

# See beyond Newsletter



## A Letter From the MSB Superintendent

It's that time of year again! The grounds are bursting with daffodil foliage and the promise of Spring is just around the corner. We have much to be excited about, including the See Beyond Festival on April 27 and the Instrument Petting Zoo on March 14 and 15. Learn more about these events below and on page 3. The Braille Institute hosted the Maryland Regional Braille Challenge at our Knafely Gym on February 10th. Students, families, and educators alike celebrated the wonderful, tactile world of braille literacy (see more on page 2).

Last but certainly not least, check out the spotlight on the exciting things happening in the Early Learning Center's Science Park classroom on page 4. There's bunnies and hedgehogs and fish, oh my!

Sincerely,  
Rob Hair  
Superintendent



## Instrument Petting Zoo

We're eagerly anticipating the Instrument Petting Zoo, organized by Mrs. Lynn, our music teacher. Student attendees will have the chance to explore a variety of musical instruments, feeling their shapes and textures, pressing keys, moving slides, discovering hidden bells, playing drums, and even experiencing the unique charm of a thumb piano. This event wouldn't be possible without the generous donations from individuals who entrusted MSB with their beloved instruments. Follow us for pictures of the event at [facebook.com/MSB1853](https://facebook.com/MSB1853).

### Page 2

Learn about the results of the APH Abacus Bee and the Maryland Regional Braille Challenge.

### Page 3

See Beyond Save the Date and photos from 2023.

### Page 4

New See Beyond information and Muddy Fingers highlight.

### Page 5

Pre-K Pet Corner and highlight of Robotics Grant.

## Abacus Bee

### Empowering Mathematical Minds

The excitement began with the inaugural APH Abacus Bee on Friday, November 3rd. Sponsored by the American Printing House for the Blind, this engaging competition aimed to spark a love for mathematics among students who are blind or have low vision.

Students showcased their prowess in mental math and abacus operations. The highlight of the event was the award ceremony, where participants walked the red carpet to receive their well-deserved medals and gift cards, marking the beginning of an exciting journey in mathematical exploration.

With three students from The Maryland School for the Blind securing invitations to the national competition in Louisville, Kentucky, the future looks bright for the APH Abacus Bee, promising growth and opportunities for students to excel in the world of mathematics.

As we await the outcomes and potential qualifications for nationals, the echoes of camaraderie, innovation, and achievement from these events linger on, reminding us of the power of determination and community support in shaping a brighter future for all.

The 2024 Maryland Regional Braille Challenge and the inaugural APH Abacus Bee at The Maryland School for the Blind were not just events; they were celebrations of talent, innovation, and community support. Here's a glimpse into the remarkable happenings that took place!

## Braille Challenge

### Inspiring Literacy and Innovation

On Saturday, February 10th, the halls of The Maryland School for the Blind echoed with enthusiasm as the 2024 Maryland Regional Braille Challenge unfolded. Hosted by the Braille Institute, this one-of-a-kind academic competition brought together students from across Maryland, all with one common goal: to showcase their proficiency in braille literacy.

The day was filled with insightful presentations. Leslie Thatcher, Director of Program Development and Strategy at the Perkins School for the Blind, shared invaluable insights on preparing students for life beyond high school, leaving parents inspired and informed. Matthew Shifrin, the dynamic CEO of Bricks for the Blind, captivated families with his innovative approach to making Lego builds accessible through text-based instructions.

The event also featured the exciting Lego Braille Brick Master Class, where budding braille readers delved into the world of Lego, thanks to the generous support of the Lego Foundation. Moreover, the

"Build Your Future" transition fair provided families with connections to organizations like Johns Hopkins University and the Department of Rehabilitative Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

As the day ended, students were honored at the award ceremony, each receiving a trophy crafted from Lego bricks and a gift card, marking not just their achievements but also the spirit of inclusion and support that defines the Braille Challenge.



Student presented with the Sidney Iubelt Memorial Spirit Award.

