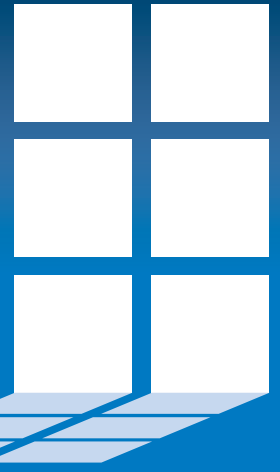




THE MARYLAND SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

The WINDOW

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 2 FALL 2010



Alana is Reaching Independence Step by Step and Her Dad is Amazed by the Journey

Raising a young child as a single parent can be a daunting experience, even more so when raising a child with disabilities. For **Federico Kendrick**, a network technician at the University of Maryland Shock Trauma Center and single father of nine-year-old Alana, the challenges have been almost overwhelming.

"I was a 22-year-old student at Bowie State University when I learned that Alana had

experienced a serious head injury," affirms Kendrick. "She was only one year old at the time."

In as little as three weeks, it became evident that Alana's injury had caused significant motor and cognitive impairments. Over the next six months, she lost most of her vision as well.

"Fortunately, my parents were incredibly supportive right from the start," recalls Kendrick. "My mother is a retired social worker, and she

immediately began to search for the right services and programs for Alana."

Years of assessment, rehabilitation and care followed, including a day program in a Prince George's County public school near Alana's home. Yet, her family and teachers felt that she wasn't progressing as they had hoped. They wanted a more intensive, specialized learning environment for her, and Alana was enrolled as a residential student at The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB).

"When Alana transferred here in August 2009, she was not walking on her own," notes **Paula Hamilton**, her first year teacher in MSB's Learning in Functional Environments (LIFE) program. "She ate with her hands and only walked with a gait trainer." Specialized adaptive equipment is often outgrown within a school year. The cost to continuously replace equipment is significant. Because of generous donors, MSB is able to provide needed equipment.

Hamilton stressed that Alana's greatest gains have been in mobility and fine motor skills. "She can take active steps without any help, and she now eats with a spoon and drinks with a straw."

According to Hamilton, Alana's progress has provided the groundwork for her to begin the road to maximum independence next year.



Alana and her dad Federico during the ESY summer program.

continued on page 3

Message from the Board Chairman

On July 23, 2010, **Dr. Michael Bina** received the prestigious Ambrose M. Shotwell Memorial Award during the Biennial Conference of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER International) in Little Rock, Arkansas.

This high honor bestowed on people in the blindness field, was given in acknowledgement of Dr. Bina's accomplishments and professional leadership, including his service to AER International itself, as president. It also recognizes his major



Dr. Bina (center) photographed with John Kerry, AER President and Donna McNair, AER Awards Committee Chairperson.

contributions as a special educator, writer, researcher, presenter, advocate and a leader of several key schools, including the Indiana School for the Blind; The Hadley School for the Blind, an international distance learning program; and The Maryland School for the Blind.

Dr. Bina has played a prominent role in guiding the profession through a time of major change. During the 1950's, a majority of children who were blind or visually impaired attended specialized schools, such as MSB, with only a small minority enrolled in their local public school. Today, the reverse is true. Many elected

state officials began to question the costs of schools for the blind and if these restrictive placements segregated students from society.

Dr. Bina, through his published articles, speeches and advocacy in state legislatures and Washington, D.C., effectively addressed these questions. He strongly advocated that students, for their future success, and depending on their unique needs, must have available "the full continuum of services" that includes both the local education agency and residential school as viable placement options. He effectively argued that the school for the blind is, in many cases, the "least restrictive environment" for students. He stressed that their individual needs, not philosophical beliefs, must be the primary determining factor of where a student goes to school. He made a strong case justifying the "per pupil" expenditures and the continued importance of specialized schools. He was a proponent of the belief that specialized schools needed to evolve as statewide resource centers with outreach services to public schools and, in addition, on-campus programs with a "revolving door." This model promotes students coming to the residential schools as many times as needed throughout their school age career to develop specific skills and then returning successfully to their local school program.

I am pleased to see Dr. Bina receive such international recognition as the Ambrose M. Shotwell Memorial Award. The profession really does owe a great deal to his efforts and leadership. In his short two year tenure at MSB, he has already demonstrated the qualities for which he was recognized. MSB is truly fortunate to have someone with his skills and dedication serving as its president.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Veilleux, *Chairman of the Board*

Back To School With Ken Pyles

Ken Pyles has spent the last 35 years dedicated to students at The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB).

As a child he was first exposed to blindness when his father began losing his vision due to Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP), a degenerative eye disease. He marveled at his father's independence despite his disability. Years later, Pyles came to MSB as a volunteer, then became a teacher and is currently teaching in MSB's Learning in Functional Environments (LIFE) program. Students in the LIFE program typically have profound multiple disabilities. They require customized equipment, multiple therapies, are medically fragile and need one-on-one staff assistance.



Preparation for the next school year is extensive and begins long before the first day of class. "Getting ready for a new school year is hard work for every teacher", he affirms. "But here, it is especially challenging. Our ultimate goal is to prepare students for life after school." Under his management, Pyle's students run a business. They design, print, press and sell buttons, magnets and coasters for all occasions. They also take orders. "It's a great way for students to learn job skills and fundraise for our class," says Pyles. Customers can call the school directly to place an order. They also welcome donations for supplies and small pay stipends for the students.

