



# TX Sense Abilities

Spring 2014  
FAMILY WISDOM

## Circus of Life

Aimee Dowling Alexander, Chris Alexander, Kathalene Brooks,  
Family members and Lauren Eudy, DARS Children's Program Specialist

*Abstract: Parents and their children with visual impairments learned new strategies to develop independent living skills, recreation and leisure skills and career awareness at a conference sponsored by the Division of Blind Services. Families received support and information about raising a child with a visual impairment.*

*Keywords: Family Wisdom, independent living skills, recreation and leisure skills, visual impairment*

The Blind Children's and Transition Programs in the Dallas region hosted the Circus of Life Family Conference in late January 2014. With a huge turnout of 70 families, equaling 257 participants, this was the largest group skills training event the Dallas region has hosted.

This conference was an opportunity for the DARS team to work together with consumers, families and the community to empower consumers to reach their full potential. Using "The BIG 6" core skills model, Division for Blind Services (DBS) offered hands-on sessions for families including measuring, setting a table, clothing organization, basic cooking skills, recreation and sports options, and cleaning skills. Parents were provided with curriculum for teaching these skills at home. The goal was to teach parents and consumers of all levels to integrate activities of daily living and independence into their daily routines.

Networking with other families with the same challenges was a huge feature of this conference. We were given many opportunities to meet and talk with other parents and even some grandparents to share ideas, offer support, and talk about what works and what doesn't when raising a child with a visual impairment. During lunch and dinner at our table, the discussions were about new games to play with our kids, the latest iPad applications (apps) that aided day to day living and learning, therapy opportunities in the area, and fun school programs that are available. It was also great to talk about what each family took away from each session at the conference. The chance to talk with families of older children to see 'what comes next' was very helpful as this is a question we discuss in our household all the time.

Attending the breakout sessions was very informative and enlightening, it was wonderful to hear about all of the community activities that are designed for our son. The session on sports activities with United States Association of Blind Athletes (USBA) Dallas-Fort Worth offered an entirely new area of opportunities for our son that we never knew existed. This is a group that we look forward to learning

more about in the future as we start to introduce sports into our son's life. The session on what to expect and look for during an ARD meeting offered us an insight on what the future holds and some tools to be better prepared for these meetings.

The conference also offered sessions on daily life skills and gave us ideas on how to incorporate these new skills into our son's day-to-day activities. We have started an 'About Me Book' that we learned about in the Resources room and have started to use it at places like gym class, music class, therapies and new doctors' offices so that everyone gets to know our son better. We also have taken ideas that involve the liquid indicator and a Dycem non-slip mat and started to use them in our home to allow our son to help us with small tasks in the kitchen while making his meals.

As parents of a two year old deaf-blind child diagnosed with CHARGE syndrome, the best lesson we took away from the Circus of Life conference was that our life is normal. There are other families similar to ours and while this life maybe a little different from someone else's, it is still a normal, happy and fulfilling one.



*Picture 1: Mary Rose and Mom learn how to measure ingredients to make trail mix.*



*Picture 2: Ydie, Jose and Adrianna explore different communication devices while Mom and Dad speak to a presenter.*



*Picture 3: Gracie and her Mom explore the Perkins Panda books.*



*Picture 4: Vocational rehabilitation teacher (VRT) Sharma teaches Dane and his Mom non-visual cleaning techniques.*



*Picture 5: Lesly explores and uses a communication device.*

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