

# WINDOW THE

## COLE'S "ODE TO JOY"

"When I make music, I'm happy!" Anyone listening to Cole Moran belt out "Ring of Fire" on his harmonica cannot doubt the 13-year-old's heartfelt declaration. And while he is recently attracting fans in public performances with his singer/songwriter father Frankie, his mother, Jenny, offered some insight into his journey thus far, and the important role the staff at The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) have played in his life.

Cole began receiving services from MSB's Infant and Toddler Program when he was just a baby. "His vision specialist would come to our home," Jenny said. "She gave us tips on everything, including how to get him to pull himself up and explore his environment. From the time he was an infant, he was attracted to the sound of his father's guitar, and it motivated him to move so he could find the source of the sound and touch it."

At the age of three he began attending MSB, and he's been a student at the school ever since. "We love MSB!" Jenny said. "They've helped Cole become who he is." Orientation and Mobility Specialist Maureen Morgan has been working directly with Cole since the beginning. Jenny is

grateful for the consistency, since Cole's frequent surgeries to help correct his scoliosis cause him to miss many days of school. He also has significant speech issues. "Maureen understands what he's saying and is used to his personality. She just brings everything together," Jenny said. "She may be teaching him to use his cane to go shopping, but she doesn't limit the lesson to mobility. He'll be working on his speech, and also learning how to pull a dollar out of his wallet to pay for something. She plays orientation games with him so that he not only has to make his way to the music room, but once there, he also has to find a note on the piano after she plays it. He finds the note immediately. We realized he had perfect pitch even before he started receiving music instruction at MSB when he was five."

Cole began playing the harmonica nine years ago, at age four. He

practices every day, usually with his dad, and listens to recordings of his playing so that he can improve. His parents use his love of music to motivate him to focus on his schoolwork and other skills.

MSB music teacher John Ingram enjoys having Cole in his general music class. "One of the first songs Cole learned on harmonica in my class was "When The Saints Go Marching In." We set up a combo with students on trumpet, tuba, and drums. It was a lot of fun. He'll often sit at the piano and pick out simple melodies from memory," John said. "Right now, we're working on his piano technique so that he'll be able to get around the keyboard easier.

Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" is one of his favorites. He'll play along



Cole performing at the MSB Spring Concert.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

There's nothing more exciting here at The Maryland School for the Blind than the start of a new school year. It is great to see students, parents and staff excited to begin the learning process with a fresh start. The goal for every school is to harness and focus that energy so that we are able to achieve the students' full potential. It is equally important that the school achieves its mission ensuring that students develop independence to the maximum degree possible.

Our theme this year is SOAR and it is also an acronym for goals centered around student independence.

**“S” is for self-determination and self-advocacy.** It is a reminder to our staff as well as our students of the importance of offering students choices so they will be motivated to set their own goals for themselves. At the same time, we want them to know how to ask for what they need. It is essential that our students are “Doers” not “done to-ers” in doing daily tasks with as little staff assistance as possible.

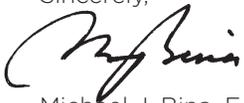
**“O” is for orientation and mobility.** Knowing where you are and how to get where you want to go safely, efficiently, and independently are important skills to be sharpened and honed as early as possible. Once mastered, students develop the confidence to explore their world. Students should travel on their own accord without unnecessary physical and verbal prompts.

**“A” is for activities of daily living.** We are preparing young adults who will be making their own way in the world. By developing good personal hygiene habits, such as grooming, dressing, cooking, cleaning, laundry, and other talents using techniques that make the best use of their capabilities, we are readying them for their lives as adults. Our students will not take MSB staff with them when they graduate, so it is essential that staff assistance fades and students do more for themselves.

**“R” stands for respect for independence.** Treating students with respect for their independence means not doing things for them that they should or can do for themselves. It means refraining from leading, or using sighted guide when unnecessary. It means allowing students the time to find their own way even if it takes more time. It means waiting for students to make choices, rather than choosing for them merely because it is easier, more convenient or quicker.

I'm pleased to say, it's working. Our students are SOARING! I'd like to offer our thanks to parents, family members, and staff for continuing to reinforce these goals at home and at school. Together we can ensure that our students will leave MSB with the skills and confidence to meet their own future expectations. With independence comes self-confidence and personal dignity!

Sincerely,



Michael J. Bina, Ed.D.  
President

## SPOTLIGHT ON MSB STAFF AWARD WINNERS



**(Pictured L to R) – Carol Seckington, MSB Principal; Dr. Michael Bina, MSB President; Laura Provost, Robin Diggs, Carol Bogue, MSB Education Director; Matthew Mescall.**

Three members of The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) 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. Individuals are nominated by their supervisors in six categories, with MSB staff winning three of the six awards this year.

**Matthew Mescall**, an adapted physical education instructor and athletic coach at MSB for the past four years, was named Outstanding Teacher of the Blind and Visually Impaired. He was nominated for his innovative teaching techniques, creative integration of academic lessons into physical education classes, his positive attitude and high energy. Matt works with students of all ages and abilities, encouraging each one to reach beyond his or her limits. He inspires them through personal example and by setting high, but attainable expectations. Matt was also recently chosen by the U.S. State Department's Division of Sports Diplomacy and the United States Association of Blind Athletes as one of four coaches in the country to participate in a goodwill ambassador program in Moscow to teach and coach the sport of goalball to Russian youth.