This school year will be challenging. I have three new students who are deafblind and a deaf staff member. "I need to brush up on my sign language!" Creating a classroom schedule and finding space for 7 students, most in wheelchairs, and 6 staff members can be tough in an older building that was not originally designed to accommodate students with multiple disabilities. In addition, Pyles must learn the needs of each student and build upon their current skills and levels of independence.

"My job is to foster and demonstrate the concept that all students can do more for themselves and achieve a higher level of independence and better quality of life," he explains. "That, after all, is our mission."

continued from cover

For Federico Kendrick, it means even more. Every week he and Alana's grandparents are amazed at how significant a difference MSB has made in her life.

"She has much more confidence in getting around the house and doing things for herself," affirms Kendrick. "And I have more

confidence too, that we can continue to build on this success. Alana deserves the best future possible. At MSB, I think she really is on her way to having it." Thanks to your support, during these tough economic times, MSB has been able to help Alana and her family and many other students and families realize hope for the future.



Alana fine tuning her motor skills with a sorting task in class.

MSB's Summer Program a Success

The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) offers Extended School Year (ESY) services each year during the month of July. Built on previous summer programs, ESY is open to students aged 3-21 who require additional training and support because they are unable to quickly recoup academic, social, and visual impairment related skills lost over the summer break.

ESY offers career education, self-advocacy classes, and daily living skills training, as well as instruction in braille and in orientation and mobility. ESY services are state funded so there is no cost to parents, however other MSB-led summer programs incur expenses and the school relies on public donations to support these programs.

"Our goal is to make sure that each student maintains his or her current level of performance on objectives outlined in their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)" states Program Coordinator, **Phyllis Simmons**. "This year, there were 105 participants." According to Simmons, "A

theme is chosen and teachers decide on activities in the community that reinforce classroom lessons. This year's theme was 'Down on the Farm...At the Beach'. For a beach activity, a group of students visited Sandy Point State Park. They experienced the sounds and feel of the water, talked about what they had learned in science, and even learned the parts of a ship."

In May, community businesses supported MSB's "Down on the Farm" field day which inspired the summer program's extension of the experience. One elementary class read stories about farm animals and

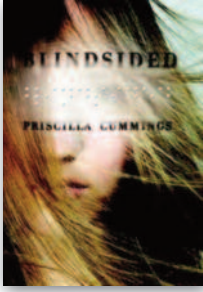
included sensory experiences where students felt feathers and wool and listened to animal sounds. Another class took a trip to Wegmans food market to learn how produce grown on farms gets to store shelves and then to our homes. "What a great way to build orientation and mobility skills, interact with each other and with merchants, and practice exchanging money," Simmons adds. This type of learning is critical in helping our students build a foundation for a bright and more independent future.



Daniel learns that rooster feathers tickle!

Blindsided

Local author, **Priscilla Cummings**, has written a new fiction book for young teenage readers called *Blindsided*. It is about a young girl who is losing her vision. Ms. Cummings spent a year at MSB researching staff and students in preparation for this novel. To purchase a copy, call 410-444-5000 ext. 1207.



Become a Partner of MSB

Join our Legacy Circle

Anyone naming MSB in their will or with a bequest may join The Maryland School for the Blind's Legacy Circle. MSB will recognize you in special ways and you will receive specialized mailings and acknowledgements. Bequests to The Maryland School for the Blind help us fulfill our mission in the future.

MISSION

The Maryland School for the Blind, through its on-campus and outreach services, ensures that students reach their fullest potential by preparing them with the abilities to be successful, independent and well-rounded contributing members of their communities.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

MSB received a grant from **The National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences** in Washington, DC for specialized technology equipment for students in the music therapy program.



For the third year, the Baltimore **Ravens All Community Team Foundation** awarded MSB funding for our outreach Teen Tuesday program. The focus this year is to improve the students' health by providing gym memberships and the necessities associated with MSB students joining and fully participating in their local fitness clubs. This includes mobility training for students' independent travel to centers and training fitness center staff on equipment adaptations and ways to assist and accommodate gym users who are blind or visually impaired.

You can enhance the benefits above with your donations. Make a secure online donation on our website: www.marylandschoolfortheblind.org or mail a check to: The Maryland School for the Blind, 3501 Taylor Avenue Baltimore, MD 21236. Write "Music Therapy" and/or "Ravens" in the check memo.

MSB BOARD MEETING

MSB's Board of Directors will meet Wednesday, November 10, 2010 at 2 pm. If you would like to attend please contact Valerie Johnson in the President's Office at 410.444.5000 extension 1201, at least one week in advance of the meeting.

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.

3501 Taylor Avenue • Baltimore, MD 21236 • 410.444.5000 • 410.319.5700 (Fax) • www.marylandschoolfortheblind.org

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can help students like Alana become independent with a donation. Donations are accepted on our website at www.marylandschoolfortheblind.org or by check, payable to The Maryland School for the Blind, 3501 Taylor Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21236. In the memo, write "Alana".

You can also elect MSB as the recipient of your United Way gift through your employer.

Here are our agency numbers:

UW Combined Charity Campaign
for Baltimore City: #3051

UW of Central Maryland: #3051

UW Combined Federal Campaign
of Central MD: #3051

UW of the National
Capital Area: #7344

UW Combined Federal Campaign of
the Nat'l Capital Area: #7344

Maryland Charity Campaign: #2062

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 taishap@mdschblind.org

PRODUCED BY THE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT FOR FRIENDS OF
THE MARYLAND SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

EDITOR: TAIISHA PINKNEY
PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER 410.319.5722

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

Follow us on Twitter! Become a Fan on Facebook!



@msb1853



The Maryland School for the Blind