

Mustang Express

Montana School for the Deaf & the Blind



Lifting students beyond expectations

Volume XXXXI Issue 1 Fall 2024



Bella enjoying an Indian Education lesson on drumming in the music room



pg. 4 and 5- Meet
our New Staff

pg. 8 and 9- Music for
the Whole Child

Mark Willmarth
Chair
Vision West, Inc.

Todd Carmichael
Vice President
O'Connor Funeral
Home

Laura Walker
Secretary/
Treasurer
Attorney at Law

Cathy Copeland
ASL Interpreter
MSU Billings

Vena Dagnall
MT Hands & Voices

Bonnie DeNoma
Retired MSDB
Foundation

Kevin Eckhardt
VP First Interstate
Bank

**Dee Dee Franzen-
Wallen**
Parent of Former
VI Student

Paul Furthmyre
MSDB
Superintendent

Jim Kelly
MSDB Student
Life Director

Connie Keogh
Legislator
Retired Educator

Tammy Lacey
Retired Great Falls
Public School
Superintendent

Doug Little
Retired Teacher &
Parent of MSDB
Student

Gary McManus
Retired MSDB
Teacher/Coach

Shyla Patera
North Central
Independent Living
Former MSDB
Student

Travis Stevenson
MSDB Parent

Rick Thompson
Retired Hi-Line
Home
Programs

**2 Mustang
Express**



From the Superintendent



MSDB Mustang Community!

Welcome back to an exciting new school year! We are thrilled to continue the journey we began last year—the Journey of a Learner. Together, we've built a solid foundation, helping our students grow academically, socially, and emotionally. This year, we're excited to build on that success and make every day an enriching experience for all.

Our key focus this year is to strengthen family and community engagement. We understand that learning is a shared responsibility, and when schools, families, and communities collaborate, students excel. To support this, we are introducing several new tools and initiatives:

A new school website to provide up-to-date information and resources, making it easier to stay connected with school events and news.

The Remind App, which will allow us to communicate quickly and directly with families, ensuring everyone stays informed and engaged.

Improved data collection tools to better understand the needs of our students and families, allowing us to tailor our support and interventions more effectively.

These efforts are designed to make our school community even stronger. We encourage families to take an active role in these new opportunities for engagement, helping us create a truly collaborative and supportive learning environment.

Let's make this year one of even greater growth and connection. Together, we will continue this exciting Journey of a Learner!

In Mustang Spirit,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Paul Furthmyre'.

