

WINDOW THE

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

At The Maryland School for the Blind, independence is at the core of every program offered to students and is especially key in the Career Education program. Students are given many opportunities to explore the world of work both on and off campus. Job exploration begins as early as age 11.

On-campus businesses and activities help students improve the "soft skills" so essential to successful employment. They learn teamwork, how to get a job done, and how to get along with co-workers and supervisors. It gives them a chance to discover their strengths and build confidence. And as students mature, they are also given the opportunity to explore off-campus internships. These opportunities provide invaluable practical experiences in the community.

Brandon prepares food in the kitchen at the Perry Hall Friendly's

Brandon Solomon will be graduating in May. He describes himself as a "people person." "It gets kind of lonely when I'm working by myself. I like talking to people," he said. His teachers describe him as someone who is kind and considerate -- even protective of others. And, he's a problem-solver. He explained,

"I go towards a problem to figure it out. I don't go away from it."

This self-knowledge is crucial to finding a job or career path that is a good fit. Brandon has learned these things about himself after exploring several jobs both on and off campus. For the past four years, he's worked at a local Friendly's Restaurant preparing food in the kitchen. MSB's Career Education Department initially set up the internship and Brandon's on-site job coach offered guidance. He received a stipend to help him practice money management. As his skills improved, he began to work more independently and Friendly's has now hired him to work weekends.

"Outside companies aren't organized for people with disabilities," explained Daren Barrios, Assistant Principal for the Career Education Program.

"Accommodations aren't necessarily difficult. For example, Brandon has useable vision. But rather than standing in a freezer trying to read the sides of all the boxes, it is so much easier and faster for him to grab a color-coded basket and know that it contains peas."

Communication and self-advocacy are key in these situations. Ms. Barrios encourages her students to speak up for themselves. "Sometimes they will sit and wait for someone to give them more material rather than ask," she said. "We set up scenarios so they will run out of work and have to ask for help. I remind Brandon, for instance, to ask



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

We are very pleased to report that MSB has recently received accreditation from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools. Currently, there are only 211 schools around the world that hold this recognition. It is the gold standard for measuring and evaluating school performance.

MSB met a defined set of research-based performance standards. These standards encompassed: governance and leadership, facilities and finances, health and safety, quality of programs and services, and evidence of student learning.

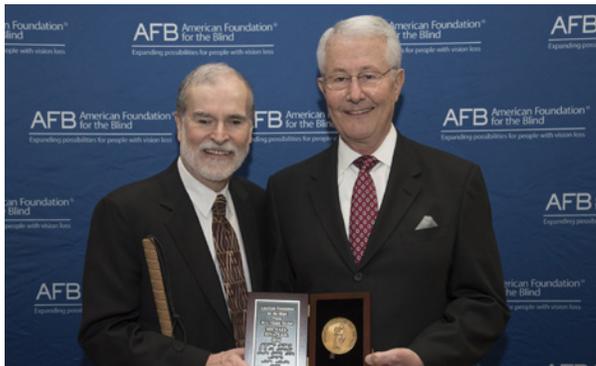
We are focused on improving our programs and services for our students. This process helped validate our efforts and we are proud of our staff for this achievement. I want to recognize and thank Dr. Starrette Galanis, Principal, for leading the Accreditation Team, and the staff who worked so hard to help us achieve this distinction.

At MSB, we are committed to continuous improvement and we are grateful for your exceptional generosity that makes our work possible. You have given students like Brandon Solomon and Wayne Gopshes the opportunity to develop the job skills that will help them live the rest of their lives as independently as possible. Your steadfast support allows us to offer our students the opportunities they need and deserve. We are deeply grateful for your contributions on their behalf.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Bina, Ed.D.
President



Dr. Bina receiving the American Foundation for the Blind's 2016 Migel Medal Award from AFB CEO Carl Augusto.

SPOTLIGHT ON STARRETTE GALANIS, ED.D. Principal, General Academic Program



Dr. Starrette Galanis fondly recalls a classroom lesson in which she observed a group of

students, with varying degrees of visual impairment, gingerly dissecting and identifying the parts of sheep brains. The labels they were pinning to the brain sections were embossed with braille. "It was fascinating," Dr. Galanis said.

MSB's curriculum mirrors that of Baltimore County Public Schools. "I'm so proud we have courses like Anatomy and Physiology and College Algebra," she said. "It is terrific to watch rigorous academic engagement."

Part of a principal's job is to observe classes and offer feedback to teachers and students alike. "It's the best part of my day," Dr. Galanis said. "I delight in working with teachers to design ways to make teaching come alive, and to make learning stick."

Doing things without vision can sometimes take longer and often requires more patience and persistence. "Our students come through it with grace, and a sense of humor," she said. "I really admire them. I try to help them develop self-regulation. I tell them, 'Do the right thing because it's the right thing to do.' That inner voice is what has guided me in my own life."

Reflecting back, she realizes how important her early experiences were in shaping the direction of her adult life.

