



WINDOW

THE

THE SMALL BUT MIGHTY CLASS OF 2019

With only five graduates, the Class of 2019 may very well have been the smallest graduating class in the history of The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB), but what they lacked in numbers, they made up for in heart!

The five students representing the General Academic, Functional Academic and Autism Blind programs at MSB became very close throughout the school year and enjoyed spending time together at the senior activities. They started the year with the election of the class officers, normally four positions, but so that

no one was left out, they created a 5th position (Public Relations Officer). The class chose blue and red as their class colors and the white rose for their flower. They chose a fitting motto "2019, We fulfilled our dream!," which they embraced throughout the year.

Highlights of the year included the ring ceremony, the Junior/Senior Prom at Columbus Gardens and the senior class trip to Medieval Times. "We try to switch things up each year and do something a little different or special, according to Maria Morris, Senior Class Advisor. With a small group, we

decided to try a few new things this year. We held a separate ring ceremony instead of combining it with the pre-prom and senior awards and we chose a new venue for the class trip."

Medieval Times, located at the Arundel Mills Mall, was a big hit with the class for their senior trip. They enjoyed the fun atmosphere, which included eating the food with their hands (medieval style) and were entertained by the jousting competition between the knights and their horses. They cheered on the yellow and black team that represented their section in the audience and which are, coincidentally, the MSB school colors and had the opportunity to pose for photos with the stars of the show.

As spring and nicer weather approached, the senior class was gearing up for the prom, which they were excited to celebrate with their underclassmen from the junior class. Dressed in their finest gowns and tuxes, they posed for photos and celebrated with family and friends at the pre-prom before being chauffeured by limo to Columbus Gardens for the main event. There, they danced "Under the Stars," which was their prom theme, to their favorite tunes spun by DJ Jeffrey Windom. Seniors Gracia Zuzarte and Wayne Gopshes were crowned the 2019 prom queen and king.



The MSB Class of 2019.

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT & CEO

Greetings! I hope you are all enjoying the warmer weather and longer days of summer!

MSB wrapped up another successful school year at the end of June and we bid a fond farewell to our five graduates from the Class of 2019 (which you will read about in this issue). We also celebrated our Early Learning Program students in Pre-K and Kindergarten at their very special end of year closing ceremony.

As I was preparing for these ceremonies, I came across this quote from author George Saunders, an American writer of short stories, essays, novellas, children's books and novels that I thought was insightful. "Err in the direction of kindness. Do those things that incline you toward the big questions, and avoid the things that would reduce you and make you trivial. That luminous part of you that exists beyond personality — your soul, if you will — is as bright and shining as any that has ever been. Bright as Shakespeare's, bright as Gandhi's, bright as Mother Teresa's. Clear away everything that keeps you separate from this secret luminous place. Believe it exists, come to know it better, nurture it, share its fruits tirelessly."

I believe this speaks to the kind of students who are part of our school. They are kind. They ask big questions. They are as bright as the stars. We are very proud of all of our students and especially congratulate our 2019 graduates: Callie, Gracia, Shi-Niyua, Lisa and Wayne. I know they are destined to shine!

We also had to say goodbye to a few long-time staff who retired at the end of the school year. I want to thank them for their hard work and dedicated service to our students over the years: Colleen Calhoun, 35 years; Diane Willnecker, 27 years; Shadia Ewada, 20 years; Carol Gamble, 18 years and Vicki Webster, 11 years. Congratulations and enjoy your retirement!

As always, I thank each of you for your interest in our school and support of our mission. MSB has been, and can only be, successful because of partners like you. Your generosity allows us to provide the best resources for our students on their road to independence. Thank you!

Sincerely,

W. Robert Hair

W. Robert Hair, M.Ed.
Superintendent, CEO



Superintendent Rob Hair with Class of 2019 President Callie Smith.



Class of 2019 Vice President Gracia Zuzarte with Mr. Hair.



The Class of 2019 at Medieval Times.