**Laura Provost**, a teacher at MSB for seven years, received the Outstanding Teacher of Students who are Blind/Multiply Disabled. She was recognized

## STUDENTS SOARED AT MSB SUMMER PROGRAM

for her natural ability to connect with her students and turn every opportunity into a teachable moment. Laura was an intern at MSB while earning a Master's degree in Special Education/Visual Impairments and was later hired by the school to teach visually impaired students with multiple disabilities. Each student in her middle school class has unique learning needs, which she carefully assesses to create individualized lesson plans and activities for the entire group. She is also a track and field and goalball coach for MSB's athletic program.

**Robin Diggs**, who has been on the staff of MSB since 1982, was named the Outstanding Paraprofessional. She has served numerous students in many capacities over her 33 year career. In her current role as a classroom paraprofessional and a job coach in the career education program, Robin is well-respected by her peers, students and community partners. Nominated for her versatility, dependability and dedication to her students, she strives for student success beyond the classroom, teaching marketable job skills and providing real-world experiences. The consummate team player, she collaborates wherever there is a need and goes above and beyond her job duties, including traveling with the athletic teams to out-of-state tournaments.

According to Dr. Michael Bina, MSB President, "We are very fortunate to have all three of these highly dedicated and talented individuals on our staff. They are most deserving of this recognition and we are proud to have three national winners from our school. They all play a key role in advancing our mission by assisting our students to reach their fullest potential by preparing them to be as successful, independent and well-rounded contributing members of their communities as possible."

The winners were presented with their awards at the Council of Schools for the Blind Institute in Louisville, KY on October 7, 2015. Congratulations to all!

While most schools were closed for the summer, The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) was in full swing offering courses and programs for blind and visually impaired students from throughout the state of Maryland, as we do every year. This year's summer short courses offered a variety of programs, from recreational and athletic activities to creative and academic programs.

For the second year, students had the opportunity to participate in MSB Camp Abilities, an overnight sports and recreation camp for youth with visual impairments. Thirty-seven students attended the 2015 camp whose goal was to provide an authentic summer camp experience with hands-on instruction in several sports including goalball, swimming, track and field events, archery, disc golf, Zumba, beep soccer and baseball. As an added bonus, these students and their program coaches were the first to utilize MSB's brand new state-of-the-art athletic complex, which was funded in part by the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation and completed just in time for the summer program. The complex includes a new running track, and beep baseball and soccer fields that feature an artificial turf infield, along with a Kentucky bluegrass outfield that is watered with an irrigation system. The excited reaction of the campers and coaches was palpable, with many

expressing the similar thought, "This is what it must feel like to play on a major league field."

The summer program also included a Music and Academic Enrichment Program, which focused on the benefits of music in education. The program was based on research correlating the learning of music to the learning of other subjects, particularly science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). In this program, students explored a variety of topics including the science of sound, music and cultural awareness and music as an outlet for creative expression of thoughts, feelings and ideas about life and global issues. Students also utilized technology to research and create projects. The program featured musical guests and student performances and field trips, including a visit to the Hippodrome Theatre.

The ever popular Accessible Sailing Program was offered to middle and high school students again this year. MSB partnered with the Downtown Sailing Center for this annual course that teaches basic sailing skills and develops teamwork and communication skills. Students work together to overcome obstacles, plan and execute maneuvers, develop self-discipline and strengthen self-esteem, while exploring Baltimore's Inner Harbor.



## SPOTLIGHT ON MSB STAFF AWARD WINNERS

(continued)

### DR. BINA RECEIVES NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

MSB President, Dr. Michael Bina has received the 2015 VisionServe Alliance (VSA) Excellence in Leadership Award. The award honors a VSA member 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 over the course of at least five years. 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 accepted the award at the VSA annual meeting on November 4, 2015. Congratulations, Dr. Bina!



### BEVERLY SCHMITZ MARHEVKA NAMED MAHPERD ADAPTED PE TEACHER OF THE YEAR



MSB Adapted Physical Education Instructor and Athletic Director, Beverly Schmitz Marhevka, was recently named the Maryland Association of Health, Physical Education Recreation and Dance (MAHPERD) Adapted Physical Education Teacher of the Year. MAHPERD's mission is to enhance and promote the health and wellness of all the citizens of Maryland by providing advocacy and professional development opportunities designed to advance and unify the professions of health education, physical education, recreation, and dance education. Bev was the ideal candidate for the award, serving as a positive role model who epitomizes personal health and fitness, enjoyment of activity, sportsmanship and sensitivity to the needs of students. She is now in the running for the Eastern District AHPERD APE teacher of the year award. Congratulations, Bev!

## COLE'S "ODE TO JOY" (continued from page 1)

with a guitar recording of it over and over, and he'll also play it for the class. He's a great student to work with. He has his own mind about what tunes he likes and what he doesn't like, and that's a good thing. He's developing his own taste."



Jenny values the team effort among staff and the focus on education. "There's nowhere else in our state where Cole would get as good an education," she said. "MSB is the best place ever!"

## Please support The Maryland School for the Blind through the United Way Campaign:

UW Combined Charity Campaign for Baltimore City: **#3051**

UW of Central Maryland: **#3051**

UW Combined Federal Campaign of Central MD: **#3051**

UW of the National Capital Area: **#7344**

UW Combined Federal Campaign of the Nat'l Capital Area: **#58365**

Maryland Charity Campaign: **#7176**

CFC-Chesapeake Bay Area: **#58365**



**Lewis Direct**

Thanks to  
Lewis Direct  
for sponsoring  
this edition of  
The Window!



FOLLOW MSB ON FACEBOOK AT THE  
MARYLAND SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND  
ON TWITTER @MSB1853

