jan van Dijk as a keynote speaker, and Jay Gense of the National Consortium on Deaf Blindness, along with many wonderful speakers, colleagues, families and individuals with deafblindness. In spite of record cold weather in Austin, and snow and ice storms here and across the state, we had 265 attendees! If you were unable to attend, you can access the workshop handouts at:

[www.tsbvi.edu/workshops](http://www.tsbvi.edu/workshops)

Many thanks to everyone who worked hard to make this conference a successful event, and to those of you who attended and gave us so much positive feedback and inspiration. We are looking forward to the upcoming Texas AER Conference In Dallas In March. You can read more about it at:

[www.tx aer.org/Conferences/conferences.htm](http://www.tx aer.org/Conferences/conferences.htm)

*Holly Cooper*



Blake Lindsay  
impulsively expresses interest in skydiving  
and gets an offer he can't refuse in  
"Blind Man's Skydiving  
Adventure"

## Rachel Allen's Glorious Life to 15!

By Rachel Christine Allen  
 2010 Texas Charger of the Year  
 With help from Tim Allen, Rachel's Father

*Abstract: A speech given by Rachel Allen, a 15 year old girl with CHARGE Syndrome, inspiring others to believe that everyone can live a full life filled with joys and adventures.*

*Keywords: family wisdom, deafblindness, CHARGE syndrome, personal perspective, family life, self determination.*

Editor's Note: The following is the speech that Rachel gave on November 8, 2010 at the Texas Chargers Retreat in recognition of her receiving the honor of being named Texas Charger of the Year. While Rachel signed, her father read her speech and helped her with the PowerPoint that featured pictures of Rachel's life. The audience was so inspired by Rachel that she was invited to present again at the 2011 Symposium on Deafblindness, held in Austin February 4-5, but she was unable to appear due to the weather. We look forward to keeping up with Rachel and her family as she continues to teach us how to live life focused on joys found in the moment.

Good afternoon! My name is Rachel Christine Allen. I am 15 years old and live in the Dallas area. I attend Vine High school in Plano, where I participate in the deaf education program. I am so smart that when my family moved from Mesquite to Coppell this summer, I skipped from the 7th grade to the 9th! Well, the real reason I skipped grades is that there were more signing students at the high school for me to interact with than in the middle school, but hey a little confidence goes a long way when you have the many challenges I have to overcome.

I was born with CHARGE Syndrome, as most

everyone in this room knows and understands CHARGE Syndrome.

- Yes, I spent my first three months life in the ICU.
- Yes, I am legally deaf, but I hear out of my right ear with my hearing aid.
- Yes, I am legally blind, but I can see some out of my left eye.
- Yes, I am on a liquid diet and fed through a G-button, but I never have had to go on a diet!
- Yes, I walk a little funny, but I can get to where I need to go!
- Yes, I breathe out of my neck with a trachea. But that beats the alternative!
- Yes, I have CHARGE Syndrome and all the challenges that accompany the
- disability.

What CHARGE did give me is energy to overcome my physical challenges, an appreciation for what I can do with what I have! With a host of people that believe I can learn and enjoy life.

### **THINGS I CAN DO AND HAVE DONE:**

- I love to cook. My favorite meal to prepare is Turkey Dinner!
- love to watch cooking shows and learn from



Rachel Ray.

- I look forward to the structure of school and my teachers and staff who love to see me excel at my pace and ability of course.
- I love to play with my family, especially my older brother Caleb! Caleb and I were playing football the other day and I fell and broke my arm! SEE! (Rachel shows the audience her pink cast)

Yes, I like the color Pink as you can see! I have belly danced in the past. I love to sing in Church from the aisle. I love to teach others, especially my four favorite Friends, who are my Teletubbies. I also performed in the School Signing Choir. I have been in a fashion show recently. Yes I won the entire contest. Well maybe that was in my mind. I have ridden on a horse, boat, zip line, rock climbing, scooter, plane, tractor, kayak, canoe, dogs, bike, paddle boats. I enjoy egg hunts, guitars, Boys and performing Sister ACT.

### MY FAMILY

I have mentioned a few of my family members, but

I want to now talk in more detail about my family! They have been there for me through all my challenges and joys!

I will start off with my oldest Brother Josh, who goes to Texas A&M! He has always been a great big brother that cares for me, plays with me, and gives good hugs every time he comes home from college!

My other brother, Caleb, does play hard with me, but I can hold my own most of the time with him. We have had a special bond of friendship through the years. Presently, he picks me up from school and takes care of me now that he is a senior in high school.

My Mom and Dad have been there for me all through my 15 years of life! They got divorced when I was seven years old. So I have had two homes since then. They have been there, through the many challenges of my childhood; hospital stays, ARD meetings, and managing all the professionals - from

cranial facial surgeons to the aids at the school. They have challenged me to grow, and be more independent. They have advocated on my behalf, to get me as many resources and opportunities so I could have a better quality of life each day I am here on this earth.

### **MY EXTENDED FAMILY**

On my dad's side, I have 11 cousins! When you add parents and grand mom ("Nannie", as we call her), you have quite a crowd – around 20 – and yes, they are loud! Usually, I just turn my hearing aid down and smile! On my mom's side, it is a little calmer for the holidays with my Gran, Andy (my mom's boyfriend), and, of course, my two brothers. This year, when my dad got remarried, I inherited a step sister, Tara (whom I get to play with after school), and a step brother, Tyler (who is in high school.)

### **MY SUPPORT TEAM**

Lucel is my auditory therapist of 11 years who has helped me learn to talk more and more. Sometimes my family finds it a challenge to keep up with me! My two nurses are Lisa & Lola. They have been with me for the past five plus years and there are many other nurses that have helped me along the way! There are also many teachers at Mesquite ISD that have taught me for the first 11 years of my education. Of course, my new teacher in Plano, Susan Mullins, and the other members of my team, are awesome. Thank you to them all!

### **CONCLUSION**

I am so honored today to be singled out as the 2010 Texas Charger of the Year! As I have shared with you today, there have been some challenges being a kid with CHARGE. But I've also had many joys and experiences as a Charger! My family are people of faith, and we

don't spend much time thinking about WHY I have CHARGE. Instead, we keep our hearts on enjoying the moments, and looking to what might be the realistic possibilities for me down the road. I have dreams and goals like any other kid! I hope to one day to be a teacher! When the Make a Wish Foundation approached me two years ago I dreamed of going to Harry Potter Theme Park! That dream may come true next summer! We will see!

If I could give other families an encouraging word, it would be to give each of us Chargers good strong hugs all throughout the day. And to my fellow Chargers I would encourage you to find a hobby like cooking, music, dancing... and enjoy life!



For more information about Texas Chargers visit: [www.texaschargers.org](http://www.texaschargers.org)

The national group is  
The CHARGE Syndrome Foundation:  
[www.chargesyndrome.org](http://www.chargesyndrome.org)

## Our Life in Music

Crystal and Danielle Morales

Reprinted with permission from Deaf-Blind Perspectives, Fall 2010, Volume 18 Issue 1. Deaf-Blind Perspectives can be accessed at <http://nationaldb.org/dbp/current.htm#morales>.

*Abstract: The authors share their passion for composing and performing music using a variety of adaptive devices to compensate for their dual sensory loss.*

*Keywords: family wisdom, deafblind, musicians, self-determination, music technology, career education, personal perspectives.*



*Editor's Note:* In the Fall '09 Edition of Texas SenseAbilities, Crystal Morales shared with readers her thoughts on growing up with high expectations and encouragement from their mother in her premier article, *All Things Possible*. Once again, it is our privilege to share an article by Crystal written in collaboration with her sister, Danielle. Thank you Crystal and Danielle for sharing your life with us!

We are 27-year-old twin musicians from Austin, Texas. We were born three months premature, and since birth we have lived with hearing and vision loss. Our vision impairment is due to a number of conditions—cortical visual impairment (affecting visual processing in the brain), nystagmus,

amblyopia, severe myopia, and severe strabismus. We also have sensorineural hearing loss as a result of ototoxic medications that we received at birth, and we use high-power hearing aids. We have been playing and composing music since the age of 6, and this article describes our musical background and interests.

We are self-taught musicians who learned by playing songs we heard on the radio, one note at a time, on a small Casio keyboard with 8 bit sounds and small keys. As we grew older, we progressed to more advanced keyboards and synthesizers. We used the same process to

learn to play other instruments as well, such as the dulcimer and cello. Currently, we create our compositions using the piano, synthesizer, electric bass, cello, violin, and hammered dulcimer.

Synthesizers, electronic instruments that are designed to create a variety of sounds, are an important part of our work. Depending on the type of synthesizer, programming is executed by using knobs, sliders, and controls or by entering numbers into the CPU. Programming synthesizers gives us the freedom to create any sound imaginable. We can completely control every aspect of a sound from its beginning to its end. The basic structure of a synthesizer consists of a signal generator, which emits a sound; a filter, which shapes the waveform; and an amplifier, which controls how loud the sound is over time. Our first "real" synthesizer was a Casio CZ-1000 programmable synthesizer. It uses numbers to alter aspects of a waveform to change its overall shape and create a completely new sound.

Our band's name is Jumelle, meaning twins in French. This name was given to us by our Grandmother Danielle, who is a native of France. We compose music every day, and our style ranges from jazz, new age, and classical to retro 80s synth-pop and techno. We enjoy experimenting with new ways to create music that is unique and fun. We have two CDs, *All Things Possible*, and *Meditations*. The latter was a collaborative project with our local Baha'i Center. These CDs are our older compositions. Our newer ones can be heard on YouTube, a website that allows users to watch, upload, and share videos worldwide. You can link to our music channels by going to [www.youtube.com/user/TheSynthFreq](http://www.youtube.com/user/TheSynthFreq) and [www.youtube.com/user/MsMotif6](http://www.youtube.com/user/MsMotif6). We are also members of online forums such as the Association of Adult Musicians with Hearing Loss and the Deaf

Musicians section of AllDeaf.com. These forums provide opportunities for us to discuss hearing loss issues, such as the most useful kind of hearing aids, with other musicians.

Although performing live gives us great joy, YouTube is our current venue for sharing our music. As every visually impaired person knows, finding adequate transportation is difficult, and this is a major obstacle for us. Although public transportation is wonderful in Austin, it is not possible to transport our equipment and synthesizers from place to place on the city bus. We hope to solve this problem and return to playing live music again in the city we love so much. In the past we performed at local coffee shops, bookstores that sold our CDs, a radio station, a few local colleges, and at the Arts Council in Denton, Texas, which features artists with disabilities. We also made an appearance on a local morning news show.