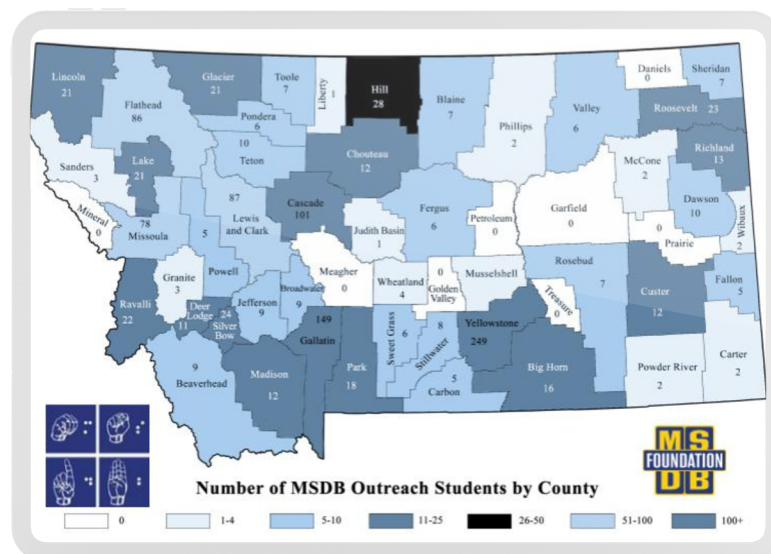
Paul Furthmyre



Calendar at a Glance

October 25- MSDB/MAFB Halloween Festival
 October 23-30- Red Ribbon Week
 November 4- Picture Day
 November 15-16 - Campus Enrichment Days
 November 26-Dec. 1- Thanksgiving Break
 December 10- Gallaudet Day
 December 19- Winter Program 1:00-2:00 PM
 December 20-January 5- Christmas Break
 February 13- Ski Day
 March 13- Ski Day
 April 4-6- Campus Enrichment Days
 April 15- Spring Program 1:00-2:00 PM
 April 17-20- Spring Break
 April 24-26- Untangling the Dots
 May 30- Graduation 2:00-3:00 PM
 June 6-8 -VI Family Learning Weekend
 June 13-15- DHH Family Learning Weekend
 June 15-21- Deaf Camp
 June 22-28- VI Camp

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WELCOME,



April Spanbauer

I am the new Director of Medical Services. I moved to Great Falls in 2016 from Florida. I have a 9 year old son, 20 year old twins, 27 year old daughter, 2 dogs, 1 cat and I enjoy hiking, fishing, art, music, writing and church.



Heather Hill

I am a new VI Outreach consultant. I have a husband and four daughters and lots of pets. I have taught special education for 6 years. I have a BA in special education and I am working on a masters in TVI through TTU.



Darreck Hale

I have a wife ,three boys and a dog. I have lived here in Great falls for 15 years. I am the new behavioral counselor at the cottage. I love activities like running, biking, snowboarding, swimming and helping others.



Erika Baisch

I am a new interpreter for MSDB. I am from Washington and a recent graduate of Kent State University. I am excited to be here!



Kacie Wilmot

I grew up in southeastern Montana. I currently live in Laurel MT with my husband, Tim, and our four cats. I began my teaching career in 2012 in special education. I enjoy spending time with family and baking.



Devany Book

I am the scheduling secretary at MSDB. I am from Great Falls and a former Bison at Great Falls High! I am prior military and a crossfit coach. I love working out, being outdoors, playing volleyball, and being with my dog.



Shawn Erickson

I live in Wolf Point with my husband, three kids, four dogs, and three cats. I love to fish, camp, and travel. I am the new VI Outreach consultant.

NEW STAFF!

Cecilia Prefontaine

I am an interpreter here at MSDB. I am originally from Rochester Massachusetts. I graduated from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in upstate New York with a degree in ASL/English interpreting. I am currently earning my Master's degree in Deaf Education.



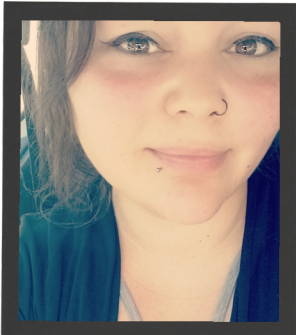
Megan DeSilva

I am a behavioral counselor in the cottages. I am a Great Falls native. I have a background in hospice and working with children. I am also a licensed social worker. I am married with an 11 year old son. I love to play piano, hike, travel, and thrift shop.



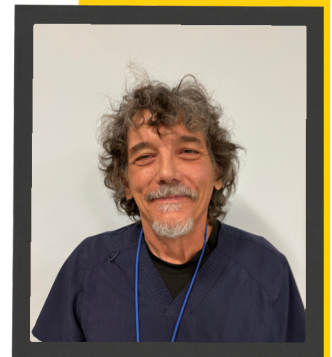
Sydney Hess

I am the new student life administrative assistant. I am from Seattle Wa. I have two kids- McKenna and Tavish. I have three cats - Cheshire, Tiddlywinks, and Luna. I love singing, reading, Halloween, coffee, Autumn and the rain, Dungeons and Dragons, video games, and nature.



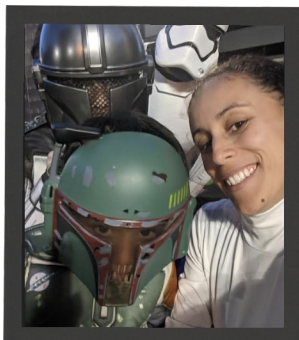
Len Warren

I am a nurse on staff at MSDB. I have been in nursing for 35 years. My wife and I have three kids- Arthur, Thyra, and Julie. Thyra graduated from MSDB. We also have 1 dog and three cats. I like camping, hiking, backpacking, bicycling, and walking our dog.



