

THE Express



Montana School for the Deaf & the Blind

Lifting students beyond expectations

Volume XXXX Issue 3 Summer 2024



Pg. 16- Malmstrom
hosts MSDB

Pg. 8 -9 - Thank you
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From the Superintendent



Dear Mustang Community,

As we bid farewell to another extraordinary school year, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for each and every one of you who has contributed to our collective journey of growth and discovery. This year, our school theme, 'Embrace the Squiggle,' has been more than just a mantra – it's been a rallying cry that has inspired us to embrace change, navigate challenges, and celebrate our successes with unwavering determination and joy.

Despite the inevitable staff turnover and transitions we faced, we stood together as a community, committed to our shared vision of creating a nurturing and inclusive environment where every learner thrives. Together, we completed the core competencies for the 'Journey of a Learner,' laying the foundation for future growth and success. We also made significant progress on many aspects of our strategic plan, setting the stage for even greater achievements in the years to come.

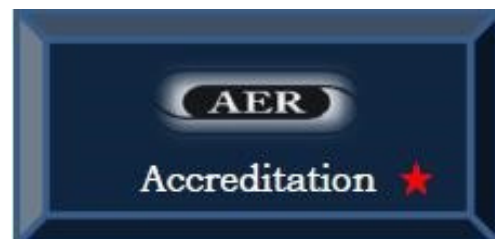
To our dedicated teachers and staff, thank you for your tireless dedication, your unwavering support, and your relentless pursuit of excellence. Your expertise, passion, and commitment to our students' success are the driving forces behind our achievements, and I am deeply grateful for all that you have done. Especially with our staff changes throughout the duration of the year.

As we look ahead to the summer break and beyond, let's continue to embrace the squiggle with optimism, enthusiasm, and a sense of adventure. Whether you're embarking on new projects, pursuing your passions, or simply taking time to rest and recharge, remember that every squiggle is an opportunity for growth, learning, and transformation.

Embracing the squiggle today, tomorrow, and always

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Furthmyre". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Paul Furthmyre



What's In A Name?

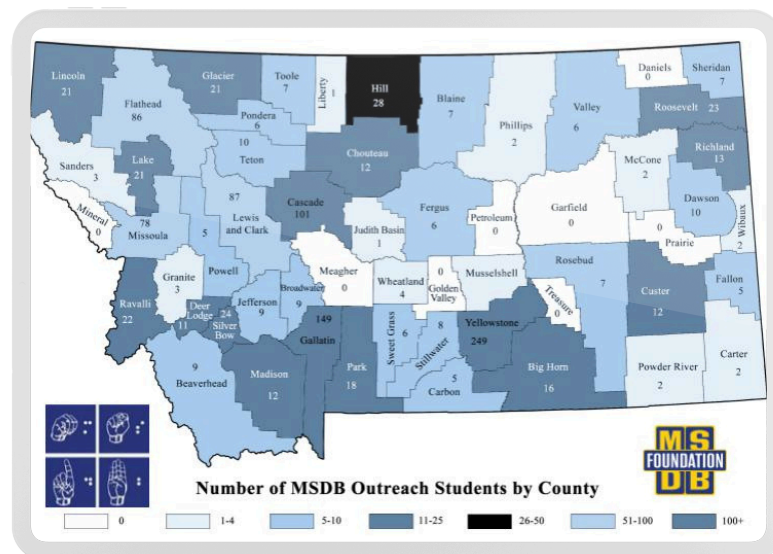
By Missie Williams, Editor

When I took over as Editor years ago, I thought of many ways to change and update the Express. I began with using the school colors to replace the green cover. I started designing the layout of the issue myself this year and continue to make more changes such as more pictures to show the smiles and energy of our students as well as Alt text to increase accessibility. When I hear the word Express, I think of something that is fast, like a bus or train. I don't think about a publication that shows the amazing things that are happening on MSDB Campus.

When I started this journey, I remember thinking that name felt incomplete. It felt like it should be something like The Mustang Express to link it to our school and our mascot. Therefore I decided it is time for a name change.