To play and compose music in our studio, we use a variety of assistive devices. We cannot hear high or low frequencies. On a piano, low notes just sound like noise and we can't hear higher notes at all. Our hearing aids are designed to shift these frequencies into the audio range that we can hear. In order to write a bass line, for instance, we shift lower notes to a higher octave that we can hear better. We then memorize the notes in the higher octave and shift them back to the original octave when making a recording. The Phonak iCom device is very helpful. It streams audio directly from a synthesizer's amplifier to our hearing aids using Bluetooth. We both wear Phonak Naida V UltraPower hearing aids.

To modify our studio for our vision needs, we have arranged our equipment in a way that

allows easy access to switches and controls and we try to keep all wires out of the way. Our sequencer is on a music stand so that its screen can be viewed more easily, and a magnification sheet, taped to the screen, is used to minimize eyestrain. We use Braille and large-print reference sheets that have technical information describing how to operate and program the equipment.

Our synthesizers have Braille labels to identify switches, controls, connection ports, and parameter buttons. We have placed the labels for the connection ports upside down so that we can identify them without having to move the keyboard. The light source in a room or on stage is an issue for most visually impaired performers. Braille labels allow us to find switches and controls quickly and ensure that we can accurately locate important functions. They are the most effective type of labels since large-type ones do not fit on a synthesizer's complex and crowded control panel. Having to put on reading glasses to search for a switch or control would not be ideal during a rehearsal or on stage. We also use bright green packing tape on small items that are difficult to see, such as SD (secure digital) memory cards, small metal jack adapters, and cables.

To read the LCD displays on our synthesizers during the programming process, we use tinted magnification lenses and high-power reading glasses. Fortunately, all of our synthesizers have high-contrast dot matrix LCD displays, which were very popular in the 1980s (most of our synthesizers are over 20 years old). They are easier to read because they have a 36-point font size and were designed to accommodate performers on stage in low lighting. When naming

synthesizer programs, we use all capital letters to make the display easier to read.

Another technological application that we use in our studio is the BrailleNote mPower. This is a small Braille computer that functions like a laptop with a word processor. We use the BrailleNote for concert notes, programming terminology, song ideas, and notes. Our hearing and vision impairments affect us as musicians in many ways, but we don't let them stop us. We would love more than anything to make music our main career, although we have Bachelor of Arts degrees in vocational rehabilitation counseling human resources and have that choice of a career as well.

We have been composing music for 20 years and will continue to so. We can't imagine ourselves being truly happy doing anything else. Our goal is to work in the music industry in some capacity. Being musicians and composers means everything to us. We don't know life without writing music, listening to music, and being inspired by other musicians. Being a musician takes you on a personal quest to write new and better music and to challenge yourself to become more skilled at what you do. Performing a successful concert and knowing that your audience enjoyed it with you is the best feeling in the world.



## I Didn't See It Coming

Sasha Rangel, 25 year old, Austin, TX

*Abstract: A young woman shares her experiences in going through her town's public school system as one of the first visually impaired students to participate in regular education classrooms, and growing up in a protective predominantly Latino culture. Through her strength, self-advocacy skills, and support from her immediate family and the community role models, she has been able to overcome challenges as a visually impaired individual and a growing young girl, teen, and beyond.*

Keywords: Family Wisdom, visually impaired, Retinitis Pigmentosa, self-advocacy, challenges, success

As I sit at my computer desk, I'm looking at my laptop and working on research for the department. By research I mean expanding my horizons to understand terms like "expanded core curriculum", "personal futures planning", and "adult learning theory". As a person with vision impairment, doing any sort of research using large print is both an adventure and a chore. I have to use black backgrounds and white lettering on a computer to see things "comfortably", or let me rephrase that, to reduce the eye strain... *sort of*. I also have to enlarge both the print and the mouse pointer so I can click my way from Point A to Point B. Half the time I have to take a second or two (or ten) to find where the mouse even *is* on the screen because I have such limited tunnel vision from Retinitis Pigmentosa (also known as "RP"). By the time I find the mouse, I have to find the text I want to click on, find the mouse again, move my eyes with the mouse to the text to click, and so on and so forth. Daunting, isn't it?

By department I mean the Outreach Department of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI). I'm a fresh new intern that is starting her first paid work experience. I'm energetic, I'm ecstatic, I'm ready and willing to go wherever whenever they need me. The blessing

in that is I get to pick the brains of each member of the team for wisdom. The curse is due to this being my first "real" work experience, I'm doomed to make lots of mistakes and often bite off more than I can chew. Many people have asked me how I got to be "who I am" or "where I am today?" Both are very good questions, and both require some thought. Let me think...

### FINDING OUT THE FACTS

When I was a toddler, I was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). The doctor explained to me in the best way he could that I would lose my sight completely one day and he guessed it would be somewhere around age 21. As a sassy three year old, I replied, "Nu-uh, by the time I'm 21 they will have invented something so I'll be able to see better than you!" (As a side note, there is no such miracle piece of technology just yet. I'm sure it's being worked on.) Once my mother heard this news, she alerted our local school district of my circumstance and they felt it necessary for me to start school right away. I started preschool at age 3 and stayed at that grade level two years. My time was split into three different classrooms almost every school day. One part

of the day I would spend in a special education classroom, one part in a regular education classroom, and the third part in a “life skills” classroom for students with visual impairments. The life skills I obtained at that early age, at least that I remember, were mainly how to cook a ham with pineapple and cherries and do laundry. One thing I am grateful for with the three part classroom day was I learned very quickly how to effectively communicate with all kinds of people. I learned how to make professional phone calls, play with children who had no impairments, and interact and play with children who had multiple impairments. My favorite playmate was a boy with cognitive challenges named Georgie. Although our impairments were different, we still understood each other when it came to the language of laughter and fun.

### **“COKE BOTTLE GLASSES” AND RED SNEAKERS**

When I started the first grade, I thought I was going to school and partaking in a regular education classroom just like the other kids. The only differences I had were that I was carrying a cane and wearing what people called “coke-bottle glasses” (the really thick lenses for people with poor vision). While I had thought nothing of it at first, I learned that children can be mean and ugly at things they see as “different”. At the end of the school day I ran home crying because so many children made fun of my glasses and cane that first day. Another negative experience happened on a school bus one day. I stopped attending the three-part day elementary school to attend a full regular education day at a school within walking distance from my house. For some reason, a bus came and picked me up at my house saying they needed to take me to the other school. I dutifully got on the bus only to find out that I would spend

the next four hours sitting on that same bus staring at my red Keds tennis shoes. We later discovered that neither the bus driver nor the bus dispatch team had a clue why they picked me up that morning and finally sent me on a bus back to my main elementary school. I was four hours late to my first day of fourth grade and will never forget how every detail of my red sneakers looked that day.

On a positive note, my school district teachers established and maintained a personal philosophy with me, “She could lose her sight tomorrow. Let’s teach her all we can today!” Throughout elementary I learned how to use a computer and type with proficiency, learn Braille, and how to do basic Orientation and Mobility (O&M) cane skills. As a stubborn young girl, I refused to do any activities that involved being “different” from any of my other classmates. Against my better judgment as an all-knowing seven year old (at least in my mind), I took the encouragement of candy and games from the teachers of students with visual impairment (TVI's) and learned the extras.

### **JUNIOR HIGH JUMBLE**

In junior high, I went through all the self-discovery adventures that any pre-teen goes through: puberty, boy crushes, pimples, and the making and breaking of social groups like “the geeks” and “the popular kids”. In addition to that, I was attending Braille classes and walking with a cane. I may have been considered one of the “popular kids” if someone hadn’t spread a rumor that I was faking my vision impairment. I lost the friends I never had, and it turned out to be just as well. There was one day I was in a locker room changing clothes after my gym class when some bully girls decided to turn the

lights out and try to steal my smiley face jewelry (I have night blindness). While they thought they had the upper hand, I had the folding cane and the ability to walk around without sight using it. I opened it up and swung around like nunchucks! They left me alone and I walked out of the locker room with no one harmed and my head held high. Never mess with a blind girl with a cane! Hi-ya!

During junior high, there was a new program beginning called the Gifted and Talented / Pre-Advanced Placement curriculum. This program meant that people would be tested at a higher level and prepared to take and receive credit for high school classes. I very much desired to be a part of that program, but a lot of my peers felt I couldn't stand up to the challenge and succeed. Most of my peers and some of the general community saw me as nothing more than "the little blind girl". I was known to have a handicap and was therefore not able to do *anything* for myself. Others in my extended family also shared this opinion and saw me as the child who could do well but was never *expected* to rise above the basics. Through the support of my mother and decision to attend my own ARD meetings, we all worked as a team to place me in the advanced program. I was expected to perform the tasks as well and sometimes better than everyone else. All I needed was a little large print and to keep up my Braille and cane skills.

Throughout junior high and entering high school, I had the privilege of receiving support and a sense of camaraderie from summer camps with other visually impaired people. These summer camps assisted me in building my confidence in interacting with other visually impaired

individuals and the community at large. I was also given a brief introduction to the working world through one particular summer program in the 1990's that allowed me to work with a newsletter that the school for the blind shared with other students. This program gave me confidence in working with others as a team to complete one professional goal. It was this work experience and other career building tips I learned that gave me an eye-opener to the exciting work world I would inevitably enter.

## HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMICS

When I enrolled in high school, I had no real idea of the things that would come. This included challenges as a visually impaired person as well as struggling through the battle of self-discovery as an adolescent. I discovered that boys were not as much of a holy terror as they were in elementary school. At the same time I was bumping into people in the hallways every five seconds because I foolishly did not want to carry a cane at the time.

Academically, I had the good fortune of being enrolled in pre-advanced placement and advanced placement college level courses that I mostly completed with ease and success along with my peers. All it took was a little ingenuity and creativity in working closely with my teachers and TVI instructor. A little large print here, some tactile and oral instructions there, and most subjects turned out to be a piece of cake! However, while most of the time I felt like I was on the top of my game in the classroom, there were some struggles I had to overcome. My worst subject was math, particularly Algebra and Geometry. I barely squeaked by Geometry but was unfortunately fortunate enough to repeat

Algebra. Thank goodness for second chances!

I discovered that my favorite subject turned out to be physics. Despite my struggle with math, the concept of physics and discovering the wonders of how things worked in the world were of the utmost fascination to me. What made my physics experience even more memorable was my physics teacher. Mr. Ballesteros turned out to be more than a physics instructor; he became a mentor, a role model, and a friend. He took every measure he could to make sure I fully grasped the concepts and the need for mathematics to solve the problems. He even took us outside one day as an experiment to study trajectories. He had us break up into teams and throw footballs in the air to learn that when thrown at an angle, there is a high point, then a descent at an angle to a low point. The day of that experiment I learned that one particular low point for a football turned out to be my rear end as I got bumped by another team's football. The measurements for the low point turned out to be equally embarrassing and amusing. I would not have gotten through the class without Mr. Ballesteros, or any other class without the help of my vision teacher at the time Liz Garza and the ECISD Special Ed department. All of their hard work and diligence to help me succeed turned out to be well worth everyone's time and effort. The special education department asked me several years later to be the keynote speaker for a special graduation ceremony they had for the largest class of graduating special education seniors they had thus far. What a way to go!