# Pre-K Pet Corner

While you may not think that a hedgehog would be an ideal pet for an elementary school, Prickles would strongly disagree. The spiny nocturnal mammal loves her job as one of the Science Park class pets. Prickles has many helpers to feed her, clean her cage and play with her every day. Students take turns creating obstacle courses from large PVC pipes to create a fun jungle gym for this spiky girl, and they each have their daily chores to ensure her environment is in tip-top shape. You can find Prickles asleep in various cozy spots throughout the day, but beware of waking her up - she will give you grunts that explain the origin of her species' name.



Prickles, the Early Learning Center hedgehog.



Mr. Bunny, the Early Learning Center bunny.

Mr. Bunny, a.k.a Bell, plays a major role in the Early Learning Science Park classroom as a friend to all. He has incredibly soft white fur, grey ears, and bright red eyes. He loves to hop around during class, but only after the students have put away any yummy cords for him to chew on (according to Mr. Bunny, the TV cords taste best). He even joins the students as they venture outside to forage and garden. Like all Science Park pets, Bell is taken care of by the students, who take turns cleaning his cage, feeding and caring for him. These tasks serve as important lessons for our young students; whether it be social skills, responsibility, or various motor skills, the lessons learned with Mr. Bunny will stick. You can find this guy hopping around Science Park, in the greenhouse, or possibly in his pink stroller tagging along for an adventure. Say hi next time you're nearby!

## Did you know?

Rabbits can be litter box trained.

## Robotics Grant

Thank you to the Maryland State Department of Education for granting a K12 Robotics Grant for the 23-24 school year to MSB! Students and teachers aim to grow the robotics program throughout the year with family events, teacher training, and conferences.



Image description: Mrs. Gina sits with a student, Alex, as they open up a new robotics kit.



# See Beyond Festival 2024

You're Invited to the

# see beyond festival

at

The Maryland School for the Blind  
**April 27, 2024 from 11 am to 3 pm**

Food and Drinks  
Blind Taste Test  
Live Music  
Blind Sports  
**AND MORE!**



Join us for an exploration of discovery, adaptation, and accessibility at the See Beyond Festival, located at The Maryland School for the Blind campus (3501 Taylor Ave, Baltimore, MD 21236). On April 27th, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., we invite the community to embark on a unique sensory journey. With light-blocking eyeshades as our guide, we'll explore the magic of inclusion and accessibility together. Discover firsthand how we all adapt to change and overcome barriers, fostering a community where everyone can thrive. Don't miss the opportunity to witness the power of adaptation and accessibility at the See Beyond Festival!

**Free, Fun-Filled Activities:** Immerse yourself in sensory and tactile arts, engage in blind sports, and tantalize your taste buds with blind taste testing—all while wearing light-blocking eyeshades.

Try the sprint track!



Check out blind soccer!



Swing for beep baseball!



Test out the white cane obstacle course!



## Muddy Fingers

Do you remember when you would look out the window and long to be outside during school? The Little Muddy Fingers gardening club does just that day in and day out! AT Specialist, Master Naturalist and Gardener Jennifer Keenan, leads kindergarten students of the Early Learning Center through a cacophony of nature-informed play and exploration exercises. No matter the weather, the class spends time outdoors doing things such as foraging, listening to the birds, planting tulip bulbs, practicing mindful breathing exercises, and much more. The benefits provided by these activities are plentiful: enhanced self-confidence, motor skills, and independence are just a few to name.



Want to know how you can contribute to the fun? The garden group has been planting seeds of zinnias and propagating spider plants to sell at the See Beyond Festival! All proceeds go directly back into the program. Join us on April 27, 2024 at 11 a.m. to support Little Muddy Fingers. Come early, they sell out quickly!

"[Students] need to be part of nature and not separate from it. They're not going to care about the environment unless they care *for* the environment." - Jennifer Keenan

Image description: Miss Jenn shows a student, Connor, how to use a garden hose to fill a watering can.