



MSB REACHING OUT NEWSLETTER



THE MARYLAND
SCHOOL FOR
THE BLIND

Volume 11, Issue 2

Spring 2016

A Re-Cap - 2015/2016 MSB Short Courses

MSB is in its 3rd year of offering weekend short courses during the school year that focus on specific skills from the Expanded Core Curriculum. Our program has grown from 4 short courses a year to at least 1 short course every month. We have also taken the short courses “on the road” to provide programs for a specific county or regionally. Staff from county programs and interns from vision certification programs help coordinate and implement the programs as well. This type of collaboration ensures that student needs are being identified by people who know them best so that the short courses can effectively address them.

This year, we have offered some fun and instructional themes and activities. In September, students enjoyed a day of adapted sailing lessons on accessible sailboats in Baltimore’s Inner Harbor with staff from the Downtown Sailing Center. In October we held a Fall Family Fun Day on the MSB campus. Students and their families enjoyed a crisp fall afternoon full of making fall crafts, cooking over a campfire and networking with each other. November’s short course, called “Kids in Action”, focused on activities to promote fitness and movement with elementary age students. December’s event combined 2 short courses with a parent conference. Elementary age students worked on making holiday themed crafts and gifts while middle and high school students worked on a community service project that involved making holiday cards for active military and veterans. Transition was the theme for the parent conference. Parents were able to hear first-hand experiences from visually impaired adults with regards to strategies and tips for preparing their children for post-secondary education and employment. They also learned about resources for adults through DDA and DORS.

After the holidays, we planned a timely “New Year, New You” course in January to teach students about healthier habits for their minds and body. Mother Nature bumped this course to the first week of February but students who attended learned about exercise and fitness, yoga and some new dance steps! They also learned how to make more nutritious food choices. Also in February, 16 students were able to attend an exciting event where they learned to play ice hockey with international blind ice hockey players and coaches at the Kettler Arena, home of the Washington Capitals in Arlington, Va. In March, we held another short course for middle and high school students that offered a community service opportunity, called “Care and Share”. Students made casseroles for a local homeless shelter and were able to learn adaptive strategies for food preparation and cooking in the process.

Upcoming short courses will include 2 regional short courses in April focused on transition to be held in Wicomico and PG Counties. In May, we will finish the year with 2 short courses. One will be the Savage Mud Run in Kennedyville, Md. This will be MSB’s second year participating in this 6 mile extreme obstacle course. The other will be a geocaching course which will be held on the MSB campus and surrounding Parkville community. Please visit our website for more information on the short courses and other Outreach events at www.marylandschoolfortheblind.org.



Photo courtesy of *Dotty Raynor*

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“The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision”

Helen Keller

Special points of interest:

- **MSB Short Courses**
- **MD Braille Challenge**
- **Blind Ice Hockey**
- **MSB Summer Programs**



Blind Hockey

By Mathew Mescall

On February 19th into the 20th The Maryland School for the Blind's Outreach Program hosted 16 students to "Try Blind Hockey" in Arlington Virginia. The action started that Friday in Knefely gym on The Maryland School for the Blind's campus with a session of floor hockey lessons to learn the skills needed to play a game of hockey minus the ice. Students learned how to stick handle, pass, communicate, shoot, and goaltend. All-important skills if one is going to take the game to the ice. The athletes then learned the "do's and don'ts" of the game including infractions and how to earn a spot in the penalty box. The night was wrapped up with a 5 vs. 5 game of floor hockey that was fast paced, high scoring, and full of newly learned skills. The game was well played and the athletes had a blast. The rest of the evening was spent getting ready for the next day and talking and watching NHL hockey.

The excitement and anticipation built up that night for the next day. That Saturday morning we woke up early to drive down to Arlington Virginia to the Kettler Capitals Iceplex to try out our skills at a USA Hockey is for Everyone Event that featured "Try Blind Hockey". After arriving early we had to wait our turn to hit the ice because the guys on it before us were prepping for their game that night against the New Jersey Devils. That's right; we got a front row seat to watch the Washington Capitals practice! They too practiced all the same skills our athletes had the night before but boy could they fly up and down the ice! It would soon be our turn to show off our skills however this time on the ice. After gearing up in full hockey gear from head to toe our brave athletes hit the ice. Some practiced skating for the first time while others grabbed a stick and blind hockey puck and worked with others on their skills. All together 60 visually impaired and blinded athletes came to experience the event. After an hour of practicing our skating and hockey skills 20 athletes were chosen to play in an actual game. Many of The Maryland School for the Blind's athletes were chosen to be apart. The game was official with 2 referees and even well experienced players and coaches from Canada.

