



# WINDOW

THE

## HATS OFF TO THE CLASS OF 2018

Graduation is always the highlight of the school year, no matter how large or small the graduating class. MSB had a smaller class this year, but the twelve graduates from the Class of 2018 represented a long history at MSB with a total of 139 combined years of attendance. Many students come to the school as toddlers and remain until graduation, which can be up to age 21. Emotions run high when it is time for them to leave MSB behind, but it is also a time of pride for the staff as they celebrate the student's achievements, along with their families and friends.

Commencement, which was held on June 11, capped off a year mixed with hard work, exciting

class activities and special events that come with the distinction of being upperclassmen. The year commenced with the election of the class officers, colors and motto, followed by the senior gala and breakfast with the President, an annual tradition at MSB. The breakfast was held in the "Bee Hive", a 50's style café, which is part of the new Blanton Student Recreation and Career Center in Russo Hall that opened at the beginning of the school year, just in time for the seniors to enjoy during their last year on campus.

Other highlights of the year included the highly anticipated senior class trip, the prom, and the ring and senior awards

ceremony in the spring. Students set sail on a cruise around Baltimore's Inner Harbor on The Spirit of Baltimore on their class trip in April. It was a beautiful day aboard the ship, and included lunch, sightseeing, games and plenty of dancing and singing among the students and staff.

The ring, senior awards ceremony and prom followed in May. Jackie Bowen and Nicholas Heuchan were crowned prom queen and king and headed off to the prom with their junior and senior classmates. As is tradition, the students and their dates were transported by limousine to the prom venue. The Columbus Gardens served as the location for the event this year and

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

This will be my last message as President of The Maryland School for the Blind. After ten years at MSB, I have decided to leave the school and spend more time with my grandchildren and family. I will be leaving MSB at the end of the summer, but I will continue to assist the school on special projects.

I have enjoyed my 52 years in the field of blindness and visual impairments, enriched by many students, parents and fellow co-workers. Like our graduates from the Class of 2018, which you will read about in this issue, I am moving on to a new phase and looking forward to the future.

The new leader of the school will be announced in the near future and the transition will begin. MSB will go on as it has for the past 165 years. I am grateful for the time that I have spent at this outstanding organization, but more importantly for the people I have met.

I also want to thank you, our friends and donors, for your steadfast commitment to our students and programs and hope that you will continue to support The Maryland School for the Blind.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Bina, Ed.D.  
President



**Dr. Bina spreads his wings in front of the SOARing for Independence project made by the MSB students.**



**Dr. Bina with Class of 2018 President Donald Mearis.**

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT Maria Morris – Teacher, Multiple Disabilities Blind Program



Maria Morris will be celebrating 20 years as a teacher at The Maryland School for the Blind this fall. She instructs students in the multiple disabilities blind program and has also been one of the senior class advisors for the past 12 years. As such, she has served as a mentor to other staff through the years who have taken on the dual role alongside her. “I enjoy the comradery of working with the other senior staff, but of course the best part is working with a new class of seniors every year, especially when one or more of my students are part of the graduating class. That makes it extra special, but that much more emotional too.”

She adds that she couldn’t take on the added responsibilities of the position without the support of her classroom team of para-educators. “It takes teamwork and I am fortunate to work with a great team by my side.”

Morris teaches students from ages 16-21 who are blind or visually impaired with multiple disabilities. After receiving her Bachelor’s degree in Speech Pathology from Towson University in 1994, she went on to get her Master’s degree in Special Education with a certification in severe and profound

disabilities. Originally planning to teach Pre-K, she now can't imagine teaching anything but her high-school students. The bond between Morris and her students is evident. "We have fun together and I enjoy their unique personalities and quirks. We just get each other."

Teaching students with physical and cognitive issues is not without challenges, but MSB is the premier educational resource for families in terms of state of the art facilities and qualified staff, such as Morris. She and her students moved to a new classroom three years ago in the newly constructed facilities for students with multiple disabilities. "There is no comparison. Our new classroom is designed for easier physical management of our students and programs. It is spacious, organized and is equipped with state of the art technology and support systems, which has made our jobs easier."

Concentrating on skills of daily living and working toward individual goals, she tries to make her classroom a learning, but also nurturing, environment for her students. "Our overall goals for all of them are the same. We strive to give our students the skills they need to be successful and prepare them for the next phase of their lives. We give them wings so they can fly."



**Hannah Fritz, Phyllis Simmons and Maria – the 2018 Senior Class Advisory team.**

## HATS OFF TO THE CLASS OF 2018 (continued from page 1)

was transformed into a magical Candy Land for the evening.

The culmination of senior year is, of course, graduation day. The ceremony was filled with special moments, including moving speeches and award presentations.

Senior Class President, Donald Mearis, delivered the graduate address and led the turning of the tassels and MSB President, Dr. Michael Bina, who is leaving the school after a decade of leadership, bid farewell to the students, staff and guests.



**The graduating class sets sail on the Spirit of Baltimore.**

Award recipients from the Class of 2018 included, Jasynda Avila, who received the B. Franklin Newcomer Award, and Louis "Tre" Gaffney and Richard Tyndall, who both received Staff Commendation Awards. Commencement speaker, Norman Conway, former Maryland General Assembly Delegate, was awarded the Champion of MSB award, along with former Senator, Barbara Hoffman, for their support of state funding for MSB's campus improvement projects. In addition, Dr. Bina presented each with honorary MSB diplomas.



**MSB Senior class officers: President - Donald Mearis; Vice-President - Jamal Davis-Brooks; Treasurer - Jacqueline Bowen; Secretary - Nicholas Huechan**

After the ceremony, the graduates and their guests gathered in the student center for refreshments, photos and well wishes from friends and family. Although it is bittersweet, it is an exciting time to see them move on to the next chapter of their lives.

Congratulations to the Class of 2018; we know that you will SOAR!

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT



**Author Mark Booker reads to MSB students.**

Thank you to Mark Booker, MSB Board member and children’s author, for visiting our early learning and elementary students in May. Mr. Booker who co-wrote the book, “Why Our Teacher Wears Yellow,” with his two daughters Renarda and Cypress, not only read to the students, but also personally signed and distributed copies to each student.



**The volunteers from Ravens Roost #82.**

MSB hosted the EAAB Track and Field Championship Tournament this past spring and we could not have done it without the support of our volunteers from the Ravens Roost #82, Maury, Donnelly and Parr, Inc. and Towson University Physical Education Majors Club. Thank you!!



**Thanks to**  
Lewis Direct  
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The Window!



**For the 3rd consecutive year, MSB students collected and delivered pet supplies for the animals at BARCS.**

**Thanks to support from the following community partners, students in our career education and MISLE summer program are working at various jobs in the community.**

- Shoppers Food – Joppa Road
- Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland
- Eastern Assembly Church

If your business is interested in participating in this program, call the Career Education Office at 410-444-5000 x1203.

### Thanks to our Camp Abilities Partners:

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| League of Dreams                    | Downtown Sailing Center           |
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| Baltimore Redbirds                  | I C You Foundation, Inc.          |
| Towson University Campus Recreation | The Foreseeable Future Foundation |
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**Volunteers from the League of Dreams and the Baltimore Redbirds join MSB Camp Abilities athletes and coaches for a game of beep baseball.**



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