Since I am but one person, it doesn't seem fair to create the name myself and call it good. That is why I am reaching out to you, the readers. I want suggestions. I am inviting you to send me your ideas for a new name. Simply get those creative juices flowing, come up with those great ideas, and email them to me at mwilliams@msdb.k12.mt.us by September 1.

My next step will be to gather all the wonderful suggestions and have the students and staff vote for the one they like best. Beginning with the fall issue the Express will have a new name to go along with the new design!



Students served by MSDB

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PRESCHOOL CORNER

Early Learning at Its Finest



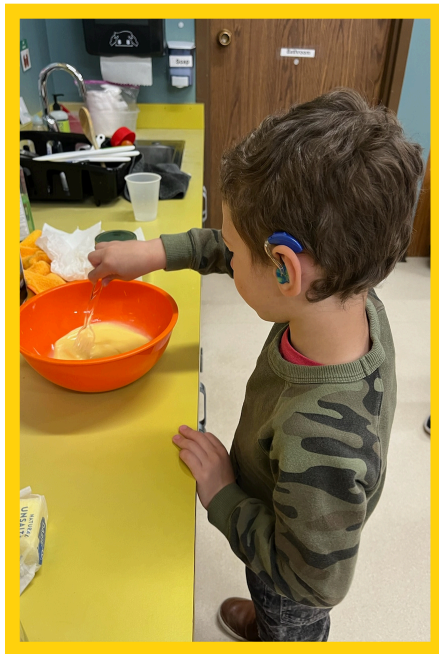
Kaylynn and Kirin pushing the cart with Morgen behind them



Oliver dancing with Ms. Katie on the stage



Kirin helping Ms. Jarvey transplant



Oliver beginning steps to cook



Kirin presenting Aubrey with a plant



Oliver reading his favorite book

Teen Hangout

By Dorothy Nutter, Lead Residential Advisor

In the fall we did some rearranging of some furniture in our activity room and moved the pool table into the room next to the main activity room. We decided to call it Teen Hangout. There was a group of people who came in to put on a new coat of white paint. We all thought it needed some color and talked with the students to see who was interested in being on a design team to decorate the room. We have eight students Josh, Madison, Marissa, Ayvia, Lilly and Amerra. Five staff volunteers Amanda, AJ, Trevor, and Christine with me as the leader and Angelina and Emery as the student leaders. But everyone in the cottage who would like to help out who is 13 and up is welcome. In January the staff got together to discuss some ideas before we had our first meeting in February with the students. They all had some amazing ideas and had to have several meetings to narrow it down. We have made some decisions and started adding furniture around the room. The students will be starting to paint soon but will probably not get it all finished before summer vacation. We will finish up when we come back to school.



Angelina and Ayvia



Madison



Madison and Lilly



Lilly, Lucia, and Emery

Thank You Student Life Staff

By Jim Kelly, Director of Student Life

Throughout the Express newsletter there are articles about student activities, different programs and information about staff (both on campus and in the outreach program). I want to write about what goes behind the scenes in our Student Life Program to make our program a “Home away from Home” for so many of our students.

Our Health Services staff not only dispenses medication for the students but oftentimes will call in prescriptions, take students to doctor appointments, meet with various staff about health concerns, contact the parents when needed and provide a little TLC. Our Kitchen staff not only prepares meals during the week at lunch but also put together the meals for the weekends, pack sack lunches for trips and of course cook for our formal dinners held at Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. Our Residential Advisors and Counselors are in communication with each other on a daily basis to provide care for the students, plan activities, are the point of contact for parents and teachers and work with the students on all aspects of daily living. Our Nightwatch Staff and Housekeeping help keep us safe by providing supervision during the hours the kids are sleeping, help with breakfast on school mornings and keep the cottages clean – really clean! Our Administrative Assistant helps keep the program running by finding substitutes when staff call in or need time off, process timesheets, do invitations for formal dinners, order supplies, and many other things our program needs. Hats off to all of the Student Life Staff who work hard to make our program a “Home away from Home” for our students!