### **SOCIAL STRUGGLES OF A SASSY TEEN**

Socially, I wanted so very desperately to be "just like everyone else" that I often sacrificed my

safety and didn't practice non-visual skills as often as I should. I had a few Braille classes but avoided them as if they were the plague in order to pursue other social endeavors and extracurricular activities. I participated in band through all four years of high school. During the marching season I played with the front ensemble percussion and the clarinet during concert season. I earned the position of section leader for two years because I proved myself to be an exemplary musician and a leader. However, I was discouraged because I felt like the director was unsure of my leading the section "blindly" (pun intended). He appointed another co-leader to work with me and I learned quickly this co-leader did not like me. It was only a matter of time before the rest of the team lost respect for me to gain his favor. On the forefront the section did really well by learning their music and performing with excellence. Behind the scenes my job in spite of having water poured on my uniform, gum thrown in my hair, and things hidden from me. I survived the struggle and managed to participate in state solo and ensemble competitions and received superior ratings for both marching and concert season competitions. During my senior year I participated in choir and received superior ratings for district competition and state solo and ensemble performance.

In my junior year I met a boy I felt was the love of my life. We were in a *serious relationship* for six months before he broke my heart. While I struggled with that for a year afterwards, I had other conflicts with other "so called friends" that made being a blind teen extremely discouraging. There were times I felt I wanted to give up. However, I had the strength and support of my VI instructor, Mr. Ballesteros, the special

education department, and another teacher named Mr. Mison who were aware of my personal problems. They helped me get through the bad times and supported me through getting back to being successful student and not a sobbing one. I graduated from high school with my head held high and was bound and determined to succeed at the next stage of my life.

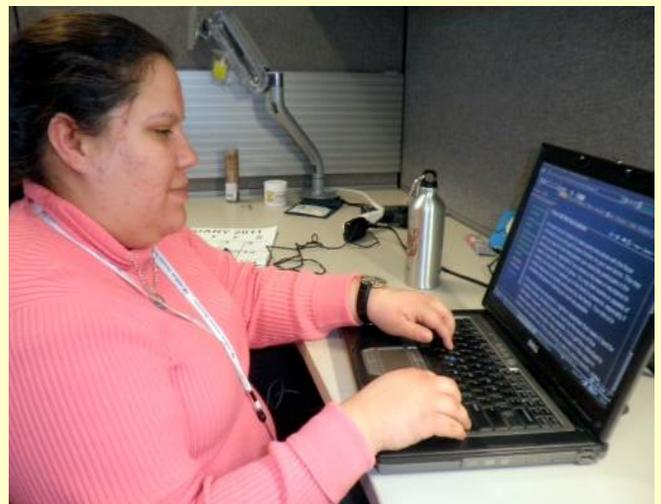
### **ON THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE**

A week after high school I attended a vocational rehabilitation school that would allow me to work on independent living skills for the next nine months. I expanded my skills in Braille, mastered almost all O&M skills with a cane, and learned how to cook. While I was in a daily living skills class, I learned how to cook for myself and to organize materials and other independent living aspects of my life. While I was in this class I was interviewed by a journalist from the university newspaper who was interested in learning my story. She watched me cook and prepare a full course meal for myself, her and other friends. These daily living skills I practiced, improved, and accomplished and continue to use in my life every day.

When I first started working with a cane, I was very stubborn in falsely believing I had enough vision to travel without one. Knowing that I had blindness and that my condition was not stable, I eventually surrendered my stubborn ways and accepted the use of the cane. I polished these skills and refined them to a point that I felt free and fearless wandering the busy streets of a town and going anywhere I pleased without anyone to do sighted guide with me. One day, I was walking and listening for traffic patterns. I realized that I had the right of way and was crossing an intersection when a car driver who later said he didn't see me hit me as I was crossing in the crosswalk. I ended up with

a metal rod in my right thigh. Having a good sense of humor, I assured the guy that not being able to see was my excuse and not his. I would like to add that such an occurrence can and does happen to anyone, blind or not. While this incident turned out to be a road block (no pun intended), I was down and recovering for a couple of months, but was certainly not out of the race of life!

*To be continued... Stay tuned for the Spring 2011 edition to see part 2 of "I Didn't See it Coming"*



## Blind Man's Skydiving Adventure

By Blake Lindsay, Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind Communications Director, Motivational Speaker and Author of *Out of Sight Living, (A Sightless Person with a Winning Vision)*

*Abstract: The author, who is blind, shares his skydiving experience, including friends and reporters in his adventure.*

*Keywords: family wisdom, blind, adventure sports, personal perspective*

My name is Blake Lindsay, and I've been totally blind since infancy. This unique condition gives me additional opportunities to challenge and inspire people of all ages to set significant goals and to follow through with their action plan. Each September, I have the privilege of speaking with a bright group of high school seniors who are together for Camp Enterprise. This three day weekend business education development is sponsored by Rotary club of Dallas. In 2010, I was finishing my talk, with a segment I call, ask the Blind guy. I always enjoy these questions, especially from junior high and high school students. During this occasion, I was asked "Blake, is there anything you haven't done on your list of adventures that you want to accomplish"? I blurted out the first response that came to mind, "skydiving". I stated this would be an adventure which I've been fascinated with for many years. Other than the brief discussion, I didn't even think about my skydiving reply.

Two weeks later, I received a surprise call from Charles with Rotary Club of Dallas: "We are sponsoring you on a skydive, so when can you go?" My first thought was "wow! Did I really say I wanted to skydive?" I immediately realized it was time for me to follow through with my spontaneous response to the students. We set

a time for my skydive to take place when I could be accompanied by a willing and qualified instructor. I was happy that my friends Heather and Michael from Rotary Club of Dallas wanted to be there for my first skydive experience. Heather had told me all about her first skydive, and she wanted to do it again.

I became more excited, and less nervous each day. I called some friends and family to say that I expected complete safety, but if something should happen, I want them to know how very much I care about our relationship. I paid our bills in advance, and even showed my wife Jennifer how to pay them online using our computer, and to use our phone to pay the other bills. Being blind has helped make it easy for me to learn to use technology. As I thought about this somewhat fear inducing goal of skydiving, I began to envision how it could help me to inspire people to dive into their goals, and face their fears in life. I asked my good friends Glen Martin and J D Ryan, to make a video recording of this event. They agreed, and came along on the adventure.

I was grateful to be able to go in one day before my jump, driven by my Rotary friend Michael Morelli. I received a brief training on how to position my body, and what I should expect.

This was valuable education from my instructor Ernie Long. I made some friends that day with people who frequently skydived. I enjoyed their kindness and eagerness to share their experiences with me. They could hardly wait to see me encounter what they knew would be a blast for a blind guy, or anyone for that matter.

The day of the dive, Glen and I drove out to a peaceful and beautiful wooded area he often walked through, to record my feelings before this event took place. It was a Saturday morning, without a cloud in the sky. The breeze was a gentle eight miles per hour. Glen's recorded interview also captured the sounds of nature, and even a distant noise of our public light rail train passing by.

After our extraordinary start to an exciting day, we got into Glen's car and proceeded to find Skydive Dallas. I'll never forget how much I enjoyed our one hour drive and visit up to Whitewright, Texas. We arrived ahead of schedule, and enjoyed a quick bite for lunch. Glen and I then walked outside, to observe all of the other people skydiving. Our outside temperature was a warm 88 degrees, which felt just right with the light breeze. JD soon arrived, and we all caught up since it had been a long time since Glen or I had visited JD. The Dallas Morning News had decided to cover my story, and I was interviewed by a pleasant lady with a cool and memorable name, Holly Hacker.

It was finally time to climb into the plane, which seated 23 of us tightly. I was excited to at last be taking that leap of faith I had thought about a lot over the prior two weeks of anticipation on the unknown. I was fully alert and attentive as we climbed up to 13,500 feet, and prepared to jump with my instructor Ernie. Our leap into the air was like no other feeling I have ever felt

before. The temperature was thirty degrees cooler at 13,500 feet than on the ground. What had been a balmy 88 degrees was now an exhilarating 58. We hit the air at around 140 miles per hour, and maintained that momentum as we dropped for sixty seconds. My hearing was temporarily lost due to the quickly changing pressure. When our parachute deployed I had an opportunity to do the old tricks to retrieve my hearing as if I were in a plane descending for landing. My instructor Ernie Long began performing maneuvers showing me how much control he had in steering us with the sturdy steering strings attached to our parachute. I got a kick out of quickly turning to the left, then right, followed by moving backwards and forwards. "Wow!"

When we safely landed, all of my friends and spectators applauded. I can certainly say that this exceptional experience is among the most exciting and valuable in my lifetime. Each time I reflect upon the experience it seems I learn another lesson in how to live my life more fully and to inspire others to enjoy life. I'm more determined than ever to motivate people to be the best they can be in finding joy in life at work, at home, and in the community each and every day.

Glen edited all of the pictures which he and JD had taken, and produced perfect ten and five minute videos, showing and telling my unique story. This keepsake production will always encourage people to dive into their goals, and face those fears and challenges which inevitably come our way in life. Without a doubt, when we dive into our goals and face our challenges, it can resemble my skydive experience by becoming "faith and fun all in one"!

## Yog-A-Bility: Yoga for Kids

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*Abstract: The authors discuss the benefits of yoga for students with visual impairments including those with additional disabilities. Yoga can provide opportunities to practice active movement, concentration and communication and help increase strength, flexibility and body awareness.*

*Keywords: yoga, blind, motor skills, orientation and mobility*

### WHAT IS YOGA?

Yoga is form of exercise, which originated thousands of years ago in India. The word yoga means 'union' which refers to the coordination of breath, body and mind. It is a fun and non-competitive activity that can be modified for a wide range of people and abilities and can be customized to work on specific skills such as balance, strength, and flexibility.

There are many types of yoga. Two, which are commonly used with children with visual impairment, are Hatha, and Kundalini. Hatha is based on a group of positions that are paired with breathing exercises to increase flexibility, strength and balance. Kundalini yoga includes body and hand positions, music, singing and breathing exercises. The Kundalini program referred to here was developed for children by Shakta Khalsa (1998) with a focus on the use of sound and movement as vehicles

for learning self-awareness and increasing self-control. A child with visual impairments benefit from this system of exercise because it generally occurs within his personal space, and provides opportunities for him to move his body in ways he may not have experienced before. Yoga supports inclusion with sighted peers. Yoga benefits many areas including:

- Improved strength
- Improved flexibility
- Body concepts and body awareness
- Spatial awareness/positional concepts
- Improved balance and coordination
- Left/right concepts
- Crossing midline (motor development on both sides of the body)

A Yoga class can consist of a single student and teacher, or a larger group. If a larger group is planned be sure to include other adults or competent students to assist individual students in assuming poses and following the teacher's instructions. Work with the other adults before starting the class to clarify roles as models, prompters, and shadows. Come to a consensus of what type and how much prompting is expected and how it will be phased out. It is important to be clear about how the adults will interact with the students. Whenever possible, the adults should have an opportunity to practice the poses themselves before the classes begin.