Following the prom, the countdown was on to the last day of school and, of course, graduation day. Commencement was held on June 10 for the five graduates of the Class of 2019, who proudly processed down the aisle of the Knefely Gym at MSB. They listened

intently to commencement speaker, Andy Jenks, Paralympian and 2016 Silver Medalist, who shared his journey as a visually-impaired individual and athlete. He shared both his personal struggles and accomplishments and encouraged the graduates to find confidence within themselves. "Each one of you is unique and you must define yourself. Never allow others to define you," said Jenks.

In her address to her fellow graduates and commencement guests, Class President, Callie Smith, thanked the MSB staff and expressed her feelings about the school. "MSB is an amazing place. It is the school that gave us all the chance to succeed at our academic

and life goals. It gave us the chance to become more independent and ready for our future plans." Smith added "I think I can speak for the graduating class when I say that we are all more prepared for the real world thanks to the opportunities given to all of us students at MSB."



Prom King Wayne Gopshes and Prom Queen Gracia Zuzarte.

BABY BEES LEAVE THE HIVE

On June 14, the Knefely Gymnasium was filled with proud parents, grandparents, family members and friends to celebrate the accomplishments of the children in MSB's Early Learning program. Students in the preschool program (three and four year olds) and Kindergarten classes (five year olds) showed off what they learned this year through performances including songs, dances, skits and videos highlighting the theme "We

are Nature Explorers." The annual ceremony included the awarding of certificates to the preschoolers and the "graduation" of the Kindergarten students, some of whom will move up to MSB's elementary program and others who will move on to their local schools.

MSB's Early Learning program is unique in that it includes students with and without disabilities. "Typical peers" are grouped together by age with students who have visual impairments and other physical disabilities. According to Karen Frank, Early Learning Principal, "Children learn so much from each other. Although they may have different needs, all children are and should be treated equally. Our program gives students the opportunity to learn acceptance of others at an early age."

The program has an outstanding reputation for many reasons

including the curriculum and award winning and innovative building design of the Early Learning facilities at MSB. Many of the school staff enroll their own children in the program, which speaks to the quality of the education.

"The teaching and learning of 'Conscious Discipline' was a priority this past school year," said Frank. Students were taught skills such as learning to make good choices, greeting friends, coping with change, being able to express feelings, showing that each friend is valued and missed if they are not in class, and finding ways to calm oneself down when upset, were at the very core of the students' everyday routines and practices. "Our program focuses on the social skills needed for life. But mostly, it is about being a school family. Every child is a valued member of our family."



Kindergarten students perform a skit at graduation.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT



Thank you to the I C You Foundation, Inc. for supporting our Outreach Summer Programs, including MSB Camp Abilities. The foundation was founded by Paralympian Markeith Price (center) who presented a check to Superintendent Rob Hair and Camp Director Matthew Mescall.



The Wiessner Foundation for Children presented a check to MSB for the Camp Abilities program, specifically for our new Blind Lacrosse program, a partnership with Parkville Adaptive Lacrosse. Representatives from the foundation, MSB and Parkville Adaptive Lacrosse were on hand to accept the check. Thank you!!

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT MSB?
There are many opportunities to support MSB. Find out @marylandschoolfortheblind.org/supportus



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



MSB Students Give Back

At the end of each school year, MSB high school students take on their teachers in a friendly, but competitive, game of basketball. This year, two of the students came up with the idea of making the annual "Student vs. Staff" game a charity event by selling refreshments and giving the proceeds to the **Make A Wish Foundation**. Great job Kennedy and Michael!



Support MSB Through The Giant Food Community Bag Program

The Maryland School for the Blind has been selected to be a part of the Giant Food Community Bag Program, which is designed to make it easy for customers to contribute to their local community while supporting the environment.

For the month of JULY, each time a reusable \$2.50 Community Bag is purchased at the **Giant Food** located at **8665 Philadelphia Road in Rosedale**, **\$1 will be donated to MSB**. You may also shop at your local Giant, purchase a bag and follow the instructions on the Giving Tag to designate MSB as the beneficiary.

