THE Maryland School for the Blind

2015 Annual Report

**Message from the President**

We have just celebrated the first year in our state-of-the-art multiple disabilities blind learning facilities, and enjoying our new athletic fields. As we roll out more blueprints and watch the foundations rise from the footings for our autism-blind buildings, we are eagerly anticipating what the campus will look like when they are completed this coming august. It is gratifying to see msb afford our students these state-of-the art facilities and hearing positive comments from parents.

We are proud of our new buildings, but buildings alone don’t make great programs. We must ensure we are truly giving our students a solid foundation on which they can build independence for the future. We are also proud of our school’s improvement initiatives that have resulted in greatly enhanced learning opportunities for our students. Our staff have worked very hard and the results show. Our students are gaining in academic, social, daily living and independence.

A few minutes ago, as I was walking to my office, a student’s mother stopped me and said, “My son has made such incredible progress since he’s been at MSB. He’s so proud of his school and his teachers. He loves it here!” I thought to myself, this is exactly what we aspire to do: exceed expectations. Her son had been previously experiencing failure in school. But here at msb, with our lower student to teacher ratios and specialized services, he is, at last, successful in school. That’s a great message for any school superintendent to hear from a parent and this truly made my week!

In my eight years at MSB, I have heard very positive comments from parents. They call or email me, or they’ll drop by my office and say, “you need to know how great your staff is.” It’s good to hear, and it’s also a measure of MSB’s value to students, their families, local school systems and the state of Maryland.

Thank you for your support of MSB.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Bina, Ed.D.

President

**Message from the Chairman of the Board**

As we enter into the fifth year of the 2020 MSB Campus Master Plan, I am proud of the incredible progress we have made thus far. I see concrete evidence of buildings, once only imagined as blue-prints, now being utilized by students and staff. It is gratifying to be able to provide our students with the facilities that they deserve and the tools that they need to be able to reach their fullest potential. And as we continue to improve the campus facilities, we still have more work to do. We must continue to focus on our mission of preparing students for independence so that they can become successful, contributing members of their communities to the greatest extent possible. By providing state-of-the art facilities for them now and into the future, we are helping ensure their success.

I would also like to commend the staff at MSB for their hard work and dedication to the mission of the school and to the students. MSB was recently granted full accreditation without stipulation for a seven year period by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools. This is the gold standard for measuring and evaluating school performance. Several staff members also received prestigious honors in 2015 for their accomplishments in the field. Please join me in congratulating MSB staff who have been recognized by national and state associations. It is truly impressive how many have been honored. This is a testament to the quality of education that the school is providing to the students and families of Maryland.

Thank you for your continued support!

Sincerely,

Edward J. Veilleux

Chairman of the Board

When a Building is More Than Just Bricks and Mortar

To those who know her, MSB student Abigail Sulerzyski is an independent young lady with a winning smile, who truly enjoys the company of others.

And with the help of her loving family and a supportive school community,

she is leveraging those qualities to

power through more than a few

serious challenges, from visual and hearing impairments, to autism and medical fragility.

Her mother, Victoria, remembers a time when Abby's future seemed pretty bleak. ‘’She spent the first couple of years in a wheelchair, going back and forth to the hospital. On top of that, she wasn't at all interactive. Then we found the PACT program [for children with special needs], where she received intensive outreach services from The Maryland School for the Blind. That's when things started to turn around.’’

Using a variety of individualized therapies and learning strategies, the MSB staff helped Abby blossom, and within a few years she had, as her mother says, ‘’learned to love her life.” She continued, “She began walking, signing, laughing, and giving hugs.” My husband, David, and I were beyond happy with her progress then and are amazed at the ground she's still gaining at 16, especially since moving into the new facility for students with multiple disabilities on the campus of MSB.’’

This ranch-style complex includes four, self-contained cottages that are connected under one roof and incorporate a wealth of accessibility features, from adjustable height counters and user-friendly appliances, to overhead lift systems and, if necessary, customized bedding. These cottages are attached to an equally accessible classroom building through a fully enclosed walkway, which has been a big boon for students during inclement weather.

‘’They've thought of everything in this facility, and it's been a real blessing for my daughter,’’ says Victoria. ‘’In just six months, Abby has blossomed in so many ways. She is much happier for one thing. She's also more engaged and adventuresome. Before the move, all she wanted to do at home was sit on the couch and watch TV. Now she's helping us unload the dishwasher and sort the laundry, two things she had never attempted before the move.’’ Her MSB youth care specialist, Sarah Morgan, reports that Abby has made a fairly seamless transition into the new complex, where she is reaping the benefits of both the increased social interaction and the enhanced accessibility.

