

**MSB Reaching Out Newsletter**

**January/February 2018**

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Hello,

Welcome back!

I hope everyone is getting settled into their routines and staying warm…..brrrrr!

In honor of acknowledging January as Braille Literacy Month, I wanted share a few interesting facts in reference to Braille, according to *Jasmine Hall* for the *NCHPAD* (National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability) *blog;*

[**Six-dot Braille cells have 63 possible combinations**](http://www.perkins.org/resources/curricular/literacy/braille-facts.html)

Each cell consists of two dots across and three dots down. A through J sit in the top two rows, K through T include the last, and U through Z add the last two dots to the first five letters. W, however, plays by its own rules owing to the fact that the original French included no such letter.

[**There are three different “grades” of Braille**](http://www.disabled-world.com/assistivedevices/visual/braille.php)

Every grade represents a different skill level, with 1 being best for those just starting to learn Braille and 3 for the more familiar. Basic letters and punctuation characterize the first, while the second builds off of that to include contractions – making it the most common version found in public. Once a person hits Grade 3 Braille, he or she can learn the shorthand for personal use, such as lists and notes, rather than more formalized literature.

[**“Braille for feet” exists**](http://www.bizjournals.com/seattle/stories/2000/03/27/focus6.html)

In order for businesses to meet standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act, Tilco Vanguard developed a veritable “Braille for feet” that assists the visually impaired in knowing the boundaries of dangerous areas. Technically referred to as “truncated domes,” these bright yellow strips spell out a universal message in order to keep store and restaurant patrons safe.

[**Most legally blind children in the United States do not use Braille resources**](http://www.afb.org/Section.asp?SectionID=15&TopicID=411&DocumentID=4897)

Shockingly enough, 34% of the 59,341 legally blind American children (defined by the American Printing House for the Blind as between the ages of 0 and 21) are considered non-readers. That comprises the majority, by the way. Nine percent stick with Braille; 27% are capable of reading visually; 8% get their lessons done as auditory readers; the last 22% qualify as pre-readers.

[**Visually impaired readers who learned on Braille have a lower unemployment rate than their print counterparts**](http://www.braille.org/papers/jvib0696/vb960311.htm)

Earlier studies noted that visually impaired persons who first learned to read using the Braille system hold a 44% unemployment rate. By contrast, those more accustomed to print media —  
or incapable of reading Braille, as it were —  
sat at a staggering 77%.

..with that being said, The MD State Department of Education along with The Maryland School for the Blind will once again be hosting the annual **Maryland Regional Braille Challenge** on **February 3, 2018**. Registered braille-reading students grades prekindergarten through Grade 12 will participate in this very unique reading and writing contest.

Throughout the day, there will be activities/workshops for parents as well. Keynote speaker, Kristen Smedley, author of “Thriving Blind” will be presenting alongside several other presenters, focusing on such topics as ***Integrating Braille into Independent Living Skills* and *Hands on Experience with JAWS for Parents.***

Please look for the results and awards given in our March issue.

Until then, happy reading,

**Renee**

*** Upcoming Events ***

**Informational Parent Webinars;**

**January 30th, 2018** – 11:30-12:30

Topic: “***Quality Assessments – The Key to Literacy”***

Presented by: **Michelle Horseman,** M. Ed/Teacher of the Visually Impaired

*Link to join webinar:* [*https://zoom.us/j/580590652*](https://zoom.us/j/580590652)

**February 27th, 2018** – 11:30- 12:30

Topic***: “What is Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) & How Does it Affect my Child’s Vision?”***

Presented by: **Sharon Whited,** MSB Outreach Low Vision Specialist

*Link to join webinar:* [*https://zoom.us/j/219677706*](https://zoom.us/j/219677706)

**G.R.I.T.S. in the Kitchen (Newly added 2nd Section)**

Topics will include labeling, organizing, storage, knife skills, and more. Classes will culminate in a picnic-style lunch for family and friends!

**Who**: Any student who is visually impaired ages 12-17

**Where**: The Maryland School for the Blind- 3501 Taylor Ave, Baltimore, MD 21236

**When**: **February 24th, March 10th, April 21st, May 19th and June 2nd from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm**

**SIGN UP HERE:** [**https://goo.gl/forms/FCSP7NZ2NzmrZcWt2**](https://goo.gl/forms/FCSP7NZ2NzmrZcWt2)

**Savage Race- Team MSB!**

**May 5th, 2018** (With additional practice dates)

The **Savage Race** is a 7 mile obstacle course that consists of 25 challenging obstacles….and LOTS OF MUD!!

Athletes who apply must attend practices! Practices will be held 2 times each month starting in February. (Athletes who live too far to make it to a practice must complete a workout program designed for them by the coaches).

**Who:** Blind or Visually Impaired Students who demonstrate a level of commitment and fitness to complete the growling course. Athletes must be ages 13-17

**Where:** Meet at MSB- Event is in KENNEDYVILLE, MD

**When:** **MAY 5th** \*See event details for practice dates\*

**Deadline to sign up: January 31st, 2018**

**SIGN UP HERE:** <https://goo.gl/forms/THddgn4010wLufSY2>

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*Looking for* ***Braille Valentines?...****Check out*[***www.nbp.org***](http://www.nbp.org)

[](http://www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/index.html)

***If you have any questions about any of our programs or are in need of resources for your child or would like to be removed from our emailing list, please contact:***

**Renee Kirby, Parent Coordinator**

**Maryland School for the Blind**

**3501 Taylor Avenue/Baltimore, MD 21236**

[**reneek@mdschblind.org**](mailto:reneek@mdschblind.org) **or 410-444-5000 ext. 1489**