Getting ready for Yoga class:

- Yoga class takes place in a quiet location with dim lighting.
- Each student has a mat she uses as her yoga space.
- The student removes her shoes (then

- Improved energy and concentration

places them beside or behind the mat) and sits crossed-legged in a circle formed by all of the student's mats.

Class begins with deep breathing and a welcome song.

Next is the routine of postures, songs and breathing.

Last is relaxation, in which the children lie on their backs and listen to a few minutes of calming music.

We have developed some teaching strategies and modifications for children with visual impairments. It is best to control both

artificial and natural lighting for students with low vision. Some students may need extra lighting when learning the movements but can have lower lighting after they have mastered the exercises. Be mindful of glare coming through windows, which may affect the student with photophobia. For such students, either seat the student with her back to the window or close the curtains or blinds. If possible, let each student handle his own mat, including storing and retrieving the mat from a set location, and also learning to roll and unroll the mat. Some students may need to sit and listen during several sessions

to become familiar with the language and expectation before being ready to actively participate. The teacher can help the student learn positions by gently guiding his hands while describing the body parts and movement. The teacher can decrease assistance by giving occasional touch and/or verbal prompts. Encourage the student to control her own body and movements as she becomes familiar with the routine. The movements may not be perfect for some students, but most can make progress within their abilities. Modeling the postures or

showing pictures of the position may be helpful for students with low vision. For certain postures, it may be helpful for the student to touch the position of the instructor's arm, head or leg to understand

body position (this strategy can be especially effective for students with tactile sensitivity). Some students have difficulty sitting up straight while sitting cross-legged. These students may benefit from sitting on the edge of a pillow or in a chair, or the narrow edge of a wedge cushion. If the student is seated in a chair, a pillow can be placed behind his back vertically along the spine to promote 'open' upright posture. A student who uses a wheelchair, can stay seated in the wheelchair or can lie down on the mat. Many exercises can be adapted to use only the arms, and the student can be gently assisted to move other parts of the body. (Note: Consult with the student's physical or occupational therapist to ensure safety of movements.) For students with limited attention, who are new to yoga, four or five activities may be enough to begin the practice. Gradually add more songs and poses as the students show growing interest and attention. Yoga is a great opportunity to use the student's communication medium such as braille, tactile symbols, object symbols, pictures, or print. A list of the different exercises is given to the student in her medium. This enables the student to follow the sequence of songs and postures during the routine and/or to communicate to her classmates what is next.

## **YOGA POSTURES AND ACTIVITIES**

The following are some positions and activities to do with students during a yoga routine:

### **Balloon Breathing**

The student begins in the ready position (sitting cross-legged with straight back and the hands together at chest level). The student pretends he is blowing a balloon taking deep breaths in and blowing it out loud and strong.

### **Angel Breathing**

The student begins in the ready position with hands in front of chest with fingers interlaced and resting underneath chin. Inhale, lift elbows up and head back. Exhale through mouth and slowly bring elbows together and head level.

### **Rock and Roll**

From sitting position, the student brings legs, bending their knees, up to chest and wraps his arms around the legs. The student rocks back and forth along the length of his spine rolling up to sitting position and back to the base of the neck.

Butterfly (Children's Yoga Songs and Meditations CD, track 2, "Fly like a Butterfly")

The student begins in sitting position with the soles of the feet together. The student gently moves knees up and down to look like butterfly wings. While sitting in a chair student can "clap" knees together or can use arms to mimic butterfly wings.

### **Dinosaur Walk**

(Children's Yoga Songs and Meditations CD, track 5, "Dinosaur Walk")

From sitting position: The student puts hands on knees or under knees to help lift them. Using an exaggerated movement, lift one leg and at a time and then stomp the foot back down.

From standing position: The student bends forward and holds ankles (or knees) and walks in place like a big heavy dinosaur.

With a group: Everyone forms a line with hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. As the music plays, each student makes big dinosaur steps to the music, lifting his knees as close as possible to his elbows. The line moves forward in a circular pattern and then reverses

during the second part of song.

### **The Elephant**

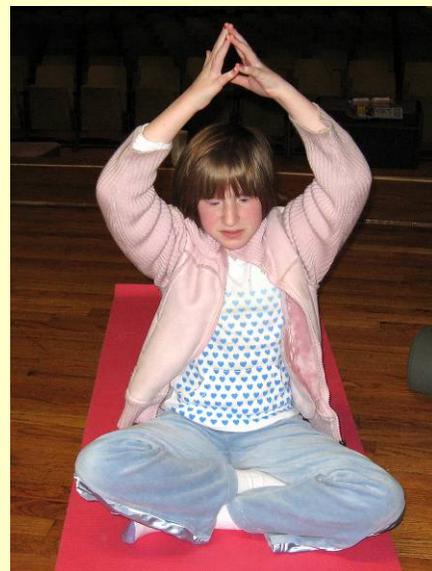
(Children's Yoga Songs and Meditations CD, track 3, "The Elephant")

From sitting position: The student extends arms in front of the body with elbows straight and hands clasped together. The student then slowly moves her arms side-to-side with arms extended (swinging the trunk); then stretches arms high in the air following the song cue. Finish the song with a loud "elephant" sound.

From standing position: The student extends arms in front with elbows straight and clasps hands together, and bends forward with arms hanging down making a slow side-to-side movement (swinging the "trunk"). Then she stretches her arms high in the air following the song cue. Finish the song with a sound "elephant" sound.

### **Tree**

With partner: With one hand on a partner's shoulder, the student lifts one foot and places it on the inside of opposite calf or thigh (avoid pressing foot on knee). The students then raises the free arm straight up pointing towards the ceiling. Hold for a count of 5 to 10 and then change sides.



Without partner: Balance on one foot, lift opposite foot and place it on the inside of opposite calf or thigh (avoid pressing foot on knee). Either place hands on hips or raise arms straight up towards the ceiling. Hold for a count of 5 to 10 and then change sides.

### **“Choo-Choo” Breath**

The student is sitting in starting position with arms bent at elbow and fists resting under chin. He “punches” alternating arms out in front while making a “choo” sound on the exhale.

### **Yogini**

(Radiant Child Music- Happy CD, track #2, Yogini Went to Sea)

The student is sitting in starting position (can also be done standing). The song involves sequencing of movements as they are sung.

Yogini went to sea, sea, sea (hand to forehead or on head)

Yogini went to chai, chai, chai, (hands tapping shoulders on ‘same side’ or crossing arms to touch opposite shoulders)

Yogini went to knee knee, knee (hands touch knees on ‘same side’ or crossing arms to touch opposite knees)

Yogini went to ouachua (hand on stomach making a circular or patting motion)

### **Partner Forward Bend**

Two students sit back to back (the instructor can replace one of the students the first few times) with arms and legs straight and holding hands above their heads. As one partner leans forward, the other one reclines back, holding for 5 seconds. The students return to center and change directions.

### **Cobra (The Snake)**

The student lies on his stomach with arms bent and hands placed palm-down under shoulders. On an exhale, the he pushes his hands against the floor, lifting his chest and head, trying to straighten his arms. Some students may have to lift using forearms.

### **Mountain (Downward Dog)**

The student starts on hands and knees and pushes her hips into the air until her arms and legs straighten resting on her feet and hands (looking like an inverted “V”). Due to tight muscles, some students may not be able to straighten knees.

Sa Ta Na Ma (Children’s Yoga Songs and Meditations CD, track #12)

This activity helps the students with isolated finger movements during a calming, repetitive song. The student sits in starting position with hands resting on his knees and palms turned upward. Each syllable of the song is paired with a fingertip being touched with the thumb. S a= pointer finger, Ta=middle finger, Na=ring finger, Ma=pinkie finger.

### **Relaxation**

The student lies on her back with arms and legs straight. The teacher may dim the lights and select a relaxing song/music to play for 3 or 4 minutes. Some children benefit from having a weighted blanket or regular blanket draped over them during the relaxation period.

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## **Stroller and Wheelchair Mobility: Turning passive Transports Into “Teachable Moments”**

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*Abstract: The author describes a variety of ways to actively engage individuals who are not traveling independently. Ideas include introducing object symbols, choices of locations, activities, and companions, using a cane, and traveling for a functional purpose.*

*Keywords: orientation and mobility, wheelchair, stroller, early childhood.*

There is an appropriate time and place for passively transporting a mobility-dependent child or student in a stroller or wheelchair. Emergency evacuations such as fire or tornado drills are one example. However, if passive transport is the predominant or only practice for getting our children from one place to another, we may be robbing them of multiple opportunities for learning about space, time and their own movement capabilities, which are the building blocks of independent movement and travel. For children who are blind or visually impaired, direct instruction in these developmental building blocks falls under the teaching domain or curriculum of Orientation and Mobility (O&M) and the teachers specifically trained to facilitate the child's learning are Orientation and Mobility Specialists with DPI license #826. (*editor's note: this information is specific to Wisconsin Public Instruction License standards, similar to Texas teacher certification standards, except Texas State Board of Educator Certification doesn't include certification for O&M*)

This document gives parents and professionals strategies to engage a child's or student's interest, attention and participation, thereby changing passive transport into “teachable

moments.”

### **AVOID THE “TRAVEL FAIRY” SYNDROME**

When the thought for movement comes from the child's brain, the child is learning. When the thought for movement comes from the travel fairy's brain, then the travel fairy is learning.

The phenomenon in which a child is “here” and then is “there” with no expectations for processing the in-between space is called the “travel fairy syndrome.” When children are not given the opportunity to process or think about their own movement through time and space, they are not learning.

**Strategy:** To reinforce your child's attention to his/her movement through the environment, become a careful observer of what your child is noticing. Whatever your child does that indicates s/he has observed something, i.e. turns to look; leans slightly to one side or another; becomes still and attentive; turns an ear toward a direction; flinches; or startles, reinforce that observation by providing a second sensory-experience related to what your child noticed.

**Imagine:** You are pushing your child in a stroller

*Active movement and exploration will be delayed if adults promote passive movement. Children in wheelchairs and strollers are at increased risk for having everything done for them. When the child is experiencing, processing and thinking, the child is learning. (Cutter, 2007)*

along a sidewalk. A turn of the head indicates that s/he has observed something. You stop and notice that you just passed a telephone pole or a tree along the boulevard. Did your child hear the telephone pole / tree? See it? Feel a shadow cast by it? Was there a change in temperature or break in the wind caused by it? Take your child over to the pole or tree and enjoy a shared tactile experience. Your attention to what your child observes reinforces his/her interest in the world around him/her. Shared experiences through mutual tactile exploration (child and adult ‘looking’ with their hands simultaneously) is very motivating for a child.