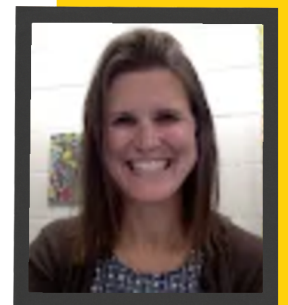
Maria Lleras

I am the new payroll technician at MSDB. I have a husband, two sons, two cats, one dog, and two goldfish. I worked for OPI for 2 and a half years before coming to MSDB. Prior to that I worked for the state of WA. I love spending time outside with the kids and my husband.



Jennifer Norlander

I am the new outreach consultant for the visually impaired with 17 years experience. I love spending time with my husband and two boys. I love hiking, camping, running and watching my boys play sports. I love watching college football- Go Buckeyes!!



PRESCHOOL CORNER

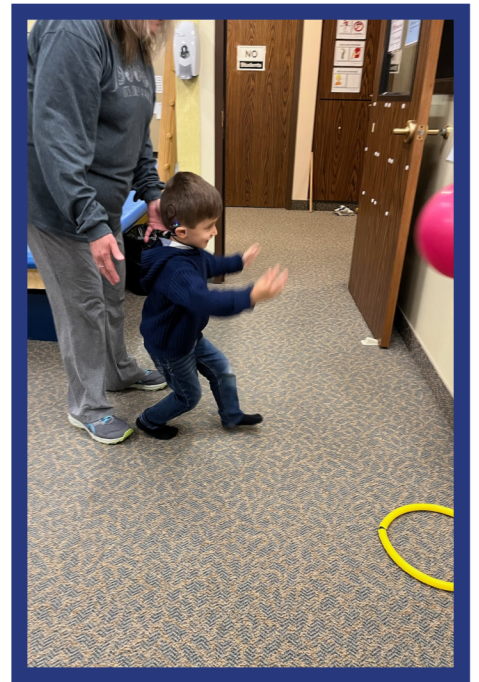
Early Learning at Its Finest



Gabriella is sitting at the table in the VI classroom reading a book



Oliver is making muffins



Charlie in Motor Lab



Oliver in Motor Lab



Owen sitting in a recliner reading a book



Oliver writes him name in the sand



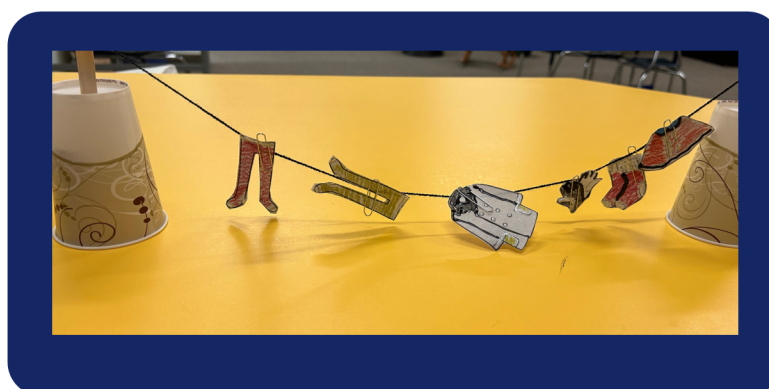
Social Studies Comes Alive

By Melissa Miller, Teacher of the Visually Impaired

Students in Social Studies class have started the year with a brief introduction to Montana and the flag. They are continuing to learn about our great state as well as learning about map reading and landforms. Following the lessons on Montana's flag, which include how Montana's flag was developed and meanings for the art on it, students used what they have learned so far to develop their own flags. One student chose to replicate a Native American Tribe's flag and another student made one up about the mines and the big sky Montana has to offer.

In addition to units about Montana, the social studies class is incorporating English Language Arts concepts into lessons. Students are reading and discussing "The Scarlet Stockings Spy" by Trinka Hakes Noble. The story is about a young girl in Philadelphia in 1777. It is a suspenseful historical fiction story of her role as a rebel during the American Revolution. Students will learn about different codes, how our flag was born and have a chance to make their own code using a clothesline like she did in the story.