Lucia, Madison, and Josh



Cottage day at the water park in Billings



Josh in his cap and gown



Joshua

Josh at his tree planting

By Missie Williams, Editor

Josh enrolled at MSDB in November of his junior year. He brought with him a wonderful sense of humor. He also brought some of his many collectables, which he spends free time searching out. Since joining MSDB, Josh has learned to sign in order to communicate with many of his friends. He has joined Expressions of Silence and Flying Hooves performing groups, as well as Mustang News, and Moving Mustangs. Josh enjoys being involved outside of school, and he has made many close friends during his time at MSDB.

When asked about his future plans, Josh states he has been accepted into our LEAP program, which stands for Living, Employment, Academic Planning. He is excited about his future and plans on settling in Great Falls permanently. Josh grew up in Butte, Montana. He was adopted at an early age. Now he has a Pomeranian named Buddy and a gray tabby cat named Big Guy. Josh has wanted to restore old cars as long as he can remember. He also wants to get licensed in welding.



Josh enjoying the new lab chairs



Josh picking up bristles to recycle



Josh and his cool science fair activity

A Fond Farewell



Shirley Wermling



Jane Garrison



Carol Clayton-Bye

We bid a fond farewell to these six lovely ladies who have made such an impact at MSDB. They have multiple years of experience and countless memories to carry into retirement. You will all be missed!



Amy Tangen



Diane Eddy



Brenda LeMieux

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for the DEAF & the BLIND

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Montana School *for the* LIFTING STUDENTS

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BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

Our donor list includes gifts received January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023. Please check these lists for recognition of your gifts. While we make every effort to get names correct, occasional errors occur. If you find we omitted or misspelled your name, please call Carmen Turnbow (406) 771-6040 or email foundation@msdb.k12.mt.us to allow us to apologize and correct the records. We want to correct even minor errors. Thank you again for your gift and, if necessary, your forgiveness.

In Memory of

Anonymous in memory of Allen Gunderson
Anonymous in memory of Darlene Lamping
Anonymous in memory of Martha Janes
Atkins family in memory of Max Schumacher
Carol Maier in memory of Martha Janes
Christopher Brillantes in memory of Ervan Jeffrey Bartlett
Francis Jenning in memory of Mike Jennings
Gail Charboneau in memory of Anne Trunkel
Ginger Whitman in memory of Darlene Lamping
Glen Thomas in memory of Martha Janes
James Trunkel in memory of Gladys Youngren
Karen Maehl in memory of Martha Janes

Katherine Royal in memory of Max Schumacher
Kris Cameron in memory of Max Schumacher
Lei Ann Shiramizu in memory of Max Schumacher
Lisa Legare in memory of Sharon Thompson
Lynn Fontana in memory of Kenny Menahan
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Mike and Sheila Lebrun in memory of Eleanore Kittleson-Aldred
Patti Perrin in memory of Martha Janes
Raymond and Bonnie Johnson in memory of Martha Janes
Renae Schumacher in memory of Max Schumacher
Richard Goff in memory of Elizabeth Goff
Robert Janes in memory of Martha Janes

Roland and Murielle Perrien in memory of Derald Guillbert
Scott and Melissa Meisel in memory of Cecelia Eide
Shawna and Gene Woodard in memory of Darlene Lamping
Shelley and Jay Fallhee in memory of Darlene Lamping
Shirley Battershell in memory of Martha Janes
Tamara Kittleson in memory of Eleanore Kittleson-Aldred
Touchmark in memory of Martha Janes
Tyrell Foard in memory of June Foard
Virgil and Nany Hall in memory of Derald Guillbert
William and Judy Cline in memory of Larry Vinther
William Razor in memory of Martha Janes

In Honor of

Anonymous in honor of Deaf Mentorship
Art and Cheryl Alt in honor of Julie Dee Alt
Debbie Johnston in honor of Gracie Jones
Anonymous in honor of Waylon Mathern
Anonymous in honor of Patrick Gannon
Joel Stuber in honor of Irish Furthmyre
Mary Clayton in honor of Levi Wahl

Allen Gunderson (1927-2022) was one of the last correspondence-school educated attorneys in Montana. He was one of the original incorporators of the MSDB Foundation in 1981 and served on the MT Board of Education 1976-2012.