‘’This facility is designed to function more like a real home, which is a much better setup for Abby, who loves to be out and around people, watching them and interacting with them. And for someone who hasn't always adjusted well to change, she has made herself at home there pretty quickly, sharing chores and taking part in leisure activities with her peers.’’

Abby's two older sisters, who don't see her as often now that they've moved out on their own, have been especially surprised by how much progress she's making in the interim between their visits.

As Victoria says, ‘’Abby has taught us life lessons we wouldn't have otherwise learned, and we are all exceedingly proud and protective of her. So every new skill she learns is a cause for celebration in our family, and these days we have a lot to celebrate, thanks to all the good work at MSB.’’

**Class of 2015 Graduates(with photos)**

**Athbi Al-Mutairi**

HOMETOWN: Nottingham, Maryland

(Born in Kuwait)

MSB MEMORIES: Being voted Prom King; learning how to read and write in English; playing the stock market game in Economics class; visiting Perkins School for the Blind in Boston to compete in goalball; being a member of the swimming, track and field and goalball teams

Senior Superlative: Voted Best Smile

POST-GRADUATION PLANS: Attend the Community College of Baltimore County, then transfer to a four year college and eventually teach English in his home country of Kuwait.

**Chanta Brown**

HOMETOWN:

Glen Burnie, Maryland

MSB MEMORIES:

Singing and playing music with the MSB jazz band, The Blue Duffs; participating in the school musicals; being a member of the cheerleading and track teams; going on the senior class field trips and the prom

Senior Superlative: Voted the Employee of the Year

POST-GRADUATION PLANS: Work in the music field entertaining others and live as independently as possible in her apartment

at home.

**Richard Brown**

HOMETOWN: Middle River, Maryland

MSB MEMORIES: Playing goalball and traveling to the goalball tournaments; editing and archiving the MSB livestream event videos; dissecting a pig in science class

Senior Superlative: Voted Class Clown

POST-GRADUATION PLANS: Move to Tampa, Florida and attend the Art Institute of Tampa to study media arts.

**Jenny Espino**

HOMETOWN: Middle River, Maryland

MSB MEMORIES: Being voted the 2015 Class President; being a Youth Ambassador and the President of the Lions Leo Club; acting and having lead roles in the school musicals; participating in the art club and winning an art award; wrestling; going on class field trips

Senior Superlative: Voted Most Creative

POST-GRADUATION PLANS: Attend the Community College of Baltimore County, then transfer to a four year college to become a braille teacher.

**John Logan Glenn**

HOMETOWN: Parkville, Maryland

MSB MEMORIES: Participating in the extended day program with his friends in the new campus learning activity center and cottages; learning new daily living skills and using his voice output device; listening to music and story selections on his headphones

Senior Superlative: Voted Most Laid Back

POST-GRADUATION PLANS: Attend the adult day program, Intervals, at The Chimes and live with his parents.

**Joanna Grafton**

HOMETOWN: Cockeysville, Maryland

MSB MEMORIES: Participating in gym activities, especially bowling, throwing and kicking balls; dancing and singing with friends; her paper shredding job; learning independent living skills and how to self-advocate

Senior Superlative: Voted Most Friendly

POST-GRADUATION PLANS: Attend an adult day program.

**Andrew Kotowski**

HOMETOWN:

Bel Air, Maryland

MSB MEMORIES: Participating on the swimming, wrestling and track and field teams; traveling to other schools for sports tournaments; going on the senior class trips; working at the Rock and Roll Café on campus and in the community delivering food to seniors and cleaning offices

Senior Superlative: Voted Best Dancer

POST-GRADUATION PLANS: Attend a music school to learn about sound engineering, to get a job involving physical work and to live in an apartment with friends.

**Rebecca Levasseur**

HOMETOWN:

Fort Washington, Maryland

MSB MEMORIES: Visiting NASA, attending the Advanced Space Academy and Aviation Challenge Mach III at the US Space and Rocket Center in Alabama, visiting the Capitol and meeting members of the U.S. Congress, completing the US Marine Jr. ROTC program; competing on

the swimming, goalball, wrestling and track teams; acting in the school plays; being voted Prom Queen

Senior Superlative: Voted Most Athletic

POST-GRADUATION PLANS: Attend Prince Georges Community College then transfer

to the University of Maryland to major in Computer Science.