A consistent system or approach to getting a child ready to move from one place to another, including how the travel plan is communicated to the child and how the child’s active participation during travel is facilitated, is called a Travel Routine. Travel Routines facilitate early orientation and mobility skill development. They are designed around the child’s developmental levels of sensory-motor, cognitive and communication skills and should include:

- Sensory cues that allow a child to predict that s/he is about to be handled or moved.
- A multi-sensory system of communication (object-cue, verbal description, picture, part of an object, sign-language, calendar box, physical-cue) that allows the child to anticipate the purpose of the travel, what activity will take place, and where it will take place.

- A systematic approach to integrating increasing increments of time, and space, using the child’s sensory system to observe movement, sequence, the passage of time, and position in and through space.
- Opportunities for multiple and repeated hands-on experience (tactile exploration) and interactions with the environment in order to develop concepts. Sighted children look around to know what objects occupy space. Blind children tactually explore to understand what occupies space. (Cutter)
- Careful observation of what the child is noticing and paying attention to, followed by reinforcing his/her experience with your attention (joint attention) and providing a second sensory experience, because children use two senses to verify information. Things to see are things to touch, hear, taste, smell, etc.

### **TRAVEL ROUTINE SCENARIOS**

**Imagine:** Your child is playing on the living room carpet. You are going to take her outside for a walk around the neighborhood. You bring her sunglasses (object-cue which means “outside”) to her and say, “Here are your sunglasses. That means we are going outside!” You then put your hands under her arms (tactile-cue for picking up) and say, “I’m



going to pick you up. Ready? One... two...three.." (allows processing time). Once ready for outside, a hands-on approach to the stroller lets her know she will be placed in it. Along the way, you stop. You sign the word "stop" in her palm and ask if she would like to "go." She kicks her feet excitedly which you acknowledge as her sign for "go." You reinforce her communication intent by continuing the walk. You have just taught her that when she talks, you will listen!

**Imagine:** Your 5-year old son is in Kindergarten. He uses a schedule system known as a "calendar box" that helps him sequence the activities of his day. Three boxes sit side-by-side on the counter. In the first box is a book; the second box contains a toothbrush. Each of these symbols represents a specific activity that takes place in a specific location. He anticipates going to the OT room when he is carrying his toothbrush; and to the carpet square in the corner for story time when

carrying his book. The third box is the "finished" or "all done" box. When the activity is finished, he puts the object-cue in this box. This is a way to communicate that activities have a beginning and an end, which are concepts related to time.

The ability to anticipate or predict what is about to happen is critical for the sense of psychological safety necessary to promote independent movement and to learn about space and time. It also demonstrates a child's capacity to learn and adds a quality of life component. Strategy: To help your child anticipate where s/he is going and what will happen when s/he gets there, create predictable environments by linking an object-cue with a specific activity that takes place in a specific location.

### MEANINGFUL TRAVEL RELATED OBJECTIVES

1. Maintain alertness through sensory input. Learning cannot occur unless the child maintains an alert state. Avoid passivity.
  - Have child carry something, point to something or touch something.
  - Have child co-actively participate in some small part of wheelchair or stroller movement.
  - Have child push elevator buttons, maneuver doors, operate water fountains.
  - Explore environment together: use senses together (sensory integration) to form understanding of environmental features and objects, including people.
  - Listen for familiar voices/sounds.

- Call attention to smell, wind, temperature and time-distance awareness.
2. Practice communication skills. The child can communicate something directly related to the area being traveled through.
- Practice an object or picture communication system linking the activity with a specific location in the home or school.
  - Observe, identify and sequence landmarks along a familiar route.
  - Point to pictures of route-related people, places, things on a t ray-top communication board.
  - Push buttons or activate switch on audio communication device to respond to trip related information or activities.
3. Intentionally expose child to a variety of environments to increase tolerance and to develop concepts. One common trait among children with multiple disabilities is difficulty tolerating different environments and change.
- Take a different route. Take a 30 second detour outside, then back in the same door.
  - Identify common environmental features: doors, door knobs, walls, floors, trees, flowers in multiple environments; especially for children with a cortical visual impairment.
4. Practice choice-making skills. Choices can include:
- Use of object-cue to choose destination.
  - Do you want a drink of water?
  - Travel on the right or left side of hall?
  - Turn right or left? Do you want to go fast or slow?
- Stop or go? “We stopped. Do you want to go or wait?”
  - Who do you want to push you?
  - Which friend do you want to walk beside you / hold your hand?
  - Do you want to be pushed forward or backward?
5. Decrease dependence, use movement / travel to accomplish a task, and practice quality of life skills. Whatever the functional level of the child, there is always at least “one more thing” the child can do or do a little better. Quality of life skills are those such as “waiting” or “stopping” on command or the ability to assist in or make independent transfers to other seating, which make the child easily managed in public. In this case children are more likely to be taken along to the store, mall or other community location, where their learning continues, rather than to be left home with a caregiver.
- Use defined touch, verbal, object-cues that allow child to anticipate or predict where they are going and what will happen when they get there.
  - Reach out to touch / explore.
  - Practice adaptive hand movements such as open / close doors, turn knobs, push handles, push elevator buttons, hold something in lap.
  - Deliver attendance slips at school, return books to library, pick up mail, deliver something to a neighbor.
6. Practice foundational / formal Orientation & Mobility Curriculum skills:
- Sequence landmarks along a route. (use orientation-cues)
  - Reinforce / teach / practice “right/left” (laterality) and directions.

- Use a cane as to extend reach, preview the walking surface, probe.
- Get kids out of chairs and on the floor in different environments! This promotes: body mapping, mapping proximal space and near-range objects. Children learn on-body before off-body. A child first understands the environment through hands and feet before s/he can be expected to understand it through the cane. (Cutter)
- Develop concepts as a result of being exposed and interacting with real objects in authentic environments. Go on scavenger hunts to find: colors, temperatures, textures, people, smells, different kinds of flooring, inside / outside

doors, lights, windows, and trees.

- Consider the use of powered mobility systems (powered wheelchair).

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## How to Play Goalball

Beverly Jackson, Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS), Goalball Coach, Round Rock Independent School District

*Abstract: an In-depth description of goalball, a game widely played by blind players. The author discusses the general structure of the game, rules, how to start a team, and necessary equipment*

*Keywords: blind sports, visually impaired, sports, goalball.*

### HISTORY

Goalball was invented in 1946 by an Austrian Hans Lorenzen and a German, Sett Reindle. It was used for sport and rehabilitation of the post WW II blind veterans. The game of Goalball was developed over the years, gaining International acceptance and becoming a Paralympic Sport in 1976.

### THE COURT

The court is a standard gym volleyball court. There are two team areas on either end of the court. Inside the team areas, there are player orientation marks consisting of two wing lines and one center line. (see diagram of court)

### THE OBJECTIVE

The object of the game is to roll the ball on the floor, in a bowling motion and have the ball completely cross over the opposing team's goal line, scoring a point.

## BASIC RULES

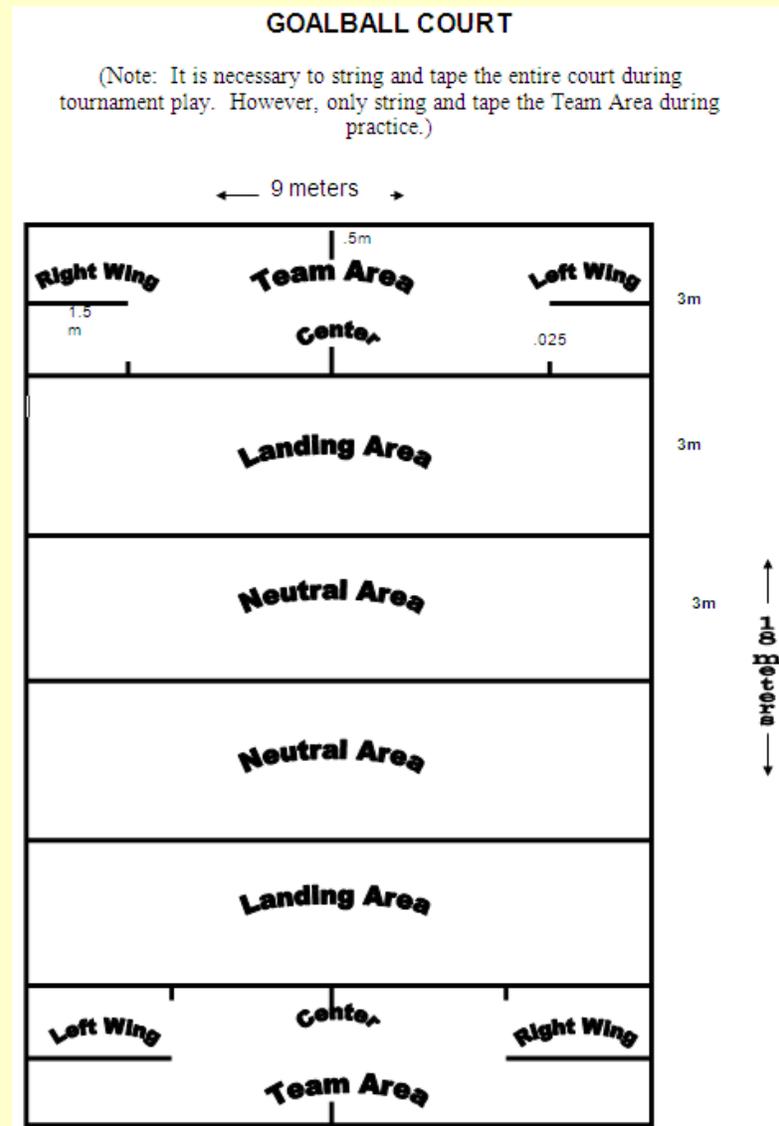
**Game Time:** A regular Goalball game is 24 minutes, consisting of two 12 minute halves, as of January 01, 2011. There is a 3 minute half time, in order for the teams to switch sides. An audible warning is issued 5 minutes before the game is to start, and a 30 second warning should be issued before the start of any half. The players that are going to start to play in any half must be ready for eyeshade control at 1 minute and 30 seconds before the start of the game. Should a team not be prepared to start the game after 3 minutes, a delay of game penalty will occur. All time is stopped during penalty situations. Game time starts and stops on the referee's whistle.

**First Ball:** A coin toss determines which team will receive the first ball, with the opposing team receiving the ball after half time.

**Time Outs:** Each team is allowed three, 45 second time outs in a game for coaching purposes. Both teams will utilize time out.

**Eyeshades:** in order to maintain an equal advantage, all team members, must wear eyeshades at all times during the game. After the game has started, a player may only adjust his or her eyeshades, by raising your arm up in the air. Only then, after the referee tells the person to turn around, may the person adjust the eyeshades.

