

The Window

The Maryland School for the Blind

www.marylandschoolfortheblind.org



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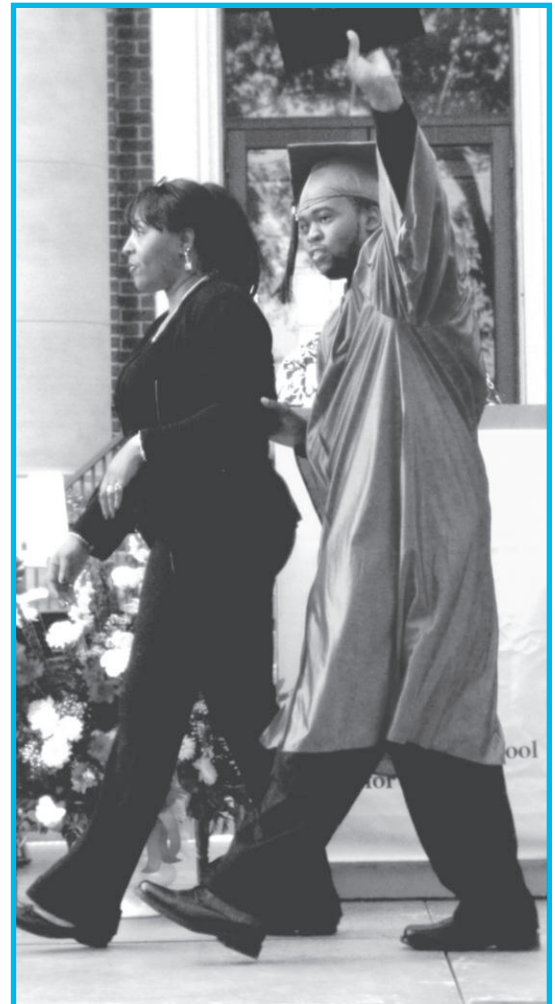
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Foriest Doss: Overcoming the Odds

ONE STUDENT'S JOURNEY TO INDEPENDENCE AND HIGHER LEARNING

● ● Foriest Doss was a typical middle school student until he started to lose his vision in the eighth grade. In addition to the growing pains and self consciousness that comes with being a teenager, Foriest was faced with something much more distressing and yet he could not do anything about it. As he struggled to use his remaining vision to read the chalkboard and even just to walk down the hall, he ended his days with terrible headaches from eye strain. What's worse is that his friends began to treat him differently. They did not know how to accept what was happening to Foriest and began to shy away from their newly blind friend.

Foriest was not sure what to think of his condition himself. He became lost and discouraged and eventually dropped out of school. He made an attempt to go back once high school started but the support and guidance he needed just didn't exist. Unable to get through his classes, Foriest grew frustrated; and then he found The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB). Enrolled as a residential student, Foriest made lasting friendships with others like himself. He was a star player on the school's goalball team and also was a member of the track team. In addition, Foriest



assisted as a stage hand for school plays and spent one semester as the school mascot. Foriest

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FOR THE BLIND

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As of August, 2009, I have completed one year as President of The Maryland School for the Blind. Every day I enjoy witnessing student achievement and MSB's dedicated staff who ensure that each student is safe, challenged and reaches new milestones.

In the face of the nation's ongoing economic headwinds The Maryland School for the Blind remains on a clear and steady path. As you would expect, we've had to make some adjustments—as have many organizations—but our deep-seated commitment to excellence across our mission remains intact and poised for continued success. We have made some strides toward achieving our vision as an A+ School of the Future. Some of these strides include enhanced campus safety, increased quality of programs and services, and raising the bar for student independence and learning. Others have come in the form of re-organization of management and greater focus on fiscal responsibility and stability.

Many parents and visitors to campus are noticing positive changes and have commented on improvements in the dormitories, classrooms, dining room, and in other areas. The water main replacement project is nearing completion. Most notably,

thanks to a grant from the Cole Foundation, the student dining room has undergone some major renovations to benefit our students. We have increased the expectations for them to be more independent in an area that is more home-like and suitable for the learning that occurs at mealtime.