In Kind

Carlos and Kristie Centurion
Carmen Turnbow
Cheyanne Tucker
Gentle Thug Productions
Paul Furthmyre

“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

MSDB's Collaborative Support with HB 619

By Katie James, Outreach Consultant



Shawn Tulloch
Presentation of HB 619

MSDB has been collaboratively working on multiple statewide projects over the course of the 2023-2024 school year. Last legislative session, a group of Deaf adults, parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing children, and professionals acting as citizens worked together with Representative Connie Keogh of Missoula House District 91 to pass House Bill 619 (MT LEAD-K) expanding the previously passed House Bill 328.

Montana joined 18 other states that have passed LEAD-K (Language Equality Acquisition for Deaf Kids) legislation. The bill called for the establishment of a temporary language development advisory committee made up of various stakeholders, including parents, professionals, members of the Deaf community, and representatives from the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) and the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS). The language development advisory committee is well underway in implementing the work of the bill to establish language developmental milestones as a resource for families and a list of appropriate language assessments for English (including spoken, written, and manual forms) and American Sign Language (including visual, tactile, and protactile) for children birth to nine years old for recommendation of state approval. Of the 14 committee members, MSDB has three staff members serving on this committee and one retired MSDB staff member. We appreciate the work being done by this committee to support our MSDB families and students.



Families working with legislature walk through the Capitol

SKC and MSDB Together Again!

By Missie Williams, Indian Education Coordinator



Students of MSDB and SKC

May 9th and 10th brought excitement and anticipation to the students at MSDB. It was time for our annual visit from Salish Kootenai College in Pablo, Montana. Each year the students enrolled in the education program at SKC create lessons to share with our MSDB students.

This year, the college students observed classrooms on the first day and saw some of the magic that regularly happens on this campus. The next day they brought lessons that were carefully planned to show Native American activities and information to our students. The excitement and laughter filled the IMC as the entire school came together to learn.

There were drumming activities, beading, basket weaving, and making shields. The kids had so much fun and were so interested they didn't want to leave. This is one of my favorite times of the school year because I see the excitement to learn about the native culture, but I also see the college students who get so excited about being here and sharing their knowledge with our students. Thanks SKC for always making time to work with us!

New accessible stage inspires performers

By MSDB Foundation

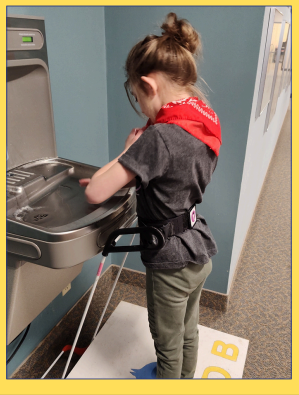
April 16 marked a significant milestone for MSDB Student Gracie Jones, a 6th grader navigating low vision and using a wheelchair. It was a momentous occasion as Gracie and her friends took to the stage together for the first time, thanks to the new ADA accessible stage. Previously, Gracie was confined to performing on the gym floor. The joyous event was commemorated with a rendition of "Celebrate Good Times, Come on!" This achievement was made possible through the kindness of our dedicated donors, whose generosity transformed Gracie's dream into reality. Philanthropy, defined as the "love of people," was exemplified on this day, demonstrating that anyone can make a difference through their generosity. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed, reaffirming our belief in the power of collective compassion. Truly, anyone can be a philanthropist. Our stage is where the most important moments of our students' young lives take place. They sing, perform skits, accept awards, and more. Now that we have a ramp, Gracie herself will graduate on stage in 2030, instead of in front of it!



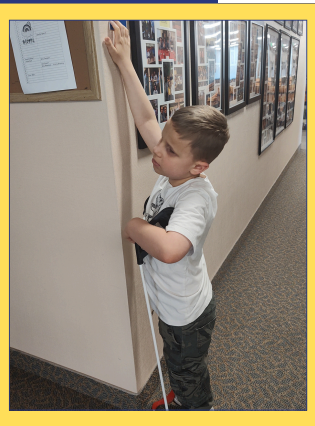
Gracie, Charlee, Josh, Lilly, and Carter