**Time limits:** Upon receiving control of the ball, a team has only 10 seconds to throw the ball back at the opposing team. If it is not thrown, a team penalty will be called.



**Throwing:** (or offense) The ball must be rolled on the floor. When throwing the ball, it must touch the floor before the overthrow line or it is considered to be a high ball. This results in a penalty and voids any goal scored from that throw. Keep in mind the ball must be bowled or rolled along the floor rather than thrown.

**Defending:** (or defense) Players must stay within the team area when defending. When stopping the ball, some part of the player's body must be touching the team areas or it is called:

illegal defense and will result in a penalty.

Play: The audible command “play” must be called by the referee to start or restart the game. After any official stoppage in the game, “play” must be called to restart the game. For example: the start of the game, after an out of bounds ball, a blocked ball, a penalty situation, or a Goal.

Goal: a goal counts when the ball passes completely over the goal line of either team area. It is a goal no matter how it crosses the line, if it was thrown by the opposing team, or thrown or carried over by your own team members.

Losing possession of the ball: there are 3 ways to lose possession of the ball. This means your team will lose the ball and the opposing team gets to throw.

Premature Throw: when a player throws the ball before he/she is allowed to or before “play” has been called

Pass out: if a player passes the ball to another team mate and the pass is missed, with the ball going over the outside lines, this is called a Pass Out.

Ball over: this takes place, when a defending player stops the ball, and it bounces off that player and rolls over the center line.

Substitutions: Each team is allowed 3 substitutions during regulation time. Substitutions must be made once a team has control of the ball and the coach calls a time-out. Changes at the half are not counted as substitutions, but the referee must be notified at the beginning of the half

## **PENALTIES**

There are two types of penalties: personal penalty and team penalty. In both cases, only one player will remain on the court to defend the penalty throw. In a personal penalty, the player who committed the penalty will block. In the case of a

team penalty, the player who made the last recorded throw will block. If a team penalty is called before a throw has occurred, the player to remain on the court to defend will be chosen by the coach.

## **Personal Penalties**

Short ball: anytime a ball is thrown and stops rolling before the team area of the defending team the play shall be whistled dead and a penalty shall be awarded to the defending team.

High ball: the ball must touch the floor at least once in the team area of the landing area after it has left the hand of the throwing player in the act of making the throw. If not, the throw counts but cannot score.

Long ball: the ball must touch the floor at least once in the neutral area. If not, the throw counts but cannot score.

Eyeshades: any player on the court who touches his eyeshades shall receive a penalty. A player removed from the court in a penalty situation may not touch his eyeshades or another penalty shall be awarded. If during a time-out, halftime, or any stoppage in play, a player wants to touch his eyeshades, he must ask the referee for permission and after being given permission shall turn around before touching his eyeshades.

Third Time Throw: A player can only throw a ball two consecutive times. The third throw will be considered a penalty. The number of consecutive throws shall be carried over into subsequent halves or penalty situations. Scoring a goal against your own team will not count as a throw.

Illegal Defense: The first defensive contact with the ball must be made by a player who has any part of his body touching the team area.

Personal Delay of Game: This is called if a player is reoriented by any other person than a teammate on the court or if the player is not prepared

to start play when signaled by the referee.

Personal Unsportsmanlike Conduct: If a player is behaving in an unsportsmanlike manner, a personal penalty is called by the referee.

Noise: any excessive noise made by a player during the act of throwing that prevents tracking by the defending team shall be penalized.

### **Team Penalties**

Ten (10) Seconds: a player must throw the ball within the 10 seconds after the defensive team's first contact with the ball.

Team Delay of Game: A team delay of game is called against a team if:

The team is not prepared to start play on the instruction of the referee, or any action preventing the continuation of a game, or the team makes a substitution at the end of any half without notifying the referee, or the team requests a fourth time-out or a fourth substitution.

Team Unsportsmanlike Conduct: if a team member in the bench area or any member of the team's delegation present is behaving in an unsportsmanlike manner, a penalty is called against that team.

Illegal coaching: no person in the team bench area shall be permitted to coach in any manner except during time-outs, substitutions, or official stoppages in play and only until the referee calls quiet please.

Noise: any excessive noise made by any player on the throwing team while another player on the team is in the act of throwing or when the ball has been released shall be penalized.

Referee's Calls to know:

Play: to restart the game

Dead ball: when the ball stops moving and players are unaware of its location

Out: when the ball is thrown out of bounds

Block out: when a player stops the ball, but knocks it out of bounds

Pass Out: when a player passes the ball to a team mate, the pass is missed, and the ball goes out of bounds

Eyeshades: when a player adjusts his eyeshades or takes them off without permission

High ball: when the ball does not touch floor within the landing area

10 seconds: when a player takes longer than 10 seconds to throw ball

Three throws- when a player has thrown the ball three times in a row

Goal: when a goal is scored and the scoring team receives a point

Half: lets the players know it is half time, team will switch ends of court

Game: informs the teams that the game is over

Time out: allows the team that called a time out to have a 45 second time out

Substitution: game stops to allow a new player to change out with another player

Player's Positions:

In goalball, there are three types of positions on a team, One Center, Left wing and right wing.

### **Defense Skills**

The wing player's main responsibility is to cover the wing line. The second responsibility of the wing player is to back up the center player. The defending wing should be in ready position at the end of the wing line. When he hears the oncoming ball and has determined its course, he should lie down in the direction of the oncoming ball, either going left or right, always remembering to lie down in line with the wing line. The player must always remember to stretch out fully with arms and legs straight, becoming almost an extension of the wing line, covering as much of the goal line as possible. The player's arms

should be straight, but in front of the player's face, with the head tilted back, protecting the players face from any contact with the ball.

The center defends the same as a wing, always diving onto the floor, fully stretched out, covering as much of the court as possible. The center player will play on the front line of the team area, orienting himself with the center line. This marking tells the center that he is at the middle of the front line. The center either dives left or right, along the front line in the direction of the oncoming ball, always keeping some body part in the team area.

### **Offense Skills**

**Throwing:** When throwing the ball back at the defending team, the player must always feel the floor marking first, so that the player is squared off and facing the direction in which he or she plans to throw. Once the player is aware of his or her position, he or she can take a step or two, and bowl, or roll the ball, along the floor, in the direction of the opposing team. Remember, only 10 seconds is allowed after stopping the ball to throw it back.

### **Strategies**

There are many strategies to the game of Goalball. The ball can be thrown hard and fast, or soft and slow. It can be thrown cross court from corner to corner, or even curved by placing a spin on the ball before releasing it. These techniques all have advantages and disadvantages and make the game interesting and fun to play.

## **HOW DO YOU START A GOALBALL PROGRAM IN YOUR AREA?**

### **Step 1: Recruit Players**

Individually consider each student as a potential goalball player. At least six players are needed to

make two teams to play each other. Teams can be mixed ages and genders initially for practice. As the players gain more experience and their skills increase, you may want to divide the teams into the following categories: male, female, beginner, intermediate, and advanced. How do you find students who might be interested in trying the sport?

- Look at students in your own school district's VI caseload
- Check with Adapted PE coaches and/or Special Olympics coaches
- Ask your Education Service Center VI Staff about interested students
- Ask your DARS/Division for Blind Services caseworkers about interested students
- Send out invitation letters to any VI related organizations (see handout)

A good age to start attending practices is eight years. However, some students who are very physical and competitive can start learning basic goalball skills at age five or six. Any student is eligible to play who is visually impaired and attending school, up to age 22. Most competitions held in Texas and the nation have a minimum age requirement to compete of 12. Sighted peers or adults can also play, but cannot compete in competitions.

Skills needed include the ability to learn rules of game, participate in a team sport, and communicate with others. The player should have the physical ability to move in and out of various positions: from floor to standing, squatting, kneeling, and lying on the floor. Students with additional disabilities other than a visual impairment are always

considered. For example: a student with mild cerebral palsy or a student with intellectual disabilities, who can learn and play the game.

Typically, most students with visual impairments that are either in general education, resource classes, and even some students who are in functional academic classes can be considered to play. Medical conditions may prevent a person from playing. If a student has a medical statement from a doctor that he or she cannot participate in contact sports due to injury or illness then that should not play. A student who is at risk for retinal detachment, or has greater than normal eye pressure should not play. If in doubt, always check with the student's ophthalmologist or physician.

For students who are fearful of the ball and being in sports, you can gradually introduce the basic skills to the student while at school, individually, or at home. Most often once a student tries the sport, he or she will love it and overcome the fear of the ball.

## **Step 2: Obtain Equipment**

Goalball:

It is best to start with at least 2 goalballs. There are different types, but all are about the same price.

<http://www.independentliving.com>: \$ 89.95 each

These are good for practices, but not a recognized competition ball.

<http://www.targe.ca/goalball>: \$90.00 These balls are better quality and sanctioned by the International Blind Sports Association IBSA.

Pads:

You will need a variety of sizes of elbow and knee pads for players to protect themselves when blocking, diving, and sliding on the gym floor.

Academy Sports: basketball elbow and knee pads, volleyball kneepads, \$6 per pair

Ice Hockey pants: \$25 and up. These are good

padded pants designed to absorb the impact of the ball

<http://www.targe.ca/goalball>: Contego goalball pants w/padding on hips/thighs \$147 each. These are not necessary, but many players who are serious about the sport purchase these on their own.

Eyeshades and goggles;

All players are required to wear blindfolds to be on the same level of vision for goalball.

<http://www.targe.ca/goalball>: Phantom Visor Eyeshade, \$60. These are specifically designed for goalball.

[www.cyclegear.com](http://www.cyclegear.com): Motorcycle or Snow Ski Goggles Scott USA makes a good quality motorcycle goggle for approximately \$25 each. To use, tape the entire goggle with duct tape so that when worn no light can pass through.

[www.mindfold.com](http://www.mindfold.com): Mindfold Sleep Shades \$20 each. These shades are good for practices, but not allowed in competitions.

Floor Tape/String:

Boundaries are marked on a court with taped-down rope so that players can feel the boundaries with their feet and hands.

<http://www.gophersport.com> : Deluxe Vinyl Floor Tape, 2 inch width \$7.95 per roll. At least 2 rolls of tape will be needed for a goalball court.

String: can found at any hardware store, craft store, Wal-Mart. The best size is .003 meters in diameter. See Handout for Floor Diagram and Measurements.

Jerseys:

Jerseys are only required for any competitions where the players are representing a team. Jerseys are not

needed for practice.

Soccer Jerseys: order from team sports supplier, the cost is about \$25 and up.

T-Shirt with numbers and/or team logo The least expensive option: costs about \$10 each.

Jersey Guidelines:

All players on a team must wear matching team shirts. Each player must have a number at least 8 inches in height on the front and back. Numbers must be single digit and either 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,or 9.