We have raised the bar for our students' achievement and level of independence. We are appreciative of the wonderful parent support we receive to assist their children reach their fullest potential. We also are thankful for those in the community who support us. Thanks sincerely for your interest in assisting in providing quality services which will positively impact and make a difference in our students' futures.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Bina, Ed.D.
President

The Maryland School for the Blind

MSB STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Meet Dr. Martin Monson, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

The Maryland School for the Blind is very pleased to introduce Dr. Martin Monson, as our newly appointed Director of Education. Dr. Monson has served as Director of the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Principal at the Wisconsin School for the Visually Handicapped and as an itinerant teacher of the visually impaired in Eugene, Oregon and Las Vegas, Nevada.



Dr. Monson holds a masters degree in special education from the University of Minnesota and a doctoral degree from the University of Northern Colorado in special education of students who are visually impaired, including those with multiple disabilities. His doctoral work was supported by a fellowship from the National Center for Leadership

in Vision Impairment. He is active in the community as a Lions Club member and is very involved in professional organizations. Dr. Monson, his wife, Renee, and their two children, Annika age 5 and August age 3, relocated from Colorado in July 2009.

Dr. Monson stated, "I am truly excited about becoming a member of The Maryland School for the Blind family. The past work that

has been done here for and with students who are blind or visually impaired is impressive. As we move forward as a school, I will use my skills, talents, and experience as an administrator and teacher to add to an already strong program so that we can maximize outcomes for the students and larger community we serve." •

thrived socially, however academics became a struggle for him because his methods of learning had to change when his vision deteriorated.

Learning to read in braille, becoming a better listener and traveling between classes with a white cane were new skills essential to his academic success. He needed to use these skills in classes on campus at MSB and also in his classes at Parkville

High School. Foriest's biggest hurdle was passing the high school state examination in order to graduate with a diploma, rather than receive a certificate of completion. Foriest studied hard and believed in himself and he successfully passed all of his exams. With a high school diploma in hand, Foriest is ready to start college classes in the spring. •

Drill Bits: The R.E.A.C.T. Team Educates and Entertains

SAFETY VIDEOS HELP STAFF AND STUDENTS LEARN EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- It is important for students and staff from all schools and with all abilities to know what to do in an emergency. It is especially important that sensory impaired persons are able to recognize emergencies so that they can take precautions independently if necessary.

The Maryland School for the Blind's Resource Emergency Action and Communication Team (R.E.A.C.T.) has staff and students humming familiar tunes in the hallways, thanks to their new series of emergency preparedness videos set to catchy and familiar music. The two minute videos are called *Drill Bits*. The team stated, "Our goal is safety! Using *Drill Bits*, we will disseminate emergency information in a way that is conducive to learning. *Drill Bits* will get everyone's attention." The REACT Team presented their first video in an all staff assembly last school year. Set to the tune of the Ohio Player's "Fire", the school-made video featured MSB students and staff singing all new lyrics that tell students and staff what to do in the event of fire at the school. "The lyrics were meant to help students and staff to remember all of the steps to take in a fire and how to follow through with them," said REACT Team member Barbara Burke. Just in time for the new school year, the team has completed videos for all school emergency drills. In addition, the Team has created a new rap song to



train Incident Leaders, who are designated staff members in charge of making sure that everyone in their area are safe and accounted for in a drill or actual emergency.

MSB student Malorie Salley never liked emergency drills. When the alarms would sound she would panic and sometimes cry. Most disconcerting, is that she wouldn't know

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what to do. "I felt nervous and scared. I would forget everything," said Malorie. Malorie met with staff in the psychology and social work departments for help. "Together, we figured out that I didn't know what to do because I didn't have anything in particular to do." That is when Burke and the REACT Team stepped in. Burke met with Malorie and proposed that Malorie train to become a Student Incident Leader. Malorie says her first reaction was, "You're dreaming! Why would you ask someone who's a total disaster in

emergencies? Why would you ask me, of all people?" However, Malorie took on the challenge and is working towards her certification. "I feel more in control. It's up to me to make sure everyone is safe. People are depending on me." It is the goal of the REACT Team and The Maryland School for the Blind to teach our students competence and independence in emergencies so they can be proactive and responsible for their own well being. •

MSB Celebrates White Cane Day with "The Sound Game"

- On October 6, 1964 President Lyndon B. Johnson
- proclaimed October 15th of each year as White
- Cane Safety Day, a symbolic day to honor the many achievements of blind and visually impaired persons and to recognize the white cane's significance in advancing independence. Originally, the white cane was designed to be a mobility tool, but it has become a symbol of independence for people with visual impairments. The root of the white cane has a deep tie to The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB), thanks to Dr. Richard Hoover, a former MSB staff member, board member and ophthalmologist, who developed the "long cane" or "Hoover" method of cane travel in 1944.