Blind Hockey has all the same rules as hockey except all players have some type of visual impairment. By using the same vision classification as used in the Paralympics, both teams must match the same level of visually impaired athletes with the other team to make the game fair. B1 (totally blinded athletes) play goalie, B 2's (some functional vision) play defense, and B 3 (legally blind but better vision than the prior classification) are the forwards. The puck must be passed once in the opposing teams' zone and a goal can only be scored on the first 4 feet of the 5 foot net. The puck itself is bigger, about 6 inches wide, has bearing in it that rattle to make noise, and is bulkier to slow it down just a bit. Other than those few rule changes the game is essentially the same. The day ended at the sound of the final buzzer with both teams and fans celebrating the fact that hockey is indeed for everyone regardless of your visual impairment!

Our day was featured in an article in the Baltimore Sun titled "Students from Maryland School for the Blind learn to play hockey" and can be found at the link :<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/education/bs-md-blind-hockey-20160220-story.html>.



The Maryland School for the Blind

(“Blind Hockey” cont’d...)

Big thanks go out the families who allowed their student this opportunity and the athletes who were the stars of the day by playing a new sport that requires bravery and skill. We hope that each athlete can continue to play Blind Hockey and with a big thanks to the Non-Profit “Leveling the Playing Field” The Maryland School for the Blind now has 10 full sets of hockey gear. If any student would like to continue to play and needs this equipment please contact our Outreach department so they can borrow it.



Photo courtesy of **Dotty Raynor**



Photo courtesy of **Dotty Raynor**





2016 Regional Braille Challenge

By Jackie Otwell



Even though we had a snowfall for the record books just the week before, The Maryland Regional Braille Challenge was held on MSB's campus on January 30, 2016, thanks to the efforts of many staff and departments on the campus. Twenty-six students participated the day of the Challenge! It was an exciting day of hard work and fun. Students participated in a variety of contest categories that may have included Reading Comprehension, Spelling, Proofreading, Charts and Graph Reading, and Speed and Accuracy, depending on the student's grade level. At the end of the day students received prizes, saw the MSB Bee, made a Braille and print snack mix, had their faces painted and walked away with balloon animals! In addition, medals with the words "MD Braille Challenge 2016" in Braille were shipped to students' homes!

Special congratulations to the following MSB students who participated: LaShai Richardson, Sidney Iubelt, Ruben Pinales, Virginia Jacobs, Gracie Zuzarte and Andrew Rhoads.

Thank you to all the staff that helped make this event a success! Please go the Ustream link below to view the Keynote address from Dr. Stuart Wittenstein, former Superintendent of the California School for the Blind, a literacy presentation from Anna Swenson, Braille Literacy Consultant and the award ceremony.

To watch these events please go to <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/MSB-Outreach-and-Training>. Thank you again and we hope to see you at the **2017 Maryland Regional Braille Challenge** next year!

Follow the Maryland Braille Challenge on Twitter @mdblchallenge #mdbc16.



Photo courtesy of *Dotty Raynor*

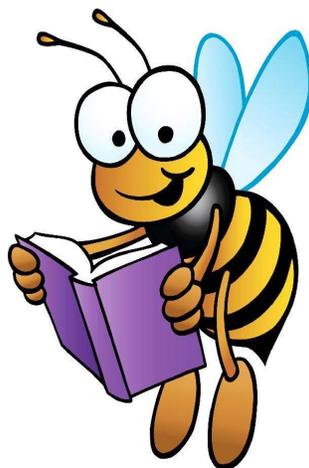


Photo courtesy of *Dotty Raynor*

The Maryland School for the Blind

A Parent's Perspective

By Renee Kirby

I am always exploring innovative ways of encouraging parents to participate in events along side and/or pertaining to their children with disabilities. I strongly feel, as a parent of a teenage visually impaired young adult, a parent can never be too prepared to assist and help guide your child's journey of Transition, from the safety net of school - whether it be public, private or MD School for the Blind - to the world of secondary education, the work force or a mingling combination of the two.