### **Step 3: Learn the Rules**

Since Goalball is an Internationally Recognized Paralympic Sport, it is sanctioned by the IBSA (International Blind Sports Federation). The USABA (United States Association of Blind Athletes is the USA recognized organization that supports blind sports).

You can download the complete IBSA Goal Ball Handbook at:

<http://www.ibsa.es/eng/deportes/goalball/reglamento.htm>

Here are some helpful websites to get you started:

<http://www.usaba.org> organization that supports blind athletes

<http://www.ibsa.es/eng> international blind sports organization

<http://www.goalballuk.com> goal ball teaching strategies

### **Step 4: Locate Practice Facility**

Start with a school in your own district. Middle and High School campuses typically have wooden gym floors. Most districts will allow you to use the facility at no cost if it is a district employee requesting the facility. You may need to make a formal request with a District Facility Use Request Form. Local churches, YMCA, recreation centers might also be interested in allowing the use of their facility. Once you have a facility, develop a schedule of practices. Example: start with two practices per month. If you have a good turnout,

you can add additional practices.

### **Step 5: Recruit Volunteers**

For approximately 6 players, you can run a practice with a minimum of 2 to 3 people. If you have scrimmages and/or additional players, it is good to have more people. Some students may require one on one instruction, physical demonstration, etc. at times throughout the practice. Ask other Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Teachers of the Visually Impaired (VI teachers), Adapted PE Coaches, parents of VI students, teachers, college students, sororities and fraternities, churches, high school clubs, etc. Most organizations require a minimum amount of volunteer hours. ( ROTC, National Honor Society, Therapeutic Recreation College Programs, APE students, etc.) Many districts will offer comp time for employees who work after regular school hours. Talk to your special education supervisor.



## Advocacy on a Tight Budget

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

*Abstract: this article discusses the impact of budget issues for FY 2012-2013 biennium and provides some lessons learned about working with legislators.*

*Key Words: blind, deafblind, Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, legislators, state budget, advocacy,*

The news is not good about the state budget, and it will affect every person and organization related to the readership of this newsletter. The Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired has been told to plan for a 10% reduction, and every school district in the state is in a similar boat. We can expect that there will be tremendous advocacy to not reduce services to children and adults who have visual impairments, and with the right message and the right timing, some of it is likely to make a difference.

Last session the legislature probably learned more about visual impairment issues than in the previous five sessions combined. They learned about the shortage of TVIs and COMS and did something about it. They learned about safety issues with blind pedestrians and did something about it. Same with the wait lists and related issues in the DARS/DBS Children's Program. Requiring O&M assessments for most kids with visual impairments came very close to passing, and didn't based mostly on hap penstance. These important issues and others that didn't make it could all stand on their on merits, so why some and not others?

First, there are just so many resources to go around, and that's just a fact of life that advocacy can't really fix to everyone's satisfaction. But an important second in my view is that most legislators really are there to do good, and they

are looking for places where their very, very limited discretionary funding control can do just that. When they find an issue that they want to champion, they have to explain it to their colleagues in a way that it can be understood conceptually and a ppeals to the other members' sense of spending responsibly for something important. As a person who attends committee hearings to provide information on TSBVI and other statewide visual impairment issues, it seems like this is a v ery hard and sometimes gut wrenching process for our elected officials. I think all advocates should keep this mind as they try to influence the legislature through testimony or other means.

I think I've learned some things about working with the legislature from watching others and from doing it both well and not-so-well myself. Regardless of whether you are an advocate telling a per sonal story or a bur eaucrat like myself providing information, keep it simple and as brief as the complexity of the subject will allow. Be truthful and accurate to your best ability. Try to be inspiring about your advocacy topic, not accusatory or condescending—most legislators are not personally connected in any direct way to the wrong you are trying to right. Lastly, if you are part of a group of advocates providing separate testimony around a s ingle topic or related topics, the testimony must all be walking down the same trail as much as

possible, because off-trail walking gets everyone lost in the woods. Last session's experience with trying to eliminate the certification-by-exam for TVIs—a good cause, by the way—ended up going nowhere primarily because of some inaccurate testimony that clouded the issue just enough to make it easy to say no.

There is reason to be concerned that the shortfall in the 2012-2013 biennium may be repeated in 2014-2015 biennium, and if so we are likely to see continued downward pressure on service availability and quality. Advocacy and providing information to the legislature to address the concerns of the visual impairment and blindness community will need to be coordinated and centered around those few key issues—whatever they are—that give lawmakers

something they can understand and champion. Parents, children and adult service providers, consumers, educators and all other interested parties need to reach out and connect with others to narrow and refine the collective agenda. For any of us, the advocacy goal we are trying to reach may have as its best hope for success the goal of some other group or individual we've not even considered. Think for example about the goals of parents who want better school and life outcomes for their young children. It seems like a natural partnership with those interested in training more TVIs and COMS just as much as it is with those interested in the children's services area.

We have to connect the dots ourselves if we are ever to expect the legislature to do the same with our mutual interests.



Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired: old main building, left, new main building, constructed in front of original, right.

## Celebrate the Past, Look to the Future

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

*Abstract: this article discusses the Division for Blind Services training conference in which participants learned about issues and events within our organization, heard from national and local leaders in the field of blindness and networked with colleagues.*

*Key Words: blind, employment, self-determination, American Council of the Blind (ACB), American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center, Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), Division for Blind Services (DBS)*

For the first time in more than ten years, the DARS-Division for Blind Services (DBS) held a Statewide Staff Training Conference. This very successful event, which was held last October in San Marcos, Texas, was designed to celebrate our staff and their many accomplishments while helping them keep up-to-date on activities and developments in the field of blindness.

In addition to DBS staff, conference participants included staff from other divisions within the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) and several consumers as well as a number of presenters, vendors, and guests from rehabilitation partnerships at the local, state, regional, and national levels. General sessions offered insights and perspectives from exciting keynote speakers, and a wide range of breakout sessions were designed to accommodate topics of special interest to division staff in a variety of program areas.

Jeanne Miller is the Director at the University of Arkansas CURRENTS (Center for the Utilization of Rehabilitation Resources for Education, Networking, Training, and Service). She presented at a general session and challenged DBS staff to gather information from the conference in order to "stimulate your thinking,

challenge your assumptions, and take back new ideas."

Kathy West-Evans presented at the same general session on behalf of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). She addressed the importance of building strong business relationships in order to further the dual goals of expanding employment opportunities and helping blind people build careers (not just jobs) based on quality skills and self-empowerment.

Dr. Fred Schroeder, an active member of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), has served as the commissioner for the New Mexico Commission for the Blind, and he was appointed by the President to serve as the ninth commissioner for the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) under the U.S. Department of Education. In his presentation, he discussed the general public's low expectations for blind people and urged staff to continue finding new ways to help our consumers develop an internal sense of self-confidence so they can unlock their true potential and lead full and productive lives.

The conference also included a very special event when Judy Scott, Center Director for the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) Center on Vision Loss, was inducted as the sixteenth member of the DBS Wall of Honor. The Wall of Honor, located at our Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center in Austin, was established in 2001 to recognize lifetime achievements in the field of blindness.

As noted during the induction ceremony, "Judy has earned the respect and admiration of both the Division for Blind Services and the blind community through her very successful efforts to build a better Texas, and a better world, for all of us."

The staff from the Blind Children's and Transition Programs, in addition to participating in pre-conference sessions that focused on developing skills to enhance our relationships with our educational partners, experienced the benefits of learning from two recognized experts in the field. First, Dr. Christine Roman, nationally known expert in CVI, spoke about assessment and intervention with children with Cortical Visual Impairment. Using videotapes of DBS consumers, she also provided live consultations with parents and professionals. Here are just some of the comments:

"INCREDIBLE!!!!" "Valuable and moving information." "Informative and dynamic."

The Blind Children's and Transition Programs also learned from Stormetta Stateler, VI Consultant from Region 16, whose presentation was entitled, "Everything You Wanted to Ask a VI Consultant but Were Afraid to Ask." She responded to direct and specific questions from staff about how to assist parents in navigating the special education

system, and staff feedback indicated that it provided tools that could be immediately put into practice.

Before I close this article, I would also like to quickly mention a phenomenon that occurred in the days immediately following our training conference. As everyone must know by now, the Division for Blind Services has always been very proud of our staff for reasons that range from their excellent job knowledge and skills to their creativity and dedication in delivering quality services for blind Texans of all ages. As soon as the conference concluded, senior managers in our division sent thank-you letters to the outside presenters who were invited to attend our conference. The phenomenon I observed was the reaction those thank-you letters generated.

A number of the responses conveyed congratulatory remarks and offered specific comments about the positive culture and passion that staff exhibited during the conference. Considering that the majority of the outside presenters attended the conference for only a brief period of time, I feel a special pride that so many of them discerned such a positive impression about our staff and our organization.

Yes, 2010 was a good year for DBS. And although we know the budget issues in Texas will bring challenges, we are looking forward to meeting and exceeding those challenges in 2011. We hope that your new year will be equally rewarding!

## RFB&D for Texas Schools! Free!

### RFB&D Press Release

*Abstract: This article describes Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic services that are now available at no cost for Texas Public and Charter Schools, kindergarten through grade 12.*

*Key Words: blind, Deafblind, dyslexic, Texas public schools, Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic (RFB&D), audiobooks, accessible*

Texas K-12 Public and Charter Schools now have FREE Access to Audiobooks for Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic (RFB&D). RFB&D, a national nonprofit organization, is the leading accessible audio textbook library for individuals with visual and print disabilities.

And Now.....Texas has a state membership that allows all K-12 public and charter schools access to their library of digital, audio textbooks and literature at no cost to the district. The Texas membership contains the following benefits:

Sign up each campus! Unlimited downloads from our library, no book limits! Access to all three formats: DAISY CD's, DAISY Downloadable and WMA Downloadable. Dedicated assistance for ordering books at [bookorder@rfd.org](mailto:bookorder@rfd.org) Web-based training, twice per month.

Teacher resources

Find all the above at [www.rfd.org/texas](http://www.rfd.org/texas) . A Texas only site!!

To Learn More, Register at [www.rfd.org/texas](http://www.rfd.org/texas) for the Introduction Webinar hosted each month.

Once the membership is activated, you will have full access to RFB&D's audiobook library which

includes textbooks, novels and literature.