To celebrate White Cane Safety Day, MSB held its second annual "Sound Game" contest. Every morning at the end of the school announcements a live or pre-recorded sound was played over the intercom. Students in classes worked together to identify the sound and the first classroom to call in and correctly identify the sound won a prize. In addition to the morning announcements, a more formal "Sound Game" was played in the Jen C. Russo Arts Center on campus where groups of classes gathered to compete against each other, listening carefully to correctly identify categories of sounds (animal, musical instrument, voices, household, and inside/outside environmental sounds). At the end of the game, the team with the most points excitedly accepted the grand prize!

Dr. Frank Richardson, an MSB staff psychologist, came up with the idea for the Sound Game. MSB's Wellness Committee funds the initiative through its grant program. With the assistance of the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) department, the game was introduced last school year. "The orientation part of O&M is the thinking part. We teach students to listen for environmental sounds to orient themselves so that they can think about where they are, what is going on around them and what actions they should take to complete their task, like traveling from one place to another independently. The mobility part of O&M is the physical movement and navigation of the student, like traveling using a white cane." said Colleen Calhoun, O&M supervisor at MSB.

Every day our students work hard to develop their ability to identify and use sounds to help them understand what's going on around them and travel safely. The Sound Game gives our students a chance to shine and show off their listening skills. •

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COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: COLE FOUNDATION

Thank you to our long time partners at the Cole Foundation. The Maryland School for the Blind received a \$50,000 grant from the Cole Foundation for renovations and equipment purchases in our student dining room. The former one room dining facility was divided into three sections for more accessible and intimate settings where dining has become a learning opportunity. The smaller rooms have been named after Richard Hoover, Louis Braille and Anne Sullivan. Now, students who are able can dine more independently by going through serving lines themselves and

bussing their trays with little or no assistance. The dining rooms have been brightened with flags from each of the different Maryland counties.

The Cole Foundation has been a generous contributor to MSB for over 13 years and has been the primary donor to significant projects like the student-run vending machine business and the student-run Rock n' Roll Café on campus. We look forward to partnering with The Cole Foundation for years to come as we prepare MSB students for the future. •

DONATE ONLINE — www.marylandschoolfortheblind.org

Donate a vehicle today! It's easy. Call 1-866-MSB-MYCAR.

The Maryland School for the Blind is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that depends on your support and donations to help students become successful, independent adults. Please consider making a contribution to make a difference in a child's life.

MSB BOARD MEETING

MSB's Board of Directors will meet

**Wednesday
November 11, 2009 at 2 pm**

The Window

The Maryland School for the Blind
3501 Taylor Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21236-4499

Mark Your Calendar

M	T	W	TH	F	SAT	SUN
November 13						
November 26-27						
December 24-31						
January 1						
January 18						
February 15						

We like to share our successes with you, however, if you would like to be removed from The Window mailing list, please call 410-319-5722 or send an email to taiishap@mdschblind.org.



BaltOween Festival Postponed

- BaltOween, MSB's annual festival fundraiser, was not held this year due to a number of circumstances that
- made it difficult to host a successful event. The construction and equipment associated with the major water main repair project made the campus inaccessible in some areas, limiting the space available for the festival's activities and attractions. Also, in the current economic times, many businesses and individuals have limited resources to sponsor events in the community. If you would like to make a contribution to the school please contact Casey Joyce at 410-444-5000 ext. 207 or donate at www.marylandschoolfortheblind.org.

We would like to thank all of the volunteers, students, parents, contributors, staff, committee members, and the general public who have supported past BaltOween Festivals.