Through this hands-on process, the students are able to understand the history in Montana and our great nation in a more personal way.



Music for the Whole Child

By Jaime Jones, Teacher of the Visually Impaired

A growing body of research supports the benefits for students who receive music education; some benefits include increased neural activity, improved test scores, and language development. Participation in music gives the student opportunities to employ multiple senses simultaneously. We can use our ears, eyes, voices, and gross and fine motor skills to clap, tap, stomp, and move our bodies when making music. The students who attend the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) are unique and diverse in their abilities and needs and can benefit from music as much as typically developing peers. Music can provide a way to improve learning in the classroom. It can be motivating and can support working on non-preferred activities, helping them get out of their comfort zone to learn new concepts. Music can be a bridge for those who have trouble communicating, processing words, or expressing their emotions through movement or singing.

Music is repetitive and can help students recognize words, develop new vocabulary, and draw on their memory. Motor skills and coordination are employed and refined through learning and playing rhythm as well as learning to play instruments.

Participation in music requires students to focus and follow the rules that musical concepts create, such as musical form, or dynamics. Music provides the opportunity to think critically about interpreting sounds, lyrics, emotions, and melodies. Musical performances are positive ways to build self-confidence and pride in one's accomplishments and strengthen social interaction and build a sense of community.

Music can be part of recreation and leisure, positively impacting communication skills, coordination, and sensory efficiency skills when provided with direct and explicit instruction and adapted materials to support their needs. Movement through space also benefits orientation and mobility skills, and to make social connections, work on social skills, and be creative in a group.

Mrs. Jones
and Adi



Wyatt with
Ms. Leah



Deaf & the Blind Foundation

BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

The music department is in need of an update of music resources to provide these students with good quality instruments, new music books, an up to date curriculum and adaptive materials to provide better access to the music and materials. A company called Dancing Dots has created software programs called Lime Lighter for students with low vision and GOODFEEL Braille Music Translator for tactile learners. Resonance boards would help our deaf students feel the beat and perceive the sounds as vibrations. These boards are 48" x 48" that sit on the floor and can be easily moved. We also would benefit from purchasing a good quality curriculum that can be adapted for our population of students and increase our number of school instruments so we have enough to go around, such as barred instruments with new mallets to play them on, more soprano ukuleles and recorders with protective cases to store them in so they stay in good shape. We also have a need for more music stands and a storage rack.

Everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy and experience music in their own unique way. It is beneficial for many and it is just a fun activity to do. I am so lucky to get to sing, teach, and perform music with the students of MSDB.

Kirin with
a
xylophone



Adi
with
Mrs. Jones



“Individually, we are one drop. Together we are an ocean.” –Ryunosuke Satoro

How You Can Help

With your help, the MSDB Foundation has been able to provide funds for services and equipment not covered by state funding. The Foundation is committed to funding academic and extracurricular activities that help prepare students for independent lives.

Please join us in that commitment by making a tax-deductible donation to www.msdbmustangs.org or mailing it to:

MSDB Foundation P.O. Box 6576 Great Falls, MT 59406

For more information, please call 406-771-6040

MustangExpress

Fun Day Labor



Morris



Madison and Ayvia

Labor Day Weekend

By: Dorothy Nutter
Lead Residential Advisor

For most people Labor day weekend means having a 3 day weekend but for the students who live in the cottage they stay here. So we usually plan a fun-filled weekend for all to enjoy. This year we had a lot of fun things to do outside playing games such as Folf (disc golf), picnic at giant springs, playing at Black Eagle park, and going to a Voyagers baseball game.

We also had a welcome back luau with a chicken teriyaki kabob BBQ which the kids made themselves and fun water games with a slip and slide and water balloons. The kids and staff always enjoy our fun Labor day weekend.