Please visit the Texas Dedicated Landing Page for:

- Membership Form to register a new school/account
- Sign up for Live Webinar Trainings
- Access to Book Ordering Support
- All Support Needs

If you have any questions at all, please contact:

Terrie Noland  
Regional Project Director  
[tnoland@rfd.org](mailto:tnoland@rfd.org)



## Funding Opportunities for Doctoral Studies in Special Education

Vanderbilt University's Peabody College  
Excerpt from promotional flyer

*Abstract: this article describes a new initiative in special education training at a doctoral level in low incidence disabilities including visual impairment.*

*Key Words: Vanderbilt University, doctoral degree, visual Impairment, severe disabilities*

The Vanderbilt University's Peabody College Department of Special Education has a legacy of conducting groundbreaking research, establishing innovative practices, and developing widely used methods and materials for practitioners, researchers, parents, and policy makers. The Ph.D. degree in Special Education is conferred through Vanderbilt's Graduate School. This degree program, which prepares students for leadership positions as special educators in schools, colleges, universities, research settings, and human service agencies, is competency based and emphasizes research and teaching. The student's program of study will consist of core requirements and a n individually designed series of courses and competencies. Through the core requirements, you will acquire fundamental research methodology skills requisite for advanced positions in special education. You can select your focus of study from high-incidence disabilities (learning disabilities, behavior disorders), early childhood special education, severe disabilities and autism, or visual impairments.

The Department of Special Education is the recipient of leadership training grants from the Office of Special Education Programs in the

U.S. Department of Education. These grants provide doctoral students with tuition, monthly stipends, health insurance, and professional travel. To be eligible for these grants, students must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Other funding streams are available for those who do not meet these requirements.

[http://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/Special\\_Education.xml](http://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/Special_Education.xml)

For general information about the application process, contact:

Alfred Brady

(615) 322-8195

[sped-admissions@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:sped-admissions@vanderbilt.edu)

For specific questions about program areas, contact the faculty identified:

High Incidence Disabilities

Contact: [joseph.wehby@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:joseph.wehby@vanderbilt.edu) or [steve.graham@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:steve.graham@vanderbilt.edu)

Early Childhood Special Education

Contact: [ann.kaiser@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:ann.kaiser@vanderbilt.edu)

High-Need Students with Severe Disabilities or Autism

Contact: [carolyn.hughes@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:carolyn.hughes@vanderbilt.edu)

## Texas Deafblind Symposium 2011 Awards for Excellence in Deafblindness

### TRAIL BLAZER AWARD

#### Rubina & Fareed Khan, Parents of Tania and Physicians, Bellaire, TX

This award is given to family members who through their advocacy or efforts blazed a trail that has made it easier for other families who follow.

### INTERVENER AWARD

#### Irma Lopez, Intervener, Texas School for the Deaf

This award is given to an intervener who has demonstrated excellence in their role of support to a child with deafblindness.

### MARTY MURRELL EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AWARD

#### Susan Lawrence, Deafblind Specialist, Region 10 ESC, Richardson, TX

This award is given to a professional in education who has made a long-term commitment to excellence in education for Texas students with deafblindness.

### ANN SILVERRAIN AWARD

#### C C Davis, Deafblind Specialist, DARS-DBS and Former HKNC Regional Representative

This award is given to any individual who has made an extraordinary commitment to improving the lives of individuals with deafblindness in the state of Texas.

"Butterfly Mola"  
By Adriana Soto  
Deafblind Art Exhibit  
2011

For more art  
see Spring 2011 issue!



## Annual NFB Writing Contest Underway

NFB Writers' Division Announcement

*Key Words: blind, Deafblind, National Federation of the Blind (NFB), Writers' Division, Braille, literacy*

The annual youth and adult writing contests sponsored by the Writers' Division of the NFB, will open January 1st and close April 1st. Adult contests, poetry, fiction and non-fiction, are open to all entrants eighteen years and over. The youth contests are all about Braille and all poetry and fiction entries are required to be submitted in Braille. The age groups are divided into three categories: first through sixth grades, seventh and eighth grades, and ninth through twelfth grades.

Prizes for contest winners range up to \$100 for adult categories and up to \$25 for youth categories. All contest winners will be announced at the Writers' Division business meeting during the NFB national convention to be held in Orlando, Florida, the first week of July 2011. In addition, shortly after convention, a list of winners will appear on the Writers' Division Website, [www.nfb-writers-division.org](http://www.nfb-writers-division.org). First, second, and third place winners in each category will appear in the summer and fall issues of the Writers' Division magazine, "Slate and Style."

For additional contest details and submission guidelines, go to the Writers' Division Website, [www.nfb-writers-division.org](http://www.nfb-writers-division.org).

President NFB Writers' Division

Robert Leslie Newman

Email- [newmanrl@cox.net](mailto:newmanrl@cox.net)

Division Website

[Http://www.nfb-writers-division.org](http://www.nfb-writers-division.org)

## HHSC Quick Resource Guide

Kevin Markel, Transition Field Specialist, and Gay Speake, BCVDDP Field Specialist, DARS-Division for Blind Services

*Key Words: blind, Deafblind, HHSC, resource guide, state of Texas*

The following is a link to download the recently released 2010 **HHSC Quick Resource Guide**. **IT IS AN AMAZING RESOURCE** for anyone seeking or helping others to find health and human services in Texas!

Developed by the HHSC Office of Border Affairs for use by promoters and other community-based health advocates, the **HHSC Quick Resource Guide** is a summary reference document describing programs for people of all ages in seven different state agencies. Topics covered include descriptions of the programs, ages served, maximum monthly income and resource limits, citizenship and residency requirements, and additional information. It's organized by agency.

[http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/hhsc\\_projects/oba/colonias/QRG.pdf](http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/hhsc_projects/oba/colonias/QRG.pdf)

## Group Health Insurance Assistance Through HIPP

*Announcement: Ryan McKenna, HIPP Trainer*

*Key Words: blindness, deafblindness, disability, Medicaid, group health insurance, Texas Health Insurance Premium Payment (HIPP)*

The Texas Health Insurance Premium Payment (HIPP) program helps families pay for group health insurance. Many families you work with might be eligible for HIPP. A family that meets the following two criteria might be eligible:

- Someone in the family gets Medicaid, AND
- Someone in the family can get group health insurance.

HIPP can help the whole family, even those without Medicaid. Family members who already get Medicaid can:

- Still get Medicaid services not covered by the health insurance,
- Go to doctors who take the group health insurance, and
- Have their co-payments and deductibles paid for by Medicaid when they go to a doctor who takes Medicaid.

Family members who do not get Medicaid might get group health insurance coverage, if they qualify for HIPP.

When a family qualifies for HIPP, Medicaid repays the family's insurance premiums.

To learn more, visit our website at [www.GetHIPPTexas.org](http://www.GetHIPPTexas.org). The Spanish-language website is at: [www.PonteHIPPTexas.org](http://www.PonteHIPPTexas.org).

If you would like brochures or posters, please contact:

Ryan McKenna, HIPP Trainer  
505 E. Huntland Drive Ste. 380  
Austin, TX 78752

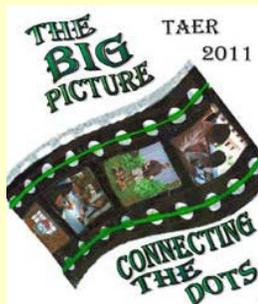
Telephone: 512-279-1722 x121

[rmckenna@hms.com/](mailto:rmckenna@hms.com/)

# Bulletin Board

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

## 2011 TAER



### “The Big Picture: Connecting the Dots”

March 24-26, 2011

Sheraton Dallas North.

We are excited to announce that registration forms  
are now online as is hotel information.

We look forward to seeing you in March!

[www.txaer.org](http://www.txaer.org)

Julie Prause, President and Christy Shepard, Treasurer

### Every Move Counts:

Sensory-based Strategies for  
Identifying Appropriate Technological  
Interventions for Individuals with  
Severe and Profound Differences  
Jane Korsten, Independent Consultant

**April 13 & 14, 2011 9:00-4:00**

Region 4 Education Service Center Houston, TX

Session ID 649391; Registration Fee: \$100

Credit: CPE 12, ASHA 1.1

Register for training at [www.theansweris4.net](http://www.theansweris4.net)

Contact: Angela Standridge,

[astandridge@esc4.net](mailto:astandridge@esc4.net)

### Texas Assistive Technology Network (TATN) Statewide Conference

June 14-16, 2011

Region 4 ESC

Houston, TX

Region 4 ESC Contact:

Kirk Behnke, [kbehnke@esc4.net](mailto:kbehnke@esc4.net)

Register for training at [www.theansweris4.net](http://www.theansweris4.net)



### Active Learning Conference

On the TSBVI Campus

June 9 - 10, 2011

With an Introduction to Active Learning by:

PATTY OBRZUT, OTR; of Penrickton Center for the Blind in Michigan

Early bird registration(April 1<sup>st</sup>- May 15<sup>th</sup>) \$100

Late & Out of State Registration (May16<sup>th</sup>-June 3<sup>rd</sup>) \$125

contact: Brian Sobek at [briansobek@tsbvi.edu](mailto:briansobek@tsbvi.edu)

or find additional information at [www.tsbvi.edu/workshops](http://www.tsbvi.edu/workshops)

## TAPVI Talks

### DESTINATION...MORGAN'S WONDERLAND FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 2011

Have you ever dreamed of a place that your family could go where all of you were having a blast, playing together and sharing new experiences? A place where your child with unique needs has meaningful experiences and makes priceless memories? Memories that can lead to new interests and to developing new skills? The TAPVI board recently toured such a place... Morgan's Wonderland...an accessible amusement park located in San Antonio.

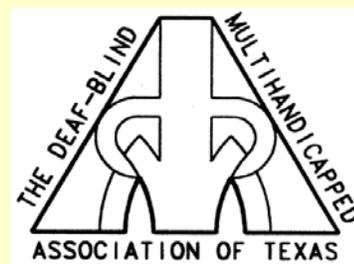
It is the "World's First Ultra Family Fun Park" designed specifically for children and adults with special needs, their family members, caregivers, friends and the entire community. This 25-acre park is a unique oasis, that through the spirit of inclusion, allows people of all abilities to play, learn and share life changing experiences together, in a fun and safe environment. To learn about the park go to [www.morganswonderland.com](http://www.morganswonderland.com). Morgan's Wonderland is enjoyed best by children that function between the 3-12 year age level. Reservations are requested.

In collaboration with DARS Division of Blind Services, TSBVI Outreach and the Educational Service Centers, a reservation has been made for up to 300 families, the maximum amount the park can handle. TAPVI will sponsor an all day activity for families on June 17, 2011. If you are interested in joining TAPVI and volunteering for this event, contact President-Elect, Amy Hayes at 281-923-7760 or [amyhayes@earthlink.net](mailto:amyhayes@earthlink.net)

Keep in touch with your DBS Specialist to receive more information. There is limited space.

### 6th Texas Chargers Annual Retreat

NOVEMBER 4 -6TH, 2011  
CAMP ALLEN, NAVASOTA TEXAS  
for additional information, see:  
[www.texaschargers.org](http://www.texaschargers.org)



### DBMAT Annual Conference

OCTOBER 14-16, 2011  
CAMP JOHN MARC, MERIDIAN, TX  
For additional information, see:  
[www.dbmat-tx.org](http://www.dbmat-tx.org)

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

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## Texas SenseAbilities

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



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