BELT CANES: The Tool for Safe, Independent Travel for Young Children

By Geri Darko, Orientation and Mobility Specialist



Adi at the water fountain



Wyatt reading the braille numbers

At MSDB, we often talk about safe, independent travel. All of our students with visual impairments are learning how to travel safely in familiar and unfamiliar environments. Some of our students are learning about environmental preview by using the white cane for detecting obstacles or drop-offs. Did you know that even our smallest of students are learning how to ensure a safe path of travel by using a white cane? The Pediatric Belt Cane is being used with our toddlers, preschoolers and younger elementary students who are visually impaired. The belt cane system consists of a belt worn around a child's waist and a rectangular-shaped white cane that attaches to the belt with magnets.

The belt cane is a great tool for small children to use because it is hands-free and allows them to tactually explore and interact with their surroundings. While wearing the belt cane, children can detect and avoid collisions with obstacles, walk up and down stairs, play on playground equipment, and become more independent in their environments. Children using the belt cane can learn that walking doesn't have to be scary or painful, even when you have a visual impairment.

If you would like to know more about the Pediatric Belt Cane, check out the Safe Toddles website and social media posts:

Website: <https://www.safetoddles.org/>

Links to the Safe Toddles podcast and blog can also be found on the website.

YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/@SafeToddles>

TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@safetoddles>

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Kaylynn feeling the artwork in the hall



Kirin descending the steps at the public library



Adi walking in the hall at Bitterroot

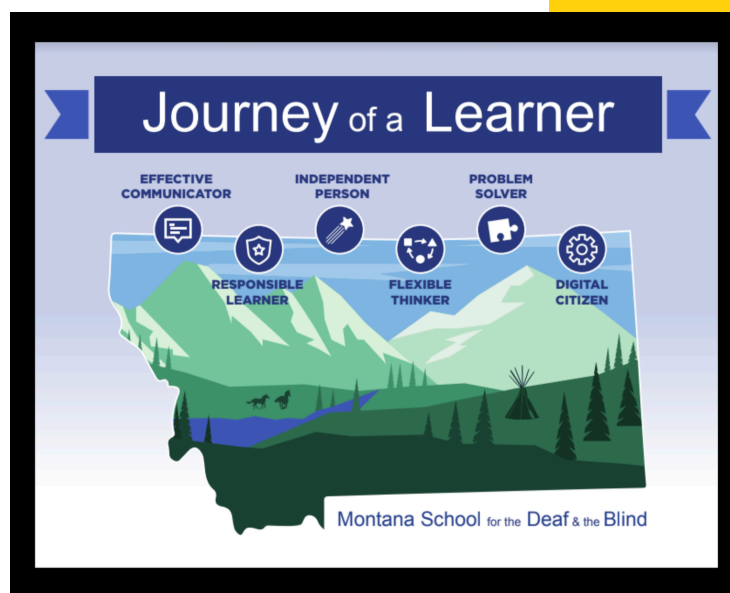
The Journey of a Portrait
By Denise Rutledge, Teacher of the Visually Impaired

Journey of a Learner

Last fall, MSDB began the important work of developing a “Portrait of a Graduate”. If you research “Portrait of a Graduate” you will find that Portraits are in many schools across the country. The basic idea is that the Portrait is developed by the larger community (staff, students, parents, community members, stakeholders, and transition-aged services like college, employers and vocational agencies) to identify the competencies that students need to be future-ready. A competency can be thought of as a skill, trait or attribute that students should have or be developing. The larger Portrait is a shared vision of what we want our student outcomes to look like. At MSDB, we know that our community encompasses the entire state. We have been pleased by the participation from folks from every corner of Montana in this Portrait and can’t thank you enough for your time and talents in this endeavor. We have renamed our project title from “Portrait of a Graduate” (a fairly generic term for these ventures) to “Journey of a Learner.”