Angelina, Lilly, Madison, Ayvia, Marissa



Marissa and Lilly



Marias, David, Madison, Ayvia and Marissa

MSDB Bowling Alley By MSDB Foundation

Our gym was built in 1983, and the bowling alley was much loved by students and their families. Since then our school has grown exponentially, especially the last five years. With aging equipment and lack of state funds to replace them, we have not been able to enjoy the bowling alley for well over a decade.

Because of the generosity of our donors, we will be in bowling shoes again. Malmstrom's Red Horse Squadron helped us with demolition this summer, and our generous donors gave funds to renovate our two-lane bowling alley.

Play is an important part of family dynamics, and our Mustang Center gym is the place where we can safely swim, workout, and play basketball in the gym. Bowling is a sport students can enjoy as a family, and most will even be able to enjoy their hometown bowling alleys for years to come!



Meeting our goal

Our new bowling alley



Piper, the Innovator

by Amber Bateen, DHH Outreach Consultant



Piper

Piper Hayes is on her way to becoming one of the next great innovators as she gains leadership and engineering skills while competing on East Helena's Robotics team. She is learning technical skills and developing life skills such as planning, working through problems, and dealing with uncertainty. This year, her team's name is Mechanical Masterminds, and they are off to a great start prepping and planning for this year's tournaments, where they will compete against other teams from Helena and other towns.

There are two components to each competition: Robotics and the Innovation project. During the Robotics portion, they are given a packet of Legos to build obstacles. Next, they code a robot to move through the obstructions. They get points for innovation, robot coding, and completing each obstacle. Each year, the teams receive a theme for the Innovation project. They must choose a problem related to this theme, research it thoroughly, and investigate solutions. They can see what works and what doesn't, then make changes. One of Piper's favorite Innovation projects involved the theme "Energy." After some research, her team decided to tackle the problem involving windmills and how the blades kill hundreds of thousands of birds and bats yearly. Her team presented two innovative solutions that involved applying sand to the blades to make them rougher and attaching a whistle to create a sound that would alert birds and bats to the blades, helping reduce deaths. What an absolutely brilliant plan. This year, the theme is "Submerge," and Piper's team has already come up with some fantastic ideas, but we'll keep those a secret until the season is over. The championship will take place in Bozeman this year. We wish Piper luck and look forward to seeing her creations!

OUTREACH STUDENTS SHINE!



Trinity

Trinity sparkled in her beautiful blue gown as she attended a **Night to Shine**, a Tim Tebow sponsored prom for people with special needs. Next year's prom date is set for

February 7, 2025.

For more information

<https://timtebowfoundation.org/night-to-shine/>



Trinity and her parents

Healthy Relationships: “The Five Love Languages.” by Yvette Smail, Behavior Specialist

Knowing and being a participant in healthy relationships is more important than ever in the aftermath of the Covid Pandemic. With long periods of isolation, and virtual and electronic communication being the primary forms of communication, traditional relationships suffered an upheaval.

The foundation of any healthy relationship consists of trust, respect, honesty, and open communication. Dr. Gary Chapman, a marriage counselor, developed a framework to assist people in their relationships. Dr. Chapman’s book “The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts”, is meant to be a tool to help people communicate effectively in their relationships by determining what each person’s love language is, i.e. what makes them feel loved. The Five Love languages are as follows: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service, and Physical Touch. Examples of each language are:

Words of Affirmation-“You’re more beautiful than a sunset.”

Quality Time-“Let’s go watch the sunset together.”

Receiving Gifts- “I painted you a sunset canvas.”

Acts of Service- “I made a picnic dinner so we can watch the sunset.”

Physical Touch- “Let’s hold hands as we watch the sunset.”

What do you think your love language is? You can use the following link to take the quiz:

<https://www.5lovelanguages.com/profile/>

Have fun and stay healthy!





Shout out
Emily LaSalle, DHH Outreach
Consultant

Congratulations Tayten and Kaylee! I'm so proud of each of you. As your graduation speaker said, "Walk through life taking risks, be brave." I know you will both make our world a better place.

This August Tayten began his freshman year at the University of Montana. Kaylee began a new job at the Sidney Health Center in the main admissions department as well as the emergency room admissions.