"As a child, I was always playing teacher," she said. "When I was in high school, I volunteered at a daycare center for children with special needs. It sparked a desire to go into special education."

In addition to her four years as principal, she previously served as MSB's education director, and also worked for the Maryland State Department of Education.

With her qualifications and vast experience in the educational field, she was the perfect choice to lead the process to become accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools.

"There was so much work that went into it," she said. "To take on this challenge, we all had to be willing to be vulnerable, and open to receiving feedback. It was an 18 month process and when the school was notified that we had achieved Unconditional Approval, it was as though we had been given a report card with straight A's. There was so much joy and energy. It was great!"

Just as the graduating students are preparing for the next chapter in their lives, Dr. Galanis is, as well. She will be retiring at the end of June. She will miss the tight-knit community of caring people that have devoted their lives and careers to MSB.

What will the next chapter bring? She is excited about the numerous possibilities — just as she would want her students to be.

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'What do you mean?' when he doesn't understand fully. It can be hard for them to remember to do that."

Brandon has a number of opportunities in which to hone these skills. In addition to his restaurant job, he picks up print cartridges from local hospitals for a recycling company and, with a few other MSB students, provides the cleaning service for Time Out for Sports, a community sports apparel store.

With the support of the community, our students are working in various fields, including daycare, cleaning, food service, meal delivery and retail.

Wayne Gopshes has a passion for radio-controlled cars. He can take them completely apart and put them back together. This led to a unique opportunity and partnership with the Middle River Hobby Shop which created an internship for Wayne. "I'd never seen him be so motivated," Ms. Barrios said. "He knows these cars inside and out. He was even teaching some of the people who work there

some things about the cars. The job is a perfect match."

Wayne is still a little shy around some of the people, but his job coach is working with him on becoming more confident. "But the store owner and employees absolutely adore Wayne," Ms. Barrios said. In fact, Wayne brought in a jig he made at home to hold a car steady while it's being worked on. The owner may help him develop it into a product.

"All of the employers we work with will tell you that our students are some of the best employees they have," she continued. "They show up. They work. They don't goof around. That's how we train our students, and it shows."

"We encourage job shadowing on campus, and have a number of campus businesses," Dureen said. "We try to find things the students are naturally interested in. But sometimes, we have to manage their expectations. They may be interested in technology, but their skills aren't yet developed



Brandon makes a clean sweep!

enough to put them in a job-shadowing environment. We work up to that. We have them research the skills and qualifications needed for a specific career path."

Brandon, for example, would love to follow in his father's footsteps. His dad is a CPA. Brandon is good in math and with computers, and enjoys dressing in a suit and tie. He's exploring other fields that use similar skills. "We're looking at a placement in the hospitality field, perhaps working at a hotel front desk, where he could use all of these skills. He'd be great at greeting people and giving them the information they need."

"I love Career Education," Ms. Barrios said. "I love seeing students be successful at jobs. It doesn't matter what a student's disability is -- everyone is capable of working in some capacity. Career Education gets them where they need to be and it's such a nice feeling when they succeed."



Wayne demonstrates his motorized car lift invention.

MSB STUDENTS LACE UP THEIR SKATES

With record snow falls and cold temperatures in the Maryland area, the winter of 2016 posed many challenges for residents throughout the state, including the staff and students of The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB). However the winter season also provided an opportunity for the students to try a brand new experience.

In collaboration with the Washington Capitals, USA and Canadian Blind Hockey, MSB students were invited to "Try Blind Hockey" with other blind and visually impaired individuals from across the Maryland/DC region at the Washington Capitals practice arena in Arlington, VA on February 20. After watching the Capitals' exciting morning practice session, the students were outfitted with hockey gear and paired with sighted volunteers. They took to the ice (many for the first time) to learn some basic ice skating skills, followed by lessons using the hockey equipment, including the sound equipped puck. After a few hours on the ice, interested participants were invited to play in a demonstration game and many MSB students jumped at the chance, while others were happy to simply cheer on their friends.

Many students commented on how much harder it was than they thought it would be, but all were glad that they tried a new experience and felt a sense of accomplishment. Some were naturals on the ice and want to continue to play the sport. This was one of the overriding goals of the event



Donald Mearis and MSB Coach, Matt Mescall take to the ice.

organizers, who are trying to form a Blind Hockey league in the area. With a donation of hockey equipment from the non-profit organization, Leveling the Playing Field, MSB students will be able to practice and continue learning the sport. One student has already been recruited by the Washington Wheelers Blind Hockey team!



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COMMUNITY SUPPORT



Beverly Marhevka, MSB Athletic Director, (center) accepts a check from the Council of Ravens Roosts.



Dr. Michael Bina accepts a donation to the school from Walmart #2045 Store Manager, Terry Raynor.



Mike LaMartina of the Fr. Burgraff Council of the Knights of Columbus accepts a donation from a Walmart customer during the club's annual Tootsie Roll campaign. The Council donated over \$5,000 to MSB from the fundraiser.



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