**Senior Class Officers:**

President: Jenny Espino

Vice-President: Rebecca Levasseur

Secretary: Chanta Brown

Treasurer: Andrew Kotowski

**Class Colors:** Black and Red

**Class Flower:** White Rose

**Class Motto:** Take it back and hold it true, 2015 belongs to you!

**2015 MSB Staff Award Recipients (with photos)**

Congratulations to the following staff who received professional honors in 2015:

MSB President, Dr. Michael Bina, received the 2015 VisionServe Alliance Excellence in Leadership Award. The award honors an individual who has made outstanding contributions at the local, regional or national level to services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired and has shown exemplary industry and professional leadership. Award recipients are listed on a print/braille plaque in the Hall of Fame – Leaders and Legends of the Blindness Field located at the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville, Kentucky.

Dr. Bina also received the 2015 Distinguished Alumnus Award from the Charter College of Education at California State University, Los Angeles and was selected as the 2015 commencement speaker for Northern State University.

MSB Adapted Physical Education Instructor and Athletic Director, Beverly Schmitz Marhevka, was named the 2015 Maryland Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (MAHPERD) Adapted Physical Education Teacher of the Year.

Three members of The Maryland School for the Blind staff are among the recipients of the 2015 Council of Schools for the Blind (COSB) organization national awards. COSB recognizes the contributions of remarkable individuals nationally who work with students with visual impairments.

Matthew Mescall (far right) was named Outstanding Teacher of the Blind and Visually Impaired; Laura Provost (3rd from left) received the Outstanding Teacher of Students who are Blind/Multiply Disabled and Robin Diggs (3rd from right) was named the Outstanding Paraprofessional.

Kathleen Johnston received the 2015 Claire Loder McGough Professional Achievement award.  This award recognizes a person who has demonstrated outstanding professional achievement by expanding the knowledge base for the education and treatment of children who are blind, including those having multiple disabilities.

**2015 MSB Student Awards (with photos)**

Jenny Espino

Maryland State Merit Scholarship Award

Andrew Kotowski

Special Faculty Commendation Award

Rebecca Levasseur

B. Franklin Newcomer Award

**2015 MSB Student Honors (with photos)**

Shaniya Harcum

Auditioned

and Chosen

for the

2015-16

Peabody Children’s Chorus

Tyler Shallue

2015

Maryland Letters About Literature Finalist

(52,000 entries)

Jermaya Taylor

2015 MSB Alumni Award Recipient and Eastern Athletic Association of the Blind Outstanding Cheerleader

Gracia Zuzarte

2015 Maryland Regional Braille Challenge

1st place

Jr. Varsity Division

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS FY 2015 (as of July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015)**

**Board Officers:**

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Dennis Parnell

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Brian Ropp

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James Datovech

Catherine Byrne Doehler (July 2014 – January 2015)

**Volunteers**

Laura Ayd

Chris Baugh

Duke Baugh

Andre Bingley

Alisha Bingley

Jane Blonder

Genevieve Byrnes

Darnel Cantrell

Gloria Cobb

Joan Concannon

George Cordustsky

Patricia Davis

Joan DiChiera

Janet Dickey

Ellen Dunn

Yvonne Edwards

Martha Frank

Ralph Hinson

Darlene Knott

Thomas McNulty

Frank Millner

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Sylvia Richwein

John Scarborough

Martha Seabrooks

Frances Sniadach

Margery Waldman

Lori Waldman

Sarah Warfield

Theresa Watson

Donna Wellman

Wayne White

**2015 Financials**

The Maryland School for the Blind is a private, 501(c)(3) school under Internal Revenue Service regulations. The School’s fiscal year ends June 30th. Funding is provided primarily through grants from the Maryland State Department of Education and payments from local school districts. Contributions are received from individuals, corporations, foundations and community groups. Total expenses approximated $28.4 million.

REVENUES

State of Maryland 82%

Local School Systems 8%

Private Gifts 7%

EXPENSES

Instruction 43%

Facilities 13%

General Administration 11%

Outreach and MD Instructional

Resource Center 6%

Residential Services 11%

Educational Support & Nutrition 16%

Federal 3%

(Photos of athletic complex)

Thanks to a joint effort between our school, the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation, Ollie’s Bargain Outlet, Lewis Contractors and Baltimore County, MSB completed construction of a new athletic complex in 2015. The complex includes a new running track, “beep” baseball and soccer fields and a hard surface multi-purpose recreation area.