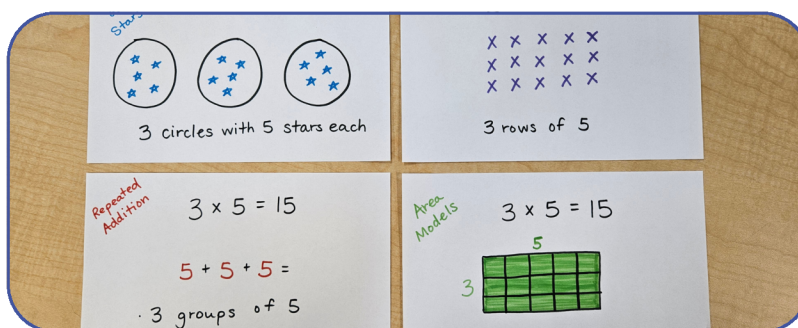
Congratulations to you both!

New Ways of Doing Math

by Alissa Kline, Teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing

Think back to math classes when you were in school. Were there ever times when you just felt stuck and didn't understand what the teacher was talking about? This has happened to everyone at some point. That is why we use so many different methods to teach math. Each student learns in his or her own way.

For this reason, teachers now tend to teach multiple ways to solve a given math problem. For example, when teaching students to multiply, teachers may teach students strategies such as "repeated addition," "circles and stars," "arrays" and "area models". While "repeated addition" might make most sense to one student, "circles and stars" might be the ticket for another student, and "arrays" may do the trick for yet another student. Because we all have different learning styles and learning needs, teaching multiple approaches to math is what helps students find the way that works best for them. If you have questions about these new ways to learn math concepts, ask your child's math teacher.



The Expansion of MSDB Outreach By MSDB BVI Consultants, Shawn Erickson & Kerri Norick

The expansion of the MSDB's outreach program began in the late 20th century, rooted in the need to serve children who lived too far from the Great Falls campus. These early programs focused on providing basic support; educational consultation; and assessments for students, families, and local schools. By the early 90s, MSDB formalized its outreach program with the goal of offering services directly to students in their home communities. MSDB outreach staff, three in total, began to collaborate more closely with local schools, offering services such as teacher training, consultations, assessments, and adaptive technology support.

In 2005, the Montana Legislature approved a Braille Bill to provide students across Montana to have access to trained braille specialists and access to technological advancements. This bill also provided MSDB funds to hire four more outreach consultants. MSDB helped to build the capacity of local educators to better serve students with sensory impairments in their home schools as well as bring in many new referrals, provide enrichment activities, and service to MSDB's campus in Great Falls, MT.

The history of the MSDB outreach program is a story of growth, innovation, and a commitment to ensuring equitable access to education for all students with sensory disabilities, no matter where they live in Montana. As technology continues to evolve and the needs of students and families change, MSDB's outreach program, which now numbers 16, remains at the forefront of providing critical services to Montana's deaf, hard of hearing, blind, and visually impaired students across 147,040 square miles.





Montana School for
the Deaf
and
the Blind

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From the Editor

Missie Williams

We start the new school year with a new name for this publication. Thank you to all that contacted me with name ideas. I took the suggestions and put them to the staff and students for a vote. The students enjoyed the fact they had a say in the name change.

I understand that not all the students in this publication attend MSDB, but they do work with our Outreach, which I feel makes them honorary Mustangs.

We are all one family continuing to do what is best for these amazing kids.

Here's to a great school year!

Missie Williams mwilliams@msdb.k12.mt.us
Special Education Coordinator/Indian Education Coordinator/
Science Teacher/ Express Editor

WHERE IN THE 406?

These are places and things seen by our Outreach consultants on their many travels around the state.

Can you guess where this is located?



Charlo, MT

Welcome back Morris!

Recently Krystal brought her son, Morris, back to MSDB for the new school year. Krystal and her family moved to Colorado for a year and now they are back in Montana. The staff and students of MSDB are so happy Morris has returned!



Let's get social!

#MtSDB
@msdbfoundation

16 Mustang
Express

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