Our MSDB “Journey of a Learner” starts now. The six competencies selected by our team were communication, responsibility, independence, critical thinking, problem solving and technology literacy. These competencies have evolved into language that matches the roles that the students will take on: Effective Communicator, Responsible Learner, Independent Person, Flexible Thinker, Problem Solver and Digital Citizen. The selection of the competencies and the development of the visual/tactile was just the first step in our journey. We will be working during the next year to identify how to make our shared vision a reality. We will be expanding our competency descriptors into “I statements” for students, and identifying what students at every stage of their school careers should be doing to demonstrate these roles. Lesson plans and MSDB events will be tied to the competencies to make sure we are promoting their development from every angle. And we will continue working with our network of supporters to make our connections even stronger, and utilize their expertise for the success of our students.

THANK YOU to all of the people that have joined MSDB in creating our Journey of a Learner. We hope you will continue to join us on this new educational adventure!



New Journey of a Learner logo

End of Year Activities

As the year draws to a close, we celebrate as a whole school by going to Flying Giant in Helena. Some students and staff choose to bowl and others choose to get more physical. This is a fun day for all!



Denise, Julie Dee, and Elijah



Logan crossing the course



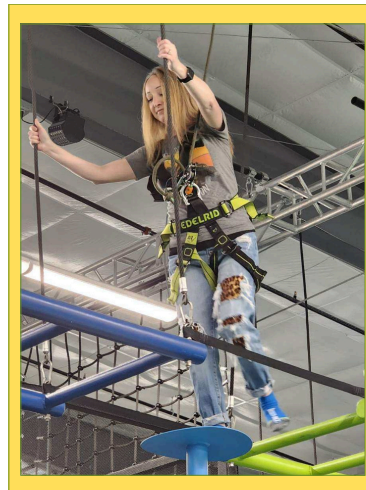
Elijah and Naomi



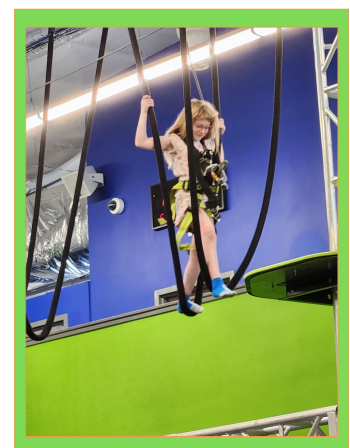
Geri zipping



Levi on the Zipline



Christy on the obstacle course



Daredevil Brooke



Julie Dee and Troy
go toe to toe

MAFB Hosts MSDB

Malmstrom Air Force Base has worked with MSDB numerous times on our campus. They have helped with our Easter celebration as well as bringing fun activities to our gym. They decided to invite MSDB to the base to see various equipment and explain what they do. They finished off the visit with bowling on base with the kids. We had a wonderful time! The smiles and excitement of the students and staff says it all! Thank you, Malmstrom, for hosting us !



Logan and Bridger check out the scope



David ready for action



Madison, Brenda, and Mary



Denise and Sara



Bowling on post



Brooke in full gear



Staff, students, and military personnel



**Montana School for
the Deaf
and
the Blind**

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From the Editor

Missie Williams

We are winding down another year at MSDB. It has been exciting, busy, and ever-changing from the first day to the last.

We have welcomed new students and staff, learned new programs, made new friends, and created new memories.

As an educator, each year is a wonder. We wonder if we can cover everything, We wonder if we are making a difference, We wonder if the kids are learning what they need to learn.

The answer is in the pictures. Look at the smiles. Look at the confidence in our kids. Look at the excitement in the staff as they work.

Our school is not like any other school. Our kids are not like any others. They are special. They are caring. They are like little rockets set to take off regardless of what may stand in their way.

We, as educators, are just the fuel that helps them set off to new heights.

After 30 years of teaching, I still am in awe watching kids as they grow and learn, laughing with them, learning with them, and changing with them.

Thank you, MSDB kids, for helping me grow and thank you, MSDB parents for allowing me to spend each moment with your children. They are a blessing every day! Have a wonderful summer!

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?



Barn near Clyde Park, Montana

SECGC MSDB #5066



State Employees
Charitable Giving
Campaign



Let's get social!

#MtSDB
@msdbfoundation

**August 26, 2024 is the
first day of school!!**

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Express

The MSDB Express is published three times a year and is graciously funded by the MDDB Foundation. To receive it electronically, please contact Carmen Turnbow at foundation@msdb.k12.mt.us