Parent workshops are a great way to network with other parents whose child may be experiencing similar obstacles and/or overcoming incredible odds just as your child. In either or all circumstances it is always a welcome opportunity to be able to take part in conversation with families and exposure to useful resources. It seems that , more often than not, parents leave these workshops with a more focused agenda than with what they came.

Amongst the hustle and bustle of the balancing act we call "Life", I can relate to the parents that feel, " if there were only a few more hours in our day...". I also know that those precious hours would also be eaten up by all the activities and situations that have us spread so very thin. I consider the workshops as fuel to fill our tanks of connection, resources and information to assist us in the parenting process which, in turn, will give you the support you and your family need to balance.

SAVE THE DATES:

April 13th—Parent Lunch Group —Daily Living Skills

May 21st—MSB/CLB -Parent Transition Workshop





The following article was written by Muhammad Waheed (a former MSB student) and originally published for the “Hallmark Newspaper” of Perry Hall High School:

OPINION: Blind ice hockey is a great sport for those with reduced sight

Muhammad Waheed, Staff Writer

February 26, 2016

Hockey sticks making clapping sounds, loud sounds from an ice rink, and a lot of communication are all essential parts of ice hockey, but low vision athletes have a slightly modified version of the sport.

Blind ice hockey started in Canada and is now making its way around the globe. Students a part of The Maryland School for the Blind recently visited the Kettler Capitals Iceplex, the home of the Washington Capitals, on Saturday, Feb. 20 to try out the adapted sport.

The rules and adaptations

Blind ice hockey uses the same type of ice rink. The puck that is used in the sport is different and modified. The puck is a steel disc that has material on the inside that makes auditory noise when moving. The blind hockey puck is larger and travels slower than a normal hockey puck. This modification is made so low vision athletes can better track the puck when in motion.

The faceoff is also altered. The adapted puck is placed on the ice at the middle of the rink. The official blows their whistle and the two athletes compete for possession.

Scoring is another aspect of the sport that is a bit different. The puck must be in the bottom three feet of the net in order for a goal to count. The adapted blind hockey puck doesn't make sound when in the air so players must keep the puck as close to the ground as possible. A pass must be completed before a goal can be scored. All goalies are totally blind and the noise coming from others passing the puck around help the goalie track the moving puck.

An athlete's amount of eye sight determines what position they play. Players with limited sight play offense and defense.

Required Skills for the Sport

I was one of the students that visited the Capitals practice facility with MSB and noted a few required skills for hockey. The standard skills used in the normal sport of hockey are required in blind hockey. A player must know how to skate on ice, use a hockey stick, understand how to control and track the puck, and play goalie.

The difference comes when you place low vision athletes on the ice rink. Players must somehow communicate with one another. Players pass the puck by calling their teammate's name. The teammate would then tap their hockey stick on the ice to call for the puck. Players who aren't used to a lot of physical contact must quickly get used to the feel of the fast paced game.

My Personal Thoughts and Experience

I always enjoy getting a chance to just get up and be active. Ice skating was the first thing I had to attempt to master which took a while to get used to. After a skating session I played around with the adapted blind hockey puck and hockey stick with other peers and volunteers. Hitting the puck with the hockey stick has a strong feel. You can clearly hear the hockey stick smash into the adapted puck. I noticed that accuracy and direction of the puck's travel is important. If the puck isn't accurate the opposing players would have a better chance of gaining possession.

Players that proved their talents and skill got a chance to play in a demo blind hockey game on the ice rink the Capitals use to practice on. Both teams competed very well and sounds from the ice rink clearly showed interest from newcomers to the growing sport.

Blind hockey might be a sport just now spreading around to low vision athletes, but definitely has the potential to spread in the blind sports community.

