



The Maryland School for the Blind

See beyond

Newsletter
Summer 2021



Message from the Superintendent

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2021

Greetings!

After another very challenging year, we officially wrapped up the 2020-21 school year on June 18. I want to congratulate the MSB Class of 2021. We were so pleased to be able to host a live and in-person graduation ceremony for our 15 graduates and their families on June 14. It was a very special evening. If you missed our live broadcast, you can view the recording on our YouTube page.

We were delighted to have Mr. Tyler Merren as our keynote speaker. Tyler is a Paralympian and will be competing with Team USA on the Men's Goalball team in the Tokyo games! Be sure to watch for him in the summer games in July! Go USA!

Have a happy and safe summer!

W. Robert Hair, M.Ed
Superintendent



Pictured: Top Left: Graduates Jayson Tyler, Isaia Pinales, Shawn Ransom & Alycia Levy pose with Paralympian, Tyler Merren **Top Right:** Graduates Jayson Tyler & Isaia Pinales with Superintendent Hair **Middle Left:** Class President Jefferson Palacios-Machado delivers the class address **Middle Right:** Melika Azminia receives the Benjamin F. Newcomer Award **Left Bottom:** Giovanni Olivera receives his diploma on stage

Read more about graduation on our website www.marylandschoolfortheblind.org

THE BITTERSWEET GOODBYE

BY DOTTY RAYNOR

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Maria Ellis had a fantastic senior year. With her mom's assistance at home, virtual learning was a successful learning experience for Maria. "Miss Staci Forrest (Maria's teacher), was so creative and made the lessons fun and engaging for the students and their parents. In science class, the students and parents were presented with a weekly challenge and we got very competitive (in a fun way)," said Maria's mom, Margie.

One of the biggest highlights of the past year was when Maria was voted the senior class Secretary and attended the senior luau and prom.



Above: Margie, Bill, & Maria at Maria's Pre-k graduation



Right: Maria and Margie at therapeutic riding lessons



Left: Maria laughing at school



Left: Maria and Margie on a hay ride



Right: Maria and Bill at Prom



Pictured: Maria Ellis receiving her certificate at Graduation with Superintendent Rob Hair and Education Director Dr. Joshua Irzyk

For Margie and Bill Ellis, (pictured left) MSB's Class of 2021 graduation ceremony was bittersweet. They were thrilled to see their daughter, Maria, graduate with her classmates, but it was hard to say goodbye to the staff at The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) who have been a part of their lives for the past 20 years.

When Maria was a year old, she began receiving early intervention services through MSB's Infant and Toddler program and started attending the Pre-K program on campus at the age of three. She is now 21 years old.

Maria has participated in a variety of activities at MSB over the years; opportunities that she would not have been afforded had she attended a public school. Some of her fondest memories include therapeutic horseback riding, field days on campus and countless class trips.

"I WILL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL TO MSB FOR PROVIDING OUR CHILDREN WITH THE BEST EDUCATIONAL SETTING TO SUIT THEIR UNIQUE LEARNING NEEDS. WE WILL MISS EVERYONE SO MUCH AS SO MANY OF THE STAFF HAVE BECOME AN EXTENDED FAMILY TO US."

Meet MSB's Cre(AT)ive Team

The MSB Assistive Technology (AT) Team has been referred to as the MacGyver's of the school. For those who aren't familiar, MacGyver was a television character who could adapt anything he found into a useful tool, which would often help him escape difficult situations. Karin, Jennifer and Kelly are well known for taking off the shelf items and adapting them into useful tools that can be used in the classrooms or by occupational, physical and speech therapists to help students meet their goals.

For example, they may adapt a kitchen item, such as a blender, by adding an environmental control unit with an attached switch (large activation button) that can be operated using any part of the blender. It is very useful for students with multiple disabilities who may have difficulty with fine and gross motor skills. Almost any household item can be adapted by this talented team so that students can achieve some level of independence.

They can get very creative with ordinary materials as well. PVC pipe and bendable tubing are some favorite materials that the AT Service has used to make items such as adaptable tech/ communication device holders. These can be adjusted and attached to mobility equipment including wheelchairs and walkers. "We are the queens of the bargain stores, according to Karin. We are always on the lookout for inexpensive everyday items and can adapt just about anything off the shelf to help our students learn and grow."

"FROM PITCHING MACHINES TO BIRD FEEDERS, ALMOST ANY ITEM HAS A WORK AROUND TO MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE..TO SEE THE LOOK ON A STUDENT'S FACE WHEN HE/SHE REALIZES HE/SHE IS INDEPENDENTLY ACTIVATING A TOY OR DEVICE IS PRICELESS!"

Interactive toys are perfect for adding switches and can be used by students in the classrooms as well as during recreational time.

The team even adapts sports equipment. The PE department, envisioned adapted bowling activities but wasn't quite sure how to execute their idea. They brought the idea to Kelly and the teams collaborated by modifying an adapted metal bowling ramp for students with disabilities so that they can just release the ball down the ramp and into the lane with the touch of a switch.



The AT Team Jennifer, Kelly & Karin



Student uses an AT switch to communicate



Maria Ellis bowling using adaptive equipment

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Donate your car, truck, or boat to MSB!

The pick-up is free and your gift is tax-deductible.

Call: 844-830-4483 or go to our website
marylandschoolfortheblind.careasy.org



Save the Date

Saturday, April 30, 2022

Join us for the first Annual See beyond Festival,
an all day festival filled with:

**Food Trucks, Games, Live Music,
Juried Craft Fair, & Immersive Experiences**

The First Annual

**See beyond
FESTIVAL**



Learn More on our website www.marylandschoolfortheblind.org



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