- See more at: <http://phshallmark.com/3547/opinion/opinion-blind-ice-hockey-is-a-great-sport-for-those-with-reduced->



MSB OUTREACH SUMMER PROGRAM



**An Overnight Program for Students Entering 1st to 12th Grade
who are Blind or Visually Impaired.**

July 5-8: Elementary (1st-5th grades)

July 11-22: Middle/High (6th-12th grades)

Accessibility is a major key to success in education, employment, community participation and ultimately, overall independence. Yet, research shows students with visual impairments are not included unless their unique educational needs for access are addressed by specially trained personnel with appropriately adapted materials and equipment. Additionally, with rapidly changing options for visually impaired people, it's often confusing about what works best for your child or your student. MSB's 2016 Summer Short Course Program will provide students with a specialized learning environment that includes hands-on instruction and real life experiences to develop their awareness about technology and resources that can help increase access to their educational and home environments as well as their community. Merging the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) with a theme based curriculum, highly qualified staff will provide instruction in the following areas:

Assistive Technology, Orientation and Mobility, Social Interaction, Recreation and Leisure, Independent Living Skills and Self-Determination. Students will use technology to research field trips and accessible resources in their own communities. Orientation and Mobility will be integrated during off campus activities. Local students can choose to participate daily. ***Information fairs will be held each week of the program highlighting accessibility options in transportation, technology (braille and low vision devices), daily living, and community resources. Parents and LSS's are welcome to attend!***

Go to www.marylandschoolfortheblind.org for registration forms- fax to: 410-319-5708

Or mail to: The Maryland School for the Blind
Outreach Department ATTN: Victoria Watt
3501 Taylor Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21236

Registration and all Health Forms must be returned May 27, 2016





Events for Families Of Children with Disabilities

Parent Lunch Group

Daily Living Skills for Visually Impaired and Blind Children

Genelle Hughes – Vision Rehabilitation Therapist / MSB

Presenting on resources and tips to assist with

Independent Daily Living Skills

Wednesday, April 13th, 2016

12:30-2:30pm (*lunch provided*)

North Carroll Branch-

Carroll County Public Library

2255 Hanover Pike / Hampstead, MD 21074

Please RSVP by April 8th

Renee Kirby – MSB Parent Coordinator – reneek@mdschblind.org / 410-444-5000 ext 1489



“Rest Day”- A Respite Time for Families Affected by Disabilities

Date: Saturday, April 16, 2016

Time: 1:00pm—4:00pm

Location: Grace Fellowship Church / 9505 Deerco Rd., Timonium, MD 21093

Contact: Disabilities Ministry @ Grace Fellowship Church

Email: disabilities@gfc.org

Phone: 410.561.8424 ext. 155

Description: This is time to give rest, encouragement, support and love to families affected by disability through a respite afternoon for individuals with disabilities & their siblings. Caregivers from around the community will provide service. All individuals under 21 welcome. Upon conclusion of our time, families will be given a meal to take home with you to extend this time of rest.

Registration closes one week prior to event until spots are full.



SAVE THE DATE



Saturday, May 21st

MSB/COLUMBIA LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND REGIONAL

PARENT TRANSITION CONFERENCE

A day full of resources and presentations from Carol Castellano- author/parent, DORS and a Q & A with a panel of Blind and Visually Impaired adult professionals

More info to follow...

www.marylandschoolfortheblind.org



Create a “Pearl” of Art! Enter APH InSights 2016!

5th Anniversary Annual Juried Art Competition and Exhibition for

Artists Who Are Visually Impaired or Blind

Deadlines for Entry: **March 25, 2016**, for Preschool through High School and
April 1, 2016, for Adults.

The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) invites visually impaired and blind artists of all ages to submit artwork to APH InSights 2016! This art competition and exhibition is exclusively for blind and visually impaired artists and draws entries from across the U.S. and around the world.

Visit aph.org for more info

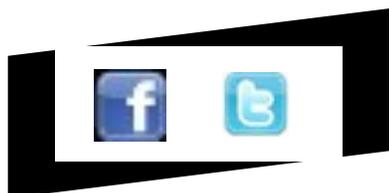


THE MARYLAND SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

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MSB's Mission

As a statewide resource center, The MD School for the Blind provides outreach, school & residential services for students to reach their fullest potential by preparing them to be as successful, independent & well-rounded contributing members of their communities as possible.

Since we 1st opened our doors in 1853, we have treated the whole child, not just the disability. We provide instructional, residential, orientation & mobility, recreational activities, sports teams, clubs, health services, physical, speech, & occupational therapies & braille instruction as well as all the basics: including math, reading, content & science.

We also understand the role of caring & compassion as it relates to our students. We never forget that our students have many specialized & unique needs. Most importantly, we never forget they are also children, youth & young adults.

Maryland Braille Challenge 2016



Photo courtesy of **